

IMAGE PROGRESSIONS IN
CHAUCER'S POETRY:
EXPOSITION OF A THEORY
OF CREATIVITY

Thesis for the Degree of Ph. D.
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LAVON BUSTER FULWILER
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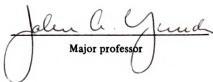
Image Progressions in Chaucer's Poetry:
Exposition of a Theory of Creativity

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ABSTRACT

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By

Lavon Buster Fulwiler

This study is a consideration of Chaucer's exposition of a theory of the origin of verse. In various works but especially in Troilus and Criseyde and the four dream visions--The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame, The Parliament of Fowls, and The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women--there exists a recurring pattern of images and ideas in some way connected with a threefold topic on literary creativity, love, and religion. The major purpose has been to illustrate that through his patterning of imagery Chaucer systematically expressed his doctrine on poetic creativity: that by a temporary creative-fecundating withdrawal into a mental otherworld a poet may achieve imaginative vision resulting from the unconscious coupling of divine inspiration with memory of works of the past.

The recurring structural pattern explicating the theory is designated an image progression. The progression is a sequence involving a nature image (water, wind, mountain, tree, bird, or flower) as an emblem of the creative and the

eternal, a protagonist speaking in the first person who identifies himself as a temporarily unproductive poet in quest of literary fecundity, his otherworld sojourn (sometimes in dream) which refreshes his creativity, and his successful exercise of his regained craft back in the natural or waking world. Contemplation of an image from the natural world has led him mentally to the inspiring supernatural world.

The study brings together what is known of medieval rhetorical and poetic theory. It observes the practices of poets antecedent to and contemporary with Chaucer. And it considers Chaucer's own works in the light of these theories and practices. On the basis of this material, it proceeds to an analysis of image progressions in specific poetic works from the Chaucer canon, with emphasis on the dream visions and Troilus and Criseyde. The analysis points out the images, the poet character, and otherworld details in the various poems and shows how they are combined to emphasize Chaucer's theory concerning imaginative vision. The vision results from the unconscious coupling of divine otherworld inspiration with memory of works of the past; the poetic productivity to which the vision leads follows conscious exercise of the poet's knowledge of rhetoric-poetic.

From the analyses of Chaucer's own poems, the thesis concludes first that Chaucer explicated his theory most

fully in Troilus and Criseyde and the dream visions, works of relatively early date. Second, it establishes that he employed the nature emblems of creativity most extensively in the earliest poems, depended more heavily on overt discussion of the literary craft in works from the middle years of his writing career, and echoed but did not elaborate on his doctrine in rather late works. Third, it illustrates that Chaucer was at once highly eclectic and highly original in his use of image progressions: the images and much material he drew from a variety of rhetorical manuals, sources, and conventions, but the organization and arrangement of them in structural patterns he himself formulated. Hence the development of the image-progression pattern explaining the creative is Chaucer's legacy to both rhetoric and theories on the origin of poetry.

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Lavon Buster Fulwiler

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CHAPTER I

APPROACH TO THE STUDY

While re-reading The Book of the Duchess and The Parliament of Fowls some time ago, I observed with interest what seemed to be Chaucer's exposition of a doctrine of creativity through patterning of images. With this observation in mind, I have examined other works recognized as Chaucer's. The further I have pursued the examination, the more thoroughly convinced I have become that Chaucer intentionally set forth in his poetry his theories on the origins of art. Throughout his works his method of elucidating his ideas on literary creativity, it seems to me, was to conjoin various pictures from nature with various pictures of the supernatural. The method allows for some additions to the natural-supernatural connection, however. In the four dream visions--The House of Fame and The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women as well as The Book of the Duchess and The Parliament of Fowls--and Troilus and Criseyde he most clearly revealed his doctrine by introducing a character or speaker capable of moving in both the natural and the supernatural worlds; in these poems he presented the speaker as a poet seeking inspiration and imagination as he proceeded from the one locale to the other. Through his fictional poet-

protagonist he was illustrating, I believe, that by a temporary sojourn into the unconscious--imaged as a supernatural place, an otherworld possessing such elements of nature as bodies of water, mountains, winds, birds, flowers, and forests--an artist might achieve imaginative vision.

Let us consider for a moment the implications of the term otherworld, which is of major importance in my study. Although any definition of it must be general and must suggest things of the spirit and the mind which cannot be adequately explained, it is possible to arrive at some delimitation of fourteenth-century ideas of otherworld.

For Chaucer and his contemporaries, living in a Church-conscious environment, otherworld naturally carried Christian religious and dogmatic connotations. Otherworld was afterlife--heaven or hell--with its corresponding joys or sorrows; it was an actual place, a land to which one attained or to which one was condemned; it was a realm of beauty or of horror. But to cite only the Christian element of this mysterious region is to oversimplify the medieval concept. Added to this basic thought were overtones from various mythologies and from folklore, still often religious and even dogmatic but non-Christian. The classical Hades with its Elysium and Tartarus as well as the Celtic fairyland and other manifestations of the region remained in the public understanding of heaven and hell.¹

¹To Howard Rollin Patch's The Other World (Cambridge, Mass., 1950) I am indebted for much background information on this topic.

Concurrent with these concepts of otherworld there existed another which is particularly germane to present concerns. The vast dream lore of the Middle Ages, which held especial appeal for Chaucer, provided this view of otherworld, a view signally adaptable to matters of the mind. The land of dreams circumscribes not only imagined experiences of protagonists but also their attitudes and emotions. Such matters may easily align themselves with the principal feelings, joy and sorrow, associated with heaven and hell and may thereby contribute yet another dimension to otherworld. In Chaucer's works particularly, otherworld may culminate a progression of images (especially water, wind, mountain, tree, bird, and flower) representing a protagonist's voyage into the unconscious, a creative-fecundating withdrawal such as that with which various modern psychological critics have concerned themselves; both love-fecundity and creativity-literary fecundity are implicit. Thus otherworld denotes more than merely a supposed land of the dead; it embraces also certain mental and spiritual states, either conscious or unconscious, of the living.

In discussing this realm I have referred to a progression of images involving Chaucer's otherworld and his theory of creativity. This expression requires definition; however, before the meaning of the progression can become clear, it is necessary to explain my use of the word image. Image here denotes a word or an expression chosen for its ability

to convey the ideas of the author by creating mental impressions in the reader; that is, it is selected because of its connotative appeal to any or all of the senses. In some places Chaucer's imagery even touches on symbolism; it employs the phenomena of this world to reveal something of another world. An image progression, then, is a series of sense-appealing expressions bearing meaning and suggesting both close interrelationships among its components and advancement or progress of the protagonist as he moves from world to otherworld and back again. When I speak of a progression in a work by Chaucer, I mean for it to convey the sometimes conscious, sometimes unconscious incorporation of ideas and images into a poem which examines the creative process but which is by no means a critical essay or a handbook dictating the manner in which a poet may create literature. The pattern (which includes conceptions of love, inspiration, creativity, power, joy, and religion) links images conducting the reader logically from one idea to another; beginning with some point in the known world, the protagonist proceeds to at least a partial understanding of his situation as man and as poet when he reaches a corresponding point in otherworld.

Because image progression may invite comparison with image cluster as used by Miss Caroline F. E. Spurgeon,² we must pause to distinguish between the two terms.

²Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us (New York, 1935), pp. 186-99.

Miss Spurgeon shows that Shakespeare often used a chain or set of images to convey a specific mental or emotional stimulus. Chaucer also groups images. But in his patterning of them he does not merely associate or cluster the several portions of a grouping to picture one idea or emotion; rather, in his groupings he suggests motion, action, or progress toward a goal or solution to a problem and leads the reader from one thought to another. Miss Spurgeon further indicates that an image cluster in one of Shakespeare's works may correlate or equate several emblems in a static manner. An image progression in one of Chaucer's poems is not so much equation of images as progression from the ideas advanced by one image to other ideas advanced by subsequent links in the chain; in an image progression, one image may influence another without reflecting or enlarging on it. Finally, the various parts of an image cluster usually appear within a few verses, although the entire group may reappear later in the same work. The constituents of an image progression do not necessarily gather or collect within a few verses--do not actually "cluster." The several images composing such a pattern, in fact, may be widely scattered through a poem; they may even provide a connected foundation or skeleton on which Chaucer develops the principal meaning of the work. Thus the Chaucerian pattern differs from an image cluster.

Yet two other terms which I shall employ in the current study call for explanation. In the dream visions and

Troilus and Criseyde, as I have commented, the natural-supernatural connection--the image progression--involves a third major component, a character taking a role in the story or a speaker narrating it. This figure is represented as a poet in pursuit of creative imagination. In the dream visions he is a persona narrating his experiences in the first person who specifically identifies himself as a poet; he will therefore be designated the poet persona.

In Troilus and Criseyde this third constituent of a progression, still a poet, does not participate in the action of the narrative but observes, relates, and comments on it; he will be referred to simply as the speaker or narrator.

In still other works a first-person narrator, either a participant or a nonparticipant in the action, speaks to his readers without declaring himself a poet; like the narrator of Troilus and Criseyde, he will be named speaker or narrator. Both the poet persona and the speaker are to be distinguished from the historical Chaucer, the actual composer of the several works, although in some instances they partially reflect or speak for their creator. What we are dealing with here, of course, are the voices of imaginative literature, which many critics of recent years have discussed.

The experiences in otherworld, the creative unconscious, of the poet persona or the speaker provided inspiration for his writing. But these were not quite enough. Artful composition still required familiarity with rhetoric and

with the literature of the past; nowhere, I think, does Chaucer indicate that the specific words and forms themselves were produced or dictated fully in otherworld so that the poet persona or speaker, returned to the conscious world, had only to record them--as Coleridge claimed actual dream-world composition for Kubla Khan. In the closing lines of The Book of the Duchess the speaker avers that he will strive to put his dream (inspiration and matter) into rhyme (words and form) as best he can: the creative unconscious demands conscious artistic effort for fulfillment. In the opening verses of The Parliament of Fowls the poet persona complains of the time required to learn "the craft." Despite his subsequent retreat into the dream otherworld and his gathering there of inspiration to compose, the conscious exercise of the poet's tools remains a necessary adjunct of the creative process. And in addition to these tools, there exist building materials inherited from the past: the conventions and traditions, the images, the narratives shaped by earlier makers of literature; incorporation of the old into the new provides a basis for a reader's or an audience's understanding, even though the new may explore ideas not previously developed. For Chaucer, composition partakes not only of imagination but also of judicious implementation of rhetorical procedures and of perceptive recourse to literary antecedents.

I believe that Chaucer consciously formulated both his doctrine of creativity and the image progression explaining

it. This is not to insist that he artificially or mechanically contrived his works or that he consciously developed all his imagery. The importance of the creative unconscious, in fact, is the principal idea which he expounded through the image patterns. But the explication of the doctrine and the employment of several specific images within progressions were intentional.

In using the terms image progression and doctrine of creativity I would not imply that Chaucer was interested only in describing how he worked or in prescribing how any poet should work. He was not argumentative or doctrinaire in developing his theory. He was a poet who employed literary theory and rhetoric, not a literary theorist or a rhetorician. I do believe, however, that in becoming a master poet he considered the workings of his own mental processes and observed the emergence of poetry from them. Nor would I insist that the presence in a poem of a related group of images of the creative always results from conscious application of a fixed rhetorical mechanism; the role of the unconscious, as I have stated, is a part of the progression. But I do think that Chaucer can hardly have been completely unaware of the implications of images which sometimes sprang apparently unpremeditated from his pen. His overt discussions (especially in the dream visions and Troilus and Criseyde) of the problems of the maker and his providing at least partial answers to some of them through the world-poet

persona-otherworld sequence seem to indicate some degree of literary planning.

My major purpose in this study, then, is to illustrate that Chaucer did indeed systematically express a theory of creativity through patterning imagery in a manner not previously advocated by literary theorists or practiced by poets. I hope to show that even though Chaucer borrowed from both the rhetoricians and the writers who had preceded him--even though he adopted in his own verse techniques which they had suggested or employed--he did not find in any of his models or sources a doctrine of creativity set forth in an image progression. The elaboration of the pattern emerges as Chaucer's contribution to medieval treatments of otherworld, to the field of rhetoric, to literature as a whole, and to doctrines of creativity. Although numerous works roughly contemporary with Chaucer's present vivid pictures of otherworld and although medieval rhetorical handbooks treat arrangement, development, and style, only Chaucer synthesizes ideas and rhetorical methods through a progression of images analyzing creativity.

To verify my position, I intend to bring together what is known of medieval poetic theory in general and of Chaucer's poetic theory in particular; to observe the practices of poets antecedent to and contemporary with Chaucer; and to study Chaucer's own works in relation to these theories and practices. Therefore Chapter II will encompass a preliminary

consideration of the constituents of the progression and brief sketches of various Middle English treatments of otherworld; Chapter III will trace theories set forth in rhetorical treatises and will note Chaucer's employment of the theories as well as his direct comments on the craft of poetry throughout his works; and Chapter IV will investigate his recognized sources and conventions which may have influenced his imagery and rhetoric. Chapter V will first examine Chaucer's poems other than the dream visions and Troilus and Criseyde to determine how extensively the image-progression formula served and will then analyze in detail the patterns in the five works in which they are most fully displayed. Finally, Chapter VI will present general interpretations and conclusions.

After considering Chaucer's poetry in the light of the image patterns, I find meaningful certain passages which were previously obscure to me. Moreover, I perceive reasons for Chaucer's having included in his poems episodes which some critics have regarded as irrelevant digressions or inexplicable flaws. I expect to discuss, at appropriate points in my study, the meanings of the passages and the reasons for the episodes. On the basis of my analysis I shall undertake to evaluate aspects of conventionality as opposed to originality in the Chaucer canon and shall attempt to ascertain why Chaucer developed the image progression to a greater extent in romance and dream-vision forms than in other literary genres.

A few further details of my approach to the study remain to be mentioned. The first concerns dating of Chaucer's works in relation to his use of image patterns. Although there is still controversy among Chaucerians concerning the dating and the sequence of composition of the various poems, I have adopted the most widely held opinions, reported by F. N. Robinson,³ as working hypotheses. It is not one of my purposes to determine exact times of composition, which have been at least generally established; for present concerns it suffices to state that Chaucer employed his image progressions expounding a doctrine of creativity most extensively in his relatively early works. Apparently during the first portions of his career as a poet, he devoted much thought to the operation of the creative imagination; later, having developed and illustrated his theory, he used parts of the progressions only enough that we may be sure he still subscribed to the doctrine which he had worked out.

A second point which I wish to make explicit is related to the topics of Chaucer's poems. I would not imply that creativity or even the somewhat broader composition was the sole subject of the works but would record that both were of great importance to the poet during the years in which he was perfecting his craftsmanship. It will not be within the scope of this study to discuss topics other than those

³Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston, 1957).

involved in some way with the image progressions exploring the creative unconscious.

A third problem centers on Chaucer's borrowing from rhetorical manuals and the works of other poets. The much-debated question of which group more strongly influenced Chaucer is not one which I shall attempt to answer. What is significant here is that although he knew and used both groups of works and even drew from them some ideas and images as well as stories, he found in neither body of writings the rhetorical treatment of a doctrine of creativity which he developed in his image progressions.

With these details of the approach to the topic examined, we may proceed to full consideration of the components of the progressions and of the literary milieu in which the progressions flourished.



CHAPTER II

CHAUCEER'S IMAGE PROGRESSIONS

In The Book of the Duchess Chaucer's treatment of medieval concepts of otherworld provides a key to his integration of form and meaning. A re-reading of this dream vision will illustrate how Chaucer developed the concepts. The poet persona, speaking in the first person, initiates his narrative in the manner of a love plaint; he is sleepless, sorrowful, unproductive in his "ymagynacioun," but unable to explain his situation. Wondering how he can continue to live in his unhappy state, he notes that there is only one "phisicien" who may cure him but quickly proceeds to another theme, for "Our first mater is good to keep."

The poet persona states that during a recent sleepless time he attempted to "drive the night away" by reading an account of Ceyx and Alcyone. He relates the tale in the following manner. When King Ceyx travels at sea, a tempest destroys his ship so that he loses his life. Later his queen, grieving that her lord has not returned home, prays to Juno for a dream vision of his condition. In her turn the goddess sends a messenger to fulfill the request. Passing into the cave-realm of Morpheus through a hellish,

unproductive valley surrounded by cliffs and running wells, the messenger bids the god of sleep retrieve the body of Ceyx from the sea and speak through it to Alcyone in a dream. The god therefore causes Ceyx to console the queen that "I nam but ded" and to ask burial for his body, which she will find beside the sea. Alcyone awakes, sorrows over her loss, and soon dies.

Refusing to prolong the Ceyx story, the poet persona reverts to his "first mater." Acknowledging that he has previously known but one God, he nevertheless calls for the aid of Morpheus. At once he falls asleep and experiences a wonderful dream. It is a beautiful May morning, he thinks. In almost-ritual manner birds are singing a "servise" with a heavenly and happy sound, and the poet persona lies abed listening and enjoying "al the story of Troye" and "al the Romaunce of the Rose" wrought on the window glass of his chamber; religion, myth, and romance are united in the opening scene of the dream. But soon he hears sounds of a hunt; immediately he mounts his horse, rides from the chamber, overtakes the hunters, and accompanies them to a forest. The hunt continues, but the poet persona, walking from a tree under which he has been standing, is approached by a fawning whelp that flees when he would catch it. It leads him down a grassy path associated with Flora and Zephyr toward a dense, shadowy forest full of animals. Finally the poet persona becomes aware of a young knight dressed in black sitting beneath a huge oak tree--a mood and a locale like



those of the poet persona before he entered the wood. Thinking that he is alone, the knight delivers a plaint so pitiful that the poet persona wonders

that Nature
Myght suffre any creature
To have such sorwe, and be not ded.

The poet persona greets the knight and offers to try to cheer him. But the knight courteously declares his sorrow so great that nothing may amend it. He proceeds to explain the cause of his woe. At length he describes a lady perfect in visage as in character. He mentions his fear of confessing his love for her, his composition of songs in her praise, and the eventual declaration and rejection of his love. Her later acceptance of it, he says, brought him long-delayed joy. Finally he reveals that he has lost her. Apparently not understanding, the poet persona inquires where the lady is at present. The knight replies that she is dead. With that the hunt ends, and the knight begins to ride homeward to his castle on a nearby hill. A bell in the castle tolls, and the poet persona awakes in his bed to find still in his hand the book of Ceyx and Alcyone. He closes his story by recording that he has thought his dream "so queynt a sweven" that he has made it the matter of a poem.

Let us recapitulate in order to observe the development of meaning through a progression of idea-bearing images. After reading about turbulent waters and uncreative wastelands (images of his own sad and fruitless state) in the

midst of deities controlling active waters and dominating heights (the flow and the peaks of fruitfulness in both love and verse), the sorrowing poet persona dreams in a ritualistic context of singing birds and pictorial representations of turbulence (Troy) and love (the Roman), both belonging to the stock of material from which a poet may draw inspiration. Almost immediately hope rises within him, although true happiness yet eludes him; mere entrance into the other-world region of dreams is not enough. In perhaps unconscious quest (the hunt) of a solution to his woeful lack of creativity, the poet persona, conducted by his horse, pursues situations which will stimulate his imagination. He is evidently standing at an outpost of otherworld (a tree) when he sees a mysterious animal which leads him along a trail where dwell both Flora and Zephyr (the goddess of flowers and the west wind) into the realm proper (the forest). Still he does not find joy and inspiration but instead encounters a young knight whose pitiable emotional state mirrors his own initial sorrow. By relating his grief to the poet persona, the knight works his way partially out of it, for ultimately he leaves the depths of despair and ascends the hill toward his castle (that is, his spirits rise somewhat). And the poet's awakening in this world, after his dream-otherworld sojourn, occurs just after the knight's return home; like the knight, he has found at least a partial solution to his difficulty. The poet persona has progressed from his meeting with birds and beasts

guiding him to otherworld, to his encounter with the other-world forest and hill, and back to this world where he becomes creative because of the inspiration which he has experienced. Waters, trees, wind, flowers, cliffs and hill, birds--all are associated with the events of the dream, and all, as we shall observe, are related to ideas of creativity. Thus images from nature, the figure of the poet, and other-world conjoin to outline the overall movement and to bear a message concerning poetic creativity.

In a very significant way this earliest of Chaucer's dream visions parallels other Chaucerian poems. It relates the craft of poetry to nature and to otherworld forces: it sets forth what I have designated an image progression involving pictures of world, poet persona or other poet speaker, and otherworld, a progression which I believe to be characteristic also of the other three dream visions--The House of Fame, The Parliament of Fowls, and The Legend of Good Women--and of Troilus and Criseyde. Furthermore, portions of the pattern appear in various other works.

Elements of the progression take different positions in order. The poet persona may be brought to view before the world image which he links to otherworld is presented. But the overall sequence of ideas remains the same despite the various orders in which the images carrying them are presented. The same general association of world, poet, love, imagination, creativity, joy, power, and otherworld

pervades the works with which the current study is primarily concerned, the dream visions and Troilus and Criseyde. Although the relation is also indicated in other Chaucerian works, it is most fully explained and worked out in these. In these poems, apparently, Chaucer was especially desirous of saying something about poetic inspiration as well as poetic craft--and he said it through slightly varied image-progression patterns joining world, poet (as persona or merely speaker), and otherworld.

To understand all implications of the image progressions, it is necessary first to note in some detail their various constituents. Some of the constituents are common among medieval writers, though not in the synthesized pattern of Troilus and Criseyde and the dream visions. Despite widespread medieval use of the images initiating the progressions, Chaucer's employment of them is not the mere adoption of a commonplace; rather it is a drawing into service of the familiar to elucidate the unfamiliar--even the unknown.

The initial element of a progression, usually an image taken from the known world, may be set in or projected into one of several manifestations of otherworld: the realms of deities, the land of dreams, an enclosed garden.¹ The images

¹At this point the analysis is intentionally general and is applicable, with limitations, to all of Chaucer's poetry. Full development of the progressions within specific works will be reserved for Chapter V.

opening the progressions come from nature but suggest the supernatural; it is significant that those most frequently and extensively used--waters, trees, winds, hills--reflect symbolism of the Bible, of myth, and of folklore. Let us examine the possible meanings of these dominant images and observe how they serve in the image progressions.

Moving water, a figure which Chaucer often employs in pictures of otherworld, carries religious connotations, both Christian and pagan, as well as psychological meanings. Wells, streams, rivers, and seas in the works under scrutiny are reminiscent of Biblical references to living water as everlasting life,² to the voice of many waters as a voice from heaven,³ and to water as an emblem of the Holy Spirit.⁴ A further signification of water imagery is evident in folklore and classical mythology. In these materials otherworld rivers not only flow eternally but also serve as borders--sometimes of forgetfulness--between world and various otherworlds.⁵ Thus water emphasizes the idea of the everlasting and represents a shift between conscious and

²John 4:10-15; Jeremiah 17:13; and Revelation 7:17. My references cite King James version numbering.

³Revelation 14:2 and 19:6.

⁴John 3:5 and 7:37-39.

⁵Stith Thompson, Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, 6 vols. (Bloomington, Ind., 1932-36). See especially III (F-H), 4-29, on otherworld journeys. To this work I am indebted for information concerning folklore cited here and on subsequent pages.

unconscious conditions. Further support for the emblematic qualities of water comes from modern psychologists, who have shown that in dreams water may represent various phenomena related to fecundity as well as birth itself.⁶ Rebirth, too--involving a release or new outflowing of life-force--may be suggested by moving water.⁷ In addition, the motion of the water implies an active and creative mind such as the mind of a poet. Hence the water images lead to ideas of both poetic creativity and otherworld.

A second major image, trees or forests, sets forth the permanence, the infinity of otherworld. Less clearly related to the central constituent of the progression than moving waters, the emblem nevertheless represents a direct connection between world and otherworld. Here again Biblical associations deserve note. Like water, a tree--archetype of the eternal--represents life;⁸ furthermore, a marvelous tree provides a bridge between heaven and earth even as it contrasts the limited power of the earthly king Nebuchadnezzar with the omnipotence of God.⁹ At least a

⁶Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, Vols. IV and V of The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, trans. James Strachey (London, 1900-1901). See especially pp. 227 and 399-406.

⁷Maud Bodkin, Archetypal Patterns in Poetry: Psychological Studies in Imagination (London, 1934), p. 252.

⁸Genesis 2:9 and 3:22; Ezekial 47:7, 12; and Revelation 2:7 and 22:2, 14.

⁹Daniel 4:10-28.

hint of the affinity between tree and creativity--their fruitfulness--appears in several passages: Psalm 1:3, Matthew 3:10 and 7:17, and Luke 6:43. Again, folklore provides parallels to Biblical meanings. Stith Thompson cites tales mentioning a tree of life in otherworld as well as tales in which death is excluded from a grove; tales with a tree as passage to the upper world, and tales relating the birth of a child in a forest. The eternal, the contrast between world (the conscious) and otherworld (the unconscious), and the creative impulse are suggested by the image drawn from nature. Chaucer's adoption of the image in numerous verses accords well with the world-poet-otherworld pattern.

Still opening an image progression, wind occasionally serves as a third image of the eternal and the creative. This figure from nature, like water and tree, conveys religious feeling. Biblical analogies of wind and spirit establish a connection among nature emblem, creative power, and infinity. On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles with "a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind"; with the coming of the wind, the Apostles received new power of expression.¹⁰ In John 3:8 wind symbolizes one Constituent of the Triune God; thus an image from this world explains the central Person of the Christian otherworld. Power originating with a Divine source is implicit. Various folk tales and myths, also,

¹⁰Acts 2:1-8.

present wind as a god, a symbol of the immortal; as a conveyor of souls to otherworld; and as a force engendering strong heroes.

Finally, hills or cliffs clarify the relation between world and otherworld and touch on the origin of poetry. Like Biblical passages on water, trees, and winds, Habbakkak 3:6 unites poetic symbol and element of nature; this one verse brings together "the everlasting mountains," "the perpetual hills," and the everlasting ways of God. The mountain also represents the eternal in Psalm 121:1-2, which mentions "the hills, from whence cometh my help"; the passage is easily adaptable to ideas of invocation for poetic inspiration and creativity. And once more myth and folk literature in general as well as the Bible offer documentation for Chaucer's imagery. In Greek mythology the abode of the immortals is, of course, Mount Olympus. One tradition maintains that the Muses, born at the spring Pieria on the slopes of Olympus, reside in other springs on Helicon and Parnassus--springs which give inspiration in the arts to anyone who drinks of their waters.¹¹ Mountain and water here reciprocate strength. In folklore a mountain may rise at the border of otherworld, or otherworld may be located within or at the summit of a mountain. The several manifestations of heights, then, emphasize the enduring qualities of

¹¹Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton, Classical Myths in English Literature (New York, 1959), pp. 235-36.

otherworld and at some points carry the connotation of literary creativity.

It is interesting to note that of these four major nature emblems, two are kinetic and two are fixed. In overall structure, the stationary or the moving qualities seem not to concern Chaucer. Yet in specific situations he turns to good service his selection of static and active figures. It bears repetition, however, that both kinetic and non-kinetic images imply progress by conducting the reader from the first element--world--to the final one--otherworld.

That these four most frequently employed images reflect Biblical and other religious or ritualistic prototypes does not classify Chaucer as a primarily religious or myth-making poet; later elements of the progression will show the comprehensiveness of his plan. Nevertheless, the religious matter constitutes one facet of the pattern. Many other pictures from nature support or extend the thoughts conveyed by the image progressions. Birds and flowers, in particular, are prominent in the scenery of certain works. It should be observed that folk tales speak of conception by maidens from plucking flowers and of birds in otherworld that sing religious songs. Creativity and religion again are implied by these images.

Even though otherworld or dreamworld gardens often furnish the locales for these initial images which we have analyzed, the gardens themselves rarely introduce the

progressions; instead, they stand as culminating symbols--otherworld goals which the poet persona or speaker in a poem eventually reaches and which sometimes solve problems or answer questions concerning love, religion, or creativity. Therefore the gardens will be dealt with as part of the third principal division of the image progressions.

At some points the first portions of the formula have already overlapped with the second element, that of the poet persona appearing in the dream visions or of the speaker of Troilus and Criseyde, also a poet but not a participant in the action of the story. This figure does not necessarily represent Chaucer, any specific poet, or even the same figure in the several works, although Chaucer must have endowed the persona and speaker with some of his own traits. Various passages present the poet persona or the speaker as sympathetic, dull-witted, sorrowful or joyful, naive--capable of reporting his experiences or dreams but incapable of understanding all he reports. He belongs to the medieval tradition of character narrators such as those of Piers the Ploughman and The Pearl.

Perhaps the central component, the poet figure, is the most effective of the three in registering the topics with which Chaucer is concerned: love in its various aspects, poetic inspiration-imagination-creativity-power, and religion. Through this figure the reader becomes aware of the interrelationships among the topics.

Love, the avowed subject of Troilus and Criseyde and the dream poems, is an emotion of great import to the poet persona or speaker. He appears as one whose desire for love remains unrequited (BD 37-40, HF 614-19),¹² who listens to the love woes of others (BD 544-57), who knows "nat Love in dede" but reads about it (PF 8-12), who writes of love (HF 620-26, LGW F-Text 320-34, 364-65), and "that God of Loves servantz serve" but himself does not dare to love (TC I, 15-16). Thus, despite his great interest in love, he awaits outside its main courts. What is even more notable is that through the poet persona or speaker Chaucer links love with the second and third of his topics, poetic composition and creativity in The Parliament of Fowls and The Legend of Good Women, and religion in Troilus and Criseyde.

But discussion of literary creativity stands alone also. First, invocations and apostrophes to deities attending on poets emphasize the poet persona's or speaker's desire for inspiration and imagination; many of these direct addresses appear in Chaucer's works. In The House of Fame the poet persona invokes the aid of Morpheus (Book I), of the deities of Parnassus (Book II), and of Apollo (Book III). Similarly, in Troilus and Criseyde the speaker begs the help of Tisiphone (Book I), Clio (Book II), Calliope (Book III), and a company of several supernatural beings (Book IV).

¹²All line citations of Chaucer's works are to Geoffrey Chaucer, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston, 1957).

Two apostrophes from The Legend of Good Women focus on poetic inspiration; The Legend of Dido opens by honoring Virgil, who earlier related it, and the Legend of Philomela addresses the

yevere of the formes, that hast wrought
This fayre world.

(11. 1-2)

Second, comments on composition underscore the desire to create and to develop the relation of composition to other-world. A reference to "sorwful ymagynacioun" (BD 14) implies that unhappiness cripples the poet persona's creative power. More significantly, a theory of divine frenzy or poetic madness unites invocation and imagination. Observing that the theory had become a commonplace in the Middle Ages, one commentator cites Ovid's concept of supernatural inspiration: it was "an esoteric knowledge of the divine origin of poetry."¹³ Divine inspiration alone, however, would not suffice. Knowledge of poetic theory and practical application of it were necessary to poetic composition. The remark at the beginning of The Parliament of Fowls that "the craft" is "so long to lerne" underscores the difficulties which face the "maker." The verse has long been recognized as a near-echo of Aphorism I of Hippocrates, who was referring to the study of medicine, or techne. It was Seneca, apparently, who first translated the adage into Latin in his Moral Essay to

¹³ Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1963), p. 474.

Paulinus, "On the Shortness of Life," and who rendered techne as art.¹⁴ As "Ars longa, vita brevis," the proverb would be widely understood during the Renaissance as referring specifically to literary subjects. Nor is this the only implication of the opening verses of the poem; the poet persona goes on to say, "Al this mene I by love." It is my conviction that love here stands directly for the practice of poetry--a belief which I expect to discuss fully in Chapter V. Since love is the matter of the poem, The Parliament of Fowls deals throughout with the poet's craft.¹⁵ Less directly but more humorously in The House of Fame Chaucer offers opinions on writing. When the Eagle proudly proclaims his own supposed simplicity of expression and freedom from rhetoric (ll. 854-63), the irony of "Geffrey's" position as captive auditor gains emphasis through his affirmation of the tedium of "hard language and hard matere" (l. 864). The closing book of Troilus and Criseyde offers several statements or ideas on the craft. That a poet should hold carefully to his subject is hinted in the declaration that love, not war, is the matter at hand (ll. 1765-71). Here also Chaucer, possibly speaking in propria persona, acknowledges his indebtedness to "alle poesye" and his

¹⁴V. H. Collins, Book of English Proverbs (London, 1959), p. 16.

¹⁵See Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance (New Haven, 1963), p. 139. Payne discusses a similar but not identical position.

admiration for his predecessors (ll. 1786-92); this passage is, then, a discussion of poetic inspiration. In addition, it accords to God the origin of power in both "tragedye" and "comedye." Thus love, creativity, and religion are brought together, usually through the voice of the poet persona or speaker. Elsewhere in Troilus and Criseyde and the dream visions as well as in other poems, Chaucer provides valuable comments on the business of the poet; however, because the comments treat rhetorical matters specifically and do not always align themselves with image progressions, they will be reserved for discussion in Chapter III.

Probably the best summations of the role of the poet persona in relation to religion are the opening verses of The Book of the Duchess and The Legend of Good Women. In The Book of the Duchess the opposition of joy and sorrow in the poet's mind prefigures the contrast between otherworld and world, and in both texts of The Legend of Good Women the "joy in hevne and payne in helle" reflect the two dominant emotions of the narrator. These two dream visions thus connect the second and third parts of the basic image pattern, for they set forth at their beginnings the narrator's consciousness of otherworld.

Various manifestations of otherworld appear throughout the Chaucer canon. The place to which the poet persona or other major figure proceeds--sometimes only in dream--may be a garden, park, or forest; a fairy kingdom; a land of

gods; a place in the sky; a court of love; or the pagan land of the dead. Some representations encompass more than one of these forms: in Troilus and Criseyde a place in the sky, the eighth sphere, is the land of the dead to which Troilus repairs. Similarly, the dream-scene locales of The House of Fame are simultaneously the realm of deities and the habitat of "a congregacioun / Of folk" (ll. 2034-35). That the poet persona obtains knowledge of or admittance to the several otherworlds establishes the final link with poetic creativity, for only in the known world can he write of his visions or his dream experiences. And so the several forms of otherworld touch on the topics of religion, love, and even composition.

Descriptions by the poet persona or speaker gain import as recordings of supernatural matters made available to mortal man. Garden scenes incorporate the symbolic waters, trees, hills, and winds as well as birds and flowers; the gardens are usually pictured in great detail. The lands of deities include palaces, even throne rooms. And the region of the dead may be presented in physical relation to or spatial conjunction with earth. In each instance the visible and tangible attributes of otherworld suggest the superior, the influential. The descriptions offer the opportunity to idealize scenery and hence to develop idea.

The manner of reaching otherworld receives Chaucer's careful attention. The poet persona or speaker achieves

entrance to--or, in Troilus and Criseyde, knowledge of--otherworld by reading, by simply falling asleep, or by invoking supernatural aid. Gifted or supernatural guides conduct him: a whelp, an eagle, a character from a book, a flower, or a deity not only enables him to see otherworld but also furnishes access to information on love, on composition, and on religion.

For full understanding of the narratives and the meanings of the poems, some awareness of the personages of otherworld is necessary. Consideration of the inhabitants, as of the scenery, reveals support of Chaucer's principal topics. The topic of religion is suggested by deities to whom other characters appeal for aid in overcoming problems, mostly concerning love; the power, the succor, the edicts of these beings accord with the spiritual aspect of otherworld. The topic of love is developed also through persons of the poems; individual lovers or companies of lovers, human or nonhuman, form the second category of actors. Finally, the topic of literary creativity is represented by the poet persona or speaker as visitor to or observer of otherworld. In addition to these three major classifications of characters embodying Chaucer's subjects, there are deceased human beings, mourners, fairies, and otherworld guides. Each group of persons, like each manifestation of otherworld, conjoins itself in some way with topics and ideas.

Because of the obvious and surely intentional relationship between overt topic and subtle meaning, some

clarification of meanings is requisite. The poetic other-world may become a microcosm or an image of the Christian heaven or hell, although Chaucer does not always cause it so to serve; as an image of the afterlife, it repeats the world-otherworld opposition of the image-progression pattern. It may stand for a mental or an emotional state related to love--withdrawal from reality or lovesickness. Or it may represent the source of poetic inspiration. Indeed, other-world may inspire at once worship, romantic love, and composition; the dream visions and Troilus and Criseyde offer several instances in which such correlation is achieved. In each instance world, poet figure, and otherworld appear. Outside the five major works of the current study, especially in certain tales of the Canterbury pilgrims, Chaucer presents a direct world-otherworld contrast without the poet persona; he does not clearly identify the first-person speaker as a poet. Hence no image-progression pattern, with poet persona as link, involves concepts of creativity and imagination. But in the dream visions and Troilus and Criseyde these concepts concerning the poet persona or poet speaker assume major positions in the development of the topics and in the structure or presentation of ideas.

A tracing of the several constituents of the image progressions has suggested that Chaucer correlated form and meaning by coupling the topic of poetic inspiration with the world-otherworld sequence. It is my belief that he introduced this combination--that it was his specific contribution

to the art of poetry and to explanations of the origin of poetry. Attention to works by Middle English writers other than Chaucer will clarify his contribution, will place him in his literary milieu, and will provide a foundation for later detailed analysis of his sources and of his image progressions in various poems. I would point out that this examination is not an examination of sources and conventions, which will be the major concern of a later chapter; little of the material now to be scrutinized, in fact, is among that recognized as influential on Chaucer. It suffices at present to observe that although Chaucer drew on traditions that had been a part of literature since Homer, he infused into them new purpose. Let us proceed, then, to brief considerations of otherworld in various non-Chaucerian works.

In the English poem Sir Orfeo, generally recognized as a product of the early fourteenth century, the focus on otherworld is particularly strong. Orfeo himself owes his existence to the union of beings of divine origin. His queen, Heurodis, dreams of a fairy host before she is forced to join them in the fairyland of the dead. Orfeo's visit to otherworld to reclaim her allows the poet to describe a radiantly attractive land peopled by fairy rulers and mortals abducted from their earthly lives. A river, a grove, and birds mark the entrance to otherworld, agreeing in some respects with nature images initiating Chaucer's progressions. The theme of a poet-visitor to otherworld occurs in the

figure of Orfeo disguised as a minstrel to gain admittance. But he is not the poet persona, the ostensible composer of the narrative. Elements of Chaucer's progression patterns are present--but not in the synthesized form of Troilus and Criseyde and the dream visions.

Slight suggestions of world-otherworld relationships appear in both the alliterative Morte Arthure (ca. 1360) and the stanzaic Morte Arthur (ca. 1400). Each narrative traces Arthur's prophetic dream of the goddess Fortuna--a resident of otherworld--and her wheel controlling man's fate. The stanzaic poem also relates how Bedwere casts Excalibur into a lake--hinting at the relation of water to otherworld--and records the old tradition that Arthur, at the point of death, is taken away by boat to be healed miraculously of his wounds. Thus water links life to after-life. But here again, as with Sir Orfeo, there is neither an image progression nor a statement concerning a poet persona and creativity.

Throughout the five poems sometimes ascribed to the Gawain Poet images of otherworld convey the importance of religion. In Sir Gawain and the Green Knight much of the wasteland scenery which Gawain views as he proceeds toward Bercilak's castle reminds the reader of supernatural places; mountain, hill and cliff, forest and oak, and ford and moat signal the hero's proximity to otherworld. Moreover, the Green Chapel and its foreboding surroundings image the



hellishness of disloyalty. The Pearl goes a step further in presenting a dream river separating earthly life from heavenly life, a speaker seeking entrance to otherworld, and a vision of spiritual glory; but even though the protagonist narrates his dream experience, he does not seem desirous of delivering a message on poetic inspiration, nor is he designated a poet. Patience adopts the Biblical otherworld image of Jonah's misery in the body of the whale, and Purity refers to the hellish fire of the city of Sodom; neither, of course, can be claimed as an original figure of speech for the poet. Lastly, St. Erkenwald juxtaposes life and afterlife: an exhumed pre-Christian judge, a just and good man, earns entry to heaven when the tears of a living bishop fall on his body as baptism. Despite the sharing of ideas and topics, the Gawain Poet and Chaucer do not employ the same methods. Chaucer's image pattern remains unique.

Somewhat more closely than any of the other poems yet mentioned, with the possible exception of The Pearl, the B-Text of William Langland's Piers the Ploughman parallels certain Chaucerian works. Like the Gawain Poet, Langland is more nearly contemporary with Chaucer than are the authors of other poems named. Will, the protagonist of Piers, falls asleep beside a stream--the water can hardly have been accidental--and dreams of three levels, tower, field, and dungeon, which image heaven, earth, and hell.

An emblem from nature, a narrator speaking in the first person and participating in the action, and a picture of otherworld thus echo the basic elements in Chaucer's progression. But here the focus is on one topic only: religion. Love and poetic creativity do not form principal matter of the poem. Furthermore, in contradistinction to Chaucer's usual presentation of one place as otherworld in a specific narrative, Langland plays up the three levels of life, which imply clearly the world and two types of otherworld.

John Gower's Confessio Amantis, which was probably composed during Chaucer's years of greatest poetic output, purportedly treats of love in the light of religious terminology: Venus is the deity; Genius is her priest; the speaker, a lover, is the person making confession. But in reality didacticism clothed in love terminology receives emphasis. Aside from love and religion, Gower refers to writing in general and to his Muse in particular, thereby loosely connecting composition with love and spiritual matters; poetic inspiration, however, does not hold the prominence here that it holds with Chaucer. Despite similarity of elements in Chaucer and Gower, Gower does not formulate the logical progression of ideas beginning with nature emblem, proceeding to poet persona and creativity, and ending with otherworld. Nor does he grant nearly equal rank to the various subjects as Chaucer does.

In the collection of prose sermons known as Jacob's Well, written about 1425,¹⁶ water pictures both evil and good but stresses the latter as superseding the former in the Christian life. An image from nature points man toward otherworld, and the speaker, a homilist, directs the thoughts of his audience from earth to heaven. However, the speaker does not become an actual link; instead he stands apart from the sequence of ideas as he elucidates world-otherworld relationships. Insofar as initial image and one culminating point of topic--religion in otherworld--are concerned, Jacob's Well uses modes associated with Chaucer; but as a part of the homiletic genre, it intentionally avoids the threefold subject matter in favor of singular insistence on spirituality.

John Lydgate and Robert Henryson, avowed followers of Chaucer, come closest to conjoining world, poet, and otherworld according to the Chaucerian pattern. In The Temple of Glas, composed just after 1400,¹⁷ Lydgate's narrator dreams of lovers complaining to Venus. There is much religious terminology: the temple, prayers to the goddess, and vows before the throne of the deity are related to the progress of persons in otherworld from sorrow to joy. The narrator observes and reports on otherworld, and religious

¹⁶Problems of dating are discussed by Arthur Brandeis, ed., Jacob's Well (London, 1900), pp. x-xii.

¹⁷J. Schick, ed., Temple of Glas (London, 1891), p. cxii, suggests 1403 as a tentative date.

imagery illuminates the topic of love; but the topic of poetic inspiration, a paramount element of Chaucer's image progression, is lacking. In The Testament of Cresseid, dated perhaps after the middle of the fifteenth century,¹⁸ Henryson presents a poet directly addressing his readers and delivering an apostrophe to a deity. The speaker describes an otherworld council of classical gods which Cresseid views in a trance. He notes that divine determination of her fate for blasphemy against Cupid and Venus is realized in her post-trance affliction with leprosy. Love and religion once more unite, but still composition supports these topics rather than appearing as a central concern. Therefore, even these intentionally Chaucerian works omit a clearly co-ordinated progression opening with an emblem from the known world, involving with a poet persona the threefold love-composition-religion material, and closing with a vision of otherworld.

It would be possible to point out a number of other-world scenes in Thomas Malory's Morte Darthur of the 1460's. Because of the multiplicity of such images, however, it seems necessary to mention only the passage most nearly analogous to passages in Chaucer's works. As in the stanzaic Morte Arthur, the king commands that his sword be cast into

¹⁸Approximate dates of Henryson's life are cited by Boris Ford, ed., The Age of Chaucer (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1959), p. 478. These dates, 1425 to 1500, provide the best clues to dating of the poem.

a lake and then approaches the afterlife himself by water. Yet in spite of the introduction to otherworld through an image of the known world, the important link of author's creativity is missing. When Malory steps into the narrative, he does so as serious actual writer and not as author-character conveying a message on poetic imagination.

Otherworld is everywhere in Middle English literature. Nature images often point toward otherworld. And narrator as character frequently leads his readers toward visions of otherworld in its various manifestations. But still only Chaucer has synthesized the three elements into a clear-cut image pattern implying motion, progress, and solution to problems simultaneously. The progression is indeed Chaucer's contribution to theories of the origin of poetry and to rhetoric; admittedly, the foregoing examination has not aimed at comprehensiveness, but it has referred to works most closely akin to Chaucer's which might furnish a basis for determining originality and conventionality within the Chaucer canon, particularly in relation to poetic theories and rhetorical modes. Middle English works antedating those with which the current study is primarily concerned contain only isolated elements of Chaucer's progression pattern; poems contemporary with his reveal only a slight bit more cohesiveness of world, poet, and otherworld; and even the avowed imitators do not develop progressions of the Chaucerian type.

On the basis of this tracing of contemporary English works it seems reasonable to conclude that Chaucer's treatment of otherworld imagery, with its implications concerning the creative imagination, is distinctive in Middle English literature. But there remain other possible origins of such treatment. Chaucer's known familiarity with medieval handbooks of rhetoric and his recognized eclecticism from classical and medieval continental literature call for examination of both manuals and literary sources and conventions. In relation to the former, several questions present themselves. What were the major interests and concerns of the rhetoricians? To what extent did they deal with images of otherworld, especially those suggesting creativity? Did they otherwise influence his theory on the origin of poetry? And finally, did they provide the image progressions which Chaucer employed? In seeking answers to the question, it is necessary first to analyze rhetorical theory which was available to Chaucer and then to survey his use and adaptation of rhetorical practices and devices. With these matters Chapter III will deal as it attempts to determine relationships between rhetoric in general and image progressions involving creativity in particular.

CHAPTER III

CHAUCEUR AND THE RHETORICAL MANUALS

More than forty years have passed since John Matthews Manly evinced the theory that Chaucer was well acquainted with formal principles of rhetoric and that he practiced them in his poetry.¹ Following his lead, other Chaucerians have published a number of discussions dealing with the history of rhetoric, with medieval development and employment of theory, and with Chaucer's use of a specific device in various works or of several devices within one poem. But no published study has yet undertaken to analyze and illustrate all the major divisions of medieval rhetoric in Chaucer's poetry: arrangement or organization, amplification and abbreviation, and style and its ornaments. Manly supports his argument for Chaucer's familiarity with rhetorical treatises through references to recommended methods of beginning and ending and to modes of amplification and abbreviation but does not investigate style and ornamentation.

¹"Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," Warton Lecture on English Poetry, The Proceedings of the British Academy, XII (1926), 95-113. References to this paper will cite the reprint in Richard Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, Chaucer Criticism (Notre Dame, 1960), I, 268-90.

Various critics have examined evidence of this last division of rhetoric in several of Chaucer's poems.² The present chapter will attempt to draw these and other commentaries together as it traces the divisions of rhetoric explicated in medieval treatises and observes Chaucer's incorporation of theory into his poetry. First, the study will briefly treat historical backgrounds of rhetoric which are especially applicable; second, it will state significant rules and data which manuals of the Middle Ages set down; third, it will review Chaucer's direct remarks on the craft of poetry; fourth, it will cite adoption by Chaucer of practices recommended in the handbooks; and finally, it will analyze his image progressions in the light of rhetorical theory.

Before examining these topics, however, I would observe that various controversies exist in regard to Chaucer's attitudes toward rhetoric, controversies which touch on basic meanings of terms and on assumptions to be frequently employed in the current chapter. Because the issues have been thoroughly considered elsewhere, it is necessary at this point only to register them and to state my own position on them. Further development will be reserved for those places in the discussion at which the controversies become most

²Two early and influential studies are the following: Agnes K. Getty, "The Medieval-Modern Conflict in Chaucer's Poetry," PMLA, XLVII (1932), 385-402, and Florence E. Teager, "Chaucer's Eagle and the Rhetorical Colors," PMLA, XLVII (1932), 410-18.

germane. Let us briefly catalogue the issues.

The question has been raised whether Chaucer actually depended on rhetorical manuals such as those of Matthew of Vendome and Geoffrey of Vinsauf to the extent that Manly and his followers have indicated.³ A correlary of this query, which suggests one possible answer, is whether Chaucer had recourse for his knowledge of rhetoric primarily to French models rather than to the handbooks. Benjamin S. Harrison believes that Chaucer knew rhetoric but learned it first from Machaut and The Romance of the Rose, not from the manuals.⁴ Wilbur Owen Sypherd supports the view that Chaucer relied more heavily on Old French works than on Rhetorical treatises.⁵ It is my own belief that the poet did indeed know intimately some critical treatises and that from them he obtained specific ideas on composition even though he also learned certain rhetorical practices from Latin, French, and Italian poetry. Both the dicta of the rhetoricians and the models of verse provided much of the imagery of otherworld which Chaucer used; but in neither body

³The leading proponent of caution in accepting Manly's thesis is James J. Murphy. See two of his essays: "A New Look at Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," Review of English Studies, XV (1964), 1-20; "Rhetoric in Fourteenth-Century Oxford," Medium Aevum, XXXIV (1965), 1-20. The first of these articles lists major studies on Chaucer and rhetoric since Manly's.

⁴"Medieval Rhetoric in the Book of the Duchesse," PMLA, XLIX (1934), 428-42.

⁵Studies in Chaucer's 'Hous of Fame' (London, 1907).

of source material were there exact parallels to the image progressions dealing with literary creativity which he developed.

A second controversy has dealt with Chaucer's attitude on the "high style" discussed by the rhetoricians. Manly,⁶ Charles Sears Baldwin,⁷ and R. C. Goffin⁸ agree that the poet was generally distrustful of this division of rhetorical teaching although he knew and understood it well. Murphy, supporting an opposing viewpoint, believes that Chaucer did not actually dislike high style but possessed only "a layman's consciousness of greater and less complexity in styles, without a rhetorician's technical knowledge of fine distinctions."⁹ What is notable for present concerns is that whether Chaucer did or did not subscribe to high style, his awareness of it would seem to uphold the argument for his familiarity with formal theory.

Still another problem in Chaucer studies is that of his general concept of poetics: did the poet regard poetry and rhetoric as one entity or two? Believing that he found medieval rhetoric inept as poetic method, Baldwin nevertheless

⁶"Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," p. 283.

⁷Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic (to 1400) (New York, 1928), pp. 292-96.

⁸"Chaucer and Elocution," Medium Aevum, IV (1935), 132-33.

⁹"A New Look at Chaucer and the Rhetoricians," pp. 10-11.

notes that in deference to the tastes of his time he did not exclude the purely rhetorical from his verse. This critic also comments that by the time the medieval handbooks were written, the field of rhetoric and poetic had merged, at least insofar as doctrines taught in the schools were concerned.¹⁰ Perhaps the surest evidence of fusion is that of the titles of the handbooks, which employ Latin words related to poetry, rhetorical colors, and verse to cover the same general bodies of material. Even Murphy's opposing contention--that Chaucer's limited knowledge of theory prevented him from distinguishing between rhetoric and poetic--underscores the similarity of definitions. For practical purposes, then, Chaucer's references to rhetoric or to poetic or to any corresponding terms denote a blending of meter, rhyme, ornamentation, and form. When the poet persona of the dream visions alludes to his craft, he may imply both rhetorical and poetic techniques. Rhetoric and poetic constituted one phase in the evolution of verse.

With these points in mind, we may pursue the first of the five areas to be treated in this chapter. In regard to historical backgrounds, Manly has stated that the system of rhetoric known to the Middle Ages was based on a limited number of sources. He cites as basic documents on theory three classical Latin works: Cicero's De Inventione, the

¹⁰Baldwin, pp. 295-97.

Rhetorics ad Herennium by an unknown author, and Horace's Ars Poetica. Another writer, Charles Homer Haskins, ranks Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria and Horace's aforementioned epistle as principal sourcebooks.¹¹ Since these works provided the matter of medieval handbooks available to Chaucer, it seems unnecessary to consider their content separate from the dicta of medieval writers which reflect classical ideals. But it is important to note that by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the focus had shifted somewhat from theoretical Latin principles to contemporary practical subjects such as letter-writing.¹² Explaining this new emphasis, Haskins (pp. 139-150) notes that the Latin commentaries were regarded as patterns for rhetorical style but were less often used than medieval manuals dealing directly with practical epistolary composition; he adds, however, that rhetoricians of the early Middle Ages "accorded at least theoretical recognition to poetical composition" while they concentrated on prose style.

The late twelfth century and the thirteenth century saw the greatest flourishing of treatises on poetic. To this period belong Matthew of Vendome, Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Gervais of Melkley, Evrard l'Allemand, and John of Garland.¹³

¹¹The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century (Cleveland and New York, 1965), pp. 138-39.

¹²Manly, p. 273.

¹³Edmond Faral, Les Arts Poetiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle (Paris, 1962). Faral's book consists of three parts:

The manuals which seem to have been most influential at this time and through the time of Chaucer are six in number:

Matthew's Ars Versificatoria; Geoffrey's Poetria Nova, Documentum de Modo et Arte Dictandi et Versificandi, and Summa de Coloribus Rhetoricis; Evrard's Laborintus; and John's Poetria. The works which scholars generally have deemed most closely related to Chaucer's are those of Geoffrey (witness the Nun's Priest's humorous but knowledgeable allusion in CT VII, 3347-51) and perhaps Matthew.

Having touched on principal historical facts of medieval rhetoric, the analysis may proceed to our second concern, the contents of these manuals. The opinions of Matthew, Geoffrey, and the other rhetoricians, most of whom apparently regarded rhetoric as something conscious and planned, can be conveyed most effectively in conjunction with the three major divisions of rhetoric: arrangement and organization, amplification and abbreviation, and style and ornamentation. To the first of these let us now turn.

discussion of the poetic arts and their history and commentators; examination of the divisions of rhetorical doctrine and of its sources; and presentation of the texts of Matthew, Geoffrey, and Evrard as well as textual analysis of Gervais and John. To Faral and to Baldwin (Medieval Rhetoric and Poetic) I am particularly indebted here and elsewhere. In addition, Ernst Robert Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York, 1963), is a valuable source. Because it is necessary to refer frequently to these works, I shall cite specific pages only when such citation would be consistent with the organization of the work.

Recommended practices of arrangement and organization suggest three subdivisions: narrative order, methods of beginning and ending, and overall plan of work. The narrative orders prescribe manners in which a narrative may be developed--the simple order in which the events may be related. Ordo naturalis, ordo artificialis, and ordo commixtus designate, respectively, the order in which events occurred; the order placing somewhere after the beginning those incidents which occurred first, as in Homer's opening an epic in the middle; and the order of events combining natural and artful techniques. Matthew, Geoffrey (Poetria Nova and Documentum), and John give advice on mainly the first two orders. Faral (p. 56), analyzing these texts, cites an opinion from the Middle Ages, based on Horace, that an able poet should prefer the artful to the natural plan. The Poetria Nova of Geoffrey, in particular, ranks the artificial mode as superior to the natural: the artificial is fertile, the natural is sterile. The work goes on to say that in the body of a composition, natural order provides for itself according to ancient rhetoric, and artificial order calls for a formula involving the decorative proverb or example.

A recent critic of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight has stated that only the better writers "found a way to satisfy both art and tradition" by combining the natural and the

artful in the same work.¹⁴ Although the critic was referring specifically to authors in the field of romance, his statement applies also to writers of other literary types; just as the Gawain poet mixes the modes (the Gawain story follows simple chronological patterns, whereas the Bercilak story begins in medias res), Chaucer sometimes blends them in poems of various genres.

In regard to the second subdivision, methods of beginning and ending, Matthew of Vendome recommends, especially, two "elegant" ways to open a work: employment of the zeugma and employment of the hypozeuxis. Evrard l'Allemand agrees with him that these figures produce effective beginnings. Geoffrey of Vinsauf and John of Garland mention the possibility of beginning with proverbs or exempla. Relatively few suggestions are made for this division or for arrangement, but those which are recorded underscore the medieval desire for the artful in poetry. On ways of closing, Matthew advises statement of a general idea and of a direct address thanking or acknowledging indebtedness to an inspiring divinity. Geoffrey believes that a poet should end as he began: with a proverb, with a restatement of the subject, or with a general idea.

Overall plan demands brief treatment. The only theorists who discuss the matter are John and Geoffrey.

¹⁴Larry D. Benson, Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight (New Brunswick, 1965), p. 170.

The former declares that a work should include exordium, narration, petition, confirmation, refutation, and conclusion, and the latter mentions methods of attaching the main portion of a work to the beginning. Faral (pp. 59-60) sums up comments on plan and, indeed, arrangement in general by observing that they are not major concerns of medieval rhetoricians; he adds that many works consequently lack unity of plan and proportion. No statement on order, beginnings and endings, or overall plan proposes anything like a progression of images.

Devoting much more space to discussions of amplification and abbreviation than to those of arrangement and organization, the rhetoricians expound what Manly (p. 276) has called "the purely mechanical character of the art of rhetoric as conceived by them." Amplification receives a much larger share of notice than does abbreviation. Geoffrey, in fact, turns much of his Poetria Nova over to consideration of rhetorical means of dilation, especially the apostrophe and description. Of the fourteen or fifteen rhetorical procedures which the theorists indicate, those most frequently illustrated or most fully elaborated by Geoffrey and Matthew, besides description and apostrophe, are digressio, prosopopoeia, expolitio, and periphrasis. The terms require brief definition and, at some points, pronouncements by the theorists to explain their particular connotations to persons of the Middle Ages.

Description indicates two primary groupings: first, persons, and second, places or things. For each category special methods are prescribed. A complete portrait of a person, as Faral (p. 80) notes, treats both the physical and the moral attributes. The physical description obeys strict laws; it proceeds from face to body to vestment, each of which is treated in detail and in order. Matthew not only discusses theory but also provides a number of examples of proper descriptions for various persons. Similarly, there were recommended modes for describing things; in picturing a garden, an author should give orderly attention to flowers, to trees, to birds, to other charms of landscape. Again, Matthew offers specific illustrations.

Geoffrey's inclusion in Poetria Nova of approximately 200 verses concerning apostrophes attests to their surpassing importance to literature of the Middle Ages. These figures were understood to have broad usage. They might, Manly (pp. 279-80) explains, address the living or the dead, persons present or absent, personified abstractions, or even inanimate objects.

Digressions frequently are made in the forms of sententiae and exempla, although they may be developed through any number of devices. Prosopopoeia attributes to deceased persons, animals, inanimate objects, or ideas the characteristics of living persons. And expolitio restates or elaborates ideas.

In explicating periphrasis, or circumlocution, Geoffrey reveals the extremes to which theory might occasionally go. His advice has been translated (Curtius, p. 277) thus:

To prolong the work you must avoid naming things by their names. Use other designations; reveal not a thing entirely but suggest it by hints; nor let your words course through your subject but rather take a long and circuitous route around what you were going to say briefly.

Manly (p. 276) believes that for the theorists "the problems of composition were not problems of the creative imagination but problems of 'fine writing.'"¹⁵ His statement seems especially applicable to medieval modes of amplification.

Although amplification assumes greater importance than abbreviation, this latter division of rhetoric also receives some theoretical attention. Brevity appears as a stylistic virtue--even aim--in certain passages of the handbooks. Matthew's Ars Versificatoria recommends abbreviation, and Geoffrey's Documentum provides illustrations of story condensation. Curtius (p. 491) quotes John of Garland's list of figures facilitating abbreviation: disiunctio, or asyndeton, and absolute constructions are prominent among the devices. Manly (p. 282) adds to the roster the figure occupatio, the refusal to describe or narrate.

In evaluating the discussions of amplification and abbreviation, Curtius (p. 490) credits Geoffrey and Evrard

¹⁵Here Chaucer supersedes the theorists, for he was indeed concerned with creativity and imagination.

with systematically co-ordinating theories of dilation and condensation. He concludes that in Latin poetry about 1200 this division of rhetoric merited careful attention. He observes:

The art of the poet has first and foremost to prove itself in the rhetorical treatment of his material; for this he can choose between two procedures--either he ingeniously draws out his subject, or he dispatches it as briefly as possible. The absurdity of these excessively generalized precepts seems not to have entered the minds of the theoreticians. But, understandably enough, they devote more space to amplificatio than to abbreviatio; there was more to say about the former.

The rhetoricians seem to have thought that a primary task of any writer was to adjust his material--usually not original with him--by extending or shortening it at appropriate points. Through such adaptation he might achieve various desired ends.

That amplification and abbreviation are closely related to the third principal division of rhetoric--style and its ornaments--becomes clear because the manuals deal with certain figures or colors under both headings. To this third division, decorative style, let us now proceed. Extensive citations and explanations of stylistic and ornamental patterns render this section by far the most space-consuming in Geoffrey's Poetria Nova; filling almost forty pages, the passage concerns many of the devices also used in amplification. Matthew, assigning two-thirds of his work to this topic, conceives of poetry as mainly descriptive, and for him description involves dilation, style, and decoration. Evrard devotes almost 200 verses of his Laborintus to listing and giving

examples of ways to ornament a work; he begins this discussion immediately after the culmination of his advice on amplification and abbreviation and thus suggests a close correlation. And John of Garland, more concisely, cites rhetorical figures of style in conjunction with methods of description.

Of style and ornamentation in general, Faral (pp. 86-89) establishes two principal points. First, medieval rhetoricians recognized three styles: the simple, the restrained or sober, and the sublime. The distinction comes from the ancients. Second, the theorists recognize two forms of ornament: the difficult and the facile. Whereas the former employs tropes (metaphor, antithesis, allegory, enigma, metonymy, synechdoche), the latter employs colors of rhetoric (repetitio, traductio, conduplicatio, interpretatio). The doctrine was that a writer should select a style appropriate to his matter: sublime style for high matter, simple style for low matter. Difficult ornament was aligned particularly with high style, facile ornament with low style, although overlapping could occur. Matters of style assuredly were of import to the theorists. At no point, however, does a rhetorician imply a clear relation of style to poetic creativity.

The tracing of these major categories of medieval rhetoric indicates that numerous ready-made theories and rules were handed down to the period in which Chaucer lived and

wrote. But he was well qualified to formulate and state his own theories as well as to adapt those of his predecessors. Before considering the theories of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries which Chaucer actually employed, then, it is necessary to recall his own comments on the composition of poetry.¹⁶ It is difficult at some points to determine whether Chaucer is speaking for himself or is merely developing traits and attitudes of a character through the comments; nevertheless, the statements reveal his awareness of the long history of poetic criticism and of the problems which confront an author. Moreover, when the passages are presented together, it may be feasible to attempt interpretation.¹⁷

Scattered verses from The Canterbury Tales deal with the colors of rhetoric and with a few other details of composition. Especially notable are certain lines from The Clerk's Prologue. When the Host calls on the Clerk to tell a tale, he counsels against the use of rhetorical devices and high style (IV, 16-20). The Clerk's reply, praising Petrarch's

¹⁶Although it is tempting to incorporate into the discussion the rather numerous references to rhetoric in Boece, it has seemed reasonable to exclude direct translations. Despite Chaucer's undoubted admiration of Boethius' work, the sentiments expressed in it can hardly be claimed as his own.

¹⁷Two particularly perceptive analyses of Chaucer's comments on the poetic craft are the following: Whitney H. Wells, "Chaucer as a Literary Critic," Modern Language Notes, XXXIX (1924), 255-68, and Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance (New Haven, 1963), pp. 60-90.

"rethorike sweete" and "heigh style," delivers a polite and perhaps too subtle thrust at the Host's critical judgment: high style or rhetoric is "impertinent" except as a means of conveying matter. Surely for the Clerk rhetorical rules were pertinent to effective presentation of his tale.

The Franklin (V, 714-27) modestly disclaims knowledge of rhetoric, although he later employs various devices.¹⁸ Similarly, the Squire denies rhetorical ability to describe Canace (V, 34-41) despite the observation in The General Prologue that "He koude songes make and wel endite" (I, 95). Both passages emphasize the widespread medieval consciousness of the role of rhetoric in literature.

The Nun's Priest's facetious apostrophe to "Gaufred, deere maister soverayn" (VII, 3347-54) is widely recognized as an allusion to the sometimes overdrawn methods of Geoffrey of Vinsauf. Satirical though the passage is in its bombast, it offers the rhetorician a kind of immortality and may even acknowledge a measure of indebtedness to him.

Chaucer has left two statements on the proper relation of word to concept. In The General Prologue (I, 741-42) and in The Manciple's Tale (IX, 207-10) he apparently endorses the sentiment--which he ascribes to Plato--that word and idea should be closely connected. Although one critic has pointed

¹⁸For a discussion of this apparent contradiction see Benjamin S. Harrison, "The Rhetorical Inconsistency of Chaucer's Franklin," Studies in Philology, XXXII (1935), 55-61.

out that Chaucer actually owed the thought to Boethius rather than Plato,¹⁹ it is significant that he adopts and commends it.

Two isolated comments on genre merit brief note. The Parson, "a Southren man," nurses an aversion to the "rum, ram, ruf" of northern alliterative verse and ranks as only slightly better verse which rhymes (X, 42-44), and the Monk defines a tragedy as a story of fall from greatness related in hexameter verse, in elegiac meter, or in prose (VII, 1973-81). The lines establish Chaucer's awareness of the kinds of poetry being composed at the time, his familiarity with the poetic tastes of various geographical areas, and his interest in genre.

A final story from The Canterbury Tales provides not direct remarks but, rather, strong implications about a specific literary genre. In parodying the metrical romance form, The Tale of Sir Thopas castigates writers who lack taste and judgment or who indulge in excesses of content and versification. It should be observed, however, that Chaucer's several stories in the romantic vein provide ample evidence of his approval of the form itself when it is properly handled.

Moving on from The Canterbury Tales to other poems by Chaucer, one encounters other passages related to literary

¹⁹Mary A. Hill, "Rhetorical Balance in Chaucer's Poetry," PMLA, XLII (1927), 858.

theories. A modern critic writing on The House of Fame says that the Eagle represents the medieval ignoring of "the boundary between knowledge and poetic imagination." The poet persona, rejecting the bird's opinion that astronomy--one branch of knowledge--holds poetic significance, has his own "poetic attitude which refuses to mingle science with poetry, and sees poetry as a realm of its own."²⁰ Thus the second book of The House of Fame attacks an outmoded poetic theory. Furthermore, it parodies the device of reference to authority.

Chaucer's wish to explain the task of the poet becomes apparent in the opening stanza of The Parliament of Fowls:

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
 Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
 The dredful joye, alwey that slit so yerne:
 Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge
 Astonyeth with his wonderful werkynge
 So sore, iwys, that when I on hym thynke,
 Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke.
 (ll. 1-7)

The passage is primarily concerned with poetic practice rather than with love. It might be paraphrased as follows: When I mention love, I mean it to suggest the craft of poetry; the perfecting of that craft requires time and the expense of much effort but may eventually lead to satisfaction and joy.

That poetry is a central issue of the poem has been recorded elsewhere. Robert O. Payne, who notes that both

²⁰H. L. Levy, "As Myn Auctour Seyth," Medium Aevum, XII (1943), 33.

poetry and love are subjects, expresses the opinion that "The first four stanzas are a complex and profound statement of the problem of the poet which can be matched elsewhere in Chaucer's poetry only in the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women."²¹ In a similar manner R. C. Goffin observes that "Chaucer begins his poem by reminding us of his trade as a courtly love poet, and tells the difficulties of his craft."²²

Also dealing with problems of composition, the speaker in Troilus and Criseyde delivers an apostrophe to his "litel bok":

. . . for ther is so gret diversite
In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,
So prey I God that non myswrite the,
Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge.
And red wherso thow be or elles songe,
That thow be understonde, God I beseche!
(V, 1793-98)

The great variation among Middle English dialects presents challenges not only to understanding but also to pacing the meter. A part of the two-stanza apostrophe is the designation of Troilus and Criseyde as a tragedy (l. 1786); this citation, like that of the Monk noted above, touches on a Chaucerian concept of genre. But aside from contemporary dialects and definitions of literary forms, Chaucer refers in this poem to language changes that may corrupt his verse:

²¹The Key of Remembrance, p. 139.

²²"Heaven and Earth in the 'Parlement of Foules,'" Modern Language Review, XXXI (1936), 495.

Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
 Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
 That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
 Us thinketh them, and yet thei spake hem so,
 And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
 Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
 In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.

(II, 22-28)

Moreover, the language-love-poetic craft triad comprehended in these lines echoes the love-craft-religion basic topic. Finally, the subject of love, language, and poetry unite in the poet's rhetorical concern

To encresse or maken dymynucioun
 Of my langage.

(III, 1335-36)

Brought into close conjunction, these scattered comments on the craft of literature afford some idea of the poet's theories. He respects the various parts of rhetoric for their service to conveying matter, but he disapproves of undue attention to rhetoric for its own sake and abhors poetic excesses. He regards poetry as a major art deserving the devoted thought and effort of poets; nevertheless, he finds the mastery of the craft time-consuming and difficult. He recognizes the advantages of developing a work within the traditions of a certain genre. And he believes that poetic elements have some importance of their own but primarily help to clarify or underscore content; technique should convey message and should complement imagination. Let us enlarge upon this last point in relation to Chaucer's doctrine of creativity.

I have remarked earlier in the present chapter that medieval rhetoricians saw rhetoric as something conscious and planned. I have further noted that before they wrote their manuals, the fields of rhetoric and poetic has fused. As a part of the rhetoric-poetic blending, imagery also was for them consciously executed. But many modern critics contend that imagery arises unconsciously from the purposes of the author. Chaucer's own theory, I think, represents an intermediate position: the unconscious, pictured by the dream otherworld with its scenery drawn from the natural world, provides both imagination and material for poetry, but consciously employed rhetoric often sets forth most effectively what has been imagined. The unconscious, then, is the seed and flowering of much verse, and the conscious is its cultivation. An image born in the poet's unconscious--though I would not imply that all imagery is necessarily produced unconsciously--might require a consciously formed rhetorical pattern such as an image progression to display its meaning adequately. When the progression itself explores the unconscious, as Chaucer's pattern does, form and meaning are inextricably integrated.

With these assumptions in mind, we may consider Chaucer's adoption of practices recommended in the handbooks. Like the material of the manuals, rhetoric in Chaucer's works can most effectively be examined under the three headings of arrangement-organization, amplification-abbreviation, and style-ornamentation. Of narrative arrangement it need only be

repeated that Chaucer, as a superior artist, employed natural, artificial, and mixed orders. Many of the shorter pieces from The Canterbury Tales follow chronological plans. The Book of the Duchess, however, mixes orders: after introductory remarks on "sorwful ymagynacioun" it moves in natural time order until the passage on Ceyx and Alcyone and the appearance of the Black Knight, whose flashback is an example of artful procedure.

Chaucer's methods of beginning and ending are varied. The Book of the Duchess opens with the poet persona's complaint; The Parliament of Fowls introduces a statement of general ideas on dreams; and Troilus and Criseyde sets forth its theme and delivers an invocation. Variety appears also in the modes of ending. The Nun's Priest's Tale expounds a moral; The Pardoner's Tale uses the peroration and closing formula of the traditional medieval sermon; The Book of the Duchess states flatly, "This was my sweven; now hit ys doon"; and Troilus and Criseyde offers a prayer for God's mercy. What is notable here is that although Chaucer adopts some methods prescribed by the handbooks, he also introduces practices of his own or of contemporary poets.

In regard to overall plan, Chaucer can hardly be held accountable for heedlessness to plan and proportion, as the theorists can be; although several unfinished works such as The House of Fame present problems of overdevelopment or underdevelopment of certain elements, it is likely that the

poet would have eliminated at least some of the difficulties had he completed the works.

Amplification in Chaucer's works takes many forms. His descriptions follow conventional patterns in various places but seem more completely integrated with the matter at hand than the theorists would demand: the handbooks emphasize description for its own sake, whereas Chaucer co-ordinates it with idea or immediate purpose. Often it becomes a part of his image-progression pattern. The portraits of the Canterbury pilgrims stress points often related to both the personality of a character and the type of tale which he will relate. The long description of the duchess in The Book of the Duchess (ll. 817-1033) follows the recommended head-to-toe order in presenting physical attributes and treats fully the moral qualities of the lady. Similarly, scattered verses in Troilus and Criseyde suggest both the physical and moral characteristics of Criseyde, though not in the order prescribed in the handbooks. And pictures of gardens--as in The Parliament of Fowls--enumerate in detail the trees, birds, and flowers mentioned in the handbooks. These last two works use description in conjunction with the image pattern leading to otherworld and thus represent Chaucer's interweaving of conventional elements with his original contributions.

Also a part of amplification, the numerous apostrophes throughout the canon are addressed conventionally to various

beings or things: to deities, to other men of letters, to a book, to a flower. With the apostrophe Chaucer primarily follows tradition. With digression, however, he deals otherwise. His employment of this device is perhaps best illustrated in The Book of the Duchess (ll. 1155-74). Telling of the love songs which he composed for his lady, the Black Knight incorporates references to Greek theories of sound which at first seem unrelated and are assuredly unconventional. In The House of Fame II, 765-822, similar ideas emerge. But even though the poet digresses, he does so in order to elucidate his thoughts on sound as related to composition and to "fame," not merely to lengthen his poems. In this respect he steps aside from tradition.

Very briefly the other major devices of amplification may be noted. Prosopopoeia appears when the Prioress of The Canterbury Tales presents the slain "litel clergeon" as speaking, when the Eagle of The House of Fame makes his long speeches, but most extensively when the birds of The Parliament of Fowls hold their discussion; the device contributes to pathos, to humor, to development of love theories. Periphrasis and the closely connected expositio stand in humorous context when the Franklin glowingly describes the close of day before flatly restating the substance of his ornate verses (V, 1016-18). In employing popular amplifying figures Chaucer extends their service beyond mere adaption of material to space.

In abbreviating material, Chaucer enlists particularly the dream mechanism. In The House of Fame and The Book of the Duchess the poet persona may be transported suddenly from one site to another; the abrupt change of place circumvents the necessity of recording long passages which would furnish nothing but continuity. Although the handbooks do not discuss the dream device, it most certainly pertains to rhetoric. In adopting the figure occupatio, probably his most frequent abbreviating device, the poet yields to convention but frequently adds humor or satire. Thus the portrait of the Wife of Bath in The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales hints of her "oother compaignye in youthe" but then slyly concludes that it is unnecessary to speak of the situation "as nowthe" (I, 461-62).

The last of the three major divisions of rhetoric is that which concerns style and its ornaments. Although an exhaustive analysis of numerous figures which Chaucer used would quickly become tedious, several general observations and a few specific citations of colors and other devices will reveal that here, as in the first and second divisions, the poet complimented conventions but also added something of his own.

Chaucer's selection of figures indicates that he preferred natural expression of thought or feeling to merely decorative features. Book II of Troilus and Criseyde opens with an exclamation. The conversations of the Canterbury

pilgrims in the links between tales offer many examples of this device. The plaint of the poet persona at the beginning of The Book of the Duchess and the gay announcement of the dream mode in the first verse of The House of Fame are at once stylistic elements and records of emotion. The natural and not the artificial appeals to the poet.

This observation leads naturally to overall considerations of style. Fully cognizant of the doctrine that style should accord with matter, Chaucer causes the Monk to speak in high style as he narrates his tragedies. Indeed, the poet himself suggests the sublime in Troilus and Criseyde. Once more, though, his blending of serious and humorous details--the playing of Pandarus' teasing against Criseyde's serious love--indicates that he did not remain content with an exact following of the manuals; he chose to alternate moods.

He did, however, incorporate into his works enough of the rhetorical colors and other figures of speech that his respect for the handbooks cannot be doubted. Perhaps most illustrative of his attention to these devices are passages in The House of Fame and The Book of the Duchess. The Eagle of The House of Fame alone uses a number of facile ornaments--one critic has counted twenty.²³ Repetition of idea, emphatic reintroduction of some point, plays on words, and repetition or reintroduction of certain words to express emotion

²³Teager, pp. 411-12.

decorate the Eagle's speech to the poet persona. Six of the ornaments classified as difficult also appear in his discourse: metaphor, epithet, hyperbole, unusual word order, and word coinage for display. In The Book of the Duchess the Black Knight employs frequentatio, or enumeration of varying facets of an idea, when he declares his woe in many ways (ll. 597-617); his description of the deceased duchess, already considered as an example of amplification, applies here also; and finally, his negative assertion followed by affirmation--correctio--of ll. 855-58 is both visual image and emphatic ornament. The manuals provided many notable elements of Chaucer's style.

What happens in Chaucer's poetry is fundamentally what usually happens when a poetic genius of conservative temperament meets with traditional rules: the traditions or conventions remain, but they are transformed by the poet's genius. Although the rhetorical treatises of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries describe nothing approaching Chaucer's image progression, they do yield many devices which the poet successfully merged with his pattern. In the light of rhetorical theories of the Middle Ages, Chaucerian comments on the craft of poetry, and Chaucerian use of doctrines, it is now possible to examine the relationships between rhetoric in general and image-progression patterns in particular. For the rhetoricians "fine writing" surpassed creative imagination. But for Chaucer composition and creativity are

very closely related; the world-poet-otherworld pattern not only places them in link positions but also indicates that poetic inspiration is at least as important as rhetoric. Herein lies Chaucer's originality: in employing many of the traditional devices of rhetoric, he couples them with image patterns dealing with inspiration--his own addition to the field of composition--so that they take on new vividness. The image progressions in his various works trace and explain the creative process of the poet; they may, in fact, either intentionally or unintentionally symbolize the process. Perhaps this symbolism is the element facilitating adaptation of the progressions to the numerous rhetorical devices which Chaucer employs with freedom and ease.

The patterning of images pervades all the divisions of Chaucer's rhetoric. In relation to arrangement and organization, it determines much of the order of the narrative, methods of beginning and ending (especially in the sense that a passage may open with nature image and culminate in otherworld picture), and overall plan. To illustrate, let us reconsider certain portions of The Book of the Duchess. The general order of material--ordo naturalis--presents a scene in this world, with the poet persona and his "many an ydel thoght" and "sorwful ymaginacioun." Following a chronological plan, the poet persona records his move toward otherworld and his ultimate creative satisfaction via book, dream, and nature emblems. Then, back in this world, he

fulfills his desire to create: his "ymagynacioun" is no longer "sorwful" and he writes about his dream. Despite the overall natural order, however, Chaucer interpolates the tales of Ceyx and Alcyone and of the Black Knight; here, artificial order is connected with the image triad in that the reading about the first and the dreaming of the second represent steps in the poet persona's moving toward an answer to his original lack of creativity. The orders have been mixed in a logical fashion.

Both the beginning and the ending of The Book of the Duchess treat of the craft of poetry, and both bring the poet persona to view in a setting in this world related to the sojourn in otherworld; in addition, the Ceyx-Alcyone sequence--a tale within a tale--begins and ends with water imagery, and the dream story opens with references to birds and closes with a picture of a castle atop a hill. Thus, in the working out of Chaucer's overall plan, the initial and final parts of the frame story and of its two embedded narratives follow the course of the image progression: nature emblem in this world, poet persona affected by the emblem, and nature emblem in otherworld form a thought chain which lends continuity and conveys message.

Nor are principles of arrangement the only rhetorical implications of Chaucer's imagery. The patterns allow also for amplification and abbreviation in various poems. Again let us look to The Book of the Duchess for illustration.

The several nature emblems--birds, waters, hills, winds, trees, flowers--involve description, as do the discussion of the deceased duchess and the references to "al the story of Troye" and "al the Romaunce of the Rose." These descriptions present ideas of religion, love, and poetic inspiration, the three dominant topics of The Book of the Duchess, even as they emphasize and develop the image progressions. Both the initial nature emblem and the culminating vision in otherworld involve description, and the story itself presents the poet as delivering apostrophes. Elsewhere than in The Book of the Duchess Chaucer makes extensive use of apostrophes and other amplifying devices, many of which directly play up facets of the image structure. By conveying symbolic matter the progression pattern may even serve purposes of abbreviation: it projects at once meanings on several levels. Messages of religion, love, and creativity in The Book of the Duchess might easily have been diffuse--even apparently unrelated--had Chaucer not adopted some rhetorical form such as his image progression to carry the symbols simultaneously.

Finally, the progression offers a chain of thought to which the poet attaches many vivid stylistic devices. Through digressio in The Book of the Duchess (as in ll. 1155-74) we learn of amorous songs which the Black Knight composed for his lady; the passage includes ideas of love and composition besides presenting the knight as a partial

reflection of the poet persona. Similarly, through descriptio (as in ll. 398-401) we observe emphasis on symbolic aspects of nature; these have already been shown to be vital parts of the image patterns.

From this examination of The Book of the Duchess through the three principal divisions of medieval poetic-rhetoric, it appears that Chaucer bowed to conventional techniques but also contributed to the field of rhetoric something which the theorists had not conceived of. However eclectic Chaucer may have been, he did not draw from the rhetorical manuals his plan of a series of images implying progress or motion or solution to a problem. One major concern of the theoreticians had been arrangement of material, but no extant handbook advises arrangement in the world-poet persona-otherworld order; although the manuals present models for descriptions of gardens and for nature emblems, they do not suggest that the things described connote literary fecundity. Another issue had been adaptation of source matter to new topics through amplification and abbreviation, but no manual considers an image progression as a means of expanding or contracting matter or of explaining the creative process. And a third interest had been the embellishment of literature, but no extant discussion of rhetoric recommends patterning of imagery to enhance style or to ornament a work. Even more important than the rhetorical implications, however, is the explication of the creative process of the poet.

Indeed, the image progressions may be either consciously or unconsciously symbolic of literary fecundity. This kind of symbolism is rare in medieval literature. Apparently Chaucer was developing a doctrine of creativity; he was doing this also in a manner distinctly his own, a manner not prescribed by the rhetoricians. Nor had other poets evolved such a pattern. Before full evaluation of Chaucer's originality as opposed to his conventionality can be achieved, it is necessary to treat one more matter: his use of source details and of familiar traditions related to his image progressions. To see how extensively he adopted, changed, enlarged, or cancelled various images handed down to him by previous authors--to see what Chaucer did with images drawn from his predecessors--will be the major purpose of the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

SOURCES AND CONVENTIONS

The classical tradition that the nine Muses are the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne carries symbolic meaning: the creative impulse is born of divine inspiration and memory. That Chaucer knew this tradition, perhaps through his familiarity with Ovid,¹ appears likely; what is more important, he may have found in the myth a suggestion which prompted him to develop his doctrine of literary creativity. I have observed elsewhere in the current study that theories of divine origin of poetry had existed since ancient times. I have further stated that for Chaucer artful composition demanded memory of literature of the past. I would now comment that in accordance with the myth, divine inspiration--his innate genius or imagination--infused new life into narratives and images which he remembered from reading books and from listening to oral presentations. His various references to memory or remembrance, his numerous allusions to his

¹Edgar Finley Shannon long ago established Chaucer's "intimate knowledge of even the details of Ovid's poetry." See Chaucer and the Roman Poets (Cambridge, Mass., 1922), p. 371. Essentials of the myth are related in Ovid's Metamorphoses, Book V; see also Dan S. Norton and Peters Rushton, Classical Myths in English Literature (New York, 1952), p. 235.

literary antecedents, and his several direct acknowledgments of borrowings²--not the discoveries of scholars alone--attest to his eclecticism, and his analogy of "olde felde . . . newe corn" to "olde bokes . . . newe science"³ suggests inspired descent of new literature from old. The Middle Ages, of course, esteemed a "maker" of literature not for originality of narrative but for what he could do with a story or an image handed down by his forebears. The principal purposes of the present chapter, then, are to examine the place of memory--the use of sources and conventions--in Chaucer's doctrine of creativity and to note the role of inspiration in the theory. Two questions in particular arise. First, how extensively do the known or supposed sources and the widely-practiced conventions employ the images of creativity which Chaucer developed? Second, how original or conventional was he in incorporating ideas from his sources into his own works: what were his practices in adapting, amplifying, or abbreviating material?

Let us first note certain points related to sources. Like the rhetorical manuals considered in Chapter III, many literary works antecedent to and contemporary with Chaucer's--

²Consider, as examples, his references to remembrance of old books in LGW F, 25-28; his citation of Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, and Statius in TC V, 1789-92; and his acknowledgment of Petrarch as source for The Clerk's Tale in CT Fragment IV (Group E), 26-38.

³PF 22-25.

Latin, Italian, French, English--presented some of the major nature images of the eternal and the creative: water, wind, tree, mountain, and even bird and flower. Like the manuals, many of his recognized sources dealt with otherworld. And like the manuals, these works stopped short of presenting image progressions expounding theories of literary fecundity. It remained for Chaucer, in remembering and correlating materials from various sources, to set them forth in image progressions; although he did appropriate both concepts and passages, he found nowhere the image sequence explaining creativity. In some of his poems containing matter borrowed from various authors, Chaucer developed and elucidated implications of creativity which the earlier redactors apparently had overlooked. In some passages he perhaps consciously brought together from several distinct sources the several elements of a pattern explaining the origin of poetry. We cannot always be sure which version of a tale Chaucer was looking at or remembering; indeed, he may not always have worked with a manuscript of his source immediately before him. But whether transcribed from a text at hand or recalled, source materials made their contributions. In Troilus and Criseyde and the four dream visions, materials taken from more than one source compose image groupings; the complexity of the borrowing, I think, indicates that the poet sometimes purposely juxtaposed images in patterns planned to elaborate his literary doctrine.

But I would direct attention to general literary conventions as well as to specific sources influencing Chaucer. As he gathered material from books or tales or poems which he had read or heard recited, so he gathered material from the literary public domain of images, characters, and episodes which through extensive use had ceased to belong to individual authors or works. Some images and other poetic elements had already become conventional before authors of known sources adopted them. By Chaucer's time, as we have seen in earlier chapters, there lay ready for new uses or new interpretations a wealth of literary conventions: prescribed order in descriptions of persons or places, a rhetorical tradition; catalogues of trees and birds; characteristics associated with genre, particularly characteristics of the romance and the dream vision; journeys into assorted manifestations of otherworld, with conventionalized guides, other characters, and scenery; and above all, images of water, wind, mountain, and tree--not necessarily serving in close conjunction and not expounding literary doctrines but pervading various genres and various literary topics. In a manner similar to that of his work with specific sources, Chaucer gained service from conventions. He stirred and brought to action the topic of creativity lying dormant in the conventional imagery, and he intentionally combined reciprocally reinforcing elements of thought progressions analyzing the literary impulse. Memory assuredly played a part in Chaucer's composition.

Because memory of works antedating his own as well as familiarity with handbooks of rhetoric assumed an important role in Chaucer's literary theory, it is necessary to examine recognized and probable sources--of both lines and general ideas--to determine their relation to the development of the theory.⁴ To implement this examination, I shall approach the sources through the piece or pieces by Chaucer which they influenced. Such an approach allows both listing of the various literary ingredients available to Chaucer and focus on his compounding in one passage portions of several books and traditions constituting an image progression. I shall consider first those works from the Chaucer canon which make rather limited use of the images: The Canterbury Tales and Anelida and Arcite. I shall then proceed to source analyses of the romance Troilus and Criseyde, which develops them more fully, and of the four dream visions, which offer the most complete explication of the doctrine of creativity. The discussion will point out possible correspondences, through imagery, between a work by Chaucer and its sources; it will inquire how he either simply transcribed or deliberately changed material from a source and how he

⁴I am working with known, suspected, and probable sources and with analogues and traditions. Chaucer's sources, I think, are now as well established as they can be. I have therefore accepted recognized data on sources synthesized by F. N. Robinson, ed., The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston, 1957), but have also investigated other secondary as well as primary sources to validate my thesis that Chaucer composed the image progressions.

emphasized the sometimes long-dormant topic of creativity implicit in the images of water, tree, mountain, wind, bird, and flower. It will exclude from consideration passages from Chaucer's works and from his sources which in no way treat the topic of otherworld or the six major images under scrutiny; it will omit examination of Chaucer's known or supposed translations, Boece and The Romaunt of the Rose, and will avoid full interpretations of the image progressions in Chaucer, which will be developed in Chapter V.

The Canterbury Tales

Let us turn now to The Canterbury Tales to observe Chaucer's treatment of nature images in otherworld settings. Not all portions of The Canterbury Tales demand inclusion in the current study. Only a brief passage from The General Prologue is applicable, few links reveal any connection with the patterns, and many tales may be completely excepted. In the passages from the collection which do deal with the six images or at least with otherworld, we find neither the progress of a poet persona from world to otherworld nor the suggestion of literary creativity through imagery.⁵

⁵For source data on The Canterbury Tales I have had recourse not only to F. N. Robinson's notes and to individual books and articles but also to W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster, eds., Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (Chicago, 1941).

Of the variety of narrative genres represented in the collection, the romances make the most extensive use of otherworld events and of the images embraced in this study. It is worthy of repetition that Chaucer developed his image progressions to a greater extent in the romance and the dream vision than in other genres; in fact, he seems to have regarded these forms as the most congenial to otherworld matter in general, even when he was not formulating full image progressions. The romantic tales of the Knight, the Wife of Bath, the Squire, and the Franklin--this last the specialized type of romance known as the Breton lay--devote more attention to otherworld happenings and to the six dominant nature images than do other stories from the pilgrimage, and The Merchant's Tale and The Tale of Sir Thopas, both of which parody romance materials, contain certain components of the image progressions.

For The Knight's Tale Chaucer's basic material is Boccaccio's Teseida, with some influence from Statius' Thebaid and other works cited below. In this tale as in others encompassing hints from otherworld, the poet both selected from sources and added from his own thinking details in some way tied in with the supernatural realm. The Knight's Tale (I, 1033 ff.) offers a passage illustrative of his method. Emily is walking in a garden "ful of braunches grene," singing like an angel and gathering flowers "To make a subtil gerland for hire hede," when Palamon and Arcite first view her from the tower in which they are imprisoned.

The lady

fairer was to sene
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe--
For with the rose colour stroof hire hewe.

The actual "facts" of the episode are to be encountered in Book III of Boccaccio's poem: the garden with trees and flowers, the maiden singing in an angelic voice, the young men ready for love. But whereas through several stanzas the Italian poet reiterates that Emilia was "cantando," Chaucer focuses not on the song but on the flora of the garden. Although he has telescoped much, he has interpolated the close association of the lady with flowers: the lily with its verdant stalk, the rose, and May flowers in general. Emily even supersedes the plants; she is fairer, fresher, and rosier than they. The concept of freshness-springtime-renewal-rebirth-creativity emerges from expansion of The Teseida's brief reference to Emilia's "ghirlanda." Chaucer's amplification of this emblem aligned with the creative in a poem noted for its abbreviation of most source matter⁶ signifies his awareness of latent implications and his continued application, in this work from approximately the middle of his career, of some portions of the theory which he had begun to expound years earlier in The Book of the Duchess.

⁶Hubertis M. Cummings, The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio (New York, 1965), pp. 125-26.

But when it served his purpose to omit imagery of the creative, he excised, not expanded, those lines from a source which bore it. The descriptions of the temples honoring Venus, Mars, and Diana provide evidence of the way he worked. He noticeably departed from his model in picturing the temple of Venus (I, 1918-66). Boccaccio's view of it (VII, 51-60),⁷ earlier translated almost verbatim for The Parliament of Fowls (II. 183-217), presents garden, blossoms, streams, birds, trees; Chaucer's refusal to adopt the Italian passage for The Knight's Tale can hardly be ascribed to any wish to avoid repetition, for elsewhere he repeated not only material from his literary progenitors but also lines of his own composition. At this point in his narrative, he chose to play up in words mainly original with him the woes of love rather than the joys inferable from the images of creativity. Although "Wrought on the wal" were "Plesaunce and Hope," a cuckoo, and a garland, also depicted thereon were

The broken slepes, and the sikes colde,
The sacred teeris, and the waymentynge,
The firy strokes of the desiryng
That loves servauntz in this lyf enduren
(ll. 1919-23)

and many more representations of the sorrowful. It is true that the description of Venus' statue, perhaps drawn from some mythological treatise, incorporates the sea "With

⁷References to The Teseida cite books and stanzas, not verses.

waves grene," "A rose gerland," and "hir dowves"--water, flowers, and birds--but it is also true that the description requires only a few verses; the emphasis on woe predominates. Love retains the prerogatives of creativity but does not always exercise them. About the middle of the Venus sketch Chaucer introduces from The Romance of the Rose (ll. 515-82) the isolated points that Idleness is porter to the garden of love and that the self-loving Narcissus, who was transformed into a flower, is also represented in the painting of the garden. Even this bit of allegory remains aloof from commendation of love and intimations of the creative; had Chaucer chosen to focus here on fecundity, he could easily have added nature images to the picture of the otherworld garden.

The description of the temple of Mars (I, 1967-2050) exhibits close similarity to that presented in Book VII of The Teseida; like the plan of Venus' temple in The Knight's Tale, it omits ideas of fecundity. The forest painted on the wall of the temple of Mars, without men or beasts and with only barren trees, is common to the Italian and English versions of the narrative and recalls Statius' reference to barren forests as the haunts of Mars in The Thebaid (VII, 34-42); its sterility might well be expected because of its connection with war and turmoil. That the unproductive forest derived from Boccaccio reflects the unproductive garden which Chaucer had personally envisioned

suggests that the English poet was consciously building up images of the fruitless even as he had developed images of the fruitful in the scene in which Palamon and Arcite first saw Emily. His adoption of the barrenness theme in the instance in which the source provided it and his introduction of a matching sterility in the instance in which the source did not provide it point toward his use of "old books" and "new corn" for a purpose.

In the third picture of a temple, that of Diana (I, 2051-88), the poet once more takes a seemingly negative approach to the creativity theme. The temple is here presented primarily according to Chaucer's own conception, although the myths represented on the temple walls in the English description both came from Ovid.⁸ All creativity intimated in the passage is shown as precursor to or result of woe. In the rendering of the myth of Callisto taken from Ovid and in Diana's statue apparently original with Chaucer,⁹ childbirth is depicted as the bringer of sorrow. The idea accords not only with Diana's being goddess of chastity but also with Emily's desire to remain a maiden.

Finally, an image of the eternal and the creative, a catalogue of trees, is transferred, perhaps ironically, by

⁸The story of Callisto ("Callistope") is found in Fasti II, 153 ff., and that of Daphne is told in The Metamorphoses I, 452 ff.

⁹Cummings, pp. 132-33.

Chaucer to his description of Arcite's funeral pyre (I, 2921-23). Boccaccio had more copiously listed trees in The Teseida (V, 77-91) as he described the grove where Palamon and Arcite fought, and Statius had also catalogued various species in The Thebaid (VI, 98-106) as he described the construction of a funeral pyre. With Chaucer, however, the placing of the image in a position culminating Arcite's love and pointing toward the rapid fulfillment of Palamon's may have some progressive structural significance. The garden with Emily as flower and angel first comes to view to initiate a love-religion-creativity triad; the temple pictures of garden, forest, and chastity goddess seemingly negate or oppose fecundity; and the trees of the funeral pyre stand between the living love and the dead love. Chaucer has neither introduced an image progression in which a poet persona moves from world to otherworld and back again nor declared his topic to be composition, but he has to some degree woven into the tale of the Knight a succession of images, garden and flower and forest; by so doing he has revealed that in this romance, as in Troilus and Criseyde and the dream visions, he had in mind a rhetorically coordinated pattern.

To move from The Knight's Tale to The Wife of Bath's Tale and The Squire's Tale is to pass from a work for which sources are rather well established to two romances for which no definite sources are known. A consideration of traditional

otherworld materials in these stories--materials from the literary public domain--may yield data valuable in arriving at conclusions on Chaucer's originality and conventionality.

The Loathly Lady motif common to The Wife of Bath's Tale, Gower's Tale of Florent (Confessio Amantis I, 1407 ff.), the ballads Kemp Owyne and The Marriage of Sir Gawaine, the romance The Marriage of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell (l. 225 ff.), and other medieval works bears otherworld implications. The hideous woman is associated in one work with a forest, in another with a sea; The Wife of Bath's Tale uses the forest setting and mentions "every streem." But beyond the conventional connection of the supernatural with tree or water, no extant tale analogous to the Wife's employs imagery as Chaucer has employed it. The aforementioned tales partially paralleling Chaucer's suggest nothing of literary creativity: they neither develop image patterns like Chaucer's nor introduce a poet persona in quest of inspiration.

Perhaps slightly related to otherworld themes though not to Chaucer's major images are attitudes on "gentillesse," which the Wife incorporates into her tale (III, 1100-76) by saying that true gentillesse comes from God. John Livingston Lowes has pointed out that Dante's Convivio mentions Gentilezza as having come from two sources: ancestry, or "old riches," and God; he has further observed that Jean de Meun discussed gentillece as not being dependent on birth.¹⁰

¹⁰ "Chaucer and Dante's Convivio," Modern Philology, XIII (1915-16), 19-20. See also Bartlett J. Whiting, "The Wife of

That this kind of goodness--possibly leading to happiness or creativity--originates in the supernatural world may have caused Chaucer to move mentally from ancestry to memory (of old books), from God to creativity, and from birth with its implied mortality to pre-existence with its implied immortality. But no direct statement and no actual image grouping in the passages on gentillesse proffered him the idea or form which he developed fully in the dream visions.

Yet another romance, *The Squire's Tale*, continues the discussion of gentillesse, thereby indicating some possible concern with otherworld, and involves several otherworld topics and images. Again, as for *The Wife of Bath's Tale*, we must deal with conventions and analogues rather than with specific influences or known sources. The knight on a brass horse who arrives at King Cambyskan's court seems to be an otherworld agent akin to characters in other romances; each magic gift which he brings--mirror, ring, sword--possesses a supernatural power, and the steed itself (perhaps like a guide to otherworld) is supernatural in its flight. Besides including these conventional romantic elements, Chaucer's story shows notable similarity to a German narrative, by Osswalt der Schribar, of the Asian Christian monarch Prester John. Prester John sends to the emperor Frederick three rare

gifts: a magic ring, a wonderful garment, and youth-preserving water.¹¹ The Squire's Tale echoes the three-gifts episode but, interestingly, does not name magic water among the gifts; if an analogue listing such water was familiar to Chaucer, his not using the image could indicate that his plans for the unfinished romance omitted any allusion to literary creativity. Another redaction of the Prester John legend, from a Latin chronicle, offers a slight similarity to Chaucer's imagery. A dry but beautiful tree bearing fruit and providing refuge for many singing birds gives off such an exceedingly sweet odor that it suggests Paradise.¹² But even here, despite the fruitful tree-bird-otherworld enlacement, there seems to be no progression of ideas on the release of a frozen literary creativity.

In relation to the talking-bird episode of The Squire's Tale, certain details call for attention. At night Canace dreams, as do the persons of numerous romances; with the aid of the gift ring she understands the speech of a falcon in a tree (once more, bird and tree images assume importance) when in the morning she strolls in a park. Of the oriental analogues to portions of this romance, it suffices to note that an Indian tale presents a female bird relating her woes to a princess who understands birds' speech and that a

¹¹H. S. V. Jones, "The Squire's Tale," in Sources and Analogues, ed. Bryan and Dempster, pp. 360-63.

¹²Ibid., pp. 358-60.

sequence from The Arabian Nights depicts a garden scene; neither work presents a parallel to Chaucer's image progressions. Because no definite source or close analogue exists, we may infer that such otherworld matters and imagery as appear in the tale emerged from widely used themes and from Chaucer's own imagination: from memory and inspiration.

For The Franklin's Tale the influence most germane in the image study are two works by Boccaccio, The Teseida and Filocolo. Although one "question of love" from the latter quite evidently provides the major elements of the plot, passages from the former contribute most of the nature emblems other than those added by Chaucer himself. A tracing of certain parts of the English poem will illustrate the interweaving of details from the two Italian stories. In V, 863, the first emblem, the sea over which Arveragus has departed, spells sorrow for his loving wife, Dorigen; in ll. 895-99 her friends seek to bring her delight by conducting her away from the sea toward pleasant rivers and wells. Both the sorrowful and the happy aspects of bodies of water seem to be Chaucer's original incorporations into the tale; interestingly, the emblematic contrast stands at the beginning of the real action, perhaps in order to emphasize the relation of the message-bearing emblem to Dorigen's progress toward solution of her difficulty. The subsequent description of the garden in which Dorigen's friends continue their

efforts to cheer her (V, 901-24) is a medley of images (some occurring in more than one source) from Filocolo II, 23 ff., The Teseida III, 5-7, and Machaut's Dit dou Vergier I, 46-66. Trees, flowers, and fresh plant growth in general are common to all three influencing passages; all appear in The Franklin's Tale. A detail from Machaut's poem, "le paradis terrestre," Chaucer rendered into English as "the verray paradys"--perhaps stronger and surely more symbolic than the mundane or terrestrial pattern in the source. For the "softe shoures" of May Chaucer needed no source: the association of this form of water with springtime and reborn plants and otherworld he had long since perceived. The garden setting, which thus amalgamates images from several works with Chaucer's own, later becomes the emblematic backdrop for Aurelius' declaration of his love for Dorigen and her jocular "promise" to grant him her love if he can remove the treacherous coastal rocks.

The Franklin's recounting of the long-unrevealed passion of Aurelius (V, 925-959) is a rather faithful rendering of the woes, the fears, the song-making of Boccaccio's Arcita (The Teseida IV, 66) insofar as narration is concerned; however, Chaucer omitted from his version the lover's falling asleep in a grove to the sound of murmuring waters after lamenting his unrequited love. The combination in the source of love, water, and wood in relation to a "maker" perhaps as nearly approaches an image progression treating

creativity as any other influencing passage. Nevertheless, the central topic of the work is not literary creativity; the attention to composition is brief and episodic. Furthermore, there is no poet persona ostensibly composing or speaking the poem at hand. And finally, Boccaccio's use of the images seems intended to establish mood within the episode rather than to convey any actual message. To shift to *The Franklin's Tale* once more, it may be noted that Chaucer excepted the group of images possibly because in this story he was not discussing primarily the origin of poetry, because he recognized the mood-serving function of the images in the source, and because he was broadening the otherworld focus so that it permeated most of the tale--from the initial references to bodies of water and Dorigen's sorrow through the description of the garden and ultimately to Dorigen's meeting Aurelius in the garden to fulfill her pledge.

Yet another specific sequence blending material from Boccaccio with Chaucer's own ideas merits examination. In V, 1030-79, Aurelius invokes the divine aid of Phoebus Apollo as god "Of every plaunte, herbe, tree, and flour" and Lucina as goddess of "the see and ryveres" that he may win the love of Dorigen. Although a prayer to Florio in *Filocolo* I, 166, has been compared to the plea of Aurelius¹³ and although

¹³John Livingston Lowes, "*The Franklin's Tale*, the *Teseide*, and the *Filocolo*," *Modern Philology*, XV (1918), 721-22.

invocations by lovers were conventional in medieval literature, the fullness of the deities' connection with flora and with waters should be credited to Chaucer. His amplification, which here deals with imagery rather than with events, emphasizes the creative and the eternal.

Some general conventions and Chaucerian ideas require attention. I have stated that it was not Chaucer's principal purpose in the narrative to inquire into the origin of poetry. It would be wrong, however, to claim that composition was not at all in his mind as he bound together the various components of the work. Indeed, the prologue not only mentions rhetoric and its colors but also cites certain distinguishing characteristics of Breton lays: their dealing with adventure, their being rhymed, their being delivered orally with or without musical accompaniment. Similar genre-consciousness and interest in adventure, rhyme mode, and method of presentation are to be found in several lays by Marie de France (particularly in The Lay of Equitan) and in Sir Orfeo. Despite the multiplicity of analogues to material in the prologue, though, Chaucer seems to have made an original contribution; he combined with the discussion of the Breton-lay genre a somewhat more inclusive consideration of rhetoric just before relating the romance which may come the closest of stories in The Canterbury Tales to presenting image progressions, otherworld, and the subject of literary creativity.

Two stories from the Canterbury collection heavily relying, for their meaning, on parody or satire--two modes which require a special kind of originality--are The Merchant's Tale and The Tale of Sir Thopas; the two, which are among Chaucer's most original works, set forth otherworld matter in unusual ways and so give evidence of some facets of his creativity.

The Merchant's Tale, for which no exact source is known, does include as otherworld-related matter the pear-tree, or fruit-tree, episode current in various popular medieval tales in Italian, Latin, German, Russian, and Portuguese. Even this episode, however, contains certain details of Chaucer's invention or expansion. Throughout the numerous analogues embodying it, the pear-tree sequence implies connection with otherworld. Some stories bring on stage such speakers as Christ and Saint Peter, who discuss the young wife's deceit of her blind husband before Christ restores his sight;¹⁴ for the two speakers from the Christian tradition Chaucer substituted the classical Pluto and Proserpina and then identified them as king and queen of the fairies. This peopling of his otherworld bows briefly to conventionalized practices but then proceeds to freedom of choice and development of characters; furthermore, it focuses on two kinds of otherworld, the earthly garden of love in

¹⁴Germaine Dempster, "The Merchant's Tale," in Sources and Analogues, ed. Bryan and Dempster, pp. 333-56.

which mortals play and the realm of the fairies, which become one entity. Nor are the supernatural beings and their habitat the only otherworld elements in the tale. Images from nature projected into the supernatural world help to convey tone and meaning. Let us see whether these were Chaucer's additions or borrowings from the works of other authors. Chaucer adopted for The Merchant's Tale the fruitful tree, sometimes in a garden, which remains constant in several analogues to the tale. But he did not find in any work all the items or all the attitudes which appear in this version. The episode becomes more humorous in Chaucer's transcription than it had been elsewhere; the humor results not merely from wording or selection of details but also from amplification of significant imagery. The Merchant's Tale offers full description of the garden and endows it with greenery and with a well about which Pluto and Proserpina disport themselves. Although in this narrative Chaucer obviously was not writing about the art of poetry, he remained sufficiently interested in the semantic possibilities of his frequently used images to turn them to satiric purpose concerning fecundity; May's avowed pregnant craving for pears, John C. McGalliard believes, is Chaucer's interpolation.¹⁵ Thus he coupled with a traditional episode, which already introduced

¹⁵"Chaucer's Merchant's Tale and Deschamps' Miroir de Mariage," Philological Quarterly, XXV (1946), 203.

a productive tree and the theme of love, a strong emphasis on creativity.

In a manner similar to that which he essayed in *The Merchant's Tale*, Chaucer gained satiric service from imagery in *The Tale of Sir Thopas*. Like the aforementioned narrative, this burlesque romance encompasses many traditional materials, all to be encountered in scores of Middle English works, apparently without relying mainly on any one particular source.¹⁶ Of the numerous romance characteristics crowded into it, those having especial affinity with the supernatural (though only in satiric mode, of course) are the hero's pricking "thurgh a fair forest" full of "bothe bukke and hare" and "over hill and dale"; his desire to love an elf-queen; his glimpse of the fairy otherworld; the forest's proliferation of "herbes grete and smale" such as the nutmeg and the clove; the singing of many species of birds; and the threat of battle with a formidable giant (VII, 754-74 and 787-816). Trees and lesser flora, birds, hill and forest and fairyland, and elf-queen and giant as near-deities blend into the pseudo-otherworld atmosphere toward which Chaucer was striving. The significance of the blending is threefold: the poet had encountered, in one romance or another or in several romances, each of the otherworld characteristics; he brought all of them together in close

¹⁶For a full discussion of works in some way akin to the *Tale of Sir Thopas*, see Laura Hibbard Loomis, "Sir Thopas," in Sources and Analogues, ed. Bryan and Dempster, pp. 486-559.

conjunction in a very brief and intentionally fragmentary poem; and he added to the basic ingredients the spices of parody and satire--for despite his being surrounded by the phenomena of creativity, Sir Thopas remains a singularly unproductive, uninspired knight.

Analysis of imagery in the various tales belonging to or reflecting some characteristics of the romance genre has shown that Chaucer often transcribed otherworld details which he found in sources but also that he excised source materials dealing with otherworld which were extraneous to his immediate purpose, that he joined elements from various works to emphasize the supernatural or the creative, and that he sometimes introduced--even in works closely following known sources--images of fecundity. It was not his intention to make The Canterbury Tales expound his theory on the origin of poetry; indeed, he had already manifested it at length in the dream visions and somewhat more succinctly in Troilus and Criseyde before work on the pilgrimage collection was under way. It may, however, have been his conscious desire to reiterate portions of the theory or to keep it alive in the minds of his readers and his audiences by continued application of water, flower, forest, and the other dominant images to otherworld discussions. And surely it was advantageous to him to exact repeated service from the images once he had established their significance in the thinking of his public.

There remain from The Canterbury Tales several stories containing brief trappings of the creativity emblems in otherworld environments. Less directly aligned with the fecund and the supernatural than the romances, certain other tales nevertheless give longevity to the creativity theme. An isolated point (unconnected with other supernatural elements) from each of several stories immediately faced by its source or lack of source may provide additional insight into Chaucer's use of borrowings. In The Pardoner's Tale three young revelers, out to seek and slay Death, meet an old man who is, in a sense, a herald of otherworld; he tells them that they will find Death under an oak tree, and they find it--in the form of gold which prompts them to contend with each other and so to bring about death for all three. An analogous novella presents Christ and his disciples walking "per un foresto luogo" where they encounter gold, another introduces a hermit who finds gold in a cave, and a third treats of a treasure hidden in the Tiber; other analogues, both exempla and dramatic works, offer circumstances similar to those involving tree, cave, or river;¹⁷ but the specific identity of the oak--symbol of the eternal--and the multiple focus on one image (two references to trees and one to a grove) seem to be Chaucer's contributions. Although in various analogues to The Pardoner's Tale certain characters

¹⁷Frederick Tupper, "The Pardoner's Tale," in Sources and Analogues, ed. Bryan and Dempster, pp. 415-38.

perform part of the function here performed by the old man, the figure developed by Chaucer is more clearly and fully associated with the afterlife than any extant prototype.

The Prioress' Tale, the exact model for which is unknown, twice calls into play the everlasting quality of the water image: in the little clergeon's singing at his own funeral when sprinkled with holy water (mentioned not once but twice in VII, 635-41) and in his reference to Mary as a "welle of mercy" (l. 656); although more than thirty analogues to the plot are known and although several include parallels to the placing of a grain on the tongue of the deceased so that he may continue singing, none refers, in explaining the feat, to the supernatural power of holy water and none associates Mary with unending mercy.¹⁸ Thus Chaucer's redaction not only places special emphasis on the eternal but also devotes attention to water as holiness, as partial source of song, and as origin of divine love and mercy--concepts lacking in any possible source.

Two original additions by Chaucer to material for The Man of Law's Tale are the only otherworld-related points of the narrative germane to the current topic. Nicholas Trivet's Anglo-Norman Chronicle, the primary source of the tale, does not present these points (Robinson, p. 693). First, Chaucer's reference to the Primum Mobile (ll. 295-315)

¹⁸Carleton Brown, "The Prioress' Tale," in Sources and Analogues, ed. Bryan and Dempster, pp. 447-85. Particularly relevant are pp. 457-66.

introduces the idea that heavenly bodies influence man's destiny. Second, the ironic remark by the Sultanness that "Coold water [of baptism] shal not greve us but a lite!" (l. 352) interpolates the supposedly typical pagan attitude toward the Christian washing away of sins. Thus references to a specific place in the sky and a specific form of water convey Chaucer's continued awareness of the services of otherworld imagery.

Brief reminders of otherworld matter appear in three fabliaux of The Canterbury Tales. The Miller's Tale, the exact origin of which is unknown, does include as a major episode that of a man fearful of floods, an episode common to various medieval narratives. As the Miller recounts the story, a carpenter believes that a flood--water raging--will take him to otherworld at an untimely season; that in reality no flood is imminent underscores the carpenter's ridiculous and baseless fear when an actual threat to the integrity of his marriage exists. The Friar's Tale, which has no known source but a number of analogues (Robinson, p. 705), brings to view a dishonest summoner who encounters "A gay yeman, under a forest syde" (III, 1380): a fiend straight from hell, apparently just emerging from the otherworld forest. And The Summoner's Tale, which again points to no specific source (Robinson, p. 706) but which echoes various medieval descriptions of hell, focuses on hellish punishments such as "with oules/ To been yclawed" (III, 1730-31). The association of dangerous water, foreboding

forest, and bird of ill omen with the eternal but surely unproductive division of otherworld provides ironic reversals of the usual suggestions of eternality and productivity. Because the satiric handling of the several images can be proved neither original nor unoriginal with Chaucer, it is possible to conclude from examination of the fabliaux only that the poet felt free to interpret and employ world-other-world images in various ways at various times: he held to no slavish rule whereby an image bore a narrow or static group of connotations. I would add, however, in tentative argument for some degree of originality in Chaucer's use of water, forest, and bird, that the overall tone and satiric mode of the three tales accords well with his treatment of material borrowed from widely varied sources.

Chaucer's interest in dreams and in the inspiration which man gains through them comes to the fore in The Nun's Priest's Tale. The poor widow's human world of the frame-tale sets off Chaunticleer's animal world of the central story as a wonderful realm where birds--chickens--speak and philosophize about the prophetic qualities of dreams. Through his dream Chaunticleer is initially inspired to beware impending danger, although he later unwisely fails to heed the warning. The multiplicity of proposed sources, including hypothetical as well as known extant works (Robinson, p. 751), renders it impossible to evaluate confidently the extent of Chaucer's originality or eclecticism

in regard to the otherworld material. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that Chaucer developed the dream motif and otherworld atmosphere more fully than other redactors of the Chanticleer story had developed it. Certainly he marshaled for the cock an imposing array of examples and authorities supporting the truth of dreams--divine inspiration through a sojourn into the dream otherworld.

Invoking superhuman aid to recount the life of Saint Cecelia, the Second Nun addresses Mary as both "flour of virgines" and "welle of mercy" (VIII, 29, 37). Both designations are conventional; no specific influence for either has been advanced, although the second image is used in reference to Mary also in The Prioress' Tale (VII, 656). If Chaucer borrowed the images from bodies of conventions, he did at least interpolate them among lines for which probable sources are recognized (Robinson, pp. 756-57). What is significant is that Chaucer added the nature images of the eternal, the inspiring, the creative in an invocation to a resident of otherworld.

The aura of spring and rebirth pervades the opening verses of The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales: showers, Zephyr's breath, flowers and crops, and the songs of little birds, set among references to engendering and inspiring, establish Chaucer's realization that April is the creative time of year. But the possible origin of that realization demands consideration. One critic has shown that

many ideas in the initial passage parallel ideas in the anonymous Latin poem Pervigilium Veneris, which "praises . . . Venus as the bringer of life-giving showers, the goddess of fertility, and the copulatrix amorum who gives to each creature its mate."¹⁹ Even this rather strong emphasis on fecundity, however, is not applied to poetic theory. Another commentator compares images of the opening passage to images of Ovid's Metamorphoses (I, 107-108) particularly and to other Ovidian passages more generally; he cites the eternal spring, gentle breezes, and wild flowers named by the Latin poet.²⁰ But despite admitted similarities between verses by the two poets, Ovid seems to have omitted entirely the thought of fecundity; he stated that the winds touched the flowers--but the flowers were already extant, not inspired or engendered by the winds. Robinson (p. 651) cites other discussions of medieval descriptions of spring and points out their conventionality. However, no certain influencing passage or passages have been agreed upon, and apparently no possible source yet proposed deals with the subject of literary composition. Since no further images of fecundity follow in The General Prologue, the significance of the opening lines for the present inquiry is that although

¹⁹John E. Hankins, "Chaucer and the Pervigilium Veneris," Modern Language Notes, LXIX (1934), 80-83.

²⁰Richard L. Hoffman, Ovid and the Canterbury Tales (London, Bombay, and Karachi, 1966), p. 23.

Chaucer had not completely dropped his use of the images of creativity by the time he began work on The General Prologue, he no longer felt the need to expound fully, through reference to sources or through original additions, his earlier-developed theory of the origin of verse.

Anelida and Arcite

Another work by Chaucer touching on otherworld concerns is Anelida and Arcite, of uncertain but manifestly earlier date than most portions of the pilgrimage collection. This poem presents as its "voice" a first-person speaker representing himself at the outset as one who will "in Englyssh . . . endytè" (l. 9); this speaker invokes the aid of the Muse Polyhymnia; associates her with the shade of a laurel, with Parnassus, and with Helicon (regarded not as a mountain but as a well on Parnassus); and credits Statius and "Corynne" with providing his material. Poet and composition, inspiring deity connected with tree and water and mountain, and remembered literary predecessors are symbols of the creative united within the confines of two stanzas. Borrowing mountain, tree, fount, and poet speaker from the first three stanzas of Book I of The Teseida, Chaucer nevertheless specifies other sources--fictitious ones, Robinson points out (pp. 788-89). His addition to a passage otherwise little changed from its source (except in sequence of statements) recalls his comments on the relation of remembrance to the

production of new literature. Whereas the voice of The Teseida says only that he will write in rhyme "una istoria antica" (I, 2)--and not, at that, a Latin one--the speaker of Anelida and Arcite singles out Statius and the indefinitely identified Corynne (l. 21). Although misdirected, the credit is yet exact and clear as well as more suggestive of well-remembered books than is Boccaccio's stanza. Even though the fragmentary tale proper offers no further examples of the nature imagery applied to otherworld or to literary fecundity, a completed Anelida and Arcite might have included some of the images, perhaps in later invocations for continued inspiration and assistance; Troilus and Criseyde, it will be recalled, intersperses such prayers and introduces other instances of world-otherworld progression throughout its five books.

In tracing relationships between the imagery in various works by Chaucer (most of them relatively late) and that in various sources and analogues, we have seen that Chaucer employed, especially in otherworld settings, such images from nature as water, forest, mountain, wind, bird, and flower. We have observed that he drew the images often from sources which were merely descriptive, occasionally from works which touched slightly on the creativity theme, but apparently never from works which fully developed that theme and applied it specifically to a doctrine of literary creativity. And we have noted that in some instances he actually incorporated into a borrowed story the images of creativity and the

eternal which had been definitely lacking in known or probable sources. Thus he kept alive, in works of middle and later portions of his writing career, the doctrine of literary craft on which he had worked in his youth. However, that doctrine no longer required full exposition; elements of it which appear in the later works seem to be only echoes or reminders of the theory basic to the dream visions. Statistically, only fourteen tales and The General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales and only the opening invocation of Anelida and Arcite make significant use of otherworld matter, and most passages which do introduce it are rather brief and are not tied to literary creativity with its correlatives love and religion.

Troilus and Criseyde

In the portions of The Canterbury Tales and Anelida and Arcite which do present message-bearing imagery of otherworld, then, there is no structural progression of ideas such as the poet employed in his earlier compositions. But in Troilus and Criseyde, written before most parts of the pilgrimage collection, we do find a structural foundation of this type. In the long romance we meet a rather well developed inquiry into the relationship existing among joy, love, power, the eternal, the imaginative, and the creative as opposed to the relationship existing among sorrow, lovelessness, lack of power, the temporal, the unimaginative, and



the uncreative.²¹ It should be noted, however, that less attention to the unconscious appears here than in the still-earlier dream visions.

I would point out that in adopting the major narrative threads and even many figures of speech from The Filostrato of Boccaccio, his main source for Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer nevertheless encountered there only traditional techniques and material: an initial apostrophe by the love-smitten speaker of "madonna," an invocation to her instead of the deities of Parnassus as his Muse, and consistent emphasis on the love story. Although the speaker clearly presents himself as a poet, he advances no doctrine correlating memory and divine inspiration; beyond the request to his lady,

Guida la nostra man, reggi l' ingegno,
Nell' opera la quale a scriver vegno,
(I, 4)

he seems little interested in any fount of inspiration or in other phenomena of creativity.

Declaring as his purpose "The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen," the unloved poet speaker of the romance opens Book I with several additional references to sorrow; he himself is "the sorwful instrument" who aids lovers in their complaints but who in turn requires the supernatural assistance of Tisiphone to recount his tale. This initial conjoining of

²¹It is not my purpose in this chapter to trace or to explicate the progressions; rather, I am here attempting to show that Chaucer's sources offered no such structural chain.

an appeal to otherworld, a desire to compose, a sorrow-joy opposition, and a consciousness of love introduces several components of Chaucer's thought progression; what it lacks is a nature image of the eternal and the creative. To understand why certain elements do or do not enter at this point, let us turn again to the subject of sources.

Robinson (p. 813) has proposed Statius' reference in The Thebaid I, 56 ff., to Tisiphone as a possible influence on Chaucer's selection of an inspiring deity and has stated that the beginning "stanzas of the Filostrato were inconsistent with Chaucer's attitude as an outsider in love." It is true that Statius causes Oedipus to appeal to one of the Furies concerning his woe over his incestuous marriage (although no discussion of literature or of literary creativity enters), and it is true that no borrowing from The Filostrato underlies the first twenty verses of Troilus and Criseyde. But another issue is perhaps of greater consequence. Apparently no source presents a request that lovers intercede with God that the poet have "myght" to show "Swich payne and wo as Loves folk endure" (I, 31-34); Chaucer's own imagination suggests it. Love, religion, and literary creativity are in his thoughts, but not all these topics emerge in sources of surrounding lines. Focus on the Deity as Giver of poetic power in relation to love is therefore Chaucer's contribution.

Although the narrative naturally continues to emphasize love and although the speaker continues to refer to himself

in the first person, the remainder of Book I presents little of relevance to thought or image progressions. Two brief passages, however, illustrate Chaucer's artistic handling of source matter. The Filostrato I, 18, names "il vago tempo" as the season of herbs (or grass) and flowers; but there are noteworthy additions in the corresponding passage of Troilus and Criseyde I, 155-61: the specific naming of April, the month of rebirth of nature; the reference to the "newe grene"; and the mention of white and red as colors of the flowers that "swote smellen." Chaucer's exactness and his strong appeals to the senses improve on his source. Again, the interpolation of the Canticus Troili (I, 400-420) into material from The Filostrato suggests a specific and exact concept by Chaucer. Taken from Petrarch's Sonnet 88, the song expands the mood and attitude of the young hero by its heavy dependence on paradox and oxymoron in almost euphuistic style; intrinsically over-sentimental, the passage is nevertheless appropriate in its position. Chaucer's sensing the value of amplification at this point (especially amplification of the topic of love through song) bears witness to his conscious adjustment of material from sources.

The proem of Book II goes a step beyond the opening verses of Book I in introducing not only an appropriate invocation but also several images from nature: the black waves and the sea of Troilus' love despair as well as the wind, which the speaker addresses in an apostrophe.



The three subsequent stanzas invoke the aid of Clio "To ryme wel this book," pretend to follow a remembered Latin author, and note that "in sondry ages" and "sondry londes" men "spedde as wel in love as men now do." To compose the passage Chaucer himself united details from disparate commonplaces or sources with details of his own invention. The nature images of water and wind are, of course, commonplaces, but they may reflect memory of Dante's Divine Comedy.²² The "Latin" author is either a Chaucerian fabrication or a Chaucerian misunderstanding (Robinson, pp. 812 and 818). The idea of speeding well in love is Chaucer's own touch. And the invocation to Clio is reminiscent but not necessarily imitative of Statius' plea to the Muse of history in The Thebaid I, 41. The poet's reason for bringing the various points together is to play up the interrelationships among wind and turbulent water, mental tempest of lover and mental tempest of poet, and the practice of love and the making of verse. The force of the passage, I think, is present in no single influence or source; by massing details Chaucer strengthens a message on creativity.

By virtue of its references to blue and white and red flowers of the joyous May love-time, the initial stanza of the actual narrative of Book II invites comparison with certain sections of The Teseida and The Romance of the Rose

²²See Robinson, p. 818, and Hubertis M. Cummings, The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio (New York, 1965), p. 53.

(Robinson, p. 818). Boccaccio's poem (III, 6-7) does little more than mention conventional trees and flowers. Guillaume de Lorris, however, depicts May as an amorous and joyful month; he cites river and hill, blue and white flowers, and cheerful birds chanting in the trees (ll. 45-128). Having first stated his faith in the accuracy of prophetic dreams, the poet persona of The Romance of the Rose claims that his work will encompass all the art of love. Despite the possibility that, like Chaucer, Guillaume may identify the art of love with the art of composition, the protagonist's adventures and emotional involvements present no problem of sorrowful imagination or of frozen literary fecundity; ll. 521-776, for example, show the dreamer entering a garden filled with nature images of the creative but refrain from applying the images to the topic of composition. The emphasis throughout the poem is placed on the relation of imagery and allegorical characters to the tenets of courtly love. Neither the Italian nor the French work can be denominated a source for opening verses of Chaucer's Book II, but each nevertheless offers numerous conventions. In beginning to narrate Book II, then, Chaucer does employ conventions absent from his principal model, The Filostrato; his use of these conventions probably to establish mood for the book suggests that he wishes to keep before his audience the near-identity of nature elements with happiness and love, which by extension (as in PF 1-4) mean literary creativity.

Not until l. 813 of Book II, when Criseyde enters a garden, does Chaucer begin to build noticeably onto the thought-progression foundation opening the first two books. The heroine's coming to the garden with its "grene blosmy bowes" and her hearing there a song of love cause her to realize that there is "swych blisse among / Thise loveres, as they konne faire endite." Although again Chaucer is working a vein of conventions, he relates to garden, trees, love, and joy the idea of the inspiration of verse. It is significant that both the conventional details of the garden and the original idea of inspiration are projected into the basic narrative, which possesses no corresponding passage.

Closing out the sequence on Criseyde's understanding of love as inspiring force, Chaucer incorporates into his tale further images connecting nature with the supernatural:

A nyghtyngale, upon a cedir grene,
 Under the chambre wal ther as she ley,
 Ful loude song ayein the moone shene,
 Peraunter, in his briddes wise, a lay
 Of love, that made hire herte fressh and gay.
 That herkned she so longe in good entente,
 Til at the laste the dede slep hire hente.
 (II, 918-924)

Bird, tree, joy, and composition on love once more are tied together in a passage original with Chaucer. Here he continues to construct a thought progression.

Yet another interpolation by Chaucer into materials drawn from the works of other poets is Pandarus' conducting Criseyde to her garden so that he may deliver Troilus' love letter to her. Brief as the addition is (II, 1114-20), it



presents a kind of otherworld setting for episodes dealing with the mental states of lovers. Set amid events taken from The Filostrato with added details from Filocolo II, 91, and Ovid's Ars Amatoria I, 467 ff. (Robinson, p. 820), the passage authenticates Chaucer's interest in the garden as a culminating point for episodes of love, or of literary creativity, even as it adds to the progression.

Like the proem of Book II, that of Book III combines invocations to Venus and Calliope with at least some nature images aligned with otherworld and with ideas of power. Designation of Venus as both goddess of love and daughter of Jove (or divine inspiration) and references to supernatural "myght," heaven, hell, earth, sea, bird, herb, and tree closely follow the Italian (The Filostrato III, 74-75). But Chaucer's focus on God and love (TC III, 12-14) departs from it; stronger emphasis on Christian religious matter as well as on love appears. And another detail concerning love which is attributable to Chaucer only is his attention to "the amorous adventures of Jupiter" (Robinson, p. 823). The English poet's treatment of this otherworld figure almost echoes the mythological equation of Zeus with divine inspiration and creativity; though the proem makes no mention of Mnemosyne in relation to the leader of the gods or to the Muses, the somewhat later plea to Calliope (III, 45), perhaps influenced by Dante (Robinson, p. 823), further recalls the myth implying that divine inspiration and memory produce the

arts. Thus thoughts of literary fecundity (developed for this redaction of the Troilus story solely by Chaucer) follow nature-otherworld images already extant in his main source.

A passing remark on Apollo's speaking from a laurel tree (III, 540-44) suggests identity of nature image with deity, otherworld, and religion. The verses seem to be Chaucer's contribution (Robinson, p. 824).

Near the end of Book III, having rather faithfully adhered to the plot of The Filostrato and having pointed out that Troilus' prowess or "myght" in arms resulted from his love (III, 1772-78), Chaucer's speaker reiterates his call to Venus; refers to her "blynde and wynged sone . . . daun Cupide"; and further addresses all nine Muses, whom he again associates with the "hil Pernaso" and with Helicon, still understood to be a spring. The two closing stanzas, evidently of Chaucer's invention, draw together ideas of love and inspiration with two nature images, hill and body of water, of the eternal and the creative.

The speaker spotlights himself as poet anew in the proem to Book IV. Forecasting Troilus' future sorrow, he avers that his pen "Quaketh for drede" of what he must write. And his invocation to the foreboding deities--the three Furies and Mars--links the poet appealing to otherworld with the adumbrations. Although the passage presents various commonplaces, the particular combination of them is apparently Chaucer's own. The woeful tone of Book IV becomes effective because of his careful omission of such images of

joy and fecundity as he placed in important positions in the two preceding books. The poet later enlarges on the theme of sorrow by incorporating into a passage mainly following Boccaccio three verses (IV, 225-27) imaging barren trees; the verses imitate Dante's Inferno III, 112 ff. (Robinson, p. 828). Two stanzas below, he adopts from The Filostrato IV, 28, the comparison of Troilus' weeping eyes to "due fontane," or "swifte welles tweye" (IV, 247); water as unproductive tears provides another emphasis on the fruitless. The tree and water images introduced into the English redaction from two distinct Italian sources underscore the theme of sorrow from loss of love, a theme suggesting the loss of literary creativity and thereby continuing the thought chain.

Chaucer transfers almost intact from The Filostrato IV, 138, a sequence on the temporary return of hope and joy to the lovers before Criseyde's departure from Troy (IV, 1429-35). The joy and love of Troilus and Criseyde are compared to the happy song of a bird among the leaves of a tree in both the Italian and the English. But a few stanzas below, Chaucer once more interrupts his translation from Boccaccio with material echoing that of other poets. In amplifying Criseyde's vows of faithfulness to Troilus, he inserts after her wish to "dwelle / Eternalich in Stix, the put of helle," her apostrophe to the river Simois, an apostrophe which also names sea, well, and hell (IV, 1540-54). And Criseyde's pleas to Venus and Jupiter (IV, 1661, 1683) are again



Chaucer's additions. Through several sections of Book IV, then, the poet seems to be exercising special effort to retain from his major source and to add from other works or from conventions various nature images and otherworld matter which will support his love-religion-composition triad.

Addressing the Fates as "angry . . . sustren thre" at the beginning of Book V, the speaker renews the emphasis on the power of otherworld personages. The apostrophe, which does not appear in The Filostrato, almost substitutes in this closing division of the poem for the invocations which have introduced the first four books.

The speaker next measures the duration of Troilus' love for Criseyde by referring to the melting of snows and the bringing of "tendre leves grene" by Zephyr; the water, tree, and wind images all appear in The Teseida II, 1. Thus Chaucer moves into his final book with continued focus on the supernatural and on images from nature, a focus not present in the basic source.

The speaker proceeds for many verses without attention to otherworld details or to literary creativity except the adoption from his source of Troilus' cursing the gods and goddesses of nature (The Filostrato V, 17); even here Chaucer adds the artistic touch of naming specific deities (V, 206-10). The speaker eventually pauses in his plot to address his "redere" concerning the woe of Troilus, which his "wit kan nat diffyne" but which he is "wery" even to ponder (V, 270-73);

this address also is Chaucer's addition. Following the statement of the hero's sorrowful railing against fate, the comment on the lapse of poetic power constitutes part of a thought progression: sorrow over unfulfilled love plus anger with the deities and with nature equals literary impotence. The negative triad, of course, receives a part of its force through the implied similarity between the poet speaker and the hero of his story. That Chaucer has borrowed but made stronger one link in the thought chain and has himself formed another link is yet another indication that his blending of source material, conventions, and original details is purposive.

In a second Canticus Troili (V, 638-44) the hero regards wind as a power impelling him toward death because of his sorrow in love. A few stanzas later he considers the wind, or sighs, of woe his "ladys depe sikes soore" (V, 673-79). The continued emphasis on the negative aspects of wind, not present in corresponding passages of The Filostrato V, reflects Chaucer's probable desire to build imagery of sorrow as he proceeds to a culminating point in his narrative.

A reference to a tree, or to wood, as origin of unexpected happiness is to be noted in Troilus and Criseyde V, 1174; the comparable stanza in The Filostrato--VII, 10-- identifies the wind as a source of joy. No valid reason for the change (other than, perhaps, the exigencies of meter) presents itself. It may be worthwhile to observe, however,

that Chaucer saw in wind and tree the same emblematic quality.

Following The Filostrato VII, 23-24, rather closely in reporting on Troilus' prophetic vision of Criseyde's disloyalty, Chaucer twice mentions the forest in which the hero dreams he wanders (V, 1233-43). The twofold emphasis--references to dream and references to wood--on otherworld as representative of lovers' mental states is therefore common to the Italian and the English poems. But a bit later, in adapting the hero's letter for Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer makes several notable changes. First, Troilus addresses his beloved as his "fresshe Flour" (V, 1317), employing a nature image, whereas Troilo writes, "Giovane donna" (VII, 52). Second, Troilus says that his eyes "arn woxen welles" (V, 1373-74)--vivid images of unending tears as actual bodies of water--whereas Troilo comments only that his eyes have not ceased to weep (VII, 60). Third, Troilus omits entirely the multiple images of former joy--birds and songs and temples, bright flowers and new grass, mountains, and "l'onde discendenti al mare"--which are the major material of the latter part of Troilo's letter (VII, 62-65). And fourth, Troilus' calling on Cassandra to interpret his dream allows interpolation of an allusion to The Thebaid V, 505 ff., a passage treating of the river Langia, which Cassandra calls "the welle" (V, 1497). Thus addition, excision, and adaptation give evidence of Chaucer's continued striving for

specificity but also of his refusal to include or omit certain otherworld details simply because a source includes or omits them.

Just as Troilus and Criseyde opens with the speaker's prayer for aid to indite his poem, so it draws to a close with similar attention to the problems of creating literature. In a conventionalized apostrophe the speaker charges his "litel bok" to be subject "to alle poesye"--old books--as he pleads for "myght" to compose comedy before he dies; furthermore, he registers his awareness that the book may be mismetered or wrongly copied because of dialectal and scribal variations. Almost immediately thereafter he resumes his tale and shows Troilus, in otherworld, conscious "of the pleyn felicite / That is in hevene above" as contrasted with the wretchedness of the world "that with the se / Embraced is." Incorporating this passage (V, 1807-27) not from The Filostrato but from The Teseida XI, 1-3, Chaucer apparently is again formulating a thought progression juxtaposing the worldly concerns of a "maker" against the hero's realization that happiness comes only to those who have experienced otherworld events. But more is yet to join the progression. The closing two stanzas, respectively, employ the tradition of a request for criticism and borrow from Dante's Paradiso XIV, 28-30, a devout invocation to the Triune God, "eterne on lyve." And so in the course of bringing his work to its culmination, Chaucer has moved from the

poet in this world to the hero (in some senses a partial reflection of the poet) who achieves contentment in other-world and back to the poet. He has interwoven the topics of love and religion with the speaker's progress from concern for the success of his composition to at least some measure of confidence that in its finished state it merits the attention of Gower and Strode. And he has done so by compounding original ideas, conventions, and details from known sources.

The overall progression of thoughts from Book I through Book V of Troilus and Criseyde, like the progression in the closing stanzas, traces something of the mental states of the speaker in conjunction with the mental states of the lover. The speaker's initial need for supernatural assistance (paralleling Troilus' yet unrecognized need for love), his growing facility in composition as the joy of the lovers builds, his pen's quaking for dread as obstacles to the love develop, and his ultimate association of old books and Divine aid with the completion of his poem and the satisfaction of the hero mirror major facets of the image progressions which Chaucer has developed most fully in the dream visions. And yet one significant element of the dream-vision chain is missing from thought progressions in the long romance. Despite the inclusion and sometimes even heavy stress on nature imagery suggesting otherworld and literary creativity, the images employed do not in this poem function as initial

agents impelling a poet persona toward some point in other-world where he may achieve solution to a problem of frozen literary fecundity. By the time he was composing Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer was already beginning to move away from explicating his doctrine of creativity, although he certainly more nearly approached explanation of it here than in The Canterbury Tales. The explanation or near-explanation involved, of course, correlation of sources and conventions with original ideas.

For the most complete expositions of the doctrine, then, let us turn to the four dream visions produced during the early years of Chaucer's career as a poet. Let us examine these works, like the later works, in relation to sources and conventions. Because they accomplish similar purposes, it is unnecessary to rank them according to their relative importance in elucidating Chaucer's doctrine of the origin of poetry; instead, it seems feasible to examine them chronologically, according to their assumed sequence of composition. To The Book of the Duchess, therefore, we look first.

The Book of the Duchess

Although detailed summaries of all Chaucer's recognized or possible sources for the poem would quickly become tedious, it may be valuable before tracing influences passage by passage to give brief resumes of material from certain works illustrating overall content, themes, and plans of courtly

literature of the Middle Ages. Because of their especial relevance to The Book of the Duchess, the earliest of Chaucer's poems expounding his theory and a work often declared imitative and derivative, I have chosen to consider the archetype of medieval dream and love poetry, The Romance of the Rose of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, and another work embodying many of its elements, The Paradys d'Amours of Jean Froissart.

The thirteenth-century Romance of the Rose presents a poet persona who briefly discusses dreams in relation to the art of love. Then the poet persona records that in May, a time of love and joy, he falls asleep and begins to dream of birds, waters, and hills before approaching in his dream a garden on whose wall appear such allegorical figures as Hate, Felony, Villainy, Sorrow, Time, and Old Age. He enters the tree-filled garden of Mirth, in which birds sing a service in ritual manner and so inspire happiness in the dreamer. He subsequently finds himself enamored of a Rose, falls subject to the God of Love, encounters the pains of love but also remedies for the pains (Hope, Sweet Thought, Sweet Speech, Sweet Sight), manages to kiss his beloved Rose, later becomes involved in difficulties with Reason and other symbolic characters, and ultimately enters an ivory tower and wins the Rose. Morning comes, and the dreamer awakes. With that point made, the poem ends.

Early portions of the vision, those composed by Guillaume, provide many of the images which Chaucer later adapts for

his works, and the entire poem, including the long continuation by Jean de Meun, presents a dream-vision progress toward joy and fulfillment. Nevertheless, the major concern in The Romance of the Rose is the topic of love, which is developed through extensive use of allegory; this fountainhead of much medieval poetry indeed holds to personification of abstract qualities and to symbolic places and events. Even the recommended remedies for love pains--Sweet Thought and Sweet Speech--remain purely allegorical; these figures, which might be logically applied to the topic of creativity, retain only their single application to love. Moreover, focus on the winning of love, with no reference to writing about it, closes the poem. Although the recognized influence of The Romance of the Rose on The Book of the Duchess and other Chaucerian works is admittedly strong, the French poem assuredly does not develop the love-religion-creativity triad which Chaucer develops.

In the poems of Froissart, the chief theme of which also is love, gardens and forests full of birds and flowers and fairies abound as portions of the joyous Maytime realm of Cupid. Allegorical figures such as Beauty, Youth, Pleasance, and Gladness dance and sing in the gardens and woods, where the lover falls before the charms of his lady. The dream settings of various poems, one critic explains, bridge the gulf "between the world of our experience and that of the

poet's imagination."²³ Discussing Froissart's Paradys d'Amours, this critic points out that it possesses genre and setting in common with The Romance of the Rose, on which it is modeled. He summarizes the poem as follows:

The poet dreams that he wanders forth one May morning in sadness of heart, for he has long been the slave of Love, who has done nothing to reward his service. He sits down beneath a hawthorn where, to the accompaniment of the nightingale, he voices his complaint. . . . Suddenly he is aroused from his thoughts by two dames in queenly garb, "more beautiful than any picture," Plaisance and Esperance. They are Cupid's maidens and they come to rebuke the poet for his infidelity to their master, to whom he has sworn loyalty and obedience. However cruel his mistress may be, the lover, they say, must take what she is pleased to offer; nor will she accord her grace on first demand, for Love must test the loyalty and steadfastness of the lover. They promise to intercede for him provided he will lay aside his melancholy, and they lead him forth to the abode of Cupid, singing as they pass through shady woods and meadows. . . . Soon they see a great company of ladies and youths, all dressed in green, the former adorned with pearls and gold embroideries, the latter wearing horns of ivory and gold. This is the Paradise of the world's great lovers. There one could see Troilus and Paris, Lancelot, Tristan and Iseult, Parsifal, Helen, Medea and Jason. The poet sings a lay to Love, who accepts his homage and promises to reward him. He wanders forth to the woods again, and there he meets his mistress, who now accepts him as her serving man. The poet's pain is changed to joy; they sit upon a grassy bank surrounded by Love's fair maidens and, whilst his lady, with delicate and gentle fingers, weaves a chaplet of daisies, the poet sings a ballad to his favourite flower, the daisy.²⁴

Froissart's poem is closer than The Romance of the Rose to The Book of the Duchess in scope and content and perhaps

²³F. S. Shears, Froissart: Chronicler and Poet (London, 1930), p. 193.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 199-200. The standard edition of Froissart's poetry, which unfortunately has been unavailable to me, is Oeuvres de Froissart: Poesies, ed. A. Scheler, 3 vols. (Brussels, 1870-72).

in handling of imagery. Nature images, otherworld scenes and figures, love topic, poet persona, and some progress toward joy are to be noted; their similarities to materials in Chaucer's poems are obvious. However, significant differences exist between Froissart's and Chaucer's treatments. First, despite composing a poem after winning his lady, the French poet's dreamer seems not to have been seeking in otherworld the inspiration to compose; rather, he composes simply to occupy time. In addition, Froissart's dream vision, like The Romance of the Rose, noticeably focuses on allegorical characters, a focus which, I think, Chaucer only rarely introduces at all and usually circumvents entirely.

It would be possible to examine many other French works in which nature emblems and otherworld settings appear, but it should suffice to say that in spite of known affinities between numerous French love visions and Chaucer's four dream poems, the English maker employs genre or form to serve a deeper purpose than mere subservience to literary fashion. Conventional and traditional though he is, he supersedes all possible models in causing the conventions and the genre to embody a vision of literary creativity.

Whereas material dealing with the creative impulse and its fulfillment is scattered rather widely through Troilus and Criseyde, it is heavily concentrated in the earliest of the dream visions. The poet has not only a more compact story to relate but also a narrower range of themes--messages

which nevertheless receive extensive development. But the most significant fact about The Book of the Duchess for a consideration of originality and eclecticism is that in closely concentrating imagery on otherworld and creativity, Chaucer intermingles, with material of his own or from the literary public domain, otherworld influences especially from Froissart, The Romance of the Rose, Machaut, Ovid, and Statius. The intermingling is not merely a compounding of traditions, events, or characterizations; it is, in fact, a fitting together of numerous brief images, verses, or passages particularly dealing with otherworld or with the natural phenomena helping to explain it.

Direct transcription from a recognized source opens the poem. The initial situation of the poet persona, his sleeplessness resulting in sorrow, clearly mirrors that of Froissart's poet persona in The Paradys d'Amours:

Je suis de moi en grant merveille
Comment je vifs quand tant je veille
Et on ne poroit en veillant
Trouver de moi plus travaillant.²⁵

But after transcribing his first fifteen lines from Froissart, Chaucer may rely also on another poet. Though no actual borrowing has been established, Robinson (p. 774) proposes comparison of the concern over sleeplessness and sorrow in ll. 16-21 with a similar concern in Machaut's first Complaint; comparison of the reference to melancholy in l. 23 to that of

²⁵Oeuvres de Froissart: Poesies, ed. A. Scheler (Brussels, 1870), I, 1, quoted by G. L. Kittredge, "Chaucer and Froissart," Englische Studien, XXVI (1899), 321.



The Paradys d'Amours in l. 7; and comparison of continued emphasis on mood in ll. 23-29 and 42 with focus on mood in ll. 109-12 of Machaut's Jugement dou Roy de Navarre:

Et pour ce que merencolie
Esteint toute pensee lie,
Et aussi que je bien veoie
Que mettre conseil n'i pooie.²⁶

Chaucer's addition to Machaut's thought of melancholy, however, seems to be intensification of a life-death dichotomy, with the latter element synonymous with loss of poetic power:

Defaute of slep and hevynesse
Hath sleyn my spirit of quyknesse
That I have lost al lustyhede.
(ll. 25-26)

Having borrowed certain details from sources and conventions to open his poem and having made one notable original contribution, then, Chaucer proceeds to emphasize the works of the past; his own is the point that in the romance which the poet persona reads to "drive the night away" there are

written fables
That clerkes had in olde time,
And other poets, but in rime
To rede, and for to be in minde,
While men loved the laws of kinde.
(ll. 52-56)

Thus Chaucer directs the sleeplessness, the sorrow, the melancholy prevalent in many contemporary works toward the idea, basic to his doctrine of creativity, that memory of literary antecedents is part of the stuff of poetry. Only later, though, after the poet persona enters otherworld,

²⁶Oeuvres de Guillaume de Machaut, ed. Ernest Hoepffner (Paris, 1908), I, 141.

will the corresponding idea of divine inspiration emerge.

The tracing of the story of Ceyx and Alcyone, which Chaucer abbreviates from Ovid's Metamorphoses XI, nevertheless preserves images of sea and tempest, which help to maintain the mood established earlier and which introduce into the poem a consciousness of otherworld. In apparently interlacing matter from The Metamorphoses XI, 592 ff., and Statius' Thebaid X, 84 ff., the English poet carries on in ll. 153-65 his practice of telescoping narration and description but of simultaneously retaining meaningful imagery: somnolent and deadly wells, hollow cliffs with hellish caves, and dark valleys between barren rocks, the last of which imply the presence also of mountains of possible joy which Ovid and Statius picture. Because Chaucer places the borrowed but abbreviated Ceyx story (focusing on Alcyone's woe-ful loss of her beloved) so that situations in it become analogous with the poet persona's, he heightens the relationship of well and cliff and valley to a maker's unhappy, loveless mental state: to his temporary fruitlessness or barrenness before he enters otherworld and there gains inspiration. Neither The Metamorphoses nor The Thebaid has drawn such an analogy; Chaucer's method of handling this borrowed material is unique.

One rather minor but possibly meaningful shift by Chaucer in the account of Juno's sending a messenger to Alcyone is the substitution of a nameless male "messenger" to Morpheus

(BD 154) for Ovid's Iris, a female deity (The Metamorphoses X, 583-632). Chaucer's subsequent concentration on Morpheus both by-passes Ovid's introduction of Morpheus' father and maintains a consistent emphasis on masculinity; the idea of the masculine as the engendering agent inspiring Alcyone's dream is thus advanced.

Despite some similarity between ll. 222-23 of The Book of the Duchess and l. 7 of Froissart's Paradys d'Amours, lines concerning death and lack of sleep, Chaucer accredits his having "red and take kep" of the Ceyx tale with his overcoming death from insomnia. This accreditation, which is his own, renews the association of old books with the memory aspect of his theory of literary fecundity.

The passage in which the poet persona mulls over actions of Morpheus as an otherworld personage and alludes to the dreams of Pharaoh and Macrobius (ll. 227-89)--a passage mainly original with Chaucer but in some details echoing Machaut and Froissart (Robinson, p. 774)--enhances the near-identity of sleep and dream with the otherworld in which the poet persona's imagination is released. By inserting this passage between the poet persona's declaration that the tale has been his salvation and his tracing of the dream which has enabled him to compose, Chaucer formulates a progression: sorrowful frozen creativity, old literature as preserver of creativity, and divine inspiration in otherworld as the thawing agent releasing poetic power.



Within the tracing of the dream we encounter an amassing of nature images elaborating on the progression. For the descriptive material at the beginning of the dream sequence The Romance of the Rose was the major source. To facilitate comparison and the drawing of conclusions about the relation of The Book of the Duchess to this source, it may be helpful to list alternately the corresponding verses related to otherworld and particularly to the nature emblems and then to comment on the similarities and differences group by group.

1. Me thoghte thus: that hyt was May,
And in the dawyngye I lay
(BD 291-92)

Auis m'iere qu'il estoit mais,
Il a ia bien .v. anz ou mais,
Qu'en may estoie, ce sonioie,
Qu'il iere matin durement
(RR 45-47, 88)²⁷

2. With smale foules a gret hep

And songen, everych in hys wyse,
The moste solempne servise
By noote, that ever man, y trowe,
Had herd; for som of hem song lowe,
Some high, and all of oon acord.
(BD 295, 300-05)

Grant seruise e doz e plesant
Aloient li oisel fesant.

Li un en haut, le autre en bas.

Mout estoit bele l'acordance
De lor piteus chanz a oïr
(RR 701-02, 705, 484-85)

²⁷Quotations from the French follow the parallel-text edition of The Romaunt of the Rose and Le Roman de la Rose, ed. Ronald Sutherland (Oxford, 1967).

3. To telle shortly, att oo word,
Was never herd so swete a steven,--
But hyt had be a thyng of heven,--
(BD 306-08)

(Qu)'onc mès se douce meloudie
Ne fut d'ome mortel oïe.
Tant estoit cil chanz doz e biaux
Qu'il ne sembloit pas chant d'oisiaus,
Ainz les peüst l'en aesmer
Au chanz des seraines de mer,
(RR 667-72)

4. So mery a soun, so swete entewnes,
That certes, for the toun of Tewnes,
I nolde but I had herd hem synge;
(BD 309-11)

Endroit de moi m'en esioï
Si durement quant il l'oï
Que n'en preïsse pas .c. liures,
Se li passages fust deliures,
Que (ge n)'entrasse e ne ueïsse
L'assemblee, que Dex guerisse!
(BD 318-19)

5. To synge, for ech of hem hym peyned
To fynde out mery crafty notes.
(BD 318-19)

Li rosignox lores s'esforce
De chanter e de feire noise;
Qui de chanter mout s'engoissoient,
(RR 74-75, 101)

Both the English and the French verses in section 1 above cite May and dawning as seasons for the dream. Both borrower and source in section 2 introduce birds singing a service high and low, all in accord. In these two important passages Chaucer closely adheres to his source. But in section 3, despite similarities between specific words, Chaucer departs from the French. Whereas the source compares the music to that of the mermaids of the sea, The Book of the Duchess likens it to "A thyng of heven" and thereby

underscores religious implications. Again in section 4 Chaucer changes one point: he makes the "soun" of the melody, not the poet persona, merry. He intentionally avoids, I think, letting the protagonist come to a state of contentment before his experiences in otherworld have brought a solution to his problem of sorrowful imagination. Finally, the verses quoted in section 5 illustrate that in transferring the detail of the birds' efforts in singing, Chaucer works to conjoin the idea of joy with the idea of craft instead of specifying a certain bird, the nightingale, as his source does. He is striving to erect a progression from the nature image to suggestions of happiness through successful exercise of the craft of poetry.

Through the twenty-nine lines initiating the dream discussion in The Book of the Duchess, thirteen are taken principally from twenty-three lines in The Romance of the Rose. Both the source passage and the Chaucerian passage treat of bird, song, and joy and so align image and thought. But in adapting the alignment Chaucer has introduced certain original embellishments.

Making memory of old books important anew, he continues to embellish his thought chain with allusions--of his own choice--to the Troy story and The Romance of the Rose itself. But having spotlighted first the gleeful birds from his source, Chaucer (relying now not on any source but on original use of convention) incorporates further images of the

eternal and the creative: forest (ll. 363, 373), tree (l. 387), whelp as guide to a deeper otherworld (ll. 388-99), flowers (l. 398), Flora and Zephyr (l. 402), and forest and trees again (ll. 414-33).²⁸ The stress, it is to be noted, is placed on the tree emblems almost in reflection of conventional catalogues of trees. But Chaucer can be original even while working with a ready-made convention. His clearly original placing of the Black Knight under "an oak, an huge tree" (l. 447) argues for meaningful inclusion of trees as opposed to mere bowing to convention in ll. 363-433.

The emphasis on the arboreal serves as a unifying backdrop for the ensuing scene involving the knight and the poet persona; the sorrow-joy opposition and the knight's avowals of love for his lady continuing through the remainder of the poem, his statements that he lacks "both Englyssh and wit" and that his "spirites be so dulle" to describe her beauty (ll. 895-901), his frequent allusions to the literature of the past (ll. 1055-1125), his composition of poetry honoring the lady (ll. 1155 ff.), and her long-delayed granting of her love (ll. 1268-72) become portions of Chaucer's progression, held together by the forest emblem, implying some affinity between the situations of the knight and poet persona. Let us determine the origins of these portions.

²⁸Although Robinson (p. 775) states that ll. 402-03 "are perhaps reminiscent" of lines in The Romance of the Rose, they actually seem only to employ widely practiced conventions.



First, the stress on sorrow which ultimately is superseded by joy and the stress on avowals of love are highly traditional, though each situation relates directly to the historical occasion of the poem: the death of Blanche, first wife of John of Gaunt. Second, the declared witlessness or dullness of one who would exercise his descriptive powers and the multiplicity of references to earlier literature are Chaucer's ideas, which in spite of their conventionality assume particular point: here they are necessary to an overall message on literary creativity. And lastly, the knight's composing verse and the lady's eventual granting of mercy accord with the tenets of conventional courtly-love literature. Thus Chaucer has selected and interwoven various traditions related to the creative and the ultimately happy in a long passage constituting roughly two thirds of the poem, and he has effectively unified them by employing the forest as his setting.

Nor do the imitated, conventionalized, or original emblems of otherworld and literary creativity cease to exercise power at this point. Through the final verse they remain paramount. Even as the knight leaves the wood, he approaches a place emblematic of otherworld and of a measure of contentment: the rich hill on which his long castle stands (Chaucer's probably original puns on the titles Earl of Richmond and Duke of Lancaster). And even as the poet persona awakes from his dream, he finds still in his hand an

object emblematic of memory which has led him to ultimate contentment: the book recounting the Ceyx story. The closing lines present the poet persona in much the same situation as Froissart presents his dreamer (The Paradys d'Amours 1685-95, 1722-23), with only the references to Ceyx, Alcyone, and the deities interpolated to correlate memory of an old book with divine inspiration; Chaucer's purpose in choosing material from Froissart must be that it plays up the successful completion of a literary project. Once more Chaucer has made the Zeus-Mnemosyne myth come alive through imaginative manipulation of and addition to source matter.

From opening line to closing line, then, The Book of the Duchess offers material dealing with natural phenomena or with otherworld: images of wells, cliffs, flowers, winds, and singing birds, all connected in some way with Chaucer's theory of literary creativity. Though it draws to some extent on specific earlier poems and more noticeably on the large body of poetic convention, it is still an amalgamation of widely disparate influences in a pattern constituted only by Chaucer. And this pattern, like the individual images, in some way enters into every part of the poem; we do not find here, as we find in Troilus and Criseyde, long passages of narration or description unconnected with a progression treating the topic of literary fecundity. Despite the extensive incorporation of conventions and details from specific sources, The Book of the Duchess is not slavishly derivative or imitative. Its shaking off heavy allegory, its

insistence on being a dream vision (with implications of a mental state accommodating literary inspiration) and not merely a love vision, and its specificity in sense appeals establish it as a work truly original in its concept of the business of the poet: first to understand how poetry is made and then to make it.

The House of Fame

To turn from The Book of the Duchess to The House of Fame is to move from a dream vision relying noticeably on both conventions and specific works (despite its originality in concept) to a somewhat less conventional one which draws relatively little on specific sources for its passages on the supernatural. In The House of Fame, then, we encounter numerous passages treating otherworld and nature emblems which are manifestly original with Chaucer.

In the opening verse the wish "God turne us every drem to goode!" relates the Deity to the dream otherworld where "goode," perhaps, equals literary fruitfulness for the poet persona. Here at the outset Chaucer creates an original line, one which declares the dream genre and implies the poet persona's yearning for happiness in this world after a sojourn in the dream otherworld. The world-poet persona-otherworld progression is already launched, although nature images are yet to be introduced. But the significant fact at present, of course, is that it is Chaucer's own idea



which initiates the progression.

Standing on the classical foundation of the equation of art to love which he will state in The Parliament of Fowls 1-4, Chaucer briefly notes the "cruel lyf unsofte" of lovers, a sentiment earlier expressed by Jean de Meun (The Romance of the Rose 18394-402) which repeatedly refers to the dreams of lovers. Thus by borrowing an idea Chaucer builds onto the "world" element of his progression the mood of sorrow. And he adds further superstructure in his invocation to the god of sleep, which Robinson (p. 780) believes to have been suggested by Froissart's Trésor Amoureux 615 ff.; this superstructure, it will be noted, definitely embodies the "otherworld" element of the progression. Although much of the description of Morpheus' dwelling place comes in rather abbreviated form from The Metamorphoses XI, 592-615, Chaucer adjusts one point: Lethe, whose waves gently murmur and invite one to sleep in Ovid's poem, is here designated "a flood of helle unswete." This foreboding concept of water, which really requires no inspiration other than the poet's own, helps to develop the early focus of The House of Fame on sorrow as opposed to joy.

Just as in The Knight's Tale a description of Venus' temple seems to have no model, so in The House of Fame 130-39 the somewhat more compact picture of it seems to be Chaucer's interpolation. Although the passage mirrors conventions, it relates to Venus certain nature images which Chaucer undoubtedly chose to include: sea, doves, and rose

garland. By viewing the pictures of nature the poet persona begins a hopeful progress toward possible happiness; that the images of love, joy, and the eternal appear between passages emphasizing woe can hardly have been unintentional.

Various other verses alluding to sad events appear in Chaucer's summary of material from Virgil's Aeneid I. In fact, despite omission of some of Virgil's many references to stormy blasts and East Wind and South Wind, Chaucer actually adds one point developing the atmosphere of sorrow and eliminates another which suggests the good and the happy. First, Virgil does not explain how Creusa meets death; Chaucer relates that she is lost "in a forest" (ll. 181-83). Second, Virgil states (Aeneid I, 195 ff.) that Neptune eventually calms the tempest which Aeolus has caused at sea. Chaucer includes the storm and Aeolus (ll. 198-211) but not Neptune's act, perhaps (as Robinson, p. 780, proposes) because he wishes to emphasize Venus' actions in begging, for Aeneas, Jupiter's aid against the storm; if such emphasis is his purpose, it marks yet another instance of his letting an otherworld force, love, lead a protagonist (though not a poet persona this time) toward joy.

Through a number of subsequent verses we find, insofar as otherworld matter is concerned, a blending of Chaucer's own ideas with conventions whose specific sources are unknown. The pose of the poet persona as one who does not know love (l. 248) is Chaucer's; development of Dido's woe when Aeneas deserts her (ll. 300 ff.) is conventional; the

statement that Fame will spread the tale of Dido (ll. 345-50) seems to be partially original with the English poet and partially influenced by The Aeneid IV, 173-92; and further outlining of woeful situations (ll. 350 ff.) follows widespread tradition.

The barren field lacking bush or tree (ll. 482-85) which the poet persona views on leaving the temple of Venus can hardly be attributed to passages in Dante's Inferno (I, 64, and XIV, 8-13) as Robinson (p. 781) suggests. Dante does not refer specifically to the barrenness of the plains he mentions--and mentions only briefly. The lines in The House of Fame, I believe, are Chaucer's intended emphasis on the thought of loss of poetic productivity. The basic description of Chaucer's Eagle, who first appears in l. 499 of The House of Fame, is probably Dante's. Two passages from Purgatorio (IX, 19-20, II, 17-24) seem to have provided visual details of brightness and golden plumes. That an animal may guide a dreamer to and in otherworld belongs, of course, to established tradition. But the decision to select the bird and the concept of the Eagle's personality must be largely Chaucer's. The Eagle's taking "Geffrey" (by Jupiter's command) to the palace of Fame and then to the whirling house of twigs for the stated purpose of rewarding his efforts in love poetry and exposing him to love tidings surely accords with Chaucer's original world-poet persona-otherworld triad and its correlatives love, religion, and creativity.

For the invocation for divine assistance in the proem of Book II, Chaucer obviously draws on The Inferno II, 7-9:

O Muse, o alto ingegno, or m' aintate:
 O mente, che scrivesti cio ch' io vidi,
 Qui si parrà la tua nobilitate.

But Chaucer adds images of mountain and spring, perhaps from The Teseida XI, 63, where Boccaccio definitely understands Helicon to be a fount on Parnassus, aligned accurately with Muse and song. Let us compare these passages from Dante and Boccaccio with the English verses to which they gave birth:

And ye, me to endite and ryme
 Helpeth, that on Parnaso duelle,
 Be Helicon, the clere welle.
 O Thought, that wrot al that I mette,
 And in the tresorye hyt shette
 Of my brayn, now shal men se
 Yf any vertu in the be,
 To tellen al my drem aryght.
 (ll. 520-27)

What Chaucer accomplishes here is an interdependence of thought, or memory, and the inspiration of hill and fountain. The special meaning of the Zeus-Mnemosyne myth to Chaucer--that both memory and divine inspiration are requisite to literary achievement--emerges from this evidently purposeful compounding of theme from disparate sources. Nature images and otherworld deities are united by Chaucer's own poet persona, who in spite of reflecting some aspects of conventional dream protagonists remains an individual.

Having advanced a discussion of composition early in Book II, Chaucer expands it in later lines. From a line

presenting a conventional dull-witted poet--"in thy hed ful lyte is" (l. 621)--he moves on to a consideration of the troubles of composing and in so doing develops a realistic and highly original portrait of the character. The unloved poet persona, devoted servant of Love through verse, often endures headaches because of his inditing poems in honor of an unappreciative deity. But Jupiter, who pities the poet, wants him to "be of good chere" after his experience in otherworld. Yet again a passage taken from no source work introduces the sorrow-to-joy motif in relation to dream otherworld and inspiring god.

Two more line groups carry forward at least some attention to composition and otherworld, and they are groups which demand examination in a study of Chaucer's eclecticism or originality. The Eagle's comparison of sound or word in air to "water previd" (ll. 809-15) and his ridiculously incorrect assertion that he has successfully conveyed his message without recourse to rhetoric (ll. 853-64) are, like the lines on Jupiter, clearly Chaucer's own. Chaucer assuredly designed The House of Fame to explain literary creativity; whether he draws from the work of the past or originates his material, he carefully keeps his thought chain operative.

Bringing into close conjunction several nature images possibly from Alanus de Insulis and a quotation on the elements from Boethius, Chaucer again briefly looks to the compositions of other writers. Let us recall certain Chaucerian verses relating the flight toward Fame's dwelling:

Tho gan y loken under me
 And beheld the ayerissh bestes,
 Cloudes, mystes, and tempestes,
 Snowes, hayles, reynes, wyndes,

And thoo thoughte y upon Boece,
 That writ, "A thought may flee so hye,
 Wyth fetheres of Philosophye,
 To passen everych element."

(ll. 964-67, 972-75)

Chaucer may have incorporated into his poem in ll. 966-67 details from Anticlaudianus IV, section 6. Alanus mentions clouds, mist, hail, winds, and thunder and tells how Phronesis traverses the ether and encounters agreeable breezes and pure atmosphere which laughs and eliminates weeping: the elements lead to peace and tranquility. Avowedly quoting Boethius (Consolation of Philosophy IV, m. 1), Chaucer then explains that a thought may fly above the elements. Following the descriptive passage on waters and winds and peace, this matter of thought helps to form a progression: nature and poet in a mental otherworld that gives contentment. Here, as elsewhere, Chaucer seems to purposely combine borrowed lines in a structural entity that does more than merely form a narrative or a description.

An invocation for the aid of Apollo as god "of science and of lyght"--of knowledge--opens Book III of The House of Fame. Some early verses are translated almost verbatim from Dante's Paradiso I, 13-27; the god's power, his laurel tree, and his divinity are points common to the English and the Italian poems. But whereas Chaucer adds in l. 1 the aspect of Apollo which he wishes to underscore, an aspect



related to memory and inspiration, Dante speaks to "buono Apollo." Furthermore, Chaucer envisions his poet persona kissing Apollo's laurel; Dante wishes only to be fit to wear a wreath of laurel leaves. And finally, Chaucer's wording of his poet persona's prayer that "Here art poetical be showed" has no exact counterpart in Dante's passage, although the sentiments of the two poets are similar.

From The Metamorphoses XII, 43, comes the suggestion that the dwelling of Fame is on a high mountain, which Chaucer renders in l. 1116 as a high rock--one of ice, or frozen water, for which no sure source is recognized. Certainly Chaucer himself, however, develops the ideas that fame, like ice, may melt (l. 1149) and that only the names of the great ancients are preserved in still-unmelted eternal form (l. 1153). Thus he interlaces mountain and water imagery even as he interlaces the borrowed and the original. The interlacement of nature images and the blending of borrowed and newly made lines strengthen the themes.

A catalogue of harpers (ll. 1201-13), including the widely known Orpheus, is apparently Chaucer's compilation of various traditions, although through Ovid particularly he may be familiar with the stories of Orpheus (The Metamorphoses X, XI) and of Orion (Fasti II, 79-118). Because the catalogue alludes only sketchily to the various musicians, or poets, and because Ovid presents in neither source cited a parallel to the situation of Chaucer's poet persona, it

seems unnecessary to evaluate the significance here of any specific borrowing beyond the fact that Chaucer employs the allusions to spotlight poetic creativity. And this continued attention to the topic of poetry pervades ll. 1395-1405: songs and harmony surround the goddess Fame, and Calliope and the other eight Muses are the singers. Although comparison of the lines with Paradiso XXIII, 97-111, has been proposed (Robinson, p. 786), Chaucer can hardly be very deeply indebted to Dante at this point; only the first few lines bear any resemblance to Paradiso, and the reference to the Muses touches, of course, on well-known convention.

From this passage on, except for a few commonplaces, material on otherworld or on poetic creativity in the poem is original with Chaucer. The catalogue of statues to famous authors (ll. 1456-1506) is compounded from widely disparate data which, Robinson believes (p. 786), have not previously appeared together; the catalogue itself, obviously, is a device long recommended by the rhetorical manuals. Fame's call to Aeolus in ll. 1567-71--a combination of religious thought, wind image, and publication of one's words and deeds--is traditional. But verses relating Aeolus' coming to Fame (l. 1602), his blowing ill or good fame to various companies of suppliants (ll. 1636 ff.), and the analogy of the outpouring of ill fame to the flowing of water from a well (ll. 1652-53) are original with Chaucer. In l. 1803 appears another commonplace: a reference to the wind of hell.

Subsequent otherworld events in the narrative which seem to have emerged only from Chaucer's poetic genius are the poet persona's leaving Fame's palace and descending to a valley (ll. 1916 ff.), his awareness that there are always some tidings in the whirling house of twigs (ll. 1956 ff.), and his rejoining his Eagle, who conducts him into the whirling house (ll. 1990-2027). Makers of literature, Fame, Aeolus, wind, valley, and otherworld dwellings thus form a thought chain which, were the poem not fragmentary, might conceivably lead to some kind of fulfillment for the poet persona who has entered otherworld to hear certain tidings. That this almost completely original thought chain near the end of the existing fragment correlates major components of the overall progression of the poem from its opening line--a progression which we have seen embraces conventional, borrowed, and newly conceived material--lends credence to the theory that when Chaucer interweaves details from the works of other poets he does so with the conscious goal of erecting a rhetorical framework on which to build his discussion of creativity.

In recapitulating, we observe that the majority of otherworld matter in The House of Fame has no definite source and that much of it is even outside the realm of convention. The individual sources and conventions which do contribute to the poem provide only brief passages--passages which in isolation do not bring together the nature imagery and the

concern with the creative but which in the course of the entire work become integral parts of a principal message. It has remained for Chaucer to combine these elements in his progressions running throughout the poem.

The Parliament of Fowls

With The Parliament of Fowls we encounter a handling of otherworld material somewhat different from that of either earlier dream vision. A narrowing of the material, perhaps to concentrate on a principal theme, is to be noted. Two specific sources, Boccaccio's Teseida and Cicero's Somnium Scipionis preserved by Macrobius, provide the majority of really significant nature images projected into the realm of dreams; however, conventions and details of Chaucer's invention contribute something also. Furthermore, one nature image, the bird, is dominant in the poem, although several other emblems with which my study is concerned suggest creativity and permanence or longevity.

Viewed as a complete work, The Parliament of Fowls presents a widespread literary convention of the Middle Ages: the council of birds. It is this device which allows the incorporation of additional nature imagery. Hence the parliament is central to the otherworld treatment. But this convention basic to the entire poem necessitates consideration of other source matters. In relation to otherworld concerns, origins of the much-discussed differentiations of

personalities and social ranks of the bird characters signify little. What is important is that all the birds act, discuss love, and sing in the poet persona's dream-garden otherworld which embraces sources, traditions, and inventions of the living poet.

At the very beginning of the poem Chaucer announces, I think, his topic of literary creativity. As I have stated elsewhere, the equation of love to the craft of poetry and the setting forth of the problems of the maker constitute the issue of the first stanza and, by extension of the application of love to verse, much of the meaning of the entire dream vision. The anglicized aphorism of the initial line, which is traceable to Hippocrates, had become familiar before Chaucer's time and was understood to imply more than the literal reference to the craft of love. Chaucer's placing this conventionalized borrowing in his opening statement of his theme may indicate his eagerness to employ material long known or remembered in a situation dealing with otherworld inspiration; for as in The Book of the Duchess, he presents his poet persona moving mentally from old book to dream otherworld and back (we must surmise) to composition of verse in the waking world.

Various subsequent references to books, though traditional and though surrounded in Chaucer's verse by lines having partial parallels in Ovid and Virgil and Dante, seem to be Chaucer's own inventions. In ll. 10, 16, 19, 29, 87,

and 110 the poet persona mentions books in two particular categories: old books, and books which he has read. The summary of Somnium Scipionis (ll. 31-84) blends the book theme with the dream motif and thereby calls to mind not only ancient books familiar to the poet persona but also the connection between memory and dream-otherworld inspiration. Thus Chaucer's mingling of the original with the borrowed is one facet of his treating otherworld material in this poem.

The nine spheres and their melody (ll. 59-60), touched on in Somnium Scipionis, belong to the body of commonplaces on which any poet may draw. Chaucer's preservation of this detail in a much-abbreviated narrative keeps alive the focus on song and, indeed, blends it smoothly into the point (apparently Chaucer's again) that the spheres constitute a well of music and melody, a "cause of armonye" (ll. 62-63).

Moving into the dream proper of The Parliament of Fowls in l. 95, Chaucer applies the conventional vision motif to the original situation of his poet persona as he ties both convention and invention to the borrowed story of Scipio. The poet persona's somewhat belated invocation to Venus for "myght" to relate his "sweven" (ll. 113-19) is original with Chaucer. One critic considers the passage an instance of Chaucer's borrowing from one of his own works, The House of Fame 518 ff.²⁹ But the verses of the two poems are not identical, and it therefore seems unnecessary to note more

²⁹Robert Armstrong Pratt, "Chaucer Borrowing from Himself," Modern Language Quarterly, VII (1946), 262-64.

than that Chaucer's original interpolation advances the other-world focus even as it conjoins dream and inspiration to compose.

For idea and wording Chaucer turns anew to memory of old books--Dante's Inferno III, 1 ff., and perhaps The Romance of the Rose 20279 ff.--in ll. 127-40 of The Parliament of Fowls. But for imagery he makes additions: the "welle of grace" opposing the stream leading to sorrow and the "grene and lusty May" opposing the tree that will never bear leaves. These images have no real counterparts in Inferno and only general resemblances in The Romance of the Rose. Although the first-mentioned poem briefly cites Acheron and the latter-mentioned offers much description of the Shepherd's park (including lists of trees, birds, fountains, and other phenomena of nature), neither influencing work provides such sharp and direct attention to water and tree images in relation to fruitfulness as Chaucer's poem provides. Furthermore, subtraction as well as addition characterizes Chaucer's rendering of source details; whereas The Romance of the Rose enumerates certain clearly allegorical facts of a principally moral or religious nature, The Parliament of Fowls de-emphasizes these points and allows instead for primary concern with later development of the topic of creativity supported by religious and love terminology. In abbreviating from a source, Chaucer here maintains interest in his threefold subject matter but seems intent first on composition.

Having noted on his own (as is his custom in the dream visions) that his poet persona is "dul" and has no "connyng for t'endite" (ll. 162, 167-68), Chaucer introduces the first of four traditional catalogues of his poem, a catalogue of trees (ll. 173-82). The structural function of this catalogue is its marking divisions of otherworld: through the wood the poet persona enters a deeper supernatural place, the garden described in ll. 183 ff.³⁰ And the emblematic service accords with that of other catalogues in the poem. It is noteworthy that three of the lists Chaucer presents--lists of trees, of stories of famous lovers (ll. 284-94), and of birds (ll. 330-65)--directly relate to the otherworld topic at hand. He includes them, I think, not merely because they are to be found in many other medieval poems but because they do accord with otherworld.

More than one hundred subsequent verses concerning the garden and otherworld come mainly from The Teseida VII, with some reminiscences possibly from The Romance of the Rose and Purgatorio. In common with stanzas 51-62 of Boccaccio's poem, though not in exactly the same order, are ll. 183-294 of The Parliament of Fowls. The garden in each work possesses bodies of water, flowers and trees, singing birds on boughs,

³⁰The parallels and sources (including The Teseida) suggested by various critics and cited by Robinson (pp. 793-94) indicate only varieties of trees and qualifying details. No particular relation exists between the kinds of trees chosen by Chaucer and development of source material to enhance his own picture of otherworld.



harmony and instruments, and the god Priapus wearing a garland. Chaucer's close following of the Italian may result from his finding there in an otherworld setting nature images of the creative already aligned with song and the personification of generative power. An interpolation, however, requires note. The wind's making in the leaves of the trees "a noyse softe" which accords with the birds' songs (ll. 199-201) has at least a rather close parallel in Purgatorio XXVIII, 9-15; in describing the Earthly Paradise Dante speaks of the "soave vento" and of a bird singing high on a bough. It is interesting to note that the description involves "il santo monte," a detail which lacks a parallel in The Parliament of Fowls.

Resuming his transcription from The Teseida, Chaucer preserves in ll. 211-12 the picture of Cupid in relation to tree and fount presented by Boccaccio. Furthermore, the Italian poet persona's seeing

l'Arti c'hanno potestate
di fare altrui a forza far follia
(VII, 55)

has its almost exact equivalent in the English poet persona's being aware

of the Craft that can and hath the myght
To don by force a wyght to don folye.
(ll. 220-21)

The uniting of craft and power again is for Chaucer worthy of adoption. A brief addition to the Italian, however, is the observation in l. 223 that "Delyt" stands "under an ok."

Even if the addition is to be attributed to metrical necessity, it is an appropriate one completely in harmony with Boccaccio's imagery and with Chaucer's topics and imagery; moreover, it seconds the portrait of Cupid beneath a tree. This phrase of Chaucer's, then, simultaneously introduces a significant nature emblem and ties together two consecutive stanzas. And another point original with Chaucer in the sixteen-stanza passage based on The Teseida is the "hil of sond" on which "Dame Pacience" sits (ll. 242-43). Thus even in transferring this expanded picture of an otherworld garden Chaucer contributes wind, tree, and hill emblems. Either consciously or unconsciously, he senses their elucidation of the supernatural and the eternal.

To observe the efficacy of the slight rearrangement of Boccaccio's stanzas may be to understand more fully how Chaucer deals with borrowed material. Stanzas 51-60 of The Teseida VII correspond in the main to ll. 183-259 of The Parliament of Fowls; stanzas 63-66 correspond to ll. 260-79; and stanzas 61-62 correspond to ll. 280-94. The transfer of stanzas 61-62 on Diana and stories of famous lovers (which, incidentally, Chaucer extends) to the end of the sequence eliminates the immediate opposition of Diana to Priapus existing in The Teseida and therefore possibly circumvents weakening the symbolism of the god. Furthermore, the shift inserts Chaucer's catalogue of love literature between the picture of Venus (appearing in both the Italian and the



English) and the picture of Nature and birds (ll. 298 ff.) abbreviated from De Planctu Naturae of Alanus de Insulis; the implication of the connection among love, composition, and nature once more reflects the pattern of idea and image running through the four dream visions.

In Alanus' work, though Nature is associated with birds and flowers as in Chaucer's adaptation, there is no statement that the goddess sits "upon an hil of floures" (l. 302). Like the hill of sand image in l. 243, the hill of flowers is apparently original with Chaucer. But a shift as well as the addition deserves note. As Robinson (p. 794) comments, the birds in The Parliament of Fowls are "gathered around the goddess" instead of being depicted on her clothing. A somewhat more vivid and less static delineation of both deity and birds results.

The parliament of the birds, perhaps suggested by Alanus (Robinson, p. 794), receives new and full development by Chaucer. Despite the likelihood that various subsequent details (for example, the social ranking of the birds in ll. 323-29) may not be Chaucer's own, they really have little to do with specific otherworld concerns or with creativity and therefore require no analysis here. The matters of consequence here are that the events in which the birds participate seem to be mainly products of Chaucer's imagination and that the bird image dominates and unifies the discussion of love in relation to sorrow and joy.

Just as The Parliament of Fowls opens with emphasis on creativity, so it closes. A joyful nuptial song ends the parliament; love, joy, and literary composition are implicit (ll. 680-92). And the poet persona, returned to the waking world from his otherworld sojourn, turns to other books than the one which instigated his dream and hopes "to fare / The bet" (ll. 698-99), perhaps by further successful inspiration and resulting composition. These twenty verses--conventional in some respects but developed and placed in the important culminating position by Chaucer--both deal with creativity and unify the direct borrowing, the conventionalized details, and the material original with Chaucer.

We have seen that in relation to otherworld in The Parliament of Fowls only one rather long passage draws extensively on any single source, that conventions frequently blend with totally new material, and that the incorporation of various nature images may be credited solely to Chaucer. In this third dream vision, in fact, the poet seems to be freer and more original in his employment of otherworld material than he has been in either The Book of the Duchess or The House of Fame. And yet essentially the same images and ideas related to creativity constitute chains running through all the poems.

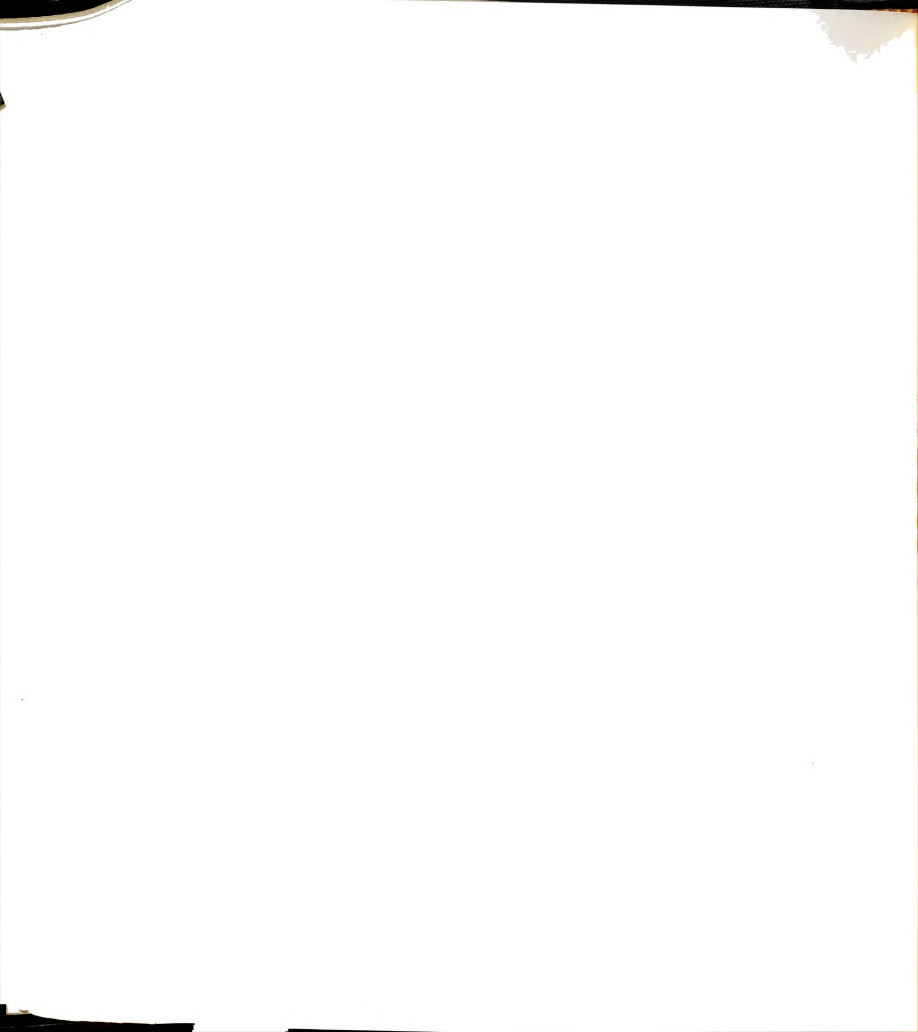
The Legend of Good Women

Perhaps the most revealing evidence that otherworld matters and nature images are almost inextricably interwoven

with Chaucer's considerations of the literary craft emerges from a comparison of the two extant versions of The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women and an analysis of its sources and conventions. Because passages treating the dream other-world (as mental state of the poet persona) and presenting images of flower, bird, and tree are virtually identical in early and revised forms, it seems that Chaucer continues to sense the interdependence of themes. Although various works supply ideas and even wording for various sections of the poem, the image-and-thought groupings common to the versions designated F and G contain less of the borrowed and the conventional than do the other dream visions.

It should be noted that the relative dating of the F and G versions matters little in a consideration of the other-world topic or of sources. The similar employment of nature images and otherworld scenes in the two accounts renders unnecessary here any attempt to show one form superior to or more fully developed than the other. Even the inclusion in either version of lines omitted from the other does not argue for any major change in the poet's attitude concerning images of creativity. As we shall observe in the few distinctions cited below, such changes as do occur are shifts between the general and the specific or shifts for emphasis but not shifts of theme or idea.

Insofar as Chaucer's originality or eclecticism in The Legend of Good Women is concerned, the joy-heaven and



pain-hell associations in l. 2 of each version were traditional in the religion-conscious fourteenth century. But Chaucer's using the tradition to initiate an original discussion of remembrance of old books (F and G 17-28) seems to be his own contribution. His also are the references to his little wit or knowledge, his delight in old books, and his eventual leaving of books to enjoy the May birds and flowers (F and G 29-39). Thus Chaucer himself links joy, otherworld, memory, nature images, and poet persona.

The ensuing lines, however, offer much material common to the French "marguerite" poems of Froissart, Deschamps, and Machaut. Although there are numerous similarities between The Legend of Good Women 45-60 and verses in various French pieces, the similarities are mainly comments on springtime, statements that the daisy brings joy, and attention to its closing at night. Passages in various marguerite poems proposed for comparison with passages in Chaucer's work (see Robinson, p. 841) present neither analysis of the craft of literature nor suggestions of dreamland inspiration. In effect, then, the praise of the daisy in the possible influencing works is not emblematic in the way that Chaucer's praise is.

Immediately following his use of the marguerite commonplaces, Chaucer introduces original verses touching on literary composition. The poet persona lacks "ryme or prose" to praise and serve the flower properly (F 66-67); such



praise lies not in his "myght" (G 59-60). His almost unproductive gleaning for appropriate words in fields already worked by other poets is nevertheless done in honor of love and in service of the flower (F 73-83, G 61-70). By juxtaposing these original lines dealing with creativity against conventional matter dealing with a nature image, Chaucer implies inspiration through nature.

The F version, ll. 86-96, presents an invocation with wording closely following that of the opening stanzas of Boccaccio's Filostrato. But the spirit and the application in Chaucer depart from the source. Despite the lack of direct naming of the "maistresse" addressed, the passage implies identity between her and "the flour" whom the poet persona serves (ll. 82-83). Thus the flower is in a sense the inspiring deity to whom he prays for aid in composition. The omission of the passage from the G version does not necessarily indicate that in it Chaucer regards the flower as being unrelated to otherworld; it does suggest, however, a possible desire to emphasize the old stories or books--details of Chaucer's own development--next discussed (F 97-102, G 81-88).

Verses on the singing of "smale foules" (F 130-51, G 118-38), apparently original with Chaucer; on Flora and Zephyr (F 171), similar to but probably not dependent on The Romance of the Rose 8411 ff.; on the ballade (F 249-69, G 203-16), conventional but compiled by Chaucer from history and legend; and on books (G 268-312), again apparently

Chaucer's, carry forward the poet's consciousness of bird, flower, and wind in relation to composition. Although each of two details appears in only one version, the birds' song and the ballade, which illustrate composition, are common to F and G.

Further employment of nature imagery almost wholly attributable to Chaucer calls for citation. Whereas one passage (F 156-74) presents blossoms and singing birds much as various verses in The Romance of the Rose do,³¹ another (G 139-43) substitutes a lark's singing to herald the approach of Cupid, a detail of Chaucer's invention; the version original with the English poet, then, pictures the specific rather than the general, although both employ nature imagery. Also original with Chaucer, the etymology of daisy and the designation of the flower as "emperice" (F 182-87) and the poet persona's resting on a flower-strewn bed (F 203-07, G 97-101) maintain emphasis on the floral image. Alignment of love and religion with the flower, or the creative, emerges from Chaucer's narration of the entrance of Cupid and Alceste together (F 212-14, G 144-46). Juxtaposition of the description of Alceste (F 214-25, G 146-57) and the description of Cupid (F 226-38, G 158-70), both of which present flowers, extends the alignment; again, the descriptions seem not to have been drawn from any source.

³¹Lisi Cipriani, "Studies in the Influence of the Romance of the Rose on Chaucer," PMLA, XXII (1907), 594-95.

And finally, the identity of daisy and Alceste in F 291-99 is a correlation previously unexplored by poets. That Chaucer included in his own narrative and descriptive passages both a number of references and various approaches to the flower image suggests the centrality of image to meaning.

Otherworld interest and focus on the creative in roughly the latter half of each version is perhaps totally original with Chaucer, although some passages border on the conventional. Cupid's scolding the poet persona (F 315-40, G 240-316), Alceste's defending him (F 341 ff., G 317 ff.), the catalogue of Chaucer's works (F 414-30, G 402-20), and the imposition of a penance on the poet persona (F 479-97, G 469-85) interlace deities, poet persona, work achieved, and a dreamland charge to compose further verse. The exact combination of these items as well as the individual introduction of them remains constant in the two versions of The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women but is not to be found, I think, in the work of any other poet.

Surely an invention of Chaucer is the pleasantly myth-like detail of the metamorphosis of Alceste into a daisy (F 510-12, G 498-500). The transformation explains the relation of the poet persona's pre-dream love of the daisy to the admiration of Alceste by characters within the dream and so unites nature, love, otherworld, and inspiration. Chaucer's familiarity with Ovid may have suggested the general idea, but the specific situation seems to be his own fiction.



The brief but clear statement that Cybele, goddess of fertility, "maade the daysye and the flour / Ycrowned al with whit" (F 531-32, G 519-20) is the only likely other-world borrowing near the end of the poem. Robinson (p. 846) points to possible influence by ll. 162-66 of Froissart's Dittié de la Flour de la Margherite. The deity creating the nature emblem, even if borrowed, supports well the use of otherworld matter elsewhere in The Legend of Good Women.

Chaucer's supplying for The Prologue a final emphasis on composition--of the "Legende" ostensibly written by his poet persona--echoes his original conclusion to the two other completed dream visions. In F 578-79, as at the end of The Parliament of Fowls, the poet persona repairs to his books--and then begins to "make." In G 544-45, as at the culmination of The Book of the Duchess, he both awakes and begins to compose. The similarity of the three closing passages argues that discussion of the literary craft is of great import to Chaucer and that it is discussion which he regards as his own. Although in this poem, as in others, he draws on memory of old books, his correlation of ideas on composition, especially at the end, remains original with him.

In The Legend of Good Women, in fact, Chaucer's use of sources and conventions related to otherworld and to nature imagery is noticeably less extensive than in any of the other three dream visions. Through imagery the earlier works convey much concerning creativity. Through more overt and

direct discussion of the literary craft The Legend of Good Women achieves similar ends. All four dream visions interweave images of fecundity with direct statement; however, Chaucer's emphasis on imagery, borrowed or original, lessens and his dependence on discussion, primarily original, increases in this latest of the four dream poems.

In analyzing Chaucer's employment of nature images and otherworld matter from sources and conventions, I have attempted to illustrate that in borrowing ideas and images, he adopted especially those which supported his feelings, conscious or unconscious, about the origins of poetry; I have expressed the opinion that he stirred to action certain long-dormant suggestions of creativity in much conventional nature imagery. I have further aimed to show that his bringing together materials from both specific works and bodies of convention developed, strengthened, and clarified ideas. And I have endeavored to point out his original contributions interspersed at appropriate places in such a manner that frequently--notably in Troilus and Criseyde and even more notably in the dream visions--they became links in a chain or progression of thoughts on the creative. Such a chain does, indeed, exist in the romance and each of the dream poems not because it came ready for use from sources but because Chaucer compounded it from the old and the new. Memory and inspiration, to be sure, were necessary to the production of Chaucer's works.



Of the poet's methods in causing borrowed or conventionalized images to function effectively, we may observe that throughout the works considered in this study the specific and clearly defined picture has been characteristic. In many verses or passages adapted from sources or traditions, Chaucer's appeals to the senses are both sharper and stronger than their models. In many adaptations, Chaucer's pictures are less allegorical and more realistic. Possibly most important of all, however, in nearly all borrowings the nature images receive at Chaucer's hands a meaningful connection with otherworld and its implications of inspiration.

It seems fitting at this point to comment that the genre-conscious Middle English period provided two modes which Chaucer found particularly fertile for planting and explicating his literary theory; the modes, of course, are the romance and the dream vision. Each genre--and genres are themselves bodies of literary patterns and characteristics so frequently imitated and borrowed that they become conventionalized--each genre, I think, lends itself to the contemplative mood necessary to development of theory. The romance (even Chaucer's rather tightly structured examples) seldom hastens either poet speaker or audience through its series of events. The dream vision (even the relatively tight and organic rather than episodic Chaucerian renderings) directly implies the meditative workings of a poet's mind especially in a dreamlike mental state. In selecting the



romance and the dream vision as genres in which to expound his ideas on the creative, then, Chaucer was borrowing patterns and characteristics which he nevertheless expanded by incorporating into them appropriate images and statements from exact sources, from widely practiced conventions, and from his own fruitful imagination.

To draw together the major findings of my source study, I wish to restate each of the two principal questions which I posed at its beginning and then to present a summary answer to it. First, how extensively do sources and conventions available to Chaucer employ the images of creativity which he developed? Repeatedly the sources and conventions offer images of water, tree, mountain, wind, bird, and flower. Repeatedly they picture otherworld settings and characters. But repeatedly they stop short of elucidating the latest implications of literary fecundity which Chaucer clarified. Second, how original or conventional was Chaucer in incorporating ideas from his sources into his own works? Chaucer was at once highly conventional and highly original: conventional in his images and settings and conservative in not attempting to establish an entirely new order of emblems, but yet original in either consciously or unconsciously employing the already recognized and widely used emblems in a progression of world-otherworld experiences setting forth a literary theory.

Chaucer must indeed have believed that both Mnemosyne and Zeus were requisite to artistic productivity, and his

coupling of the remembered and the divinely inspired illustrates that both were operative in the production of his own verse.



CHAPTER V

EXPOSITION OF THE LITERARY THEORY

The preceding chapter has traced the contribution of memory of old books to Chaucer's poetry and has observed that like memory, inspiration was requisite to his literary productivity and to his emerging theory of the literary craft particularly in his early works and in romance and dream-vision genres. But much remains to be said about the specific poetic pattern born of Chaucer's own genius: the progression of images presenting a figure from nature which leads a poet persona to some otherworld where he receives inspiration to create verse. With this pattern we shall now be primarily concerned: with its meaning revealed through sense appeals, through overt discussions of literature or composition, through structure.

Before beginning the analysis of Chaucer's image progressions, it will be well to reiterate certain statements made in various contexts elsewhere in this study. First, despite inclusion of nature images, the voice of a poet narrator, and much otherworld scenery throughout Chaucer's poetry, the synthesis of these details appears most clearly in romance and dream-vision genres, especially in poems dating from the early years of Chaucer's writing career.



Hence it seems appropriate to consider initially, as in Chapter IV, the relatively late poems least concerned with nature and otherworld and to proceed then to the works in which Chaucer develops his thoughts on literary fecundity in image progressions. The examinations of the late works may here move more rapidly than in the source study; the examinations of the poems in which Chaucer was actually formulating some literary theories and establishing his practices in composition, however, will require rather full attention. As in earlier chapters, the very short poems, the translations Boece and The Romaunt of the Rose, and the prose pieces will be excepted because they do not convey meaning through extensive use of the nature images or through thought chains dealing with the creative.

Second, in employing nature images--of bird, flower, water, wind, mountain, wood--Chaucer perceived implications of creativity which other poets using them either did not see or did not advance. His understanding of the nature emblems led him to conjoin materials into a thought grouping implying motion or action or progress. Third, the word love in the dream visions and Troilus and Criseyde implies the practice of poetry, although not to the exclusion of other possible implications; aligned with love and creativity are ideas of joy as opposed to sorrow and heaven as opposed to hell. And fourth, the poet persona or speaker--the voice of each poem--is in pursuit of creative imagination through



otherworld experiences suggesting simultaneously a creative-fecundating withdrawal and a link between the natural and the supernatural. World, poet persona, and otherworld form a structural chain both unifying and elucidating various aspects of the topic of creativity.

Certain questions arise concerning employment of the image progressions. The answering of these questions through analysis of material in the various works under scrutiny will, of course, be the burden of this chapter. A major problem: how does a specific poem pattern images and so expound a poetic theory? Another issue: how does a poem present the topics of love, creativity, and religion? And yet another: what is the relation of Chaucer's theory to his topics and to the possible meanings of each poem?

The Canterbury Tales

Let us apply these questions, insofar as it is feasible, to those portions of Chaucer's mature work presenting nature images and treatments of otherworld. In The Canterbury Tales, most otherworld material appears in stories belonging to the romance genre, as has been stated in relation to sources. The Knight's Tale brings to view in a tree-filled garden, or near-otherworld, setting the angelic Emily associated with various kinds of flowers and with song (I, 1033 ff.). The beginning of the real action occurs here, for it is at this convergence of trees, flowers, and song with suggestions of



the heavenly that Palamon and Arcite behold the damsel and initiate the love triangle on which the plot proceeds. The nature images lead to topics of love and religion but not to creativity. Nor does the voice of the poem enter the action as a poet persona; indeed, Chaucer here effaces the voice even as speaker outside the action except in assigning the fitting romance genre to the Knight. And yet the repeated references to song lend credence to the thought that composition in some way retained for the poet an association with the spirit of love embodied in the floral and the arboreal.

The several pictures of temples to pagan deities--to Venus (I, 1918-66), to Mars (ll. 1967-2050), and to Diana (ll. 2051-88)--present cuckoo and dove, rose garland and other flowers, waves of water, and barren trees. But the nature images are twice removed from the active and the fertile: they are merely depicted on the walls or elsewhere in the temples (and only briefly at that), and they focus on negation of creativity rather than furtherance of it. Later, in mentioning a grove (I, 2899) and in interpolating a list of trees (rather copious despite the declaration in occupatio that their names "shal nat be toold for me") between the dying Arcite and the living Palamon (ll. 2921-23), the tale employs the tree image to suggest both the temporal and the eternal. Though it is not necessary to infer that the dichotomy is the principal point of the sequence, it is



perhaps significant that the initial fruitful nature images in relation to Emily, the subsequent unproductive ones in relation to the staged battle over love, and the ultimate fruitless-fruitful contrast form a succession of ideas in some ways developing the thought of creativity. However, neither a declared topic of composition nor a poet persona seeking otherworld inspiration enters the succession. Thus *The Knight's Tale*, composed later than the works with which my study is primarily concerned, offers no real image progression.

A somewhat different emphasis emerges from otherworld treatments in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. The hag who through love (or at least dominance in marriage) becomes a beautiful woman is of course under the influence of otherworld forces. In the Knight's first encountering her in a forest (III, 989-99), his later escaping death through her superhuman aid (ll. 1009-45), and his eventually experiencing love and joy (ll. 1249-58), we see a tentative nature image-otherworld-joy linkage. But as in *The Knight's Tale*, no poet in search of inspiration enters and no discussion of the literary craft appears. The rather fully developed analysis of gentillesse and its culminating assertion that gentillesse comes from God (ll. 1109-64) touch slightly on otherworld matters. The origin with the Deity of a certain kind of goodness leading to joy is thus clearly pointed out. Yet still the otherworld concerns remain separated from any discussion of literature.



Significant elements of plot in *The Squire's Tale* depend on otherworld details: the knight on a brass horse who brings magic gifts to King Cambyskan (V, 80-167), the dream of Canace (ll. 371-75), and her understanding the speech of a falcon while she walks in a park (ll. 392 ff.). Although further nature images and otherworld events or settings might have followed had Chaucer completed the tale and although such images are integral to the extant portion, it is unlikely that more than a general association of nature and the supernatural, as in *The Knight's Tale*, would have characterized the finished narrative. One matter not included in the tales of the Knight and the Wife, however, gives evidence that composition was in the poet's consciousness. Early in his tale the Squire pauses briefly (ll. 34-41) to disavow rhetorical facility while actually employing various rhetorical devices; despite the conventionality of the modesty passage, it stands in an introductory position to the plot projecting images from nature into the otherworld-like park setting and so mirrors part of the concern with problems of composition initiating each dream vision and Troilus and Criseyde. Hence a completed *Squire's Tale* might to some degree have correlated the topic of composition with otherworld. It is possibly not too fanciful to suppose also the inclusion of topics of love and religion. But even were all three topics involved, no otherworld solution to a poet speaker's problems of creativity is hinted.

Similar interest in rhetoric and similar denial of rhetorical ability head *The Franklin's Tale*, the fourth romance from The Canterbury Tales to incorporate nature images. The Franklin's Prologue, in fact, alludes to Parnassus as source of literary excellence and to Cicero as a literary model (V, 721-22). In the tale proper, a contrast between sorrowful sea and happy rivers and wells introduces nature as the plot begins to unfold and reveals Dorigen's woe over her husband's absence (ll. 863-99). There follows a picture of a fresh, paradisiacal garden with May showers, leaves, and flowers. The springtime-and-rebirth atmosphere of this garden in which Aurelius declares his love to Dorigen does more than establish mood or scene, I think. It instigates a composition-otherworld association preceding the ultimate answer to Dorigen's difficulty: choice between fidelity to her marriage vows and fidelity to her jocular but rash promise to Aurelius. The Franklin's Prologue and Tale together, then, bind composition, nature images, near-otherworld setting, and solution to a problem as they echo some elements of dream-vision image progressions.

Throughout the romances of The Canterbury Tales, other-world and nature images are integral to plots, ideas, and topics. No romance, however, deals with the problems of a poet speaker in pursuit of literary imagination, and therefore no romance presents the full pattern which I have designated an image progression. But it is necessary to examine

two other poems in the collection which parody certain characteristics of romances.

For humor in its own right as well as for clarity of meaning and structure, apparently, *The Merchant's Tale* combines two otherworld realms into one and introduces nature images of the fruitful in a parody of love scenes. Januarie's garden walled off from the world at large is at once the setting of mortal delights and the fairy region of Pluto and Proserpina. It is worthy of note that the otherworld material forms a tightly unified passage toward the close of the narrative (IV, 2029 ff.). In describing the garden the Merchant compares its beauty to that which "he that wroot the *Romance of the Rose*" (ll. 2032-33) might devise and so calls into service certain literary associations. The theme of creativity runs through subsequent references to Priapus, the personification of generative power, as "god of gardyns"; to well and laurel; to Pluto and Proserpina "and al hire fayerye"; and to the making of melody about the well (ll. 2034-41). The continued naming of Januarie and May (ll. 2042-55) in conjunction with these points focuses not so much on their respective age and youth as on their potential unproductivity and productivity. The ensuing humorous joy-sorrow opposition as Januarie loses his sight is aligned with his wish that upon his death May will fare "as the turtle that lost hath hire make" (l. 2080)--a humorous use of the bird image. Various citations of the "fresshe May" and the

"fresshe gardyn" advance the springtime-rebirth motif and prepare a context for interpretation of the pear tree "That charged was with fruyt," which Damyan climbs in order to keep his tryst with May (ll. 2210-11). The argument between Pluto and Proserpina resulting from the love intrigue is set off between references to flowers (l. 2231) and the merry song of "the papejay" (l. 2322); the flower and bird images thus circumscribe the otherworld-within-otherworld, or fairyland-within-garden, of the deities. And the culminating pear-tree episode is itself a mock-romantic picture of love in other-world. Components of natural world and supernatural world, then, not only suggest the creative but also overlap so that they reciprocate strength.

Supernatural elements provide much of the material for humor also in *The Tale of Sir Thopas*. Hill, birds, forest, and various flora are the phenomena of nature surrounding the would-be lover and hero as he seeks fairyland "An elf-queene for t'espye" (VII, 799) but instead encounters the exact opposite, a giant. The concentration of nature images and otherworld details of the creative in this relatively short passage culminating with an ironic reversal bespeaks both Chaucer's genius for employing the often serious nature emblems to achieve a comic effect and his awareness of the cumulative force of a chain of such emblems. And there is even some relation between the treatment of otherworld and the poet's interest in the craft of poetry. Despite the

absence of any direct discussion of it within the tale, the multiplicity of satiric lines parodying literature of inferior quality moves logically toward Harry Bailly's declaration in the epilogue that "This may wel be rym dogerel" (l. 925). Hardly more effectual a criticism could have lambasted weak contemporary verse. The censure attests to Chaucer's continued concern with the origins of good literature.

Sundry glimpses of the supernatural recur elsewhere in The Canterbury Tales. The pseudo-religious Pardoner offers one: the exemplum proper of The Pardoner's Tale is clearly defined by images of grove and oak in a passage relating eternal death to a consequent end of creativity (VI, 760-75). In The Prioress' Tale life-giving holy water and Mary the unending "welle of mercy" enable the slain boy chorister to sing his praises of "that blisful Mayden free" (VII, 635-69); water, religious love, and song form a slight recollection of Chaucer's earlier thought chains. The Man of Law's Tale twice gives evidence of the poet's realization that otherworld and nature image may offer mutual reinforcement: first by incorporating a statement concerning the Primum Mobile and its power over man and second by pointing out the Sultanness' insincerity in yielding to baptism (II, 295-315, 351-57). None of these tales, obviously, uses enough nature images or otherworld matter to constitute a major thought line; however, the relation of forest and water emblems to the eternal and the powerful is implicit.



Like tales of other genres in The Canterbury Tales, two fabliaux treat briefly of water and wood. The Miller's Tale draws much of its humor from a jealous husband's unnecessary fear that a flood as great as Noah's will end his earthly life and conduct him to otherworld; he envisions water as entry to the afterlife. The Friar's Tale presents a devil at the edge of a forest clearly demarking otherworld. Little can be concluded from the use of these images of the eternal except that they did indeed continue to represent the unending to Chaucer--unending chaos and destruction as opposed to a continuing joy and creativity.

The otherworld of dreams has thus far demanded almost no attention in The Canterbury Tales. In approaching The Nun's Priest's Tale, though, we encounter much concern with the prophetic qualities of dreams. The argument between Chauncleer and Pertelote over the accuracy of dreamed presentiments interweaves various bits of dream lore; allusions by Pertelote to Cato and by Chauncleer to Kenelm, Macrobius, Daniel, Joseph, Croesus, and Andromache (VII, 2940-41, 3110-48) witness simultaneously to Chaucer's broad knowledge in the field and to his desire to incorporate memory of old books into his narrative. Nor is the catalogue of dreamers and authorities on dreams the only material dealing with literature. The often-cited apostrophe to the literary theorist Geoffrey of Vinsauf (ll. 3347-54), as I have commented previously, manifests some degree of familiarity with medieval



rhetoric. Hence two practices of Chaucer in his early poems recur in this mature work: focus on the possibility of divine inspiration through dreams and emphasis on memory of literature of the past.

Uniting flower and water images in the invocation to Mary, *The Second Nun's Tale* suggests a relationship among nature, religious love, and inspiration to create poetry (VIII, 29, 37). In spite of its brevity, the association once more recalls a part of Chaucer's literary theory.

Finally, it deserves repetition that references to water, wind, flower, bird, and song are interspersed among references to springtime, creativity, and rebirth opening *The General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*. Although no discussion of the literary craft ensues, certainly there is no negation of the connection between the nature images and literary fecundity.

To trace the recurrence of nature images and otherworld matter through *The Canterbury Tales* is to observe that poems from the latter portion of Chaucer's career do indeed employ in otherworld settings the nature images of the eternal and the creative which were vital to the expositions of Chaucer's sentiments on the origin of verse; more than half the tales present some otherworld matter. However, it is to observe also that at no point do they formulate a sharply defined progression from nature image to unproductive poet and thence to an otherworld mental state supplying inspiration and joy.



That progression, I believe, Chaucer had developed during the years in which he was reaching toward an understanding of the creative impulse and its fulfillment. Perhaps by the time he was engaged in composing The Canterbury Tales he had become so accustomed to drawing service from bird, flower, tree, mountain, water, and wind images in otherworld settings that they almost naturally flowed from his pen.

Anelida and Arcite

Before we turn to analysis of the elements of the progression in Troilus and Criseyde and the dream visions, it remains to examine such elements of it as appear in the fragmentary poem Anelida and Arcite, probably composed earlier than most tales of the Canterbury collection. In this fragment we encounter a speaker who specifically identifies himself as a poet (ll. 8-14) and who moves into his narrative only after invoking the aid of an otherworld figure--the Muse Polyhymnia associated with the mountain Parnassus, the supposed stream Helicon, and the laurel tree--and improperly crediting his story to old books by Statius and "Corynne" (ll. 15-21). Nature images, poet speaker seeking facility in composition, and implication that such facility will come from otherworld suggest the major components of Chaucer's image progression and hint that both memory and divine inspiration are prerequisites to the making of the poem. Despite this forceful beginning, the remaining extant verses

offer no interlacing of nature images and otherworld concerns. Certain isolated details, however, indicate that the connections were never far from Chaucer's consciousness as he composed. The representation of Arcite as "double in love" and "subtil in that craft" (ll. 87-88) recall but do not completely repeat the equation of love to literary craft opening The Parliament of Fowls. Subsequent references within the narrative to love, "the poynt of remembraunce," and sorrow (ll. 126, 211, and 212 respectively) echo and connect some elements contributing to image progressions in other poems. The unloved, sorrowing poet speaker almost corroborates the connection in these words:

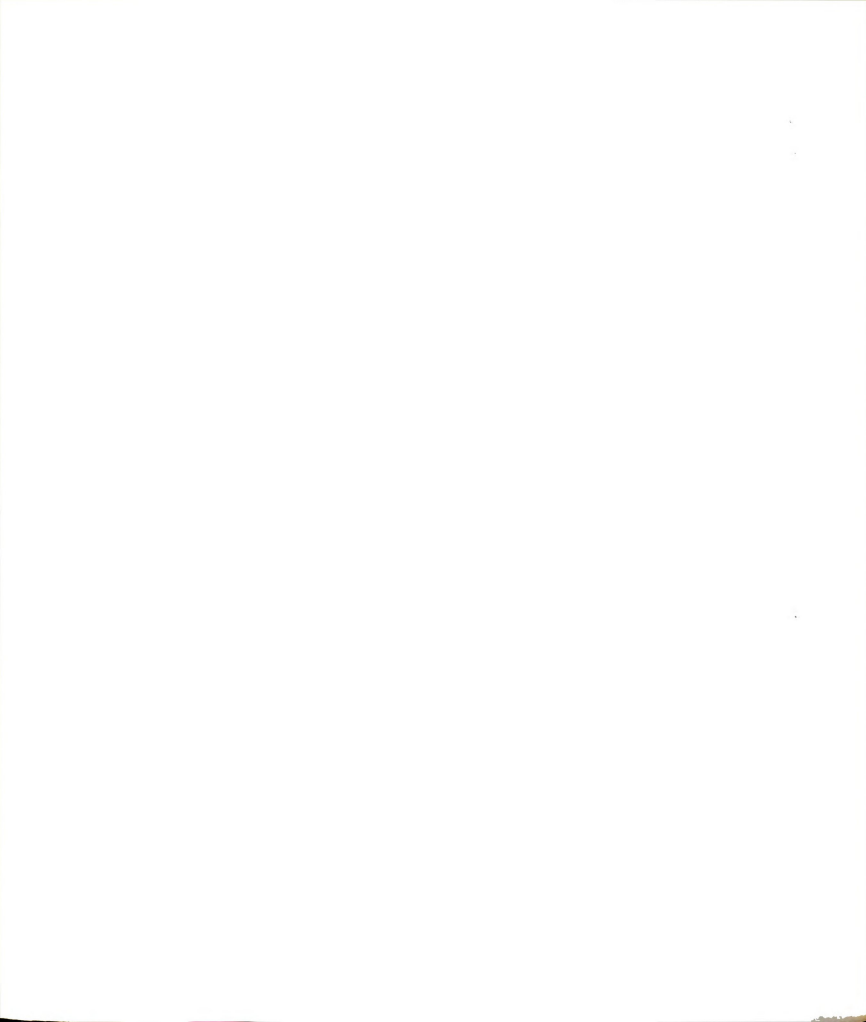
Then ende I thus, sith I may do no more,--
 I yeve hit up for now and evermore;
 For I shal never eft putten in balaunce
 My sekernes, ne lerne of love the lore.
 But as the swan, I have herd seyde ful yore,
 Ayeins his deth shal singen his penaunce,
 So singe I here my destinee or chaunce,
 How that Arcite Anelida so sore
 Hath thirled with the poynt of remembraunce.
(ll. 342-50)

It is impossible to say with any measure of assurance what otherworld details or nature images might have entered the poem had it achieved completion. But because of certain similarities between the fragmentary Anelida and Arcite and the completed Troilus and Criseyde it may be reasonable to propose some slight possibilities. Let us note the similarities. First, the speaker of each poem represents himself at the outset as a poet. Second, the above-quoted verses inject the Anelida and Arcite speaker into his narrative anew, as the

Troilus and Criseyde speaker sometimes interpolates comments. Third, each speaker is without love. Fourth, several invocations introduce various books of Troilus and Criseyde, as an invocation opens Anelida and Arcite. And fifth, a story of "falsed" love which leads to woe is the matter of each poem. The parallels, then, may indicate that additional invocations or comments by the loveless speaker of Anelida and Arcite would have united with references to an attempt by him to draw inspiration from a mental otherworld and to conjoin the inspiration with memory of old books in solving a problem of literary creativity; they leave open also the possibility that further nature images of the creative and the eternal might have supported the material dealing with composition. But beyond these points it is not clear what otherworld details the poem might have embodied.

Troilus and Criseyde

In the long romance Troilus and Criseyde we encounter a body of nature images and otherworld details noticeably interacting with comments on the craft of literature. The poem presents various indications that at the time of its composition Chaucer was still concerned to publish his poetic theory even though he had long since effected a compounding of its elements. It also establishes some interrelationships among the topics of love, creativity, and religion. And it further relates the Mnemosyne-and-Zeus, or



memory-and-inspiration, myth to the threefold subject matter and to much of the meaning.

A summary of the entire poem might yield extensive supporting evidence of Chaucer's methods in narration, but such a summary

were here a long digression
Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle.
(I, 143-44)

And so it must suffice to concentrate on a sequential sketch of the content most directly related to the topic at hand. The unloved and sorrowful poet speaker opens his poem by stating that he will tell of Troilus' "double sorwe" and then invokes the divine assistance of Tisiphone, the "cruwel Furie" reflecting Troilus' sorrow and pain. In an apostrophe to now-happy lovers he requests prayers for those unhappy in love and for himself that he may

have myght to shewe, in som manere,
Swich peyne and wo as Loves folk endure,
In Troilus unsely aventure.
(I, 33-35)

Turning to his "matere," the speaker presents the Graeco-Trojan war background to his plot and then introduces the heroine, Criseyde. The season is springtime,

whan clothed is the mede
With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme,
And swote smellen floures white and rede,
(I, 156-58)

and Criseyde goes to the temple to praise and serve "Palladion." Here Troilus, who has held love a "folye," sees her and is hit by Cupid's arrow. His newly experienced emotion

leads him to compose a paradoxical song on the joyful pain and woeful good of love (I, 400 ff.)--a song the preservation of which the speaker attributes to "myn auctour called Lollius" (l. 394).

The joy-sorrow paradox of love re-emerges in a proverb-filled stanza of the verbose but unloved Pandarus:

"For thilke grownd that bereth the wedes wikke
Bereth ek thise holsum herbes, as ful ofte
Next the foule nettle, rough and thikke,
The rose waxeth swoote and smothe and softe;
And next the valeye is the hil o-lofte;
And next the derke nyght the glade morwe;
And also joie is next the fyn of sorwe."
(I, 946-52)

No further imagery of significant otherworld material occurs in the remainder of Book I. Let us recapitulate, then, to note the sequence of such matter thus far. We find the loveless speaker seeking poetic power from a supernatural source, springtime and creativity, heroine in relation to fresh phenomena of nature and to religion, hero in relation to temple and love deity, composition in terms of joy and sorrow, acknowledgment of memory of an old book, and references to herb and flower and hill of gladness by one who can only "hoppe alwey byhynde" (II, 1107) in the dance of love. Each major topic of Chaucer's image progressions--love, creativity, religion--assumes importance. The speaker's alleged source and an inspiring deity reflect the roles of Mnemosyne and Zeus. And flower imagery appears at points in the plot which deal with springtime blooming and new creative love.

This sketch of Book I, focusing on elements of Chaucer's thought progression, first has illustrated that there is indeed a sequence or progression of ideas on the creative and second has interpreted the sequence. In sketches of subsequent books we may blend considerations of literal content and meaning. Let us proceed, then, to such considerations.

Having stated as his theme Troilus' double sorrow and having appropriately begged the aid of Tisiphone in Book I, the speaker supplies similarly appropriate nature images in the proem to Book II. The apostrophe to the wind concerning the sea of Troilus' tempestuous despair (a kind of mental otherworld, perhaps) thus glances back briefly to the "cruwel Furie" at the beginning of the poem and unites the emblematic quality of an element of nature with that of an otherworld personage. The second stanza appeals to Clio for excellence in versifying and reasserts that the loveless speaker indites "of no sentement" (experience) but from a Latin source; again both divine inspiration and old books must join forces to produce poetry. The application to love of the changes which time brings "in forme of speche" (II, 22-28) both foreshadows his statement concerning problems of dialectal variation (V, 1793-98) and suggests a connection among language, love, and poetic craft. As the narrative of Book II begins, the springtime setting still prevails; fresh flowers have come to life again, and "The swalowe Proigne, with a sorowful lay,"

awakes Pandarus to an errand of love undertaken for Troilus (ll. 50-73). At the home of Criseyde, Pandarus hears of the "romaunce of Thebes" which she and other ladies are having read to them (II, 81-105). Although the allusion reintroduces the war background and perhaps thereby adumbrates later events in the downfall of love, it serves also the function of the love-creativity-religion topic: it reaffirms the relation of old books to new creativity and love by marking the point at which Pandarus declares Troilus' love for Criseyde.

Criseyde approaches her decision on whether to grant her love to Troilus through events transpiring in her garden, which is "shadewed wel with blosmy bowes grene" (II, 821). The song to Cupid sung by her niece in this setting relates the religion of love to joy and causes Criseyde to inquire,

"Lord, is ther swych blisse among
Thise loveres, as they konne faire endite?"
(II, 885-86)

Hence the love-creativity-religion triad is renewed. Tree and song in garden otherworld lead the lady toward love as solution to a problem. In a later stanza, a nightingale's lay of love makes Criseyde's "herte fressh and gay" and perhaps inspires her dream of an eagle that exchanges his heart for hers (ll. 918-31); thus the bird and the song prefigure a prophetic dream in which the eagle replaces the nightingale. And Pandarus' guiding Criseyde to the garden so that he may deliver Troilus' epistle of love (ll. 1114-20) once

more provides a near-otherworld setting for writings on love. The rather heavy concentration in Book II of passages on literature suggests that here Chaucer was working especially with his literary theory.

In the opening stanzas of Book III the speaker recognizes the all-pervading power of Venus "In hevene and helle, in erthe and salte see" over man, bird, herb, and tree. Jove as amorous deity bent on love underscores the theme. But appeal to love as a purely romantic force is not quite adequate to the speaker's current purpose. The invocation to Venus draws added might from a later request that Calliope ease the poet's distress so that he may "telle anonright the gladnesse / Of Troilus" (III, 47-48). The coupling of the goddess of love and the Muse of epic poetry reiterates the love-literary craft equation of The Parliament of Fowls. Love and religion and composition yet again interlace, and a poet speaker seeking creativity yet again links world to otherworld.

Briefly but clearly one stanza identifies the laurel with Apollo (ll. 540-44). The tree-deity, natural world-supernatural world connection echoes a motif of the invocation and ties the motif to a second call to Venus and the nine Muses near the end of Book III:

Thow lady bryght, the doughter to Dyone,
Thy blynde and wynged sone ek, daun Cupide,
Yee sustren nyne ek, that by Elicone
In hil Pernaso listen for t'abide,
That ye thus fer han deyned me to gyde,
I kan namore, but syn that ye wol wende,
Ye heried ben for ay withouten ende!

(III, 1807-13)

A few other details of Book III demand note. In ll. 1324-36 the speaker subjectively reminds his audience that he is following his supposed Latin author Lollius and invites "correccioun / Of yow that felyng han in loves art" for his language, or use of words. The aubade of ll. 1472-91 implies a love-verse causality. A later passage on the bliss of Troilus and Criseyde slightly suggests a love-joy-composition linkage:

Felicite, which that thise clerkes wise
Comenden so, ne may nought here suffise;
This joie may nought writen be with inke;
This passeth al that herte may bythynke.
(III, 1691-94)

And finally, God as "auctour . . . of kynde" is mentioned in the culminating stanza of Troilus' song of Love as a powerful deity controlling man (ll. 1737-71). Old books, song and other composition, and inspiring deity maintain in this passage the principal points of a thought chain.

One related critical interpretation calls for attention. Peter Dronke has pointed out that "The language of love in Troilus III has a strong undercurrent of language relating to the Redemption."¹ Religion and salvation and solution to a problem thus stand in a significant central position in the narrative.

Re-emphasizing that he is a poet in need of divine aid to compose, the speaker establishes at least a tentative

¹"The Conclusion of Troilus and Criseyde," Medium Aevum, XXXIII (1964), 47.



likeness between himself as quaking author and Troilus as woeful lover in the proem of Book IV. Possibly Chaucer is preparing the way for acceptance of the speaker's concluding moral message in Book V. Images of barren trees and welling eyes (ll. 225-31, 246-52) not only intensify the sorrowful tone of this book but also contrast with more cheerful images of rebirth and creativity of earlier divisions; thus the joyful upward progress of love followed by its sad downfall is paralleled structurally by appropriate nature emblems of the happy and the unhappy. Moreover, the likening of speaker to hero implies similar upward-downward emotional progressions for the maker in relation to his composition.

The temporary joy of the lovers before Criseyde leaves Troy is imaged as the song of a bird on a leafy, productive bough (ll. 1432-35). Criseyde subsequently pledges fidelity in an apostrophe to an active, creative body of water:

"And thow, Symois, that as an arwe clere
 Thorough Troie rennest ay downward to the se,
 Ber witnesse of this word that seyde is here,
 That thilke day that ich untrewed be
 To Troilus, myn owene herte fre,
 That thow retourne bakward to thi welle,
 And I with body and soule synke in helle!"
 (IV, 1548-54)

The motion and truth of this river contrast with the hellishness of the Styx cited in l. 1540 and so reflect joy-sorrow, love-lovelessness, and fertility-sterility oppositions running through numerous verses.

With foreboding of "The fatal destyne / That Joves hath in disposicioun," the speaker addresses the three Fates at the beginning of Book V. He notes the passage of three years by citing thrice-melting snows and Zephyr's thrice inspiring the rebirth of green leaves--brief recurrences of joy before approaching final sorrow. A long ensuing passage dealing with Troilus' woe and his cursing the deities of nature is interrupted by the speaker's comment on a problem of composition:

Thow, redere, maist thiself ful wel devyne
That swich a wo my wit kan nat diffyne.
On ydel for to write it sholde I swynke,
Whan that my wit is wery it to thynke.
(V, 270-73)

I would reaffirm my statements in Chapter IV that Troilus' sorrow over love plus his anger with the gods and with nature foreshadows loss of power, whether in literal love or in the figurative love implying literary fecundity. The hero's woe keeps active the love-composition alignment.

The downward negative trend continues in Troilus' song of sorrow in love:

"O sterre, of which I lost have all the light,
With herte soor wel oughte I to biwaille
That evere derk in torment, nyght by nyght,
Toward my deth with wynd in steere I saille;
For which the tenthe nyght, if that I faille
They gydyng of thi bemes bright an houre,
My ship and me Caribdis wol devoure."
(V, 638-44)

The wind of sorrow pushing the lover toward death is soon echoed by the wind-like sorrowful sighs of Criseyde (ll. 673-79). Troilus' dream of wandering in a forest (ll. 1233-43)

reinststitutes the tree image in the same woeful context as the earlier verses have introduced the wind emblem. And water imagery joins the chain of stress on sorrow in the hero's declaration:

"Myn eyen two, in veyn with which I se,
Of sorwful teris salte arn woxen welles."
(V, 1373-74)

A kind of overall framework for Troilus and Criseyde may be inferred from the fact that the speaker begins his poem with a prayer for divine assistance to compose and closes it with various statements on literary creativity. His wish for God-given poetic power in comic as well as tragic vein and his charge to his poem to honor the ancient authors to whom it is at least indirectly indebted unite the theme of Divine inspiration with that of memory of old books (ll. 1786-92). Diversity in English pronunciation and orthography, the speaker realizes, may prevent proper delivery or interpretation of his narrative (ll. 1793-98). And the mention of "the forme of olde clerkis speche / In poetrie," the apostrophe to fellow-authors Gower and Strode, and the culminating invocation to the Deity (ll. 1854 ff.) once more conjoin old books and some suggestion of inspiration. References to composition and religion close out the literal story of love, which, indeed, Chaucer concludes by injecting the final view of Troilus between passages specifically discussing writing.

But the literal love, even, ultimately links religious terminology with happiness and music. Having lost love and

life, the hero ascends to the eighth sphere, where he is surrounded by "sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie." And from his vantage point he is able to distinguish between worldly vanity and heavenly felicity, between worldly love and heavenly love. Because the speaker has earlier established a similarity between his own state and that of Troilus, his placing of this final narrative episode among comments on literature gains added meaning: sorrowful poet may achieve happiness and a solution to his problems in composition through dependence on otherworld power, just as sorrowful lover may win joy and an answer to his love problem in otherworld. Though for some years certain critics have condemned the close of Book V as irrelevant to earlier matter,² it may actually supply the strongest cohesive force of the poem. Indeed, it organically unites what might have seemed widely disparate themes.

In one important detail particularly, the thought chain in Troilus and Criseyde differs from the full image progressions of the four dream visions. Although many images from nature appear in the poem, they do not act as agents instigating the poet speaker's progress from a point in the known and conscious world to a comparable point in otherworld where his bound creativity is freed. Rather, they support

²See especially J. S. P. Tatlock, "The Epilog of Chaucer's Troilus," Modern Philology, XVIII (1921), 636. Tatlock believes that the mood at the end of the poem differs from that in earlier portions and that the religious conclusion is "sudden and arbitrary."

statements of prevailing mood or define crucial events in the plot. By the time that Chaucer was engaged in his work on Troilus and Criseyde, he had somewhat changed his use of imagery. It continued to support and keep active the themes with which the poet was dealing, but it did not continue to carry the burden of the topic of literary creativity. Chaucer had moved toward more direct, overt discussion of his craft.

The Book of the Duchess

A consideration of The Book of the Duchess, by contrast, reveals a poet persona who does meet a nature image in an old book, who does visit otherworld in dream, who does encounter there various nature images of the eternal and the creative which thaw his frozen craft, and who does return to the conscious world able to create.

Since I have already presented in Chapter II my general sequential reading of nature imagery and otherworld concerns in the poem, I wish now to retrace the world-poet persona-otherworld matter more specifically in relation to overall structure. Two structural practices in particular require note. Repeated frame-within-frame effects have elicited comment by various students of the poem, and similarities between the Ceyx-Alcyone and Black-White narratives as well as between the situations of the Black Knight and the poet

persona have received analysis.³ With these points in mind, we may look again to the content of The Book of the Duchess.

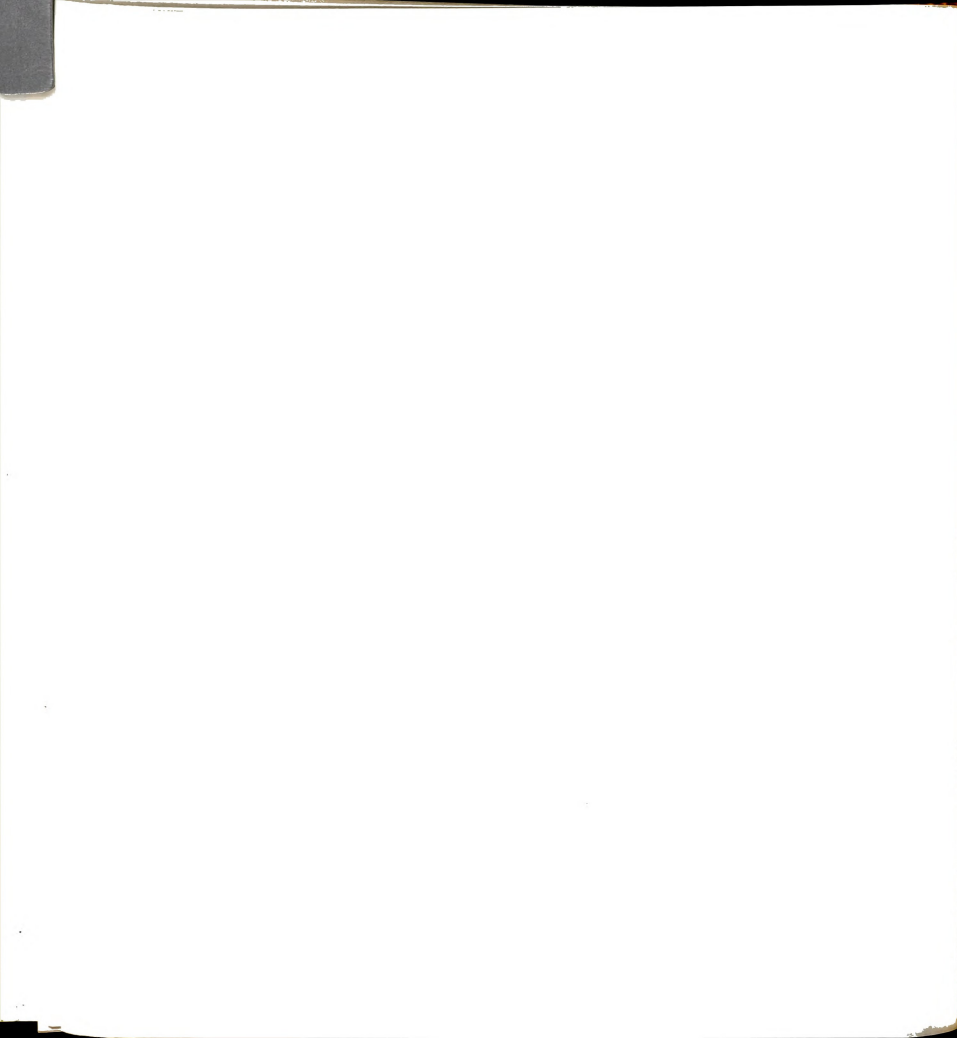
At its beginning the poet persona is unhappy, unimaginative, loveless, and sleepless. To pass the dreary night he reads in a book revealed to be an old one, Ovid's Metamorphoses, an account of King Ceyx and Queen Alcyone. The story opens with the king's traveling at sea and losing his life, or entering otherworld, through a watery storm. His wife, bereaved by his extended absence, receives in a dream a divinely inspired answer to her question of his whereabouts: his body will be found beside the sea. The queen awakes, sorrows, and then herself enters otherworld through death. The poet persona meditates upon what he has read, falls asleep "ryght upon my book," and dreams. Initiating the dream are suggestions of rebirth, love, composition, religion, and creativity: Maytime, merry birds singing in heavenly tone, delightful murals depicting the story of Troy and The Romance of the Rose. The poet persona imagines that he joins a group of hunters, rides to a forest side, pauses beneath a tree, and then pursues a dog into the forest down a path almost sacred to Flora and Zephyr. Repeated emphasis on trees precedes the poet persona's seeing a man in black

³See especially Bertrand H. Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Re-opened," PMLA, LXVII (1952), 863-81; R. M. Lumiansky, "The Bereaved Narrator in Chaucer's The Book of the Duchess," Tulane Studies in English, IX (1959), 5-17; and John Lawlor, "The Earlier Poems," in Chaucer and Chaucerians, ed. D. S. Brewer (London, 1966), pp. 39-64.



sitting with his back to an oak. The man, a noble knight, bewails in verse the death of his lady. Frequently bringing forward the sorrow-joy opposition running through other Chaucerian poems, the Black Knight's lengthy discourse on his love for "goode faire White" nevertheless emphasizes sorrow. Numerous literary and mythological allusions (ll. 1055-1125) followed by references to his own making of songs (ll. 1155 ff.) inject the theme of composition anew. With that the hunt ends, and the knight, having released much of his woe, returns to his castle on a hill; the poet persona awakes from his dream, finds the book of Ceyx and Alcyone still in his hand, determines to put his dream into rhyme, and does indeed complete his project in creativity.

The framework of the story, then, takes on a box-within-box pattern. The movement from outer to inner boxes proceeds thus: sad and uncreative poet persona, reference to book with nature imagery, sleep, dream, hunt, nature images of flowers and trees and wind in otherworld, man in black who discusses sorrow and joy and love and literature. The Black Knight is the central box. The reverse inner-to-outer movement takes this sequence: man in black, nature image of hill in otherworld, ending of hunt, ending of dream, ending of sleep, book, and apparently happy and creative poet persona who has successfully completed writing about his dream. And so world and nature imagery, poet persona led to dream otherworld by old book and phenomena of nature, and otherworld events, the three major divisions of Chaucer's image



progressions, work in conjunction with and even serve as principal stuff of the frame-within-frame organization of material.

But certain structural parallels as well as structural progresses support meaning in The Book of the Duchess. First, there exist similarities between the Ceyx-Alcyone and Black-White stories. Various commentators have observed the mirror-image effect of the two narratives whereby the bereaved in the first is the lady and the bereaved in the second is the knight. Second, some critics have pointed out that the knight is a partial reflection of the poet persona: each achieves a measure of peace or solution to sorrow through an otherworld sojourn, the knight to the forest and the poet persona to both dream and forest. Perhaps even more significant, however, is a third parallel: a parallel between the situation of Alcyone and that of the poet persona. It is in her divinely sent dream vision that Alcyone finds the answer to her question and her sorrow; similarly, it is in an old-book-inspired dream that the poet persona finds release from sorrow and frozen imagination. Hence the Ceyx-Alcyone sequence may be even more integral to the organic structure of the poem than has been recognized. The poet persona, Alcyone, and the Black Knight share grief but also hope and some overcoming of woe.

With the general organization and structure of The Book of the Duchess in mind, then, we may move on to somewhat more



specialized analysis of the three principal components of Chaucer's progressions, world and poet persona and other-world. Let us trace first the nature images only, to observe their functions in the overall structure. The initial encounters with nature come in the Ceyx episode's references to the sea (ll. 67, 140, 208). Not only does the sea emblem open, center, and close the sequence; it clearly introduces a person into the eternal otherworld. Within this frame in which sea equals death are other images from nature. When Juno's messenger goes to Morpheus, he passes through a barren, sleep-inducing region

to the derke valeye
 That stant betwixen roches tweye
 Ther never yet grew corn ne gras,
 Ne tre, ne [nothing] that ought was,
 Beste, ne man, ne noght elles,
 Save ther were a fewe welles
 Came rennyng fro the clyves adoun,
 That made a dedly slepyng soun,
 And ronnen doun rygght by a cave
 That was under a rokke ygrave
 Amydde the valey, wonder depe.
 (ll. 155-65)

The sorrowful imagination of both the poet persona and Alcyone is implicit in the negative references to heights, trees, and bodies of water.

Despite the parallels between the poet persona and the lady, however, a contrast also is apparent: Alcyone is connected only with sorrowful nature images, but he is related to images of joy as well as to images of woe. In his dream it is springtime, the time of rebirth, and "smale foules a

gret hep" sing creatively in merry heavenly tones. After joining a hunt, he becomes closely associated with trees-- indeed, an entire forest, which he enters

Doun by a floury grene wente
 Ful thikke of gras, ful softe and swete.
 With floures fele, faire under fete,
 And litel used, hyt semed thus;
 For both Flora and Zephirus,
 They two that make floures growe,
 Had mad her dwellynge ther, I trowe;
 For hit was, on to beholde,
 As thogh the erthe envye wolde
 To be gayer than the heven,
 To have moo floures, swiche seven,
 As in the welken sterres bee.

(ll. 398-409)

The springtime-and-rebirth theme expands through the nature images of flowers and wind; in addition, the creativity idea gains momentum.

Nature imagery remains important at a deeper point in the poet persona's dream. His seeing the man in black under an oak recalls his having paused beneath a tree at the forest side and so establishes a link between them. Through the knight's long review of his love, however, imagery turns away from nature except insofar as the forest is a backdrop for the scene. And yet the eternal, creative wood itself may play a part in such comfort as the knight--and by extension the poet persona--may gain. The oak, symbol of the eternal, under which the knight sits may lend him a measure of strength and stability which, added to the comfort which comes from his talking about his grief, enables him to ride up the hill toward higher spirits. And the hill, as we have noted, marks

simultaneously the close of the episode involving the knight and the close of the poet persona's dream.

Nature imagery, then, stands at the beginning and the end of the poet persona's dream, at the beginning and the end of the Ceyx-Alcyone passage, and at the beginning and the end of the Black-White sequence. Besides representing love and creativity and religion (as we shall observe more fully), the images from the known world perform services of organization and structure.

The second major component of Chaucer's image progressions, the poet persona, is perhaps the strongest force correlating all facets of the poem. His presence throughout provides a unifying thread, but the mere presence is not the only binding agent. The idea of death which the poet persona advances at the very outset may be the initial indication of a death-rebirth archetype (specifically related to composition) running the length of the work, for assuredly at the close the poet persona's creativity has been born anew after his experiences with various phenomena of nature in the dream otherworld. The death-rebirth motif applied to the central figure reflects the sorrow-joy opposition of the Black Knight and Alcyone.

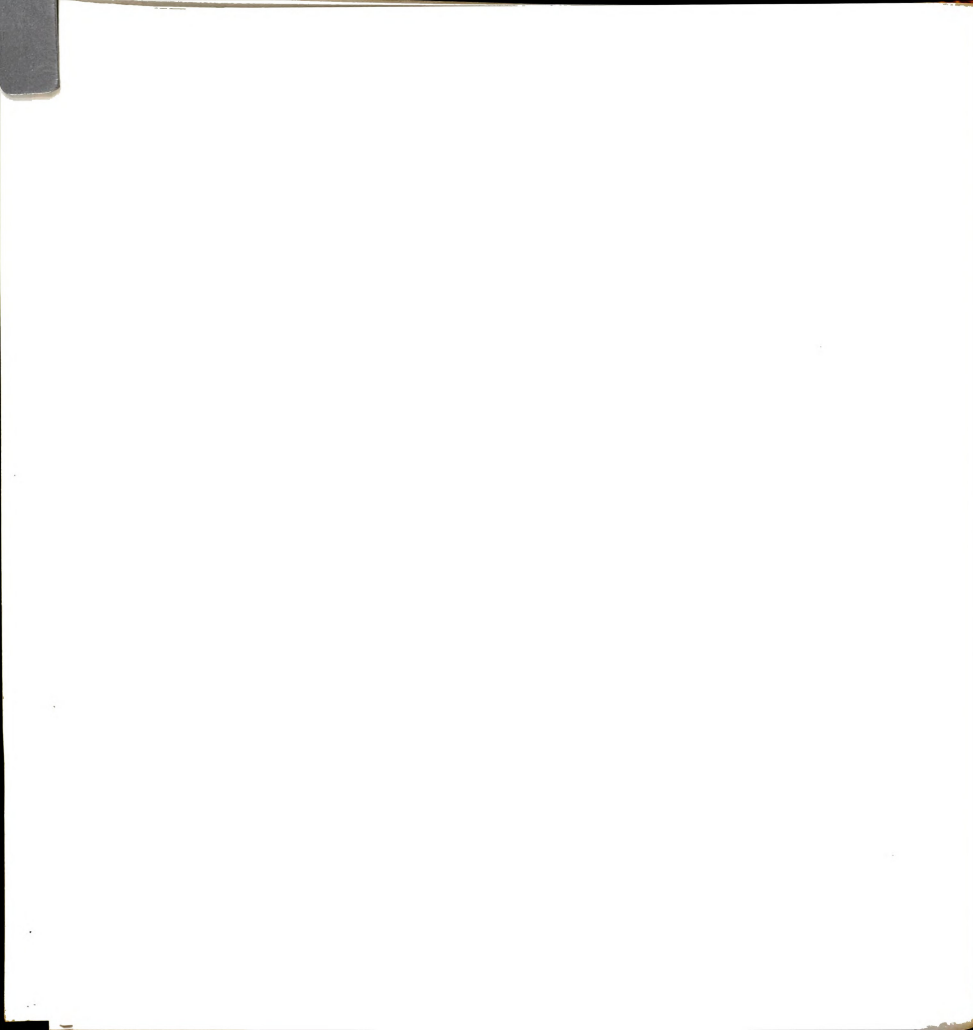
It seems necessary to consider momentarily Chaucer's concept of the character of the poet persona as central figure, although numerous critical discussions have dealt fully with the matter. Whether the poet persona is the conventional



dull or naive or witless dreamer of much medieval literature has been the subject of much criticism.⁴ It is true that on hurried reading one might infer a limited intelligence for him, but a more careful analysis indicates that loss of imagination and creativity rather than stupidity is his difficulty. His "many an ydel thoght," his "sorwful ymagynacioun," his slain "spirit of quyknesse," and his loss of "al lustyhede" equal fruitlessness in literature. Although it would be possible to extend discussion of his personality and interests quite aside from its relation to composition and love and religion, what is of greatest import here is that he does indeed introduce the three topics.

Through the poet persona, in fact, we see much other attention to literature: his interest in reading, his summary of the Ceyx-Alcyone story, his salvation through the tale (ll. 222-25), his citations of the matter of Troy and The Romance of the Rose (ll. 326-34), his hearing the Black Knight's literary allusions (ll. 568-72, 1056-84, 1117-23) and comments on his own verse-making (ll. 1155-63). But a

⁴For an overview of such criticism, see in particular four works: George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1915); Howard Rollin Patch, On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge, Mass., 1939); James R. Kreuzer, "The Dreamer in the Book of the Duchess," PMLA, LXVI (1951), 543-47; and Bertrand H. Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Reopened," PMLA, LXVII (1952), 863-81. The views of the dreamer range from Kittredge's idea that he was naive and child-like and Patch's statement that he was a "poor dolt" to Kreuzer's denial of any naiveté and Bronson's opinion that the dreamer was using tact in dealing with the man in black.



somewhat more general involvement of literature which nevertheless relates specifically to the image progressions occurs also. In various ways the protagonist is shown to be in pursuit of something, sometimes perhaps unwittingly. He reads and so pursues a certain kind of knowledge. He dreams of joining a hunt and so extends his pursuit. He imagines following a dog as otherworld guide and so finally encounters the knight whose sorrow-to-comfort progress mirrors his own emergence from difficulty. That the object of his search is creativity has already been shown, I think, through reference to the poet persona's initial sorrowful imagination and ultimate success in composition.

Similarly, we find through the poet persona strong focus on love; only one physician, assumed to be the lady whom he loves, can heal his sorrowful sickness (ll. 36-40); his narration of the Ceyx-Alcyone passage deals with sorrow over lost love; and his concern with the Black-White sequence develops the connection even more extensively. And yet again, through the poet persona we encounter the topic of religion: his consciousness of the spiritual emerges through his statement that he "knew never god but oon" (l. 237); through allusions to pagan deities, Juno and Morpheus; through the religion of love which the poet persona, like Alcyone and the Black Knight, honors; and through the sorrow-joy dichotomy implying a hell-heaven opposition. Thus the poet persona is not merely the central link in the world-poet persona-other-world chain; he is also the agent most completely correlating



topics of the poem.

The third principal element of Chaucer's progressions, otherworld, is so thoroughly explored in The Book of the Duchess that its being essential to movement and meaning can hardly be questioned. Several manifestations of the region appear. The otherworld of afterlife, reached through a watery death, is the place to which Ceyx and Alcyone repair. The otherworld of pagan deities becomes important in the scene of Juno's aid to Alcyone, which in turn involves the otherworld of the queen's dreams. Paralleling this dream-land is the subsequent unconscious state of the poet persona which ultimately revives his nearly expired creativity. And within his dream, as I have commented, is a yet deeper otherworld, the forest where he meets the man in black. It is significant that the sorrow-joy contrast common to all these pictures of otherworld is also fundamental to the poet persona's initial fruitlessness and later fecundity. And because elsewhere in the Chaucer canon (notably in the opening verses of the two versions of The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women) the sorrow-joy dichotomy is equated with a heaven-hell opposition, the idea of progress from one kind of otherworld to another emerges.

Despite extensive peopling of otherworld in much medieval literature including other dream visions by Chaucer, The Book of the Duchess limits its cast of characters. Besides the poet persona, whose dual function as co-ordinator



of topics and link in an image progression we have noted, few figures are really brought to action before the audience. Ceyx and Alcyone, Juno and her messenger, and Morpheus are presented as if in motion, but they are characters existing in the tale antecedent to the principal story. The poet persona's horse, the hunters, and the whelp perform only briefly and without development as conductors of the poet persona to a deep area of otherworld. Thus only the Black Knight and the poet persona serve in major roles. The efficacy of the small cast, I think, is twofold: the similarities between the situations of the poet and the knight are enhanced, and the focus on love and creativity is sharpened.

Thus world, poet persona, and otherworld formulate a tightly interwoven thought chain in which various nature images cause the protagonist to enter a mental otherworld where he finds his creative ability. After the return of his poetic power, he is able, back in the waking world, to relate his dream.

It remains to evaluate the contributions of memory and inspiration to The Book of the Duchess so that we may understand the constitution of Chaucer's poetic theory about the time he composed the poem. Although space allotted to each component of the creative process is no sure measure of its significance, the allotment may yet indicate something of the poet's thinking. Of the 1334 verses, 159 (not quite twelve per cent) relate the content of the old story from



Ovid. By contrast, 1035 verses (more than seventy-seven per cent) concern the poet persona's dream in which he receives inspiration. Seemingly, then, inspiration might be of vastly greater import than memory in the evolution of a poem. But since there are parallels between Alcyone's situation and the situations of the poet persona and the Black Knight and since the knight himself alludes to old books, the memory facet of creativity looms larger than it might at first appear to do. We cannot say that all otherworld experience equals inspiration, for much remembered literature is apparently remembered in the unconscious, the dream otherworld. And yet because of the still-greater attention to that mental state where inspiration has its seat, it is likely that Chaucer regarded original otherworld-given genius as indispensable to the production of literature. The creative process required unconscious as well as conscious pondering of material available to the poet before his genius transubstantiated it.

The House of Fame

With the fragmentary second dream vision by Chaucer, The House of Fame, we encounter afresh the three topics of love, religion, and creativity; image progressions involving elements of nature from the known world, a vision of otherworld, and a poet persona who moves mentally from one region to the other; and continuing subscription to the idea that



memory and inspiration produce literary art. A summary of the poem blended with commentary will reveal the inclusion of these elements and will simultaneously indicate similarities or differences between it and The Book of the Duchess in relation to otherworld material.

In an introductory discussion of dreams, the proem to Book I states the poet persona's wish that "God turne us every drem to good!" and suggests distinctions between "avisoun" and "revelacioun," between "drem" and "sweven," and between "fantome" and "oracles," distinctions which may imply heaven-sent imagination for the second-named of each contrasted pair. Thus the opening verses not only establish a religious context but also hint that dreams may be of divine origin since possibly

spirites have the myght
To make folk to dreme a-nyght,
(ll. 41-42)

that they may result from

the cruel lyf unsofte
Which these ilke lovers leden
That hopen over-muche or dreden,
(ll. 36-38)

and that they may emerge under yet another condition:

That som man is to curious
In studye, or melancolyous
Or thus, so inly ful of drede,
That no man may hym bote bede;
Or elles that devocion
Of somme, and contemplacion
Causeth such dremes ofte.
(ll. 29-35)

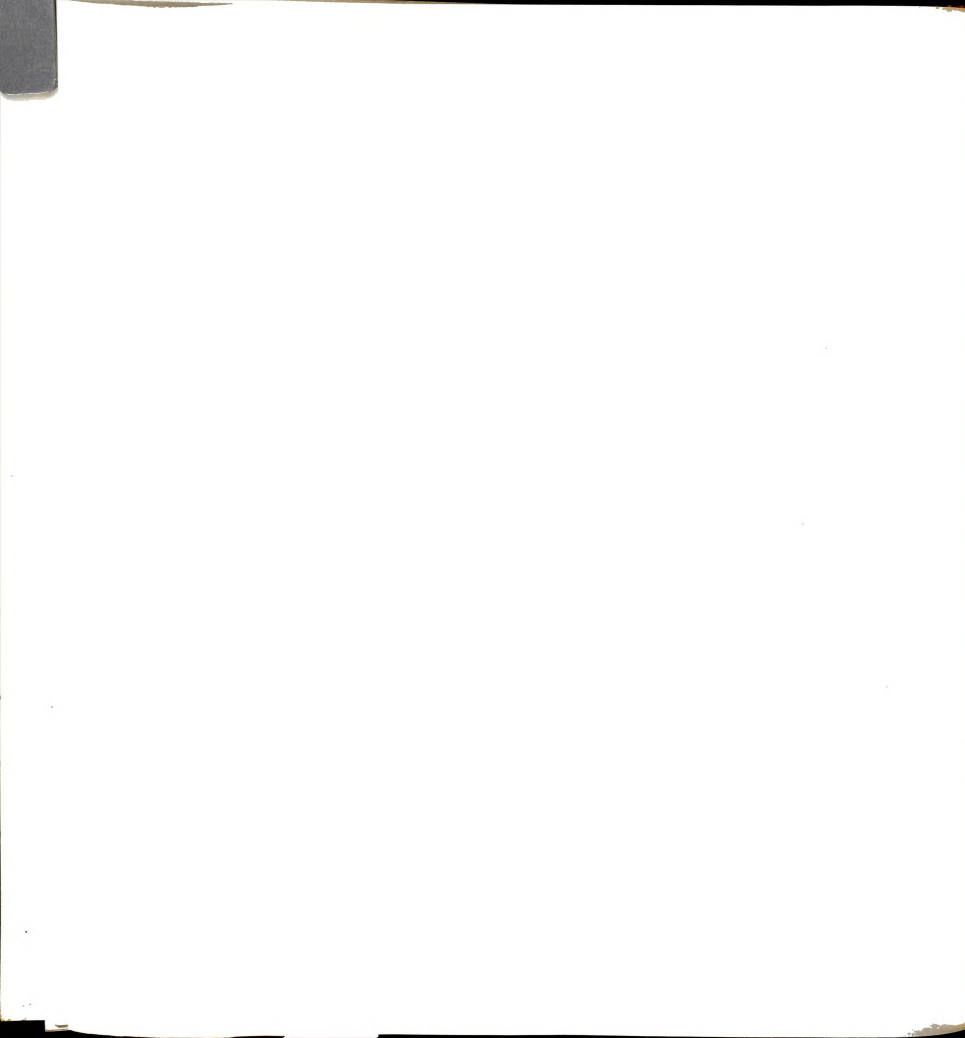
Religion, love, study (possibly of old books), and meditation (not necessarily on "devocion") all enter into the

discussion of dreams along with the idea of divine inspiration and memory. Hence both the major topics and the suggestions of the Zeus-Mnemosyne theory are bound to a unifying thought chain.

That the dream state is one kind of otherworld and therefore that the proem is organically related to the world-poet persona-otherworld progression becomes clear in the invocation to the god of sleep

That duelleth in a cave of stoon
Upon a strem that cometh fro Lete,
That is a flood of helle unswete,
Besyde a folk men clepeth Cymerie,--
There slepeth ay this god unmerie
With his slepy thousand sones,
That alwey for to slepe hir wone is.
(ll. 70-76)

River, otherworld of hell, sorrow, and desire for assistance in composition unite within the confines of a few lines. The poet persona's prayer to Morpheus advances the wish for an accurate re-creation of the dream otherworld state in which inspiration was initially given. Nor is the woeful need for literary aid left undeveloped. Subsequently the poet persona begs that "he that mover ys of al" may give joy to lovers who have dreamed of bliss and who will now hear of the poet persona's dream (ll. 81-87). The placement of these interlinked references to happy love, to dream, and to action-instigating Deity just after references to imagery of sorrowful imagination almost prophesies a possible answer to the poet persona's difficulty: contemplation of love in the dream otherworld may lead to active inspiration and consequent



creativity. The poet persona's threatened curse on those persons who would misjudge his vision (ll. 94-108) aligns hate, or lack of love, with inability to fathom the dream-land origin of verse and therefore implies that love is requisite to the creative impulse.

Not adopting the traditional Maytime setting for the dream in The House of Fame, Chaucer incorporates a feeling of initial coldness and barrenness by dating the dream December 10. This time of fruitlessness is represented as the time the dream actually occurred, not just the time in which events within the dream were laid. If establishment of the theme of initial fruitlessness was Chaucer's purpose in selecting a winter setting, there seems to be no need to search for allegorical meaning in the date.⁵ Another shift from traditional dream-vision practices is the immediate arrival of sleep, without recourse to old book or contemplation of nature or prayer to Morpheus as in The Book of the Duchess.⁶ The poet persona simply falls asleep and imagines that he is in a temple of glass, a place having religious significance, in which both emblems of love and emblems of literature abound. The temple, it is revealed, is sacred to Venus, goddess of love and beauty; more importantly, her

⁵See Robinson, p. 780, for a resume of allegorical interpretations of the date.

⁶The invocation to the god of sleep in ll. 66 ff., it will be remembered, is contemporary with the supposed time of composition, not with the time of the dream.

"portreyture" represents her as "Naked fletyne in a see," as wearing a rose garland, and as being associated with doves and Cupid. Imagery of water, flower, and bird is thus related to the continuity and eternality of love as represented by the two generations of Venus and Cupid.

Juxtaposed against this group of nature images of the creative in otherworld is a passage dealing directly with an old book: the story of The Aeneid "writen on a table of bras" on a temple wall. The movement of emotion within the poet persona's rehearsal of the narrative is from woe and destruction through joy and more woe and ultimately back to happiness. We find major points of this progress in the fall of Troy; in Aeneas' flight from the Greeks with the aid of Venus and later the spirit of his wife Creusa, who has died in a forest; in his apparently joyous union of love with Dido; in her sorrowful death when she discovers the falseness of Aeneas' love; and in Aeneas' final happy and successful founding of a new nation. By introducing this material into The House of Fame, Chaucer casts special light on the love and sorrow-joy themes and plays down the war background except as evidence of woe. He seems to be consciously building toward an overall image progression for the entire poem.

Temporarily leaving his summary of The Aeneid at the event of Dido's suicide, the poet persona advises persons who would know more of the Aeneas-Dido tale to read Virgil or Ovid and so reminds them of old books which have become

mother to new poetry. The ensuing allusions to various other instances of falseness and betrayal (ll. 383-426) re-emphasize the topic of literature. And the remaining verses on The Aeneid trace the hero's adventures in a tempest at sea, in his journey to hell, and in his settling in Italy and establishing a nation; thus Chaucer repeats the nature image-otherworld association and introduces creativity. Closing out the summary, the poet persona attributes Aeneas' final achievement of success to Jupiter at the request of Venus (ll. 464-65) and thereby renews the Zeus theme of inspiration in relation to love--as envisioned by the poet persona.

It is the cumulative force of all these details of world-poet persona-otherworld and memory-inspiration, apparently, which draws meaning from the last two verse paragraphs of Book I. Exiting from the temple with the realization that he does not know where he is (he cannot find himself creatively), the protagonist views still in dream a barren area reflecting the sterility of his own mind:

Then sawgh I but a large feld,
 As fer as that I myghte see,
 Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,
 Or bush, or grass, or eryd lond;
 For al the feld nas but of sond,
 As smal as man may se yet lye
 In the desert of Lybye;
 Ne no maner creature
 That ys yformed be Nature
 Ne sawgh I, me to rede or wisse.
 (ll. 482-91)

The multiplicity of nature images in the yet-unproductive otherworld not only strengthens the loveless-uncreative

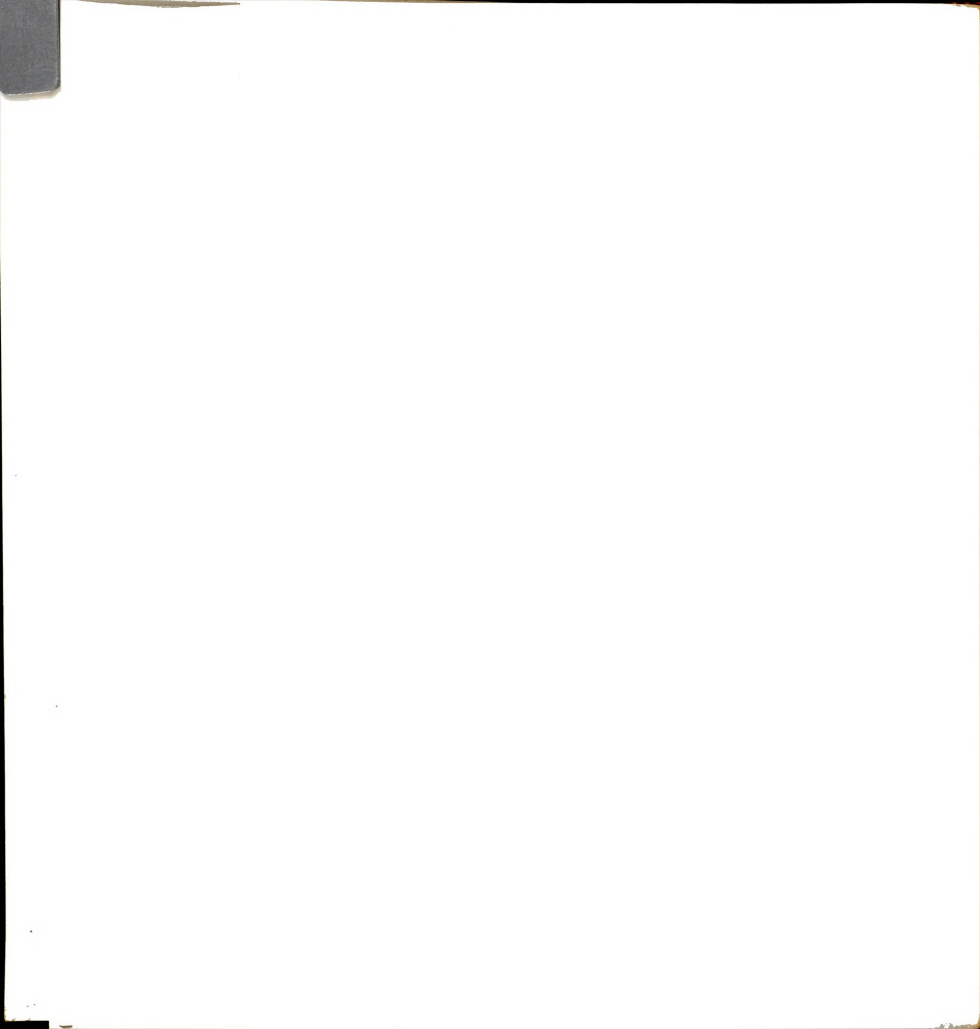
association but also serves as an introduction to the deeper mental otherworld where, as in The Book of the Duchess, the poet persona may gain that which he lacks in order to make poetry. With the plea that Christ save him from phantom and illusion (that He cause him to see truth in his otherworld sojourn), he casts his eyes heavenward and immediately detects the initial element of an answer to his prayer: the Eagle, or bird of creativity, which will conduct him to the fruitful portion of otherworld.

Let us pause momentarily to meditate on associations which Chaucer has established elsewhere and has echoed in Book I of The House of Fame. Two otherworld regions are implied: the sterile-sorrowful-hellish region and the potentially fertile-joyful-paradisiacal region. That these understandings of otherworld embody at once concepts of the pagan Elysium and Tartarus and the Christian heaven and hell lends added power and breadth to the religious element of Chaucer's idea on the origin of art. And that matters of love will be regarded in the potentially fertile area further unifies the love-creativity-religion triad. We have here looked back on Book I and anticipated material in Books II and III; the necessity for doing so, I think, is evidence of the continuity of theme throughout the poem.

In the proem of Book II the poet persona reiterates his concern with dream lore, calls in memory of famous dreamers in Biblical and classical literature, and invokes the aid of Venus ("Cipris") as well as that of the Muses of Parnassus

and "Elicon, the clere welle." Thought, or Memory, is also addressed as a being who may have the "vertu" to help the poet persona relate his dream properly. Mountain and water imagery in addition to the interlacement of dream with love and divinity and memory and religion and composition initiates the portion of the narrative in which the poet persona is taken on a quest. As in The Book of the Duchess the protagonist was represented as being in unwitting pursuit of matter for his poetry, so here, perhaps, the central figure's dream is a quest on which he must go unconsciously since in the conscious world he has not been fully aware of his need.

Resuming the narration of his dream (l. 529), the poet persona tells of the Eagle's catching him up from the barren field and wafting him aloft. Stupefied, he ponders that he is unlike Enoch, Elias, Romulus, or Ganymede; even in his amazement he seeks Biblical and classical analogies to his case and so injects memory of old books into the poem just before the Eagle explains his mission. Jupiter has sent him to "Geffrey," whose devoted but unrewarded service to Cupid and Venus through love poetry has aroused the chief deity's pity. The Eagle cannot restrain himself, however, from the personal observation that in the poet's "hed ful lyte is" (l. 620) despite his regularly sitting "domb as any stoon" at his books (ll. 656-60). Thus is recalled the uninspired if not slow-witted poet who perhaps unwittingly seeks material from other authors: he has memory but lacks otherworld inspiration. In recompense for his labor and

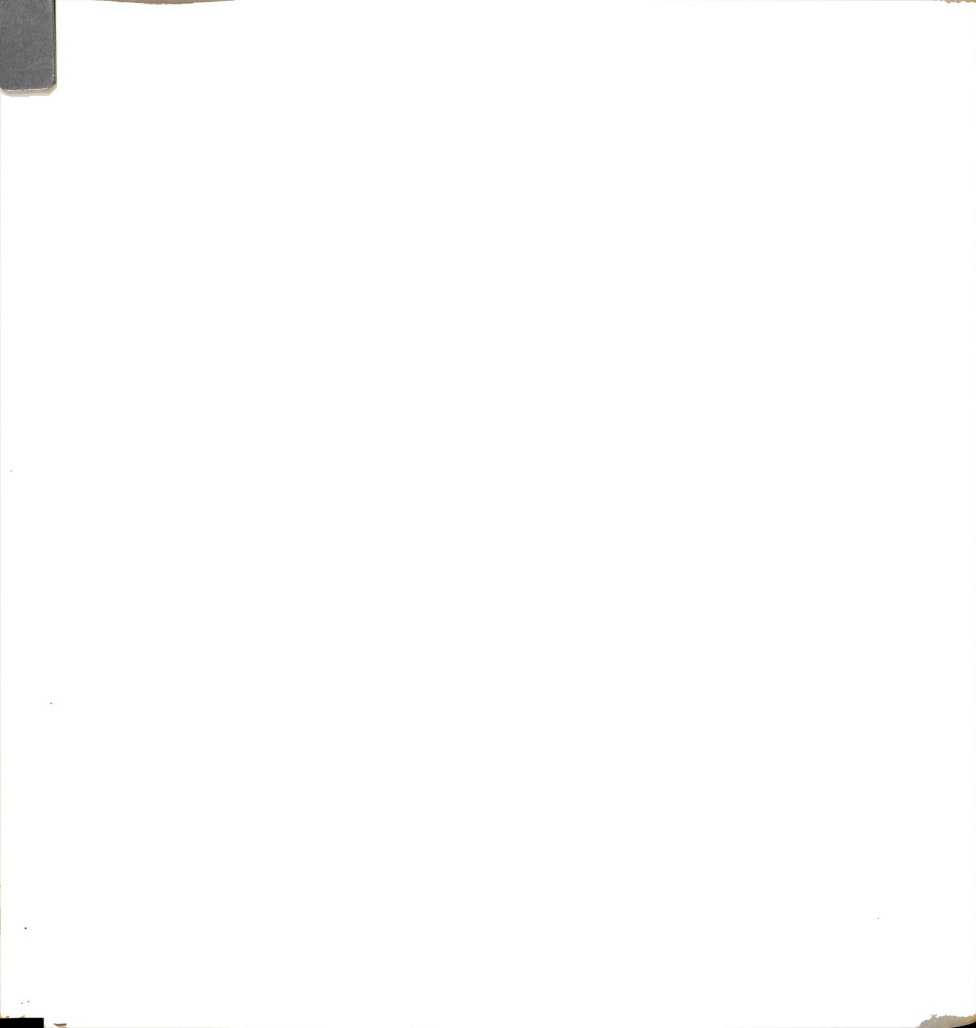


devotion, Jupiter will "quyte" him with certain tidings--news and sayings of love--so that he will "be of good chere." The place where he will hear the tidings will be the aerial otherworld of the palace of Fame to which all news from the world ascends. Deity, specific otherworld, and love tidings will lead the poet persona to joy.

The Eagle's lengthy explication of the movement of sound involves a comparison of it as "eyr yoroken" to the ever-wider circling of disturbed water (ll. 782-822). Although speech and sound do not equal literary composition, they do suggest some of its elements.⁷ What I find of greatest consequence, however, is the figure of moving water in relation to these poetic elements; in Chaucer's thought, perhaps not fully conscious at this point, active water bears a resemblance to the flow of a maker's mind. The Eagle's disquisition on sound assuredly contributes to Chaucer's poetic theory, though the contribution is relatively slight.

In incorrectly disclaiming any dependence on rhetoric, the otherworld guide unwittingly reveals his unconscious concern and Chaucer's surely conscious concern with matters of poetry (ll. 853-63). This attention to the art of composition presented while the travelers are en route to the

⁷See Laurence K. Shook's opinion set forth in "The House of Fame," in Companion to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto, New York, and London, 1968), p. 342. In his interpretation, the poem states that poems "are made out of sounds," that the real "stuff of poetry is speech," and that speech and sound provide "the fundamental element of verse." Although I do not fully subscribe to all of Shook's ideas, I do find merit in them.



house of Fame initiates a progression of thoughts on the creative. There follows the poet persona's viewing from on high

feldes and playnes,
And now hilles, and now mountaynes,
Now valeyes, now forestes,
And now unnethes grete bestes;
Now ryveres, now citees,
Now tounes, and now grete trees,
Now shippes seylynge in the see.
(ll. 897-903)

An allusion to Scipio's dream of "Helle and erthe and paradys" (ll. 916-18) relates the poet persona's mental state to otherworld. A later downward glance reveals to him

Cloudes, mystes, and tempestes,
Snowes, hayles, reynes, wyndes,
And th'engendrynge in hir kyndes,
(ll. 966-68)

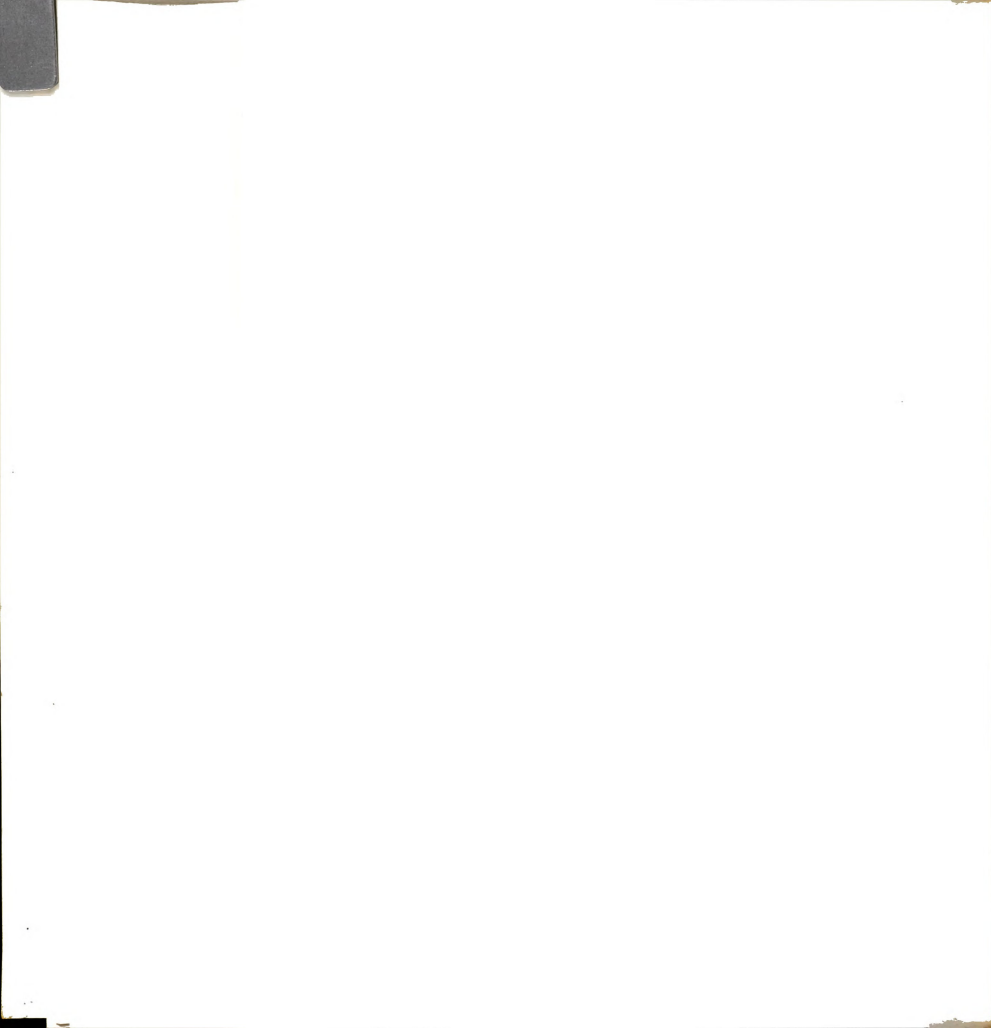
so that he is moved to praise the creative might of God and then to think of Boethius, Martianus Capella, and Alanus de Insulis. Two groups of nature images, various forms of otherworld, power of the Deity, and old books form a clearly interrelated sequence set afoot by the Eagle's comments on rhetoric. The major components of Chaucer's image progressions are present.

The ensuing discussion, in which Geffrey avers that he is too old to learn "of sterres aught," mentions poetry on stars and Geffrey's not knowing their names or positions, information which the Eagle might have supplied him. As they approach Fame's palace, they hear a great rumbling sound "of tydynges, / Both of feir speche and chidynges," which Geffrey likens to the "betynge of the see . . . ayen the roches

hollowe" in a tempest (ll. 1034-36). Thus at least a part of the lore which he gains in otherworld possesses the creative force of moving water; the arrival at the house of Fame, embracing the water image, may equal the poet persona's reaching in his mental otherworld the point at which his imagination becomes mobilized so that it may flow freely.

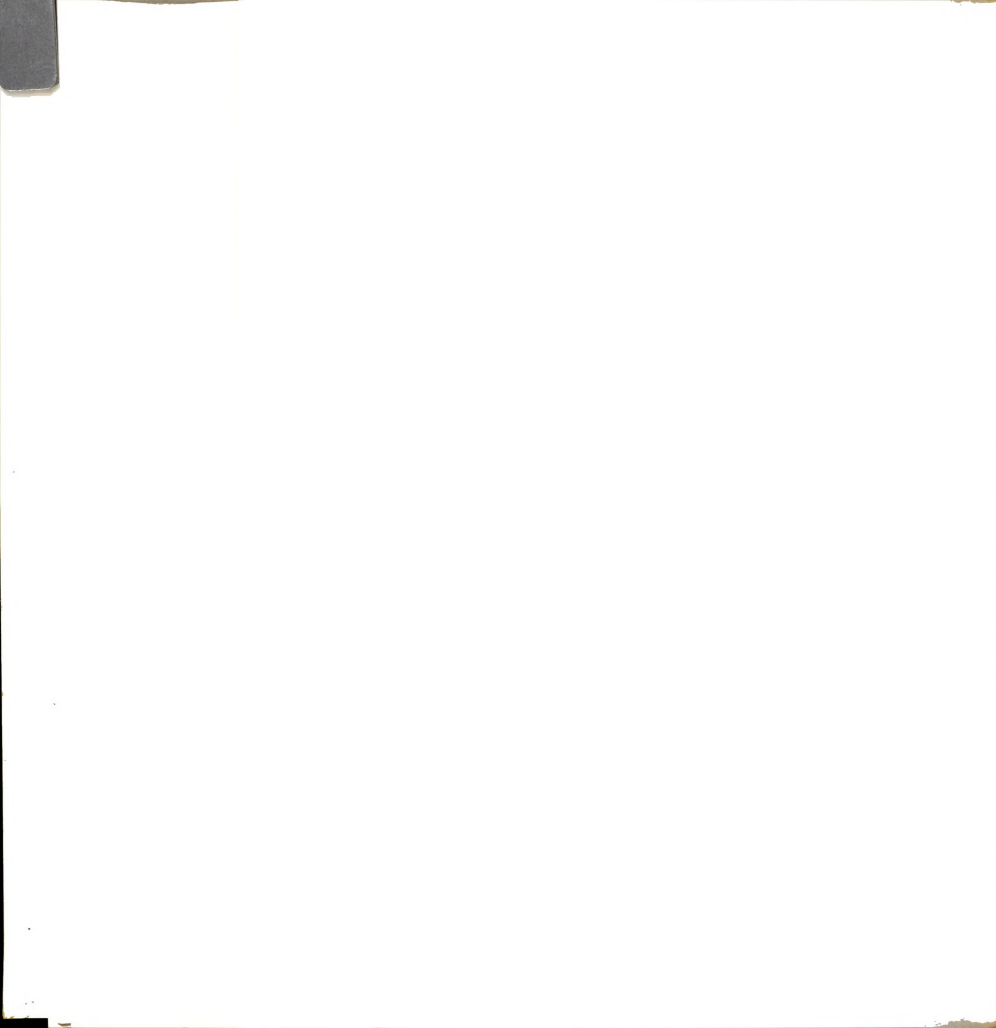
The appeal that Apollo as deity "of science and of lyght" give assistance in the "lytel laste bok" of the poem (ll. 1091-93) indicates progress toward and use of knowledge and enlightenment after activation of the imagination. Geoffrey still desires that "art poetical be shewed," though not craft but "sentence" is his primary concern. His promise to kiss Apollo's laurel in appreciation of literary assistance recalls the creativity implicit in the tree image.

The location of the palace of Fame on a high rock, the poet persona's struggle to ascend the rock, and his discovery that the rock is of ice inject imagery bearing much "sentence": Fame is related to creativity, the poet must climb "with alle payne" to reach the pinnacle of fecundity, and even fame or creativity once achieved may melt. But the fresh state or preservation of great names in the still-frozen ice suggests that any artistic excellence will attain immortality. In this passage Chaucer clearly identifies the frozen with the permanent rather than the impermanent. Apparently he is not here referring so much to widespread recognition in one's own day as to attainment of a place among the immortals.



About the otherworld palace which Geffrey reaches after more climbing stand minstrels and "gestiours" and harpers as well as other entertainers and workers of magic, some of whom the poet persona knows from old books (ll. 1195-1281). The efficacy of the passage is to spotlight the making and the presentation of verse or song in conjunction with some attention to memory of literature. The topic of poetry receives renewed emphasis in a scene depicting the goddess Fame surrounded by the nine Muses (ll. 1395-1405); that the deities of the arts honor in song a yet-higher goddess again conveys the thoughts that creativity may lead to a kind of immortal fame.

Statues in the palace strengthen the association of literature with fame: the figures of Statius, Homer, Virgil, Ovid, and Lucan (ll. 1456-1506) simultaneously receive Geffrey's unconscious homage and introduce the idea of unconscious memory anew. Following these direct references to specific ancient makers, several nature images of the creative add point. Aeolus as literal wind, as deity, and as publicizer of man's words and deeds (ll. 1567-71, 1602, 1636 ff.) embodies several ideas: nature images of fecundity and the eternal, religion, and literature broadcast or published; almost a full progression as well as interlacement of topics emerges from this one apt figure. But Aeolus is also part of the broader progression moving from the climb up the high rock to makers of literature through Fame's



charge to the wind deity and to the poet persona's later descent into a valley.

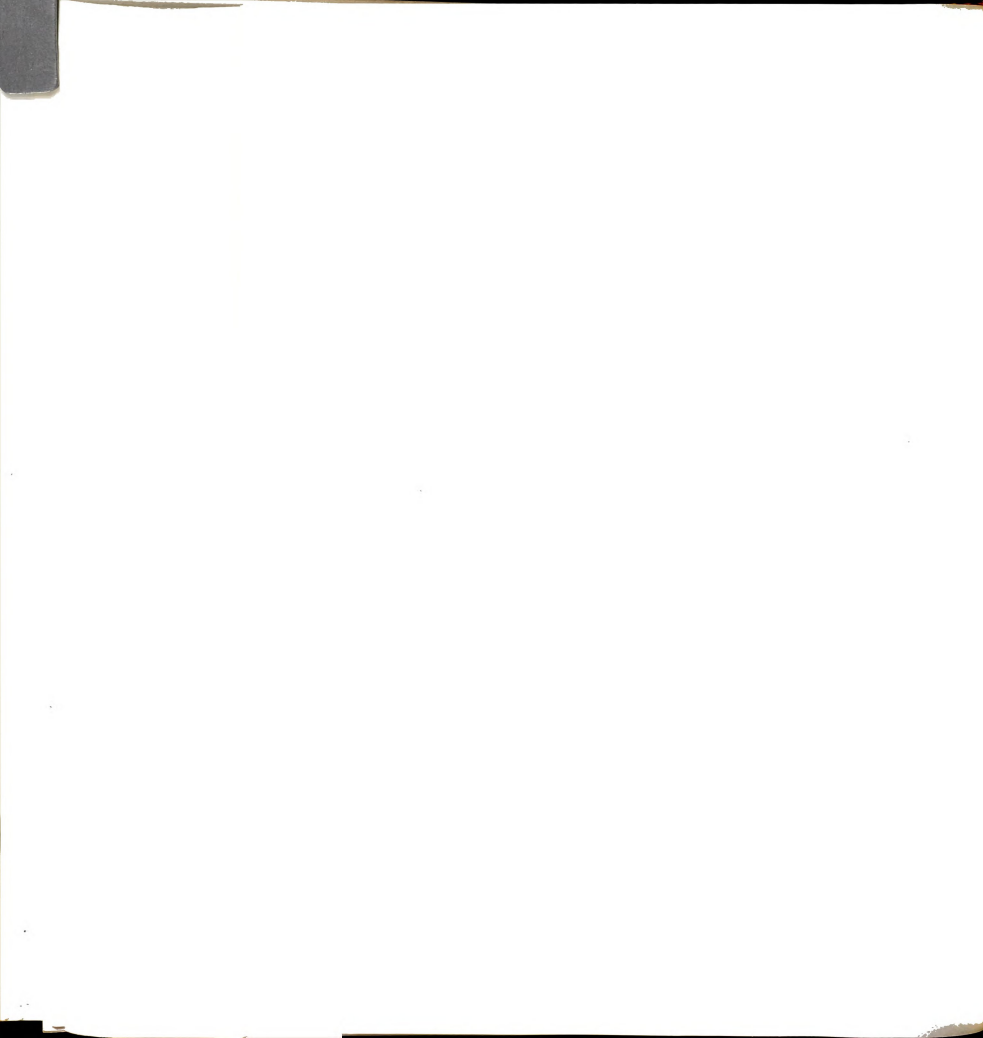
The valley which Geffrey enters on leaving Fame's house apparently marks a temporary period of discouragement following his realization that this otherworld palace has provided him "no such tydynges" as he had expected (ll. 1894-95). And yet in the valley he sees a huge whirling house of twigs, a second otherworld dwelling, which may offer hope. Not only does its motion hold out the possibility of progress and mental activity, but from it comes a noise so great

That, had hyt stonden upon Oyse,
Men myghte hyt had herd esely
To Rome, y trowe sikerly.
(ll. 1928-30)

From the house eternally emerge "tydynges, / Other loude, or of whisprynges" (ll. 1956-57), of all manner of human concerns. Among them are life and death, love and hate, fair winds and tempests; no one matter assumes major importance, though several suggestions of the creative and the eternal enter. Aware that his Eagle is "perched hye upon a stoon" nearby, Geffrey requests that the guide await him while he sees what wonders are in the place; the implications that the bird has never been far away from the poet persona since bringing him to the area and that the emblem of the creative rests high on a permanent foundation unite nature imagery with productive poet and the eternal. Again a brief and compact but nevertheless complete image progression has been formed. The Eagle's subsequently conducting Geffrey into the

whirling house once more almost directly states that contemplation of or association with a nature image leads the poet persona to a point in otherworld at which he may find inspiration. In the house Geoffrey sees folk exchanging news (ll. 2043 ff.), becomes aware that it grows or increases as it passes from mouth to mouth (ll. 2075-80), and views the compounding of true and false tidings (ll. 2108-09). Although news is equivalent to neither remembered old books nor literary composition, it is related to them; perhaps there is even a passing bow to adaptation and reworking of old material in the growth of tidings conveyed from person to person.

Finally, to the accompaniment of much excited noise related specifically to love tidings, enters "A man of gret auctorite." Despite much scholarly interest in identifying this personage, it is unlikely that positive identification can ever be made. But identification is probably less important than the possible function of the character. Had the poem been completed, the man might have performed some single significant act such as charging the poet persona to compose or delivering edicts to the folk interested in love tidings. Elsewhere Chaucer has shown his accord with authority in government, in religion, and in literature; elsewhere he has revealed his basic conservatism and conventionality in all these fields. Thus it appears likely that the introduction of the man of authority would have preceded his issuing orders related to some of the many kinds of news to be



encountered in the whirling house of twigs: life or death, love or hate, fair wind or tempest. And all the kinds of news are matter with which a maker may deal.

The very full and all-pervading distribution of nature images throughout The House of Fame and the continuing presence of the poet persona indicate that had the poem reached completion some sort of overall progression superior to the many rather brief progressions might have provided still further structural unity. The major outline might have taken this form: numerous early nature images of barrenness superseded by other nature images of creativity, initially unproductive and later productive poet persona, and initially sterile otherworld replaced by later fertile otherworld united in such a way that poetry results. Though the fragment breaks off without stating definitely that the poet persona actually received creative inspiration in the dream otherworld, the several invocations establish the idea that he is indeed recording his remembered dream with the aid of certain divinities; a temporary imagined renewal of his otherworld experiences results. No one book, no one nature image in the waking world has caused him to dream, but in his dream he does ponder at length The Aeneid and more briefly the contributions to literature by various poets. Hence memory plus inspiration again equals the production of art. And inspiration--if otherworld is identical with inspiration at this point--demands more space than memory demands, as it did



in The Book of The Duchess. But neither partner to the creation of literature may absent itself: both Zeus and Mnemosyne remain absolutely requisite.

The Parliament of Fowls

Though the theory of the origin of verse and the three-fold subject matter related to it remain constant in The Parliament of Fowls, there is apparent an approach to the treatment of image progressions somewhat different from that of the earlier dream visions. Whereas both The Book of the Duchess and The House of Fame call in an abundance of nature images without focus throughout on any one image,⁸ The Parliament of Fowls tends toward heavy emphasis on one dominant emblem of creativity, the birds referred to in the title. Simultaneously, it sharply defines the role and the problem of the maker of poetry in such a way as to indicate that Chaucer was becoming ever more aware of the relevance of his poetic theory to his own creativity.

Plunging directly into the topic of the literary craft in the initial stanza, Chaucer seems to blend his own voice with that of his poet persona:

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
The dredful joye, alwey that slit so yerne:
Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge

⁸Even the bird image of Books I and II in The House of Fame lacks the centrality of image to entire poem which the title The Parliament of Fowls suggests.



Astonyeth with his wonderful werkynge
 So sore, iwys, that whan I on hym thynke,
 Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke.
 (11. 1-7)

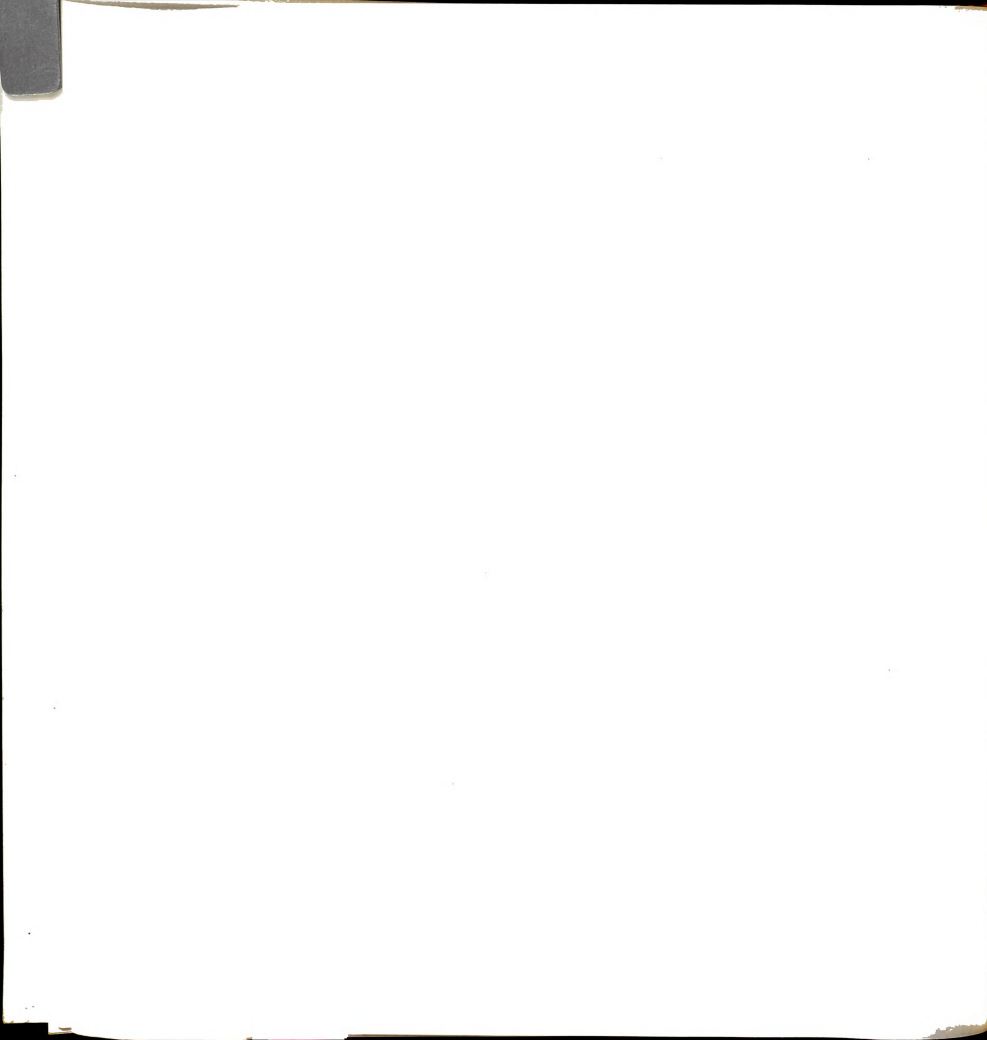
We have previously noted that paraphrase of this passage would equate the practice of love to the practice of composition. As in the opening book of Troilus and Criseyde, the poet (perhaps now less readily identifiable with the actual author) goes on to explain that he is not personally acquainted with Love, or Cupid, but that "ful ofte" in books he has read of two facets of the deity: "his myrakles and his crewel yre." Although these facets do not exactly parallel joy and sorrow, or heaven and hell, they do at least present the duality of the emotion and, by extension, the creativity or sterility of a maker. And the poet persona desires that "God save swich a lord!" despite the duality.

From the reference to craft in general in the first nine lines, the poet has proceeded to the somewhat narrower consideration of books in particular, and he maintains that consideration through subsequent stanzas which eventually further narrow the focus to one specific volume. The poet persona, an avid and almost constant reader, has recently looked in an old book "a certeyn thing to lerne"--and has found delight by doing so, although the exact thing sought yet eludes him. Literature, nevertheless, has led him to joy.

Identifying the book referred to as "Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun," he explains that it treats of "hevene and



helle / And erthe" (ll. 32-33). In the next seven stanzas he summarizes the work and so illustrates the relevance of the summary to the opening remarks on craft. Several dichotomies carry the narrator's understanding of the book's theme: joy-sorrow, eternal-temporal, heaven-hell, life-death. Joy without and in a blissful place will be the reward of persons who love the "commune profyt" (ll. 43-56). That this message is given to Scipio by Africanus in a dream following a happy reunion with Masinissa suggests a slight reversal of the cause-effect progressions encountered elsewhere: here joy leads to dream in which knowledge is gained, whereas The Book of the Duchess and The House of Fame have presented dreams providing knowledge which in turn has led to joy. A subsequent contrast between "the lytel erthe" and "hevenes quantite" supplies a basis for evaluating the extensive influence of the nine spheres' melody, imaged as a well of music and cause of harmony (ll. 62-63). Africanus' advice to Scipio that he scorn delight in the world precedes Scipio's request for knowledge of how to gain heavenly bliss. And Africanus' answer is that one should know oneself immortal and should work for the common profit. The final detail from the old book is the wish of Africanus that God give Scipio the grace to come to that blissful place. Two particularly significant points emerge from a reading of this passage. First, an otherworld place as point of origin for music, or poetry, is closely tied in with Chaucer's doctrine of creativity, and second, themes of religion and love other than



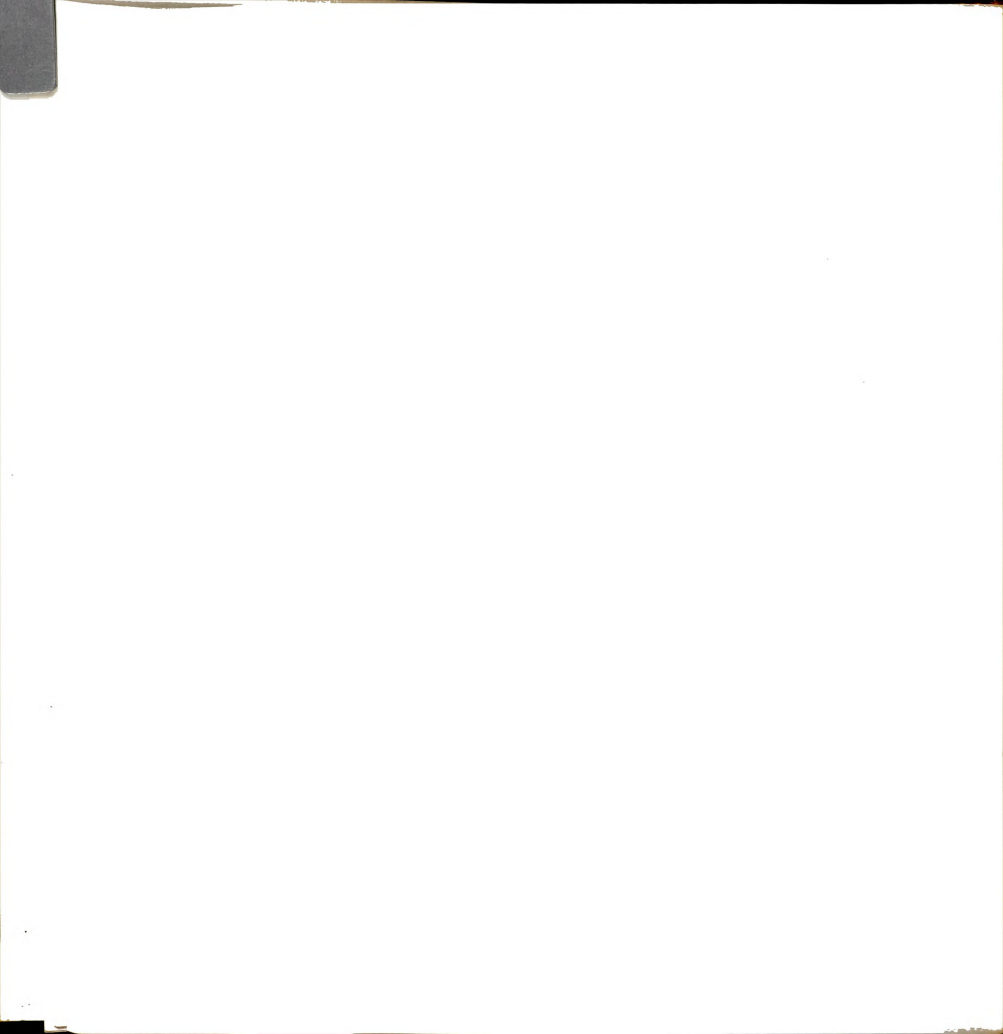
romantic love receive special attention immediately thereafter so that the threefold subject matter appears within the summarized book as well as in the poet persona's own story.

Let us see what additional elements of Chaucer's thought progressions enter into the summary of Somnium Scipionis. Besides the joy-dream-knowledge sequence pointed out above, we see a dreamer (but not the poet persona) pursuing knowledge; the sorrow-joy, earth-heaven motifs; reference to the music of the spheres in water imagery of the eternal and the creative; and counsel on how to attain that eternal (and perhaps even creative) state. It bears repetition that it is an old book which has presented the thought chain.

It may be well to note at this point that critics have often held the summary of Scipio's dream to be irrelevant and digressive.⁹ But in the light of Chaucer's image progressions and his concern with the origin of verse, it is clearly integral to the meaning of the poem.

With nightfall the poet persona sleeps and dreams that Africanus comes to him as he had come to Scipio in the book. However, before relating his own dream, he draws analogies between matter in the dreams of various kinds of persons and matter in his vision. It seems significant that the list of dreamers begins with a hunter and ends with a lover: the

⁹See William George Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Gloucester, Mass., 1959), pp. 12 ff.



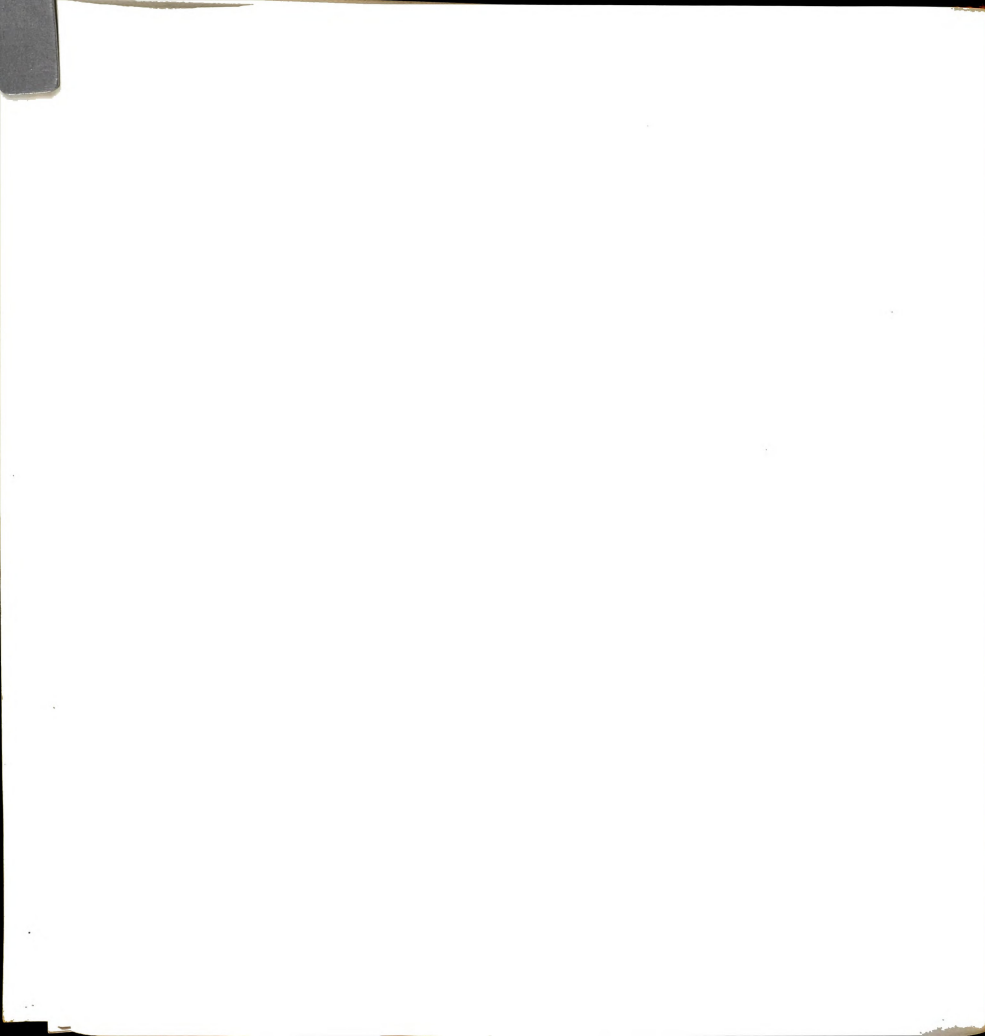
poet persona is still searching "a certeyn thing to lerne" and is still one who pursues but does not know the love which equals successful literary craft. The dream itself opens with Africanus' commendation of the poet persona for studying his "olde bok totorn" and his promise (like Jupiter's in The House of Fame) to "quyte" him for his labor.

Not until this point--almost one fifth of the way through the poem--do we encounter an invocation:

Cytherea! thou blysfyl lady swete,
That with thy fyrbrond dauntest whom the lest,
And madest me this sweven for to mete,
Be thou myn helpe in this, for thow mayst best!
As wisly as I sey the north-north-west,
Whan I began my sweven for to write,
So yif me myght to ryme and ek t'endyte!
(ll. 113-19)

The appeal to the goddess of love renews the love-craft equation of the first stanza even as it introduces a religious frame of reference and so unites again the three principal topics advanced in the progressions of the dream visions. The placement of the appeal between speeches by Africanus, the otherworld guide of this poem, and before the description of the park aligns the maker of the old book with love deity and otherworld. Hence the reason, possibly, for the invocation's belated appearance.

Two contrasted stanzas (ll. 127-33, 134-40) are composed of further oppositions: positive and negative water and tree images. In the "blysfyl place" to which lovers may go are a "welle of grace" and "grene and lusty" flora; in the lovers' woeful otherworld, instead, are a stream leading to sorrowful



doubt and barren fruitless trees. Although Africanus explains that the poet persona, as one who is not a lover, is exempt from either the particular joy promised or distress threatened, the creative as contrasted with the unproductive is surely applicable to him.

The guide comments on the poet persona's mental state and then reveals the purpose of the dream sojourn:

" . . . although that thow be dul,
Yit that thow canst not do, yit mayst thow se.
For many a man that may nat stonde a pul,
It liketh hym at the wrastlyng for to be,
And demeth yit wher he do bet or he.
And if thow haddest connynge for t'endite,
I shal the shewe mater of to wryte."

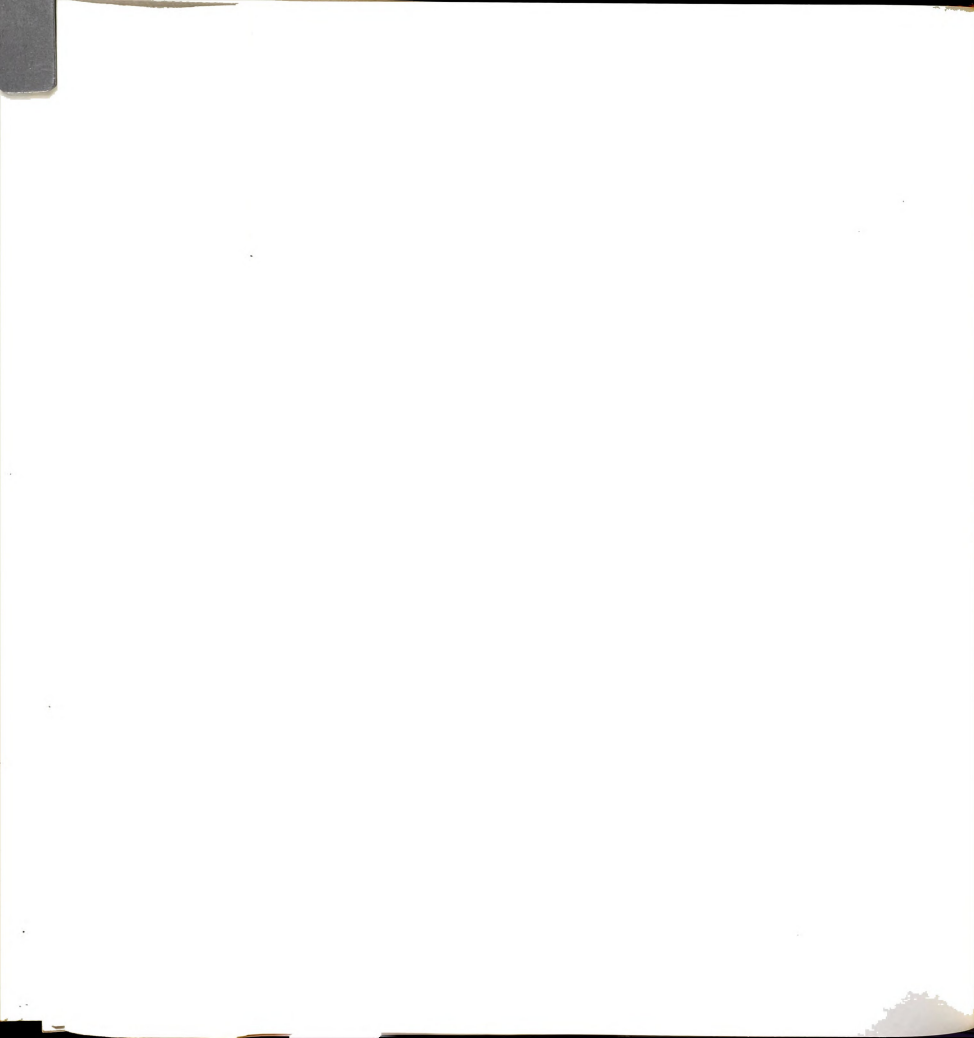
(ll. 162-68)

Thereupon he conducts the poet persona through a forest of numerous varieties of trees into an enclosed garden, apparently a deeper otherworld. Because of the concentration in the garden otherworld of many natural phenomena, it seems fitting to present three consecutive stanzas of description.

A gardyn saw I ful of blosmy bowes
Upon a ryver, in a grene mede,
There as swetnesse everemore inow is,
With floures white, blewe, yelwe, and rede,
And colde welle-stremes, nothyng dede,
That swymmen ful of smale fishes lighte,
With fynnes rede and skales sylver bryghte.

On every bow the bryddes herde I synge,
With voys of aungel in here armonye;
Some besyde hem here bryddes forth to brynge;
The litel conyes to here pley gonne hie;
And ferther al aboute I gan aspye
The dredful ro, the buk, the hert and hynde,
Squyrels, and bestes smale of gentil kynde.

Of instrumentis of strenges in acord
Herde I so pleye a ravyshyng swetnesse,
That God, that makers is of al and lord,



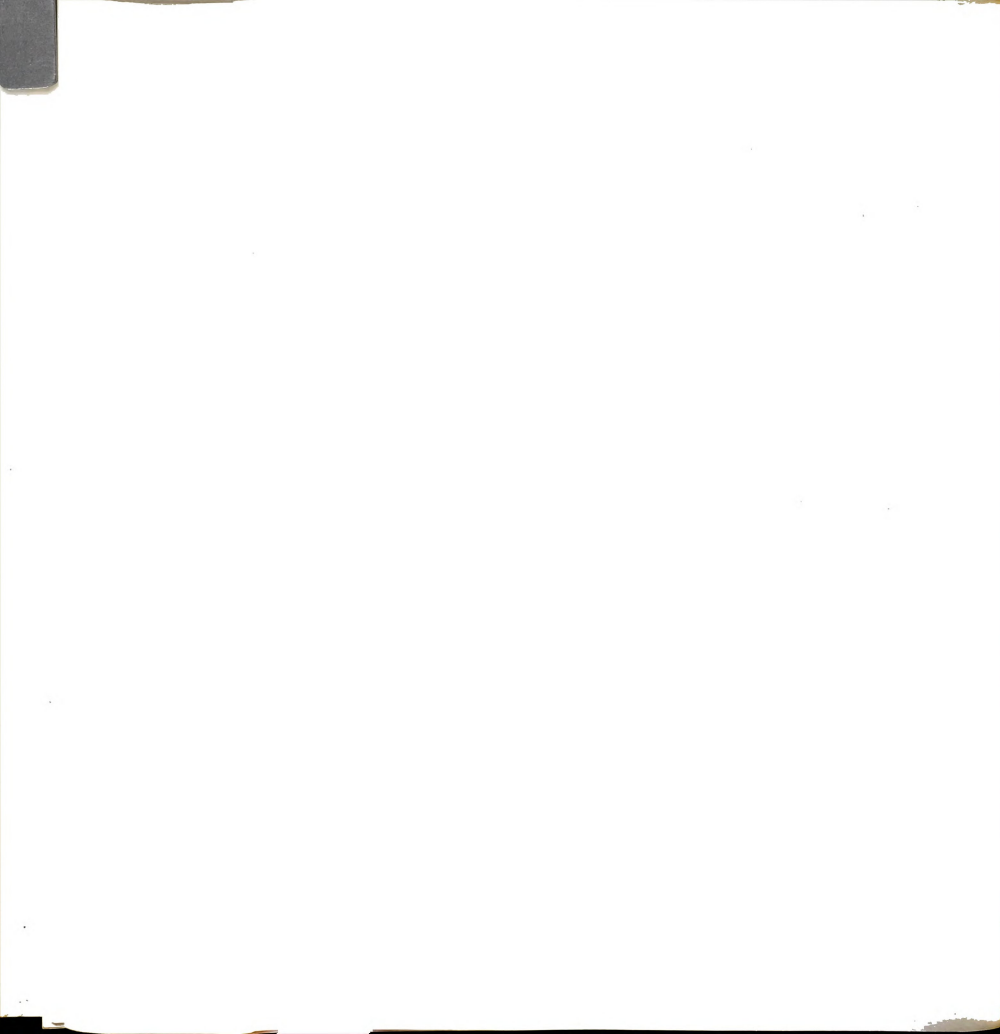
Ne herde nevere beter, as I gesse.
 Therwith a wynd, unnethe it myghte be lesse,
 Made in the leves grene a noyse softe
 Acordaunt to the foules song alofte.
 (ll. 183-203)

Through the otherworld vision of the poet persona, then, water, tree, flower, bird, and wind unite in relation to Deity and song in a garden of love. In addition, the idea of harmony echoes that discussed in the summary of Scipio's dream.

Ensuing verses refer to eternal youth and to joy (ll. 207-18); to Cupid standing "Under a tre, besyde a welle" (l. 211); craft that has "myght" (l. 220); and "Delyt" beneath an oak (ll. 223-24). Thus nature images precede the entrance of the poet persona to the garden of love and then unify scenes within the garden even as they reiterate their relation to love, the eternal, composition, power, and joy. The passage presents a rather fully worked out progression.

As some critics have harshly judged the summary of Somnium Scipionis as irrelevant, so some have condemned the description of the garden as unnecessary.¹⁰ But without the garden, I think, the poem would lose a great part of its meaning; through it, as we have seen, Chaucer interweaves matters of creativity with love and religion. Thus he prepares the way for understanding of the association of his opening verses on craft with closing lines on reading, as we shall observe.

¹⁰An especially strong censure is that of J. E. Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English (New Haven, 1926), p. 646.

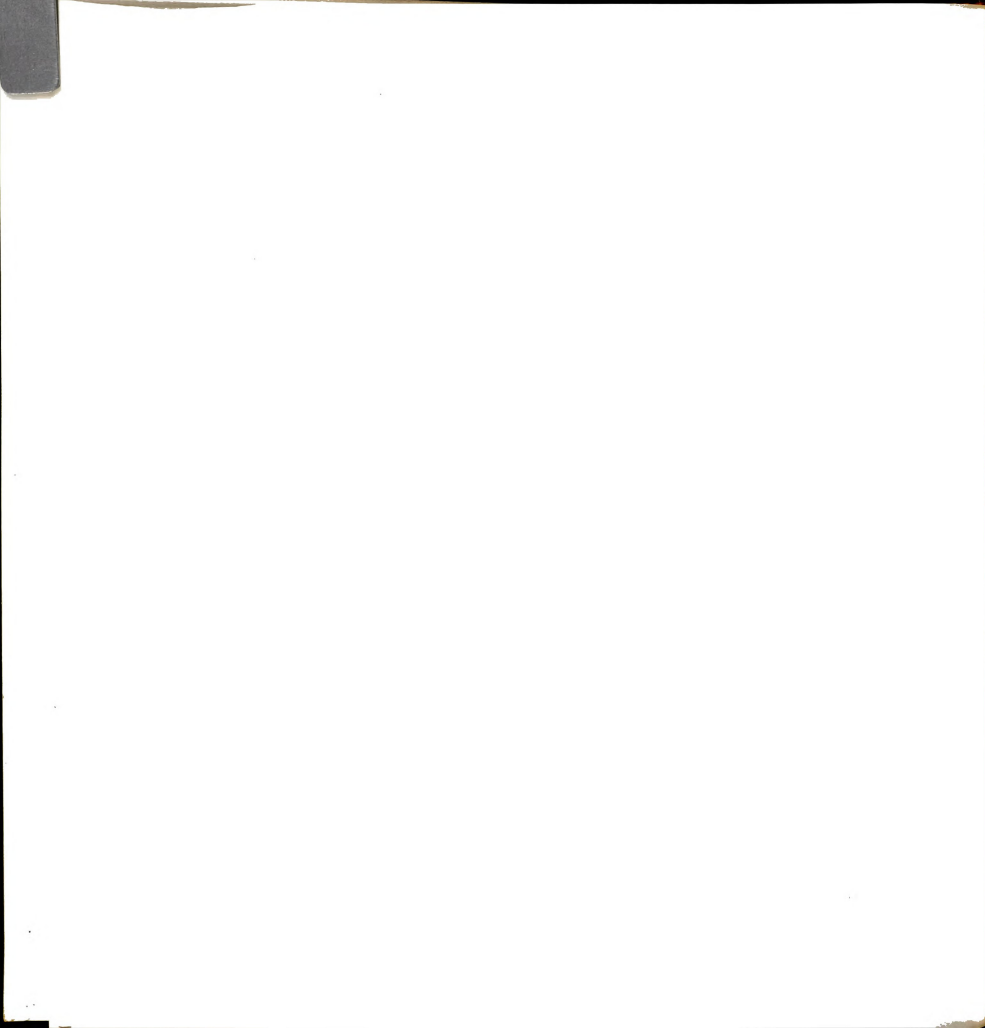


A brass temple "ifounded stronge" and covered with doves suggests the permanence of religion and creativity and love since it is the temple of Venus. But near the building sits "Dame Pacience" on a hill of sand--potentially creative but impermanent and therefore unlikely to produce any notable works. The contrast between temple and hill gains especial meaning in that Art is in the vicinity of both the permanent and the impermanent: it may or may not achieve development and preservation.

A new line of thought enters with the poet persona's seeing the flower-bedecked Priapus in the temple of Venus just before he encounters the goddess herself (ll. 253-73). Nature image of the creative and the eternal, the generative principle, religion, and love conjoin so forcefully in apparent anticipation of a long catalogue of love literature (ll. 284 ff.) that this passage in the approximate center of the poem may be the climactic point at which the poet persona actually achieves inspiration to compose. Indeed, he states that

Whan I was come ayeyn into the place
That I of spak, that was so sote and grene,
Forth welk I tho myselven to solace.
(ll. 295-97)

The fruitfulness and the happiness indicate that he has reached in otherworld a mental fertility which he might never have reached without his creative-fecundating withdrawal following the reading of a meditation-inducing book. Perhaps it is the poet persona's newly found joy which enables him to



understand (at least partially) and to report on the parliament of birds which ensues. But most significant of all is the union of the arrival of inspiration with the catalogue suggesting memory of old books. Yet again the Zeus-Mnemosyne myth is recalled.

As the protagonist continues his otherworld ramblings, he views Nature, "upon an hil of floures," surrounded by numerous birds on Saint Valentine's Day. That the creative impulse is natural with a poet is implied. Insofar as Chaucer's poetic theory is concerned, the import of the subsequent council is threefold. First, the bird image dominates and unifies the remaining lines of the poem; the many varieties of fowl are introduced and perform. The image is particularly fitting in that it suggests the song of a poet as well as the songs of birds. Second, love is the topic of debate among the congregated fowls; almost every conceivable approach to romantic love is advanced by those who participate in the long discussion emphasizing a sorrow-joy contrast. And third, the deity Nature hears the birds' speeches. Thus creativity, love, and religion present themselves as possible matter to the listening poet persona, who has already achieved imaginative power.

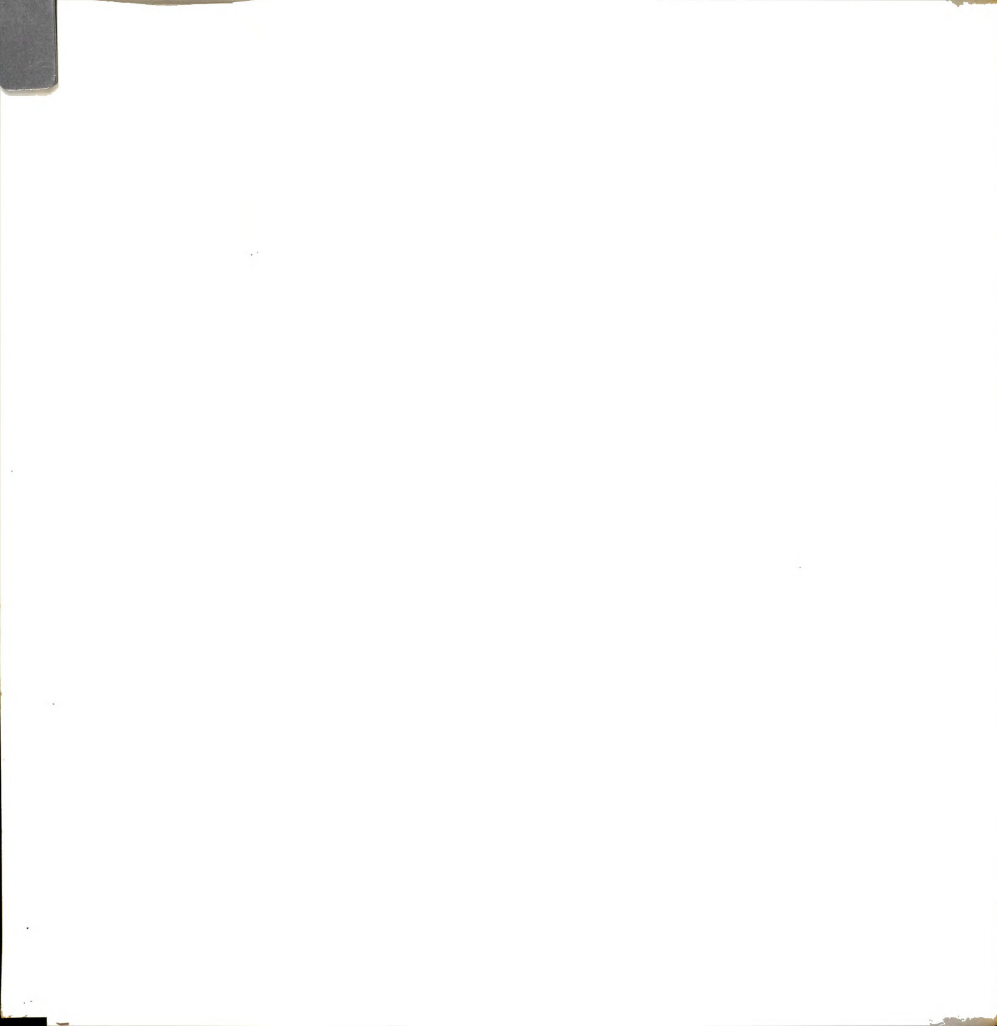
Closing the parliament after most of the birds in love are blissfully mated is a nuptial song (ll. 680-92). For the birds, the summertime spirit of creativity and rebirth and love has triumphed over the wintertime mood of sterility and death and lovelessness, even as it has done for the poet

persona. As he awakes, he repairs to other books, evidently in quest of yet further matter which, like Somnium Scipionis, will lead him to the dream otherworld; there inspiration will infuse new life, through his unconscious pondering, into old books and so produce poems other than the one now reaching completion. Although no specific mention of writing occurs at the end of The Parliament of Fowls, it is everywhere implied through the dominant bird image; in addition, the invocation to Venus earlier in the poem has established that now, back in the waking world, the poet persona is composing the very poem which ultimately concludes with references to reading.

In relation to the general progression of ideas in the poem, then, we observe this sequence: loveless and uncreative poet persona; book on dreams, creativity, and immortality; poet persona's own dream of fruitful and productive garden, remembered love stories, and love council of birds ending with joy and song; and poet persona, now creative, desirous of gaining yet further poetic power through books and dream otherworld. In this poem, as in other dream visions by Chaucer, nature imagery, poet persona moving from world to otherworld and back, and otherworld itself are the principal structural components, the organizers and arrangers of matter.

The Legend of Good Women

In examining The Parliament of Fowls I have attempted to show that despite the multiplicity of nature images, one central emblem, the bird, acts as a special unifying agent. I have further tried to illustrate that opening, medial, and final passages focus on the poet persona and his achieving literary fecundity. And I have stated that handling of the material in the poem differs somewhat from that of The Book of the Duchess and The House of Fame. As we approach the fourth and last dream poem by Chaucer, The Prologue to The Legend of Good Women, we see him sharply reducing the number of nature emblems of creativity and emphasizing one major nature image, the daisy, much more strongly even than he emphasizes the bird in The Parliament of Fowls. In like manner, we find that he heightens still further the problems of the maker, this time more through direct, overt discussion of the craft and less through nature imagery. And again, we see him treating his material in a manner different from that of any of the preceding dream visions. What we encounter, in fact, is an almost skeletal overall image progression arranging material in one large thought chain and omitting any of the minor chains characteristic of the earlier works. The skeleton, I hope to show, is the major structural device; it does not have so many branches as the previous frames but does possess the strongest points of juncture. It presents, I think, the image progression in its purest



form: daisy as nature image; apparently unloved and temporarily uncreative poet persona who contemplates it; his dream-otherworld mental state where he receives inspiration to compose; and his fulfillment of the creative impulse back in the waking world.

To this image progression serving Chaucer's poetic theory let us now turn our attention. The familiar joy-pain and heaven-hell oppositions stand at the beginning of the poem, and they are supported almost immediately by a third: truth-falsehood. The confusion and doubt which thus surround man or poet can be answered only by recourse to books.

Than mote we to bokes that we fynde,
 Thurgh whiche that olde things ben in mynde,
 And to the doctrine of these olde wyse,
 Yeve credence, in every skylful wise,
 That tellen of these olde appreved stories
 Of holynesse, of regnes, of victories,
 Of love, of hate, of other sondry thynges,
 Of whiche I may not maken rehersynges.
 And yf that olde bokes were awaye,
 Yloren were of remembraunce the keye,
 Wel ought us thanne honouren and beleve
 These bokes, there we han noon other preve.
 (ll. 17-28)¹¹

Once again Chaucer has paid tribute to authority, old books, and memory. Nor does he drop the subject at this point. Subsequent lines may be paraphrased as follows: although my knowledge and understanding are limited, I take such great pleasure in reading books that only in springtime, when birds sing and flowers come to life, can I be enticed away from

¹¹Quotations and line citations for LGW will follow the F version unless otherwise noted.

them. The implication is obvious: the role of old books already created may be superseded in the making of new books only by a fresh example of the creative.

Through many later verses, flowers (especially daisies) are repeatedly aligned with joy and love and Maytime. The qualities of the daisy, in fact, are so admirable that the poet persona regrets that he lacks

Englyssh, ryme or prose,
Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght!
(ll. 66-67)

But there may be a solution to this rather minor problem in creativity (it is not, of course, the major problem of complete absence of the poetic impulse). Help may come from "lovers that kan make of sentement," perhaps such lovers-in-verse as Froissart, Machaut, and Deschamps, who have reaped the poetic harvest and have left the poet persona of The Legend of Good Women to glean where best he may in order to do service in verse to the flower (ll. 68-83). This apostrophe to other poets then blends into a citation of the "Maistresse" of the poet persona's wit (l. 88) and thence to a direct request that she be the poet persona's "guide and lady sovereyne" (l. 94). The passage does not declare but does suggest the identity of flower and lady so that the flower assumes the guise of a deity through whom the poet persona seeks inspiration.

There follow lines counseling reverence for old stories (ll. 97-101) and for authority (G 83). The juxtaposition of these lines between the invocation and the poet persona's

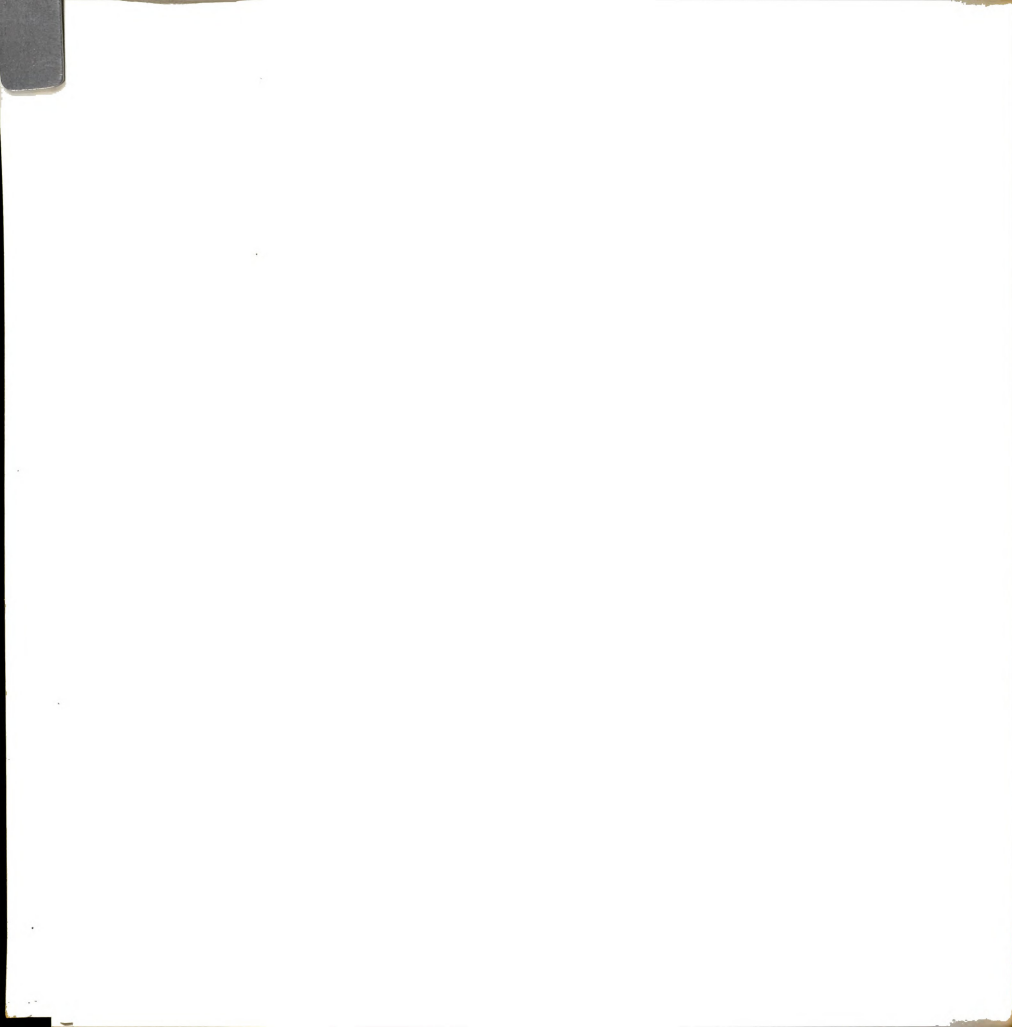
rising early on May Day to witness "the resureccioun" of the daisy results in a close relationship of old book, poet persona, religion, rebirth, and flower.

Very sketchily, ensuing lines mention tree, birds, song, lays of love, blossomy branches, joy, and Saint Valentine (ll. 121-70). The citation of Flora and Zephyr emphasizes both their divinity and their generative abilities (ll. 171-74). But these images lack the development and the interweaving with otherworld events affecting the poet persona that comparable images in the other dream visions exhibit.

Retiring to a flower-strewn bed, the poet persona falls asleep and dreams that he waits in a meadow to see "this flour that I so love and drede" (l. 211). Immediately he sees entering the meadow together Cupid and a queen, both flower-bedecked. Love and religion in the person of Cupid are thus aligned with creativity in the person of the queen, who is revealed to be at once Alceste and the daisy (ll. 291-99). A ballade composed and sung in her honor carries forward the theme of creativity.

But more to the point is Cupid's chagrin with the poet persona for proselyting or at least discouraging those who have served him:

"Thou hast translated the Romaunce of the Rose,
That is an heresye ayeins my lawe,
And makest wise folk fro me withdrawe;
And of Creseyde thou hast seyde as the lyst,
That maketh men to wommen lasse triste,
That ben as trewe as ever was any steel.
Of thyn answer avise the ryght weel;
For thogh thou reneyed hast my lay,



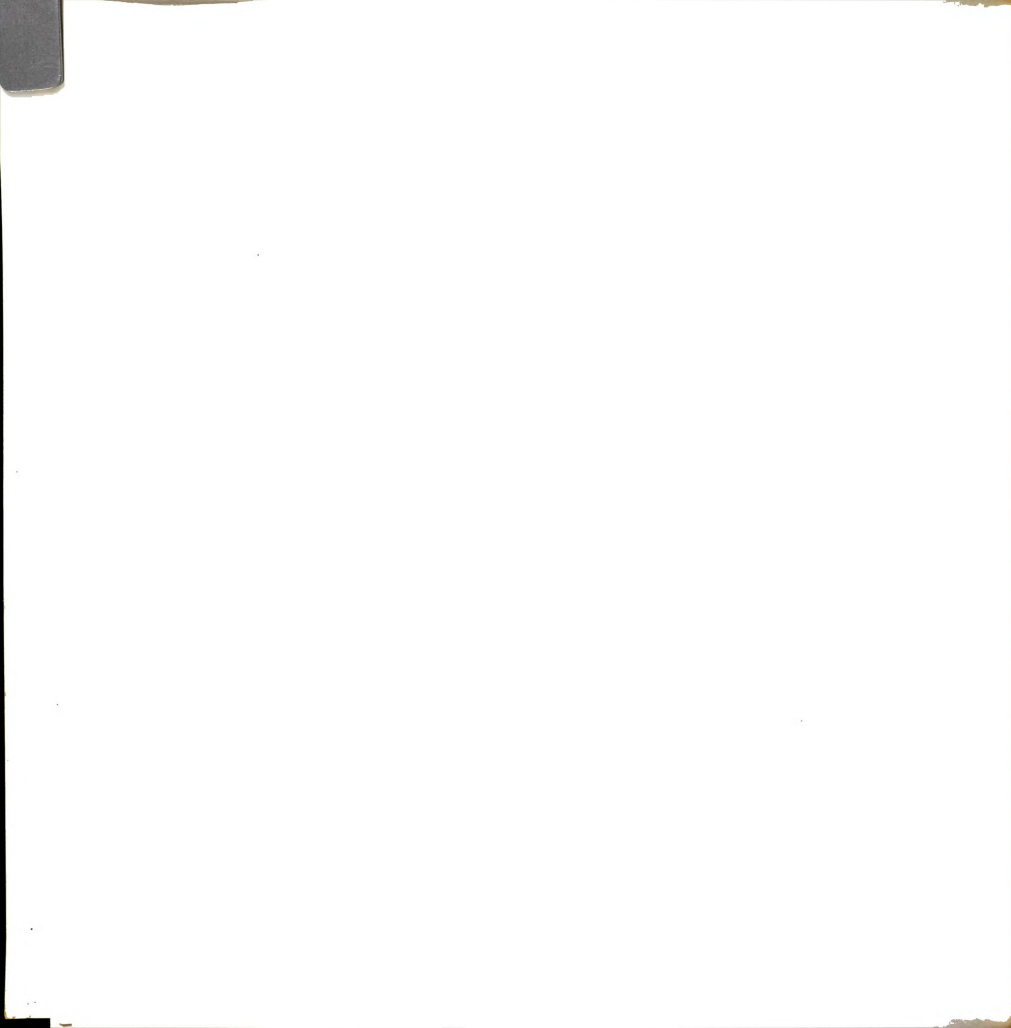
As other wrecches han doon many a day,
 By Seynt Venus, that my moder ys,
 If that thou lyve, thou shalt repenten this
 So cruelly that it shal wel be sene!"

(ll. 329-40)

Religion, love, and creativity are implicit in Cupid's thought. A subsequent passage appearing in only the G version (ll. 267-312) alludes to many authors and books and so advances one of the three topics. Although various commentators have regarded it as a digression (Robinson, p. 844), it assuredly is an appropriate and integral part of the Zeus-Mnemosyne theory of composition.

Alceste's defense of the poet persona, which is principally commendatory, does not actually oppose Cupid's censure of him; rather, it unites with the censure to present a two-part idea. The deities' different attitudes in their discussion of his poems imply his own unconscious analysis of them; Cupid may represent the poet persona's recognition of imperfection (not necessarily just in content of certain poems) and Alceste may represent his understanding of what is good. Her defense, like Cupid's accusation, points to his previous composition of works dealing with religion and love:

"Al be hit that he kan nat wel endite,
 Yet hath he maked lewed folk delyte
 To serve yow, in preysinge of your name.
 He made the book that hight the Hous of Fame,
 And eke the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse,
 And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,
 And al the love of Palamon and Arcite
 Of Thebes, thogh the storye ys knowen lyte;
 And many an ympne for your halydayes,
 That highten balades, roundels, virelayes;
 And, for to speke of other holynesse,
 He hath in prose translated Boece,



And made the lyf also of Seynt Cecile.
 He made also, goon ys a gret while,
 Origines upon the Maudeleyne.
 Hym oughte now to have the lesse payne;
 He hath maad many a lay and many a thing."
 (ll. 414-30)

The list, I think, is significant here not so much because it supplies internal evidence of what constitutes the Chaucer canon as because it is indicative of the emphasis on the religious and the amorous in what he has created.

The penance proposed by Alceste once more touches on composition of verse about truthful, almost religious service of the love deity:

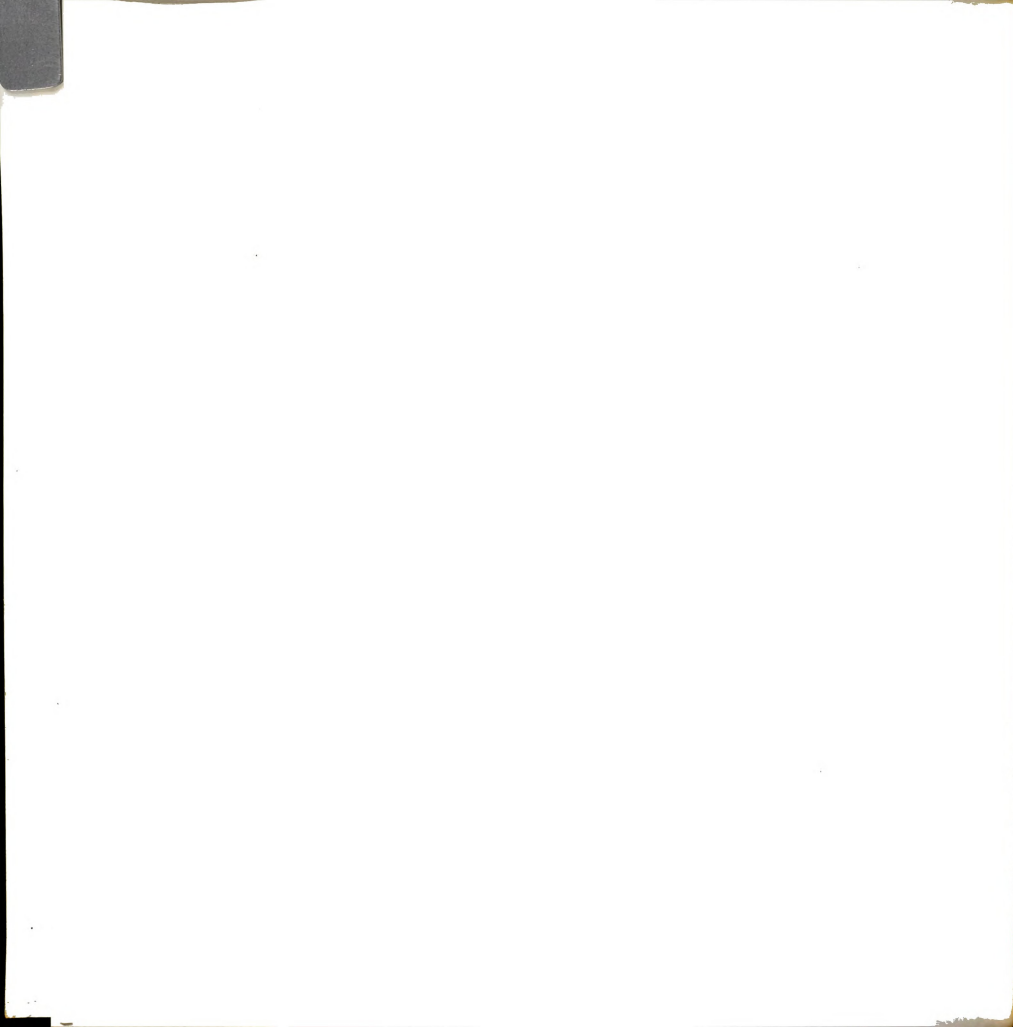
"He shal no more agilten in this wyse
 But he shal maken, as ye wol devyse,
 Of wommen trewe in lovyng al hire lyve,
 Whereso ye wol, of mayden or of wyve,
 And forthren yow, as muche as he mysseyde
 Or in the Rose or elles in Creseyde."
 (ll. 436-41)

The poet persona's grateful response to the proposal renews the topics of truth and morality in relation to love as it incorporates a declaration of his purposes in writing the works that have brought Cupid's wrath on him:

". . . God woot, yt was myn entente
 To forthren trouthe in love and yt cheryce,
 And to ben war fro falsnesse and fro vice
 By swich ensample; this was my menyng."
 (ll. 471-74)

And the final imposition of the penance maintains the love-religion-composition emphasis along with attention to truth:

"Now wol I seyn what penance thou shalt do
 For thy trespas, and understonde yt here:
 Thow shalt, while that thou lyvest, yer by yere,
 The moste partye of thy tyme spende
 In makynge of a glorious legende
 Of goode wymmen, maydenes and wyves,



That weren trewe in lovyng al hire lyves;
 And telle of false men that hem bytraien,
 That al hir lyf ne do nat but assayen
 How many women they may doon a shame;
 For in youre world that is now holde a game.
 And thogh the lyke nat a loveere bee,
 Speke wel of love; this penance yive I thee."
 (ll. 479-91)

The entire sequence from accusation through sentence, in fact, recalls the truth-falsehood dichotomy near the beginning of the poem, a dichotomy supporting the joy-sorrow and heaven-hell oppositions. Each of the three dichotomies, of course, in some way relates to the threefold subject matter.

In being charged to rectify his errors in literature, the poet persona has reached that state in the mental other-world that can reconcile his recognition of the bad with his recognition of the good in his works, that draws a line between pain-hell and joy-heaven, and that opens the way toward subsequent successful making of verse.

It is necessary to examine one other possible facet of the penance episode. In some respects Cupid as inspiring deity and Alceste as incarnation of an ancient myth, or old book, reflect Zeus and Mnemosyne. Their combined analyses of and reactions to the poet persona's works and their embodiments of his own unconscious self-criticism surely indicate something about the origin of poetry. Within the poet persona's mind, Chaucer seems to be saying, there must be a constant re-evaluation of the effective and the ineffective; within the unconscious mind the genius of new inspiration and the stuff of works earlier composed (whether those of

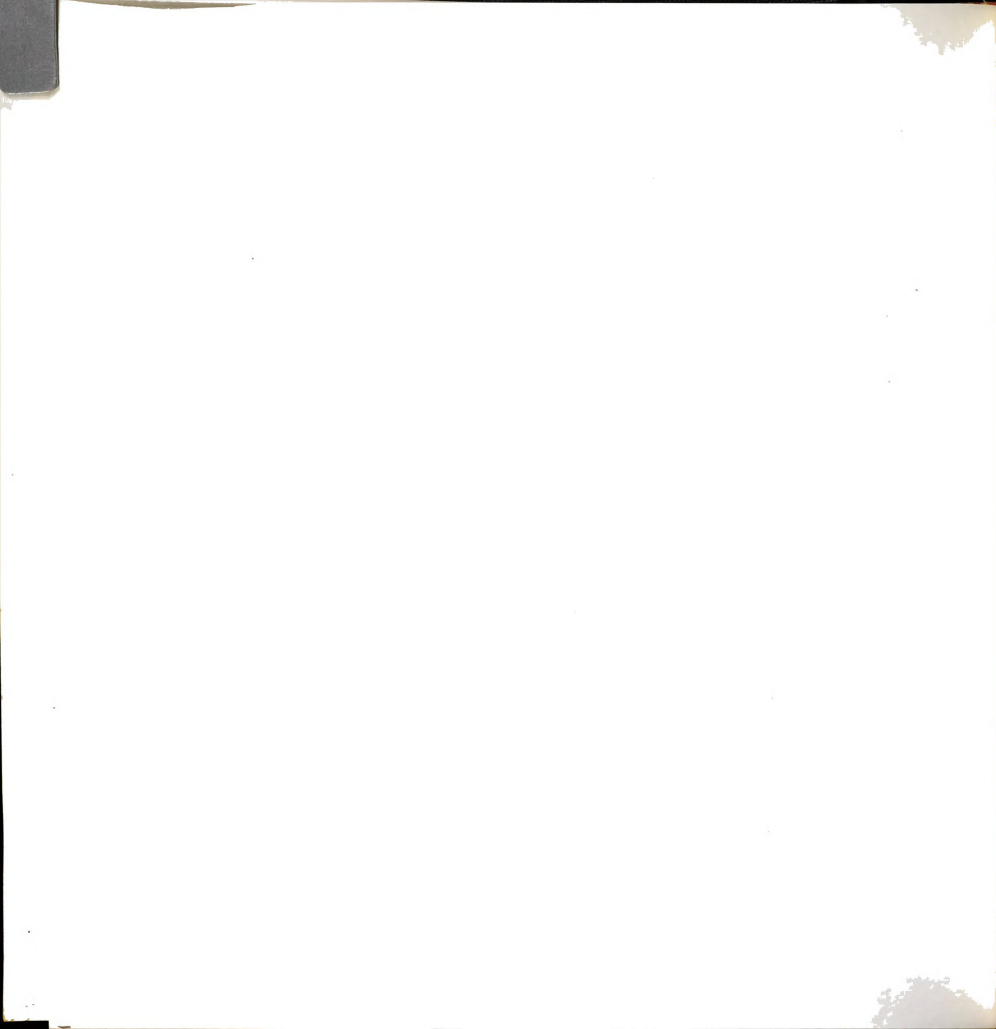


the poet persona or of other authors) must fuse before further poetry may be born.

As we trace the few remaining otherworld details on creativity in The Legend of Good Women, we encounter three brief points which nevertheless contribute to the overall theme on the origin of literature. The passage relating Alceste's metamorphosis into a daisy and her ultimate achievement of bliss (ll. 510-16) suggests a kind of rebirth conjoined with joy. The statement in ll. 531-32 that she owes her existence to Cybele, the fertility goddess, renews the focus on origin, this time of the flower which in turn inspires origin of new verse. And finally, the closing lines of the poem present the poet persona, awakened from his inspiring dream vision, beginning to compose his poem. At its end, then, The Legend of Good Women re-emphasizes the idea that a nature image set into the poet persona's mental otherworld results in composition.

Throughout the poem, as we have observed, nature emblem, poet persona, and otherworld have appeared in chain-link pattern as an outline of what happens in the creative process. The one dominant creativity image from the natural world has led mentally to the one major otherworld event, the imposition of the poet persona's penance, so that back in the conscious world he can successfully compose. Thus the progression is rather sharply defined.

By the time that he was writing The Legend of Good Women, Chaucer had come to marshal his material into logical steps;



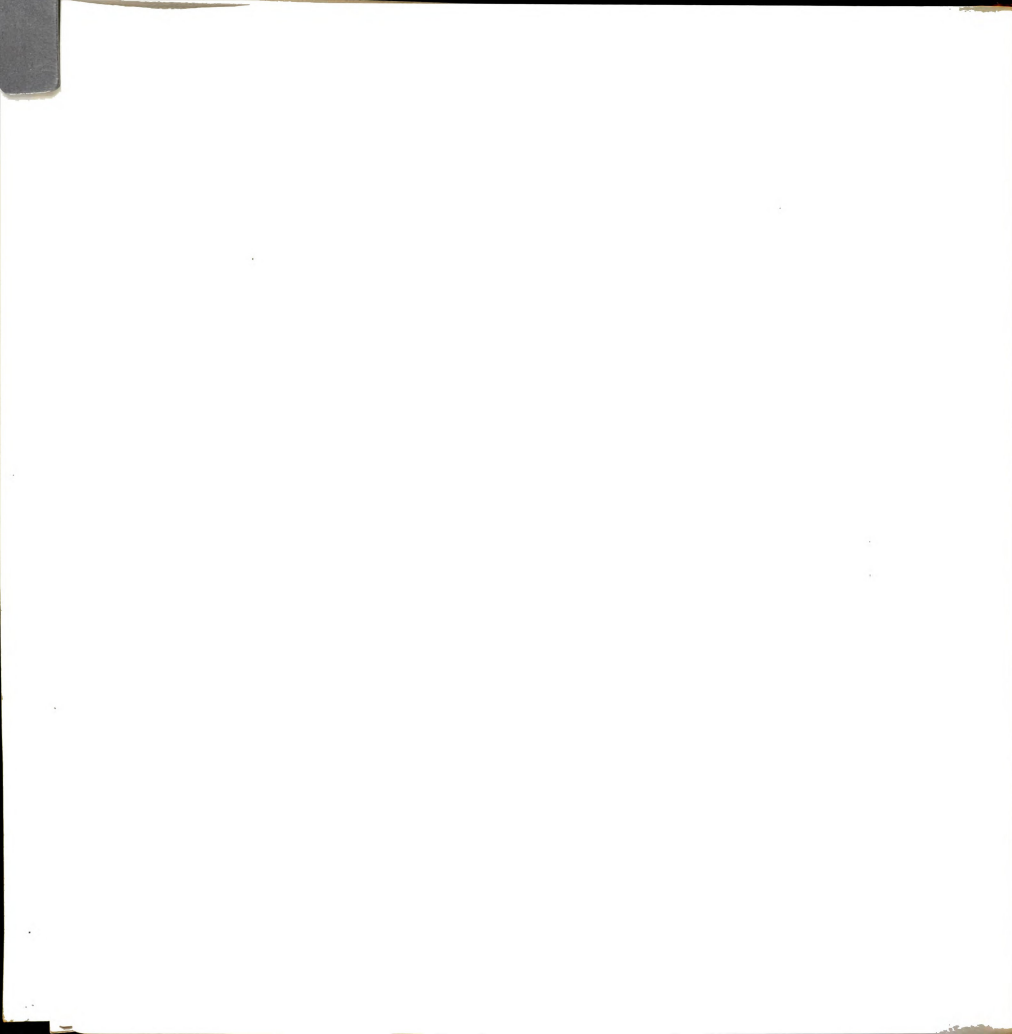
despite full development there are not the repeated overlays and interweavings of the earlier dream visions. This statement is not to deny the excellence and the effectiveness of The Book of the Duchess, The House of Fame, and The Parliament of Fowls; rather it is to observe distinctions between early and somewhat later handlings of material. As a young writer perfecting his craft Chaucer drew in a multiplicity of images, narrative details, and rhetorical techniques to substantiate his thesis. As a maturing writer who sensed the impossibility of conveying all his views within the scope of a single work, he concentrated on a few selected devices which he arranged in logical, direct order.

We have seen that the four dream visions deal through image progressions with the topics of love, religion, and creativity. We have noted that they convey Chaucer's understandings of the origin of poetry. And we have observed that despite their similar employment of the world-poet persona-otherworld image progressions conveying that understanding, there was a gradual shifting from heavy emphasis on nature imagery bearing the theme of creativity to more overt discussion of the literary craft. From these several conditions we may infer that the longer Chaucer worked with poetry, the more conscious he became of the manner in which literature is produced.

In the course of composing the dream visions, Chaucer evolved a rather full concept of the relation of memory and inspiration to poetry. But the concept raises one further

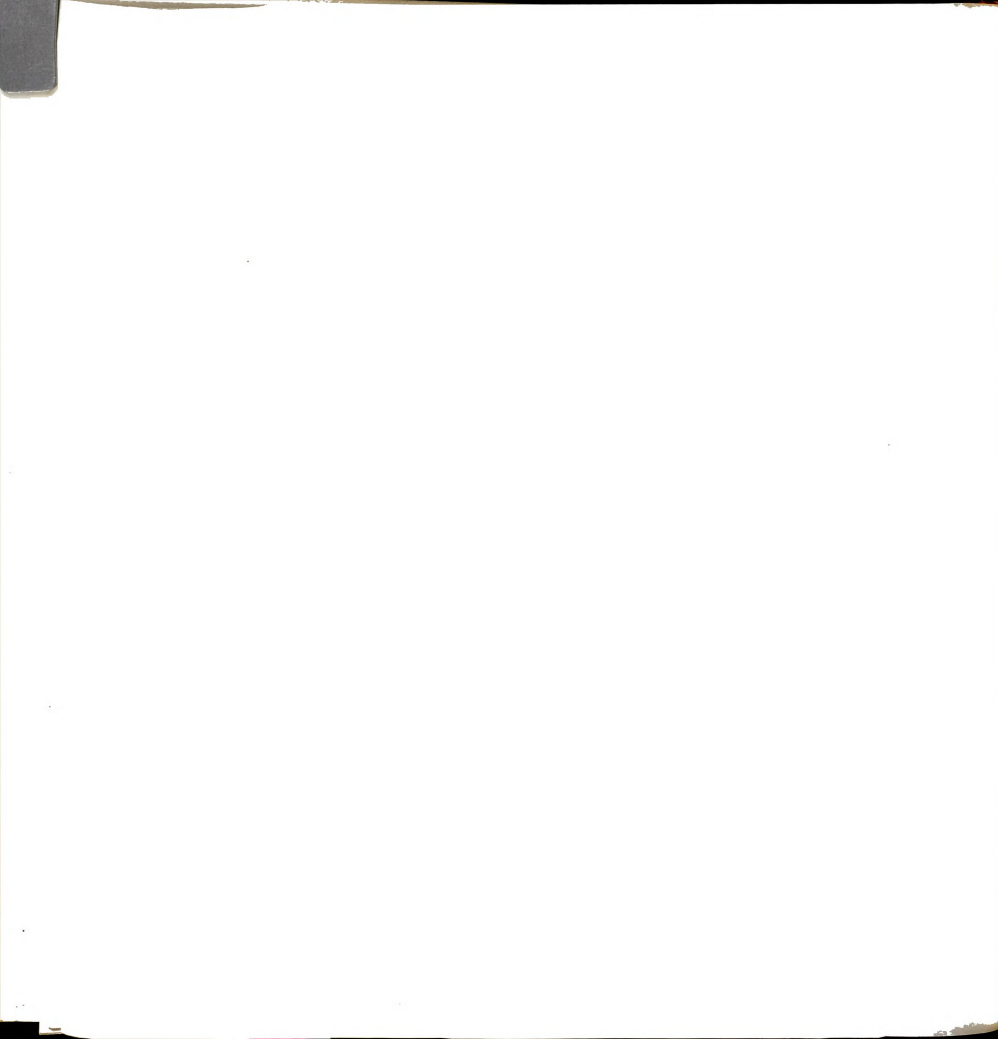


question: is there some special place within a poet's unconscious mental otherworld that is the seat of his poetic genius? To bring together material from the several dream poems will be to approach an answer to this question. In examining the content of each poem, I have commented that the poet persona in each dream reached a climactic point at which his bound creativity was released or at which he came to an understanding of his situation. The first three works show him reaching that point in a deeper part of otherworld than he first enters. In The Book of the Duchess it is the part of the forest in which he encounters the Black Knight, not the initial dream scenes of bedroom and hunting area. In The House of Fame it is apparently the whirling house of twigs, not the initial barren field or Fame's palace. And in The Parliament of Fowls it is the flowery hill in the garden-- the same garden which the poet persona originally entered but another section of it, viewed only after a tour through the temple of Venus. The implication is that even the unconscious mind must exert itself; poetry does not suddenly and effortlessly come to full flower during the poet's creative-fecundating withdrawal. The Legend of Good Women offers a comparable though not identical point of origin for poetic genius: the dialogue between Cupid and Alceste reconciling the good and the bad in the poet persona's works, a dialogue perhaps representing the poet persona's own unconscious attempt at reconciliation. And this dialogue, between characters who almost incarnate the inspiration and memory facets



of creativity, may best answer the question concerning the true seat of genius. Not until a poet actually meditates on or ponders his own already extant works can he most effectively record the new works emerging from his coupling of memory and inspiration. The seat of genius, then, is that point in a poet's thinking just beyond memory and inspiration, where he applies his own knowledge, experience, and wisdom.

Through the several divisions of my study I have drawn conclusions on the form of Chaucer's image progressions, on their relation to medieval rhetoric-poetic, on the poet's treatment of source materials and conventions, and on the function of image progressions within the various poems by Chaucer. Interrelationships among the major conclusions presented in the several chapters now require attention. By observing these interrelationships we may arrive at an overall interpretation of the image progressions in Chaucer's poems setting forth a theory of creativity. Let us proceed, then, to general conclusions and interpretations.

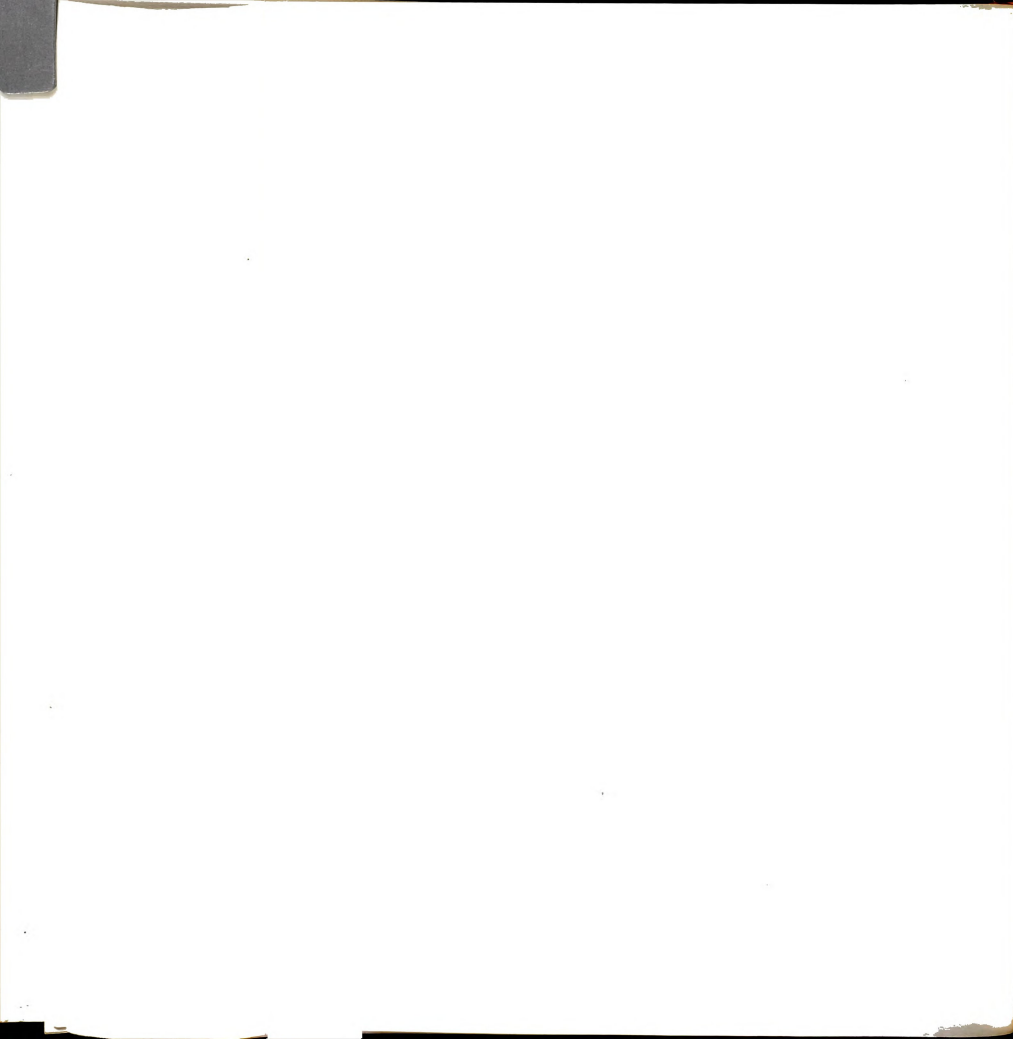


CHAPTER VI

INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In examining Chaucer's poetry, especially Troilus and Criseyde and the dream visions, from the standpoint of the poetic theory which they embrace, I have observed and traced a recurring pattern, woven of the poet's imagery and the narrative movement of each work. This pattern involves the experiencing of nature imagery by a poet persona or other poet speaker who is undergoing a creative-fecundating withdrawal into a mental otherworld of the unconscious. The result of the withdrawal and its concomitant image-experience is the conversion of the persona's old poetic barrenness into a new productivity, the poet's achievement of a literary rebirth.

After establishing this pattern, I have considered it in relation to the rhetorical practices and literary conventions of Chaucer's day, as well as to the specific sources from which Chaucer drew material for his own creative activity. In this consideration I have shown that despite Chaucer's frequent use of medieval literary convention and his frequent close adherence to certain sources, he developed a relatively consistent image-progression pattern which is



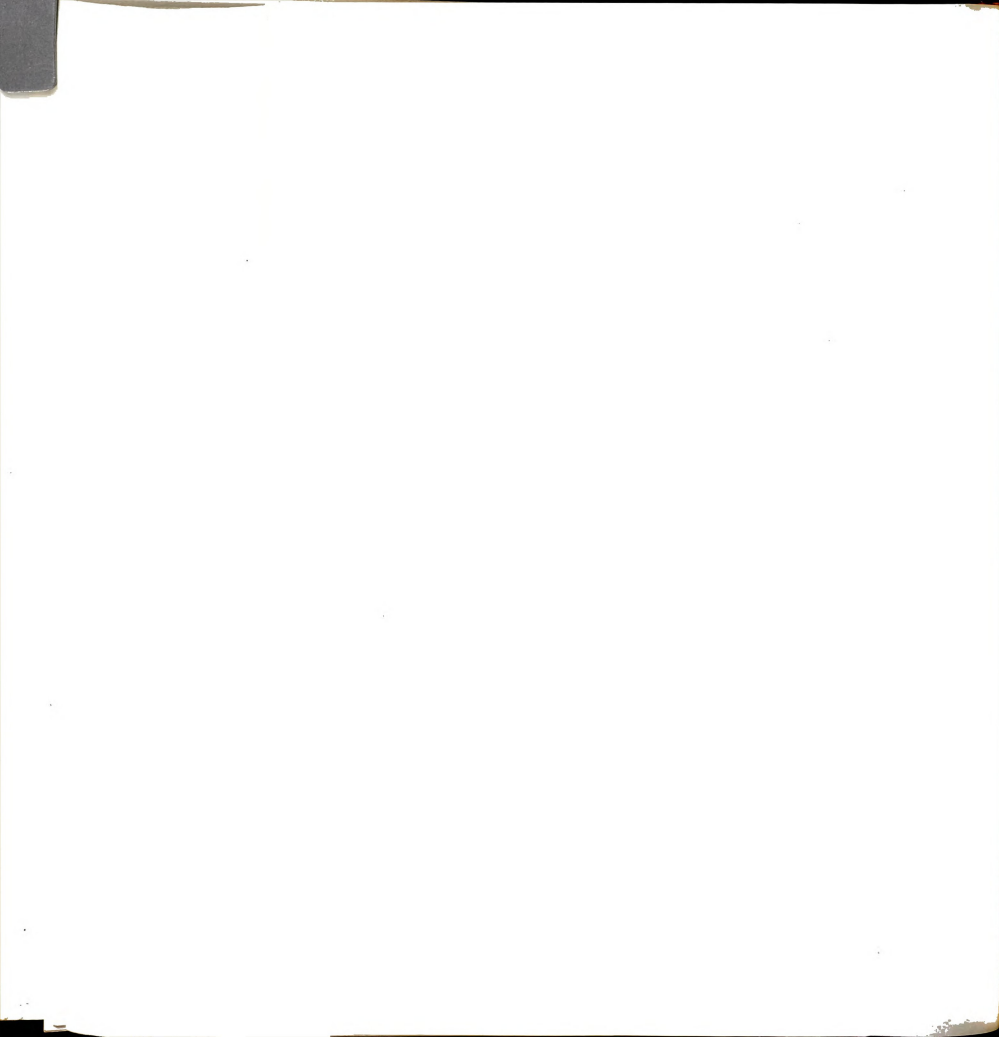
uniquely his own. Finally, I have examined in some detail the appearance of this pattern in the specific image progressions found in the various works of Chaucer. It is now possible to bring together in relatively brief space the findings on these several matters and so to understand something of the implications of Chaucer's doctrine for his own poetry in particular and even for literature in general.

Let us restate the theory itself and recall its components. By a temporary withdrawal into the unconscious, a poet may find his memory of works which he has read conjoined with a seemingly divine inspiration so that new poetry results. Art, then, originates in the unconscious, but it requires the conscious employment of rhetoric-poetic for fruition. The theory is explicated, I have said, through a sequence involving an image of creativity from the natural world, a poet character capable of moving in both natural and supernatural worlds, and the otherworld in which he achieves creativity. The nature images which represent and lead to the creative and the eternal are water, wind, mountain, tree or forest, bird, and flower; the poet figure is one usually in quest of lost fecundity who finds and then diligently exercises it; and the otherworld is a place of mental retreat in which an almost defunct creativity can be revived. Chaucer's doctrine, therefore, is that the making of poetry involves both unconscious and conscious effort by the poet. In the unconscious, remembrance of old books

is united with inspiration (the Zeus-Mnemosyne myth); in the conscious, the exercise of rhetorical and poetic practices fulfills the poet's creative impulse.

Rhetoric-poetic now demands re-evaluation in relation to Chaucer's doctrine. For medieval rhetoricians, plan or arrangement--one of three divisions of medieval rhetoric--was not a major concern. Thus many medieval authors, following the dicta of the manuals, either showed little concern with arrangement or used episodic rather than clearly structured movement within their works. Chaucer's arrangement of material by image progressions indicates not only that he went beyond the rhetoricians and contemporary authors but also that for him order was serviceable, perhaps even necessary, to effective presentation of themes. The organization of the topics of love, creativity, and religion in conjunction with the progressions accords with Chaucer's sense of order. In addition, it bespeaks his basic conservatism and his regard for authority.

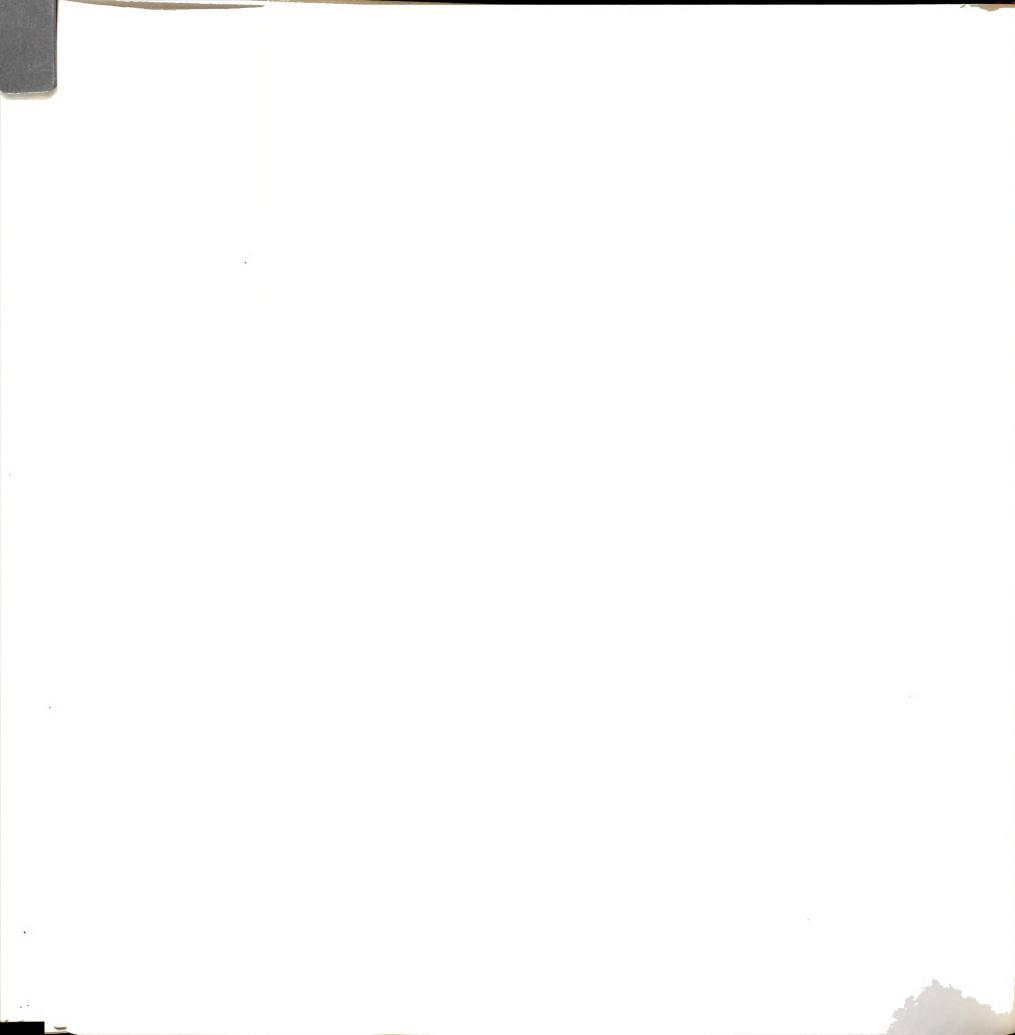
Let us consider why order and conservatism are related. The conservative, authority-conscious person in any field, but especially in literature, usually feels more comfortable working within a pattern or framework. The conservative person of genius achieves within the pattern or framework a kind of freedom perhaps seldom known by persons who have not learned to work within limitations. And for Chaucer, a conservative genius, the image progressions provided an effective way of interweaving form and content that left him free



to incorporate any ideas or moods or materials which he wished to incorporate.

To clarify Chaucer's own position on the relation of rhetoric to image progressions, I would recall certain comments made in the chapter on medieval manuals. World, poet persona, and otherworld are all involved in Chaucer's theory; the unconscious otherworld offers the poet both inspiration and memory of old books, but the conscious world is the place where he actually works out and puts into service a rhetorical pattern such as an image progression.

Aside from organization and arrangement, another detail of rhetoric, that of genre, calls for attention. The fourteenth century was a time of importance for genre. It seems at first inexplicable that a genre-conscious age would not generally accord great significance to all elements of arrangement and organization, since adherence to a genre is itself acceptance of certain restrictions along with certain material and form. But for many medieval writers, apparently, choice of a genre excused any further formulation of structure; for them it was sufficient to place all material into a given set of conventions without development of additional structural lines within the genre. For Chaucer, however, genre was much more than the one general receptacle into which he might project all his ideas and themes. It was a body of conventions which could be marshaled and controlled so that form would be appropriate to content. I believe that Chaucer was consciously concerned with selection of



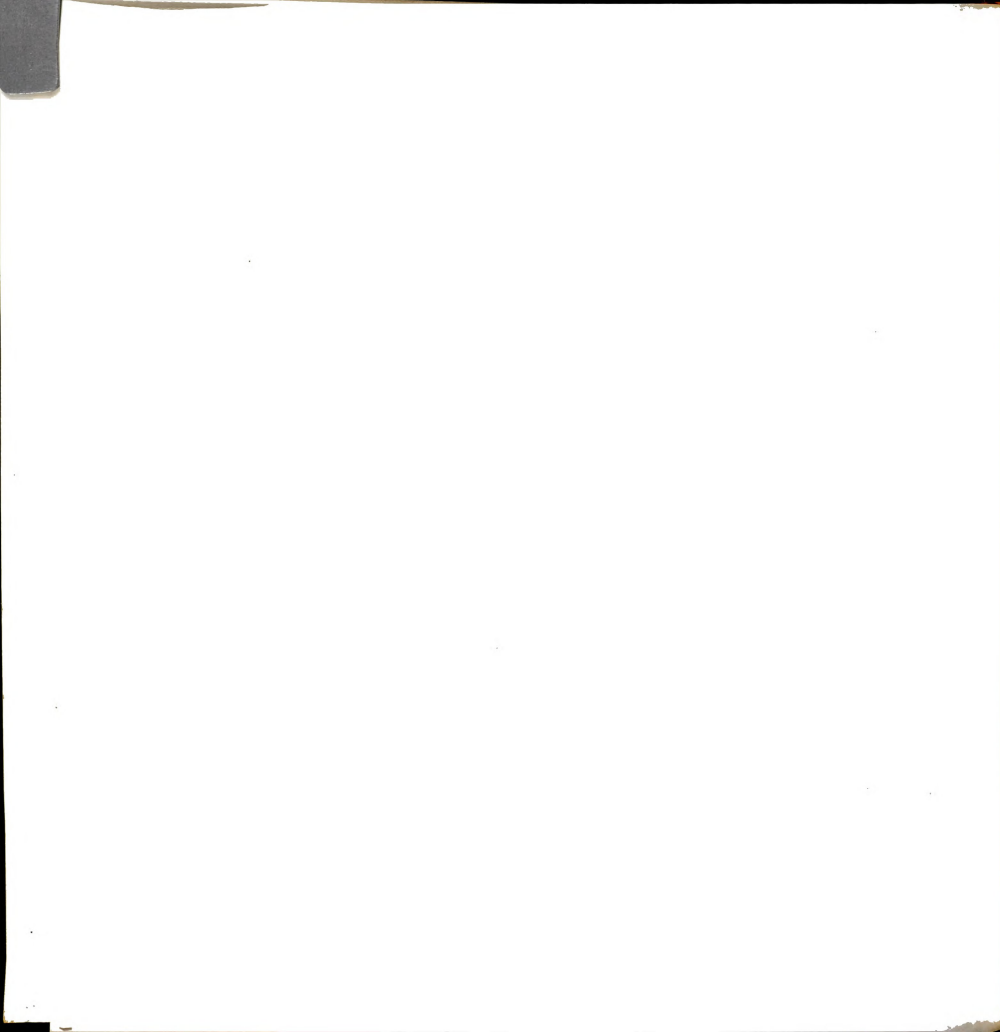
appropriate literary types to convey certain ideas. That he presented his world-poet persona-otherworld thought chains most fully in romances and dream visions was, I think, a result of conscious choice. In the light of all divisions of this study, several possible reasons for the choice now present themselves in answer to a question which I raised in the opening chapter. First, the romance and the dream vision, as genres moving in rather leisurely fashion, lend themselves to the picture of a meditative, contemplative poet persona earnestly and diligently seeking but not feverishly and impatiently rushing after literary creativity; Chaucer's own long and deep pondering of the poetic process led him to establish for the poet figure in a narrative an aura of deliberation. Second, romances frequently include dream lore or dream episodes which mirror one facet of a maker's unconscious mental activity, and dream visions actually image the entire world of the mind. Third, the general outline of each genre is sufficiently conformable to a variety of matter that Chaucer could easily fit into it the skeleton of an image progression. Thus he may have selected the two literary types partially because they were accommodating to his plan for stating and elucidating his doctrine on the origin of poetry.

Yet one more point of rhetoric-poetic requires brief note: Chaucer's approach to his material. Elsewhere in my study I have commented on his very limited association with allegorical modes of thought. I do not understand him to



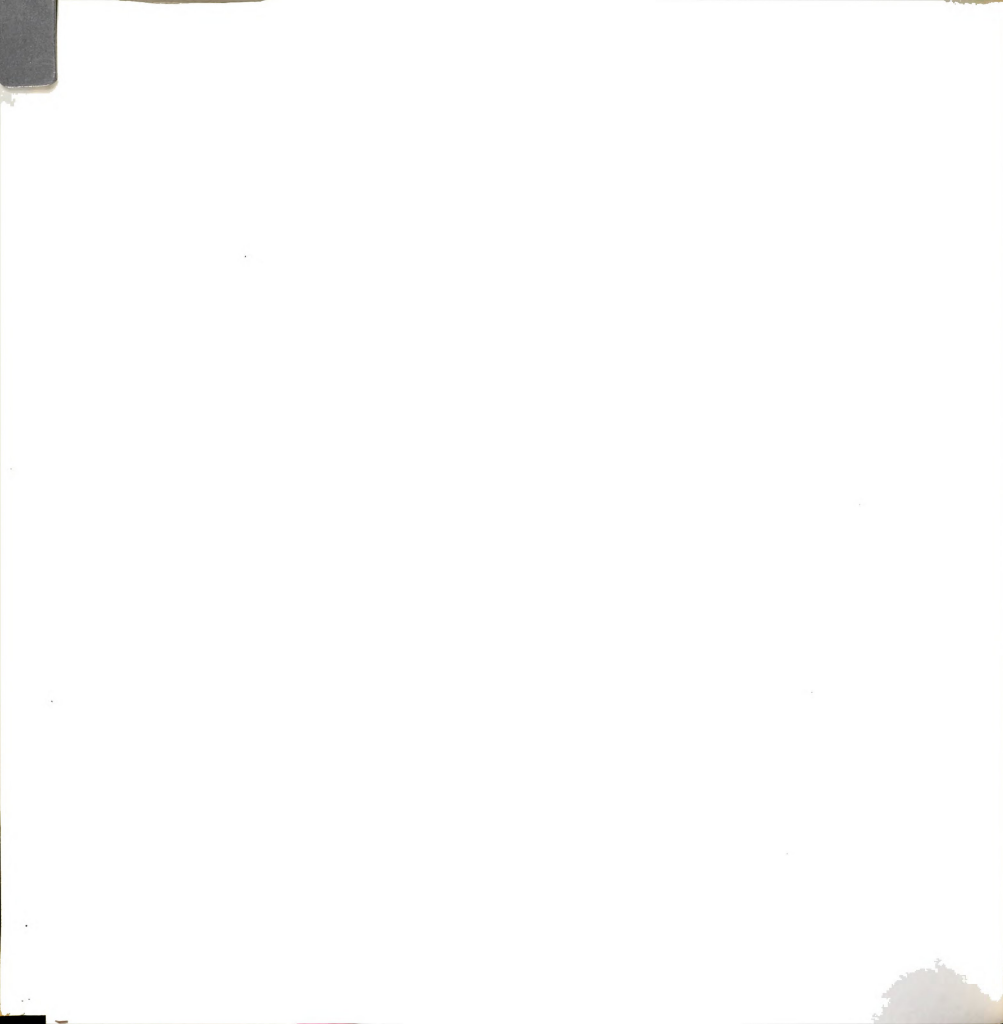
have been a strongly allegorical poet. Only when he transferred passages from a source to his own poems did he employ much allegory, and even then he often reduced or adapted it. Although some definitions might place Chaucer's prolonged use and extensive development of creativity emblems within the field of allegory, the emblems do not serve in the manner that emblems in Piers the Ploughman or Everyman or The Romance of the Rose serve. They do not actively control plot. Instead, they remain primarily sense-appealing nature images which instigate a poet character's mental activity in the unconscious.

If Chaucer did not approach his composition allegorically, then, let us consider other possible approaches which he may have had in mind. Surely he was doing more than merely telling a story, though narration itself was of consequence to him. He was not narrowly a religious or myth-making poet, and yet, as we have seen, the theme of religion runs through much of his verse and the classical myth of Zeus and Mnemosyne seems fundamental to his poetic doctrine. Nor did he approach his work as a love poet in the sense that Guillaume de Lorris, Machaut, Froissart, and Deschamps approached theirs, although love as a representative of literary craft is basic to his entire theory. He was, then, I think, a poet willing to draw on myth and ritual, folklore, Biblical material, and works of past or contemporary authors to present his views on life and literature, but yet a poet singularly original in his channeling of borrowings into a



rhetorical pattern uniting nature image, poet, and an other-world mental state. Again, memory--use of sources and conventions--contributes to another kind of originality within a patterned rhetorical arrangement. In the poet's unconscious, remembered books or elements of books may undergo certain modifications--a kind of sea change by which they broaden or narrow their meaning. And at least for Chaucer, that unconscious state is one form of pre-ordered mental existence which at once controls and unleashes the abilities of the poet.

Throughout my study I have referred to the implications of eternality as well as of creativity in the image progressions. Some clarification of the appropriateness of the eternal in a thought pattern dealing with the creative seems necessary. Through his poetry, of course, a poet achieves a personal immortality akin to what Chaucer must have had in mind when he discussed Fame as a permanent rather than a merely contemporary recognition. But even more than an enduring name, a poet may wish to leave to the literary public domain, from which other authors draw, a personal legacy of form or content or of both. In Chaucer's case, that legacy was a message concerning the creative impulse; it was embodied in a rhetorical pattern of his own construction; and it conveyed his desire to leave for all posterity his understanding of the creative process. Indeed, it involved organically related form and content.

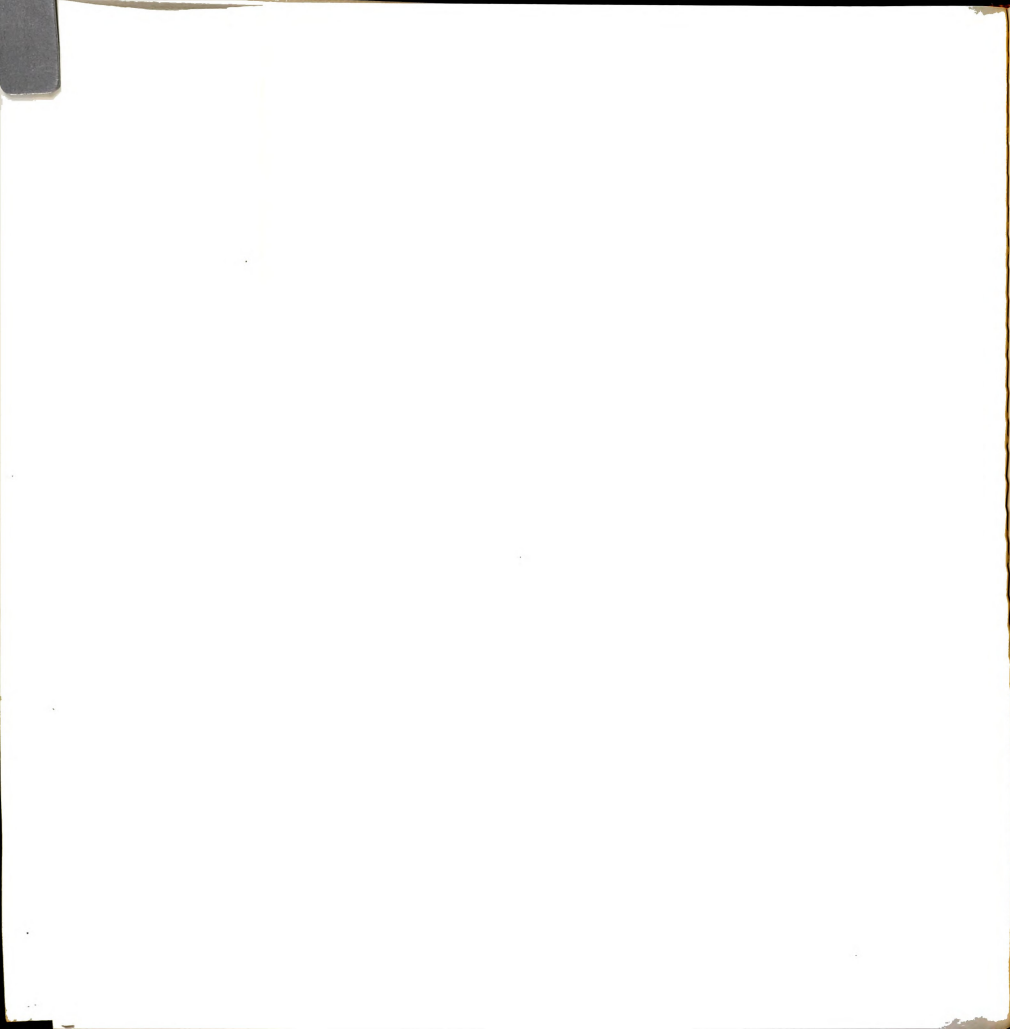


To unify finally the various facets of my study, it will be necessary to repeat certain statements, but such repetition will, I think, complete a picture of Chaucer as poet. As conventional and conservative writer, he seems to have worked best within a pattern even though he could vary that pattern. His use of rhetorical practices recommended by the manuals and employed by poets contemporary with or antecedent to him is one element of his conservatism and conventionality. His borrowing of plots or episodes or descriptions from other poets is a second. And his adoption of widely used imagery of the eternal and the creative is yet another. But his correlation of conventional rhetoric, episode, and image is his own. He found it possible to be highly original within rather fixed areas.

As a loyal, conservative subscriber to the recognized governmental, ecclesiastical, and literary order of the royalist, deeply religious, and genre-conscious time in which he lived, Chaucer seems to have encountered his greatest freedom within the frame of such order. Old books and old rhetoric belong to this authority-loving order. But they meet refreshment and rejuvenation through divine otherworld inspiration. Assuredly the Zeus-Mnemosyne myth of the ancients was operative in the poetic theory and practice of this fourteenth-century genius whose contribution to literature is timeless.



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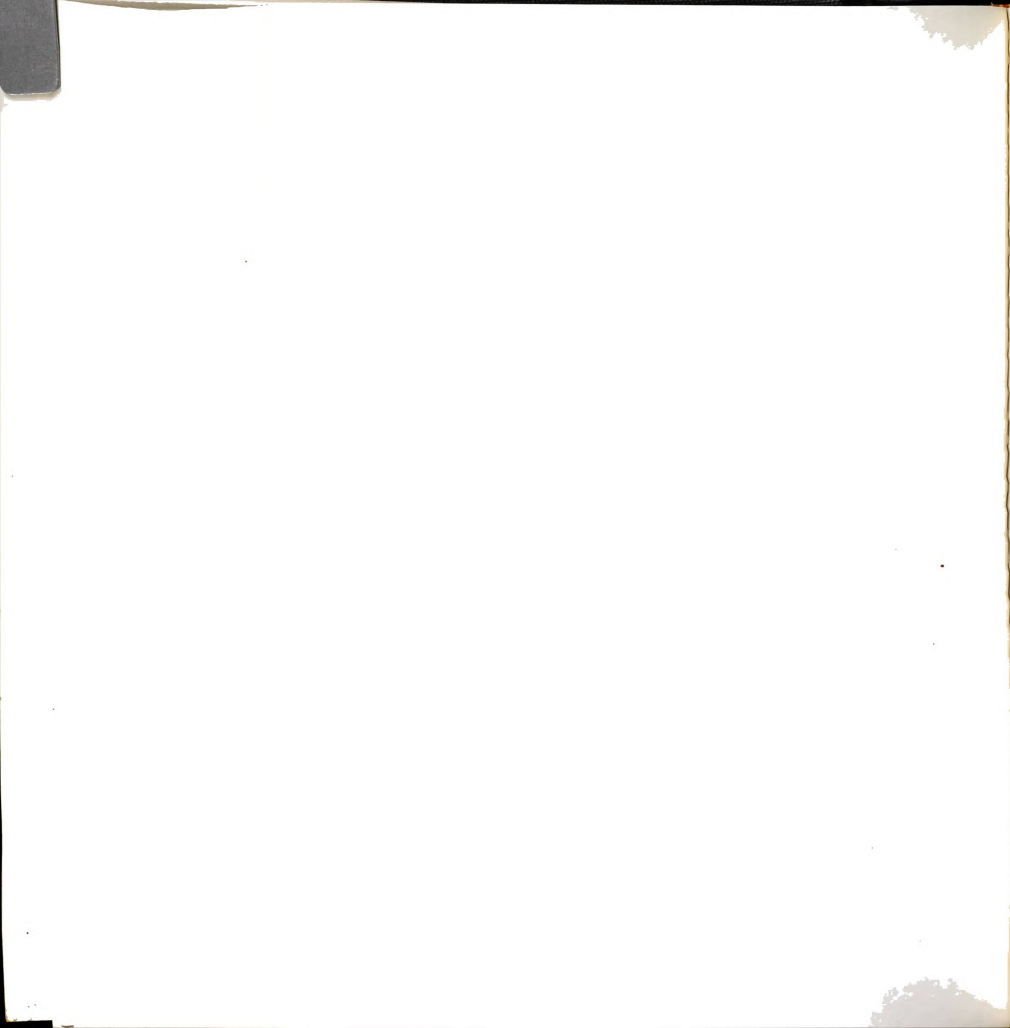
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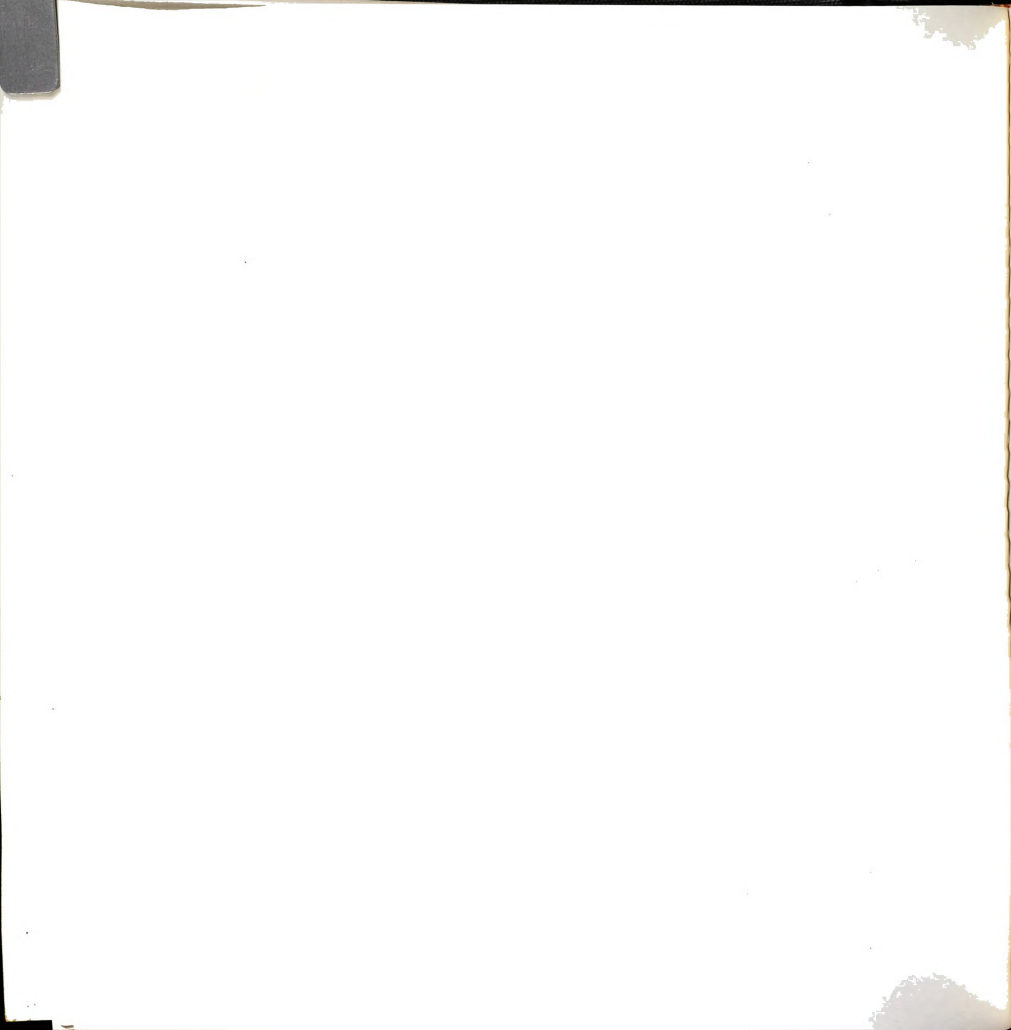
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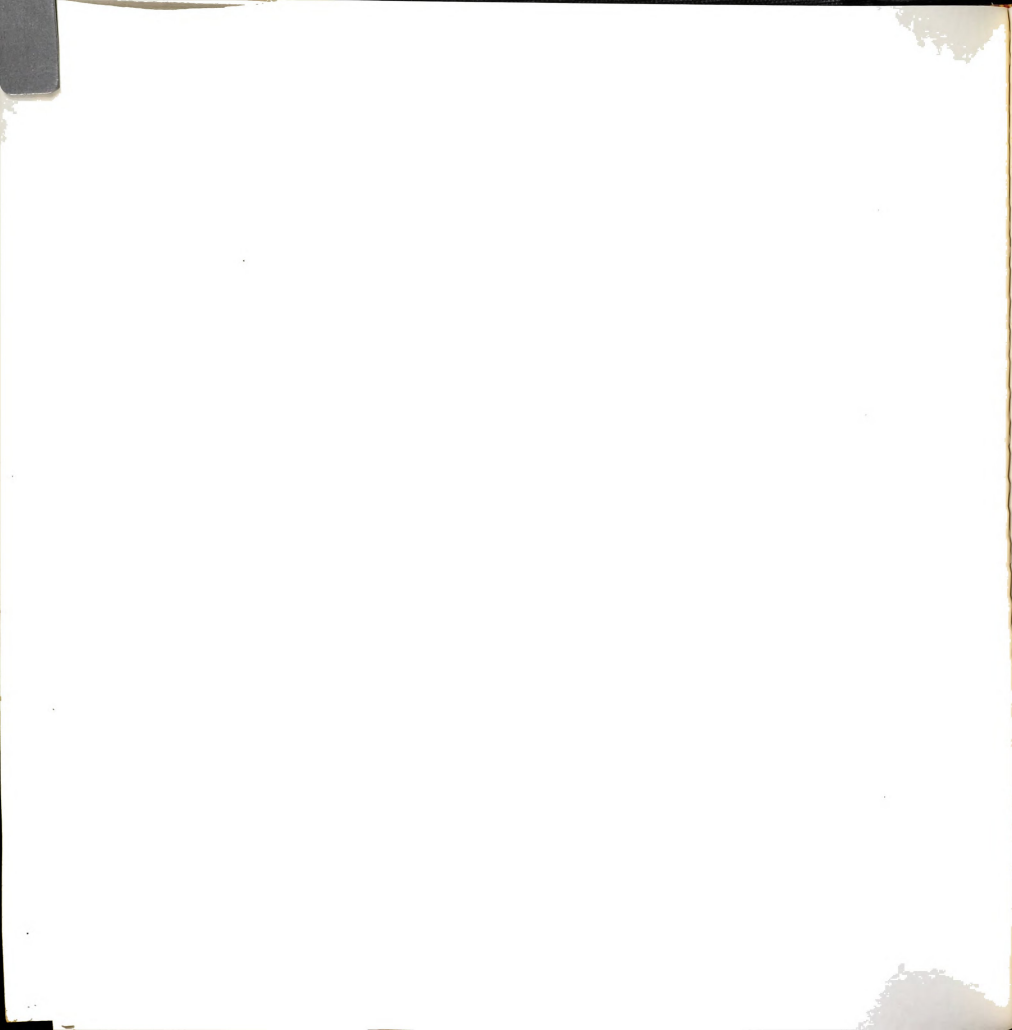
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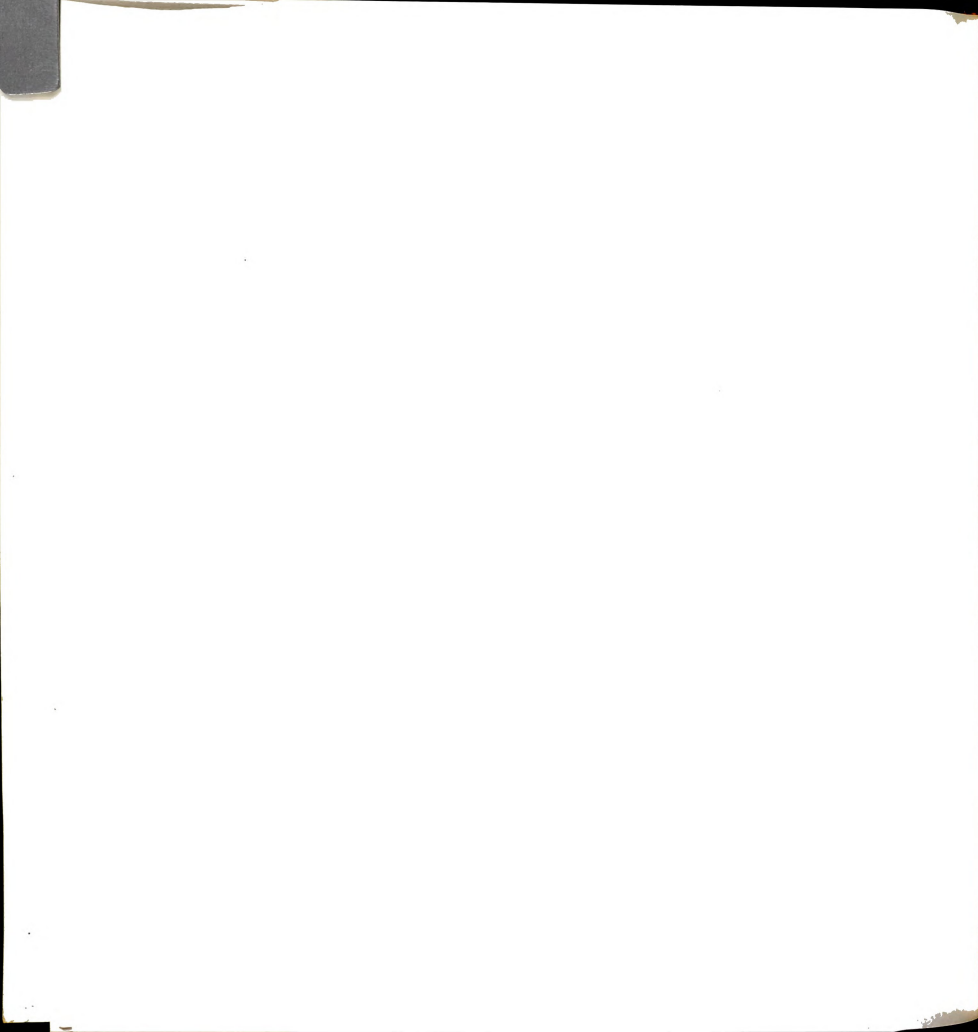
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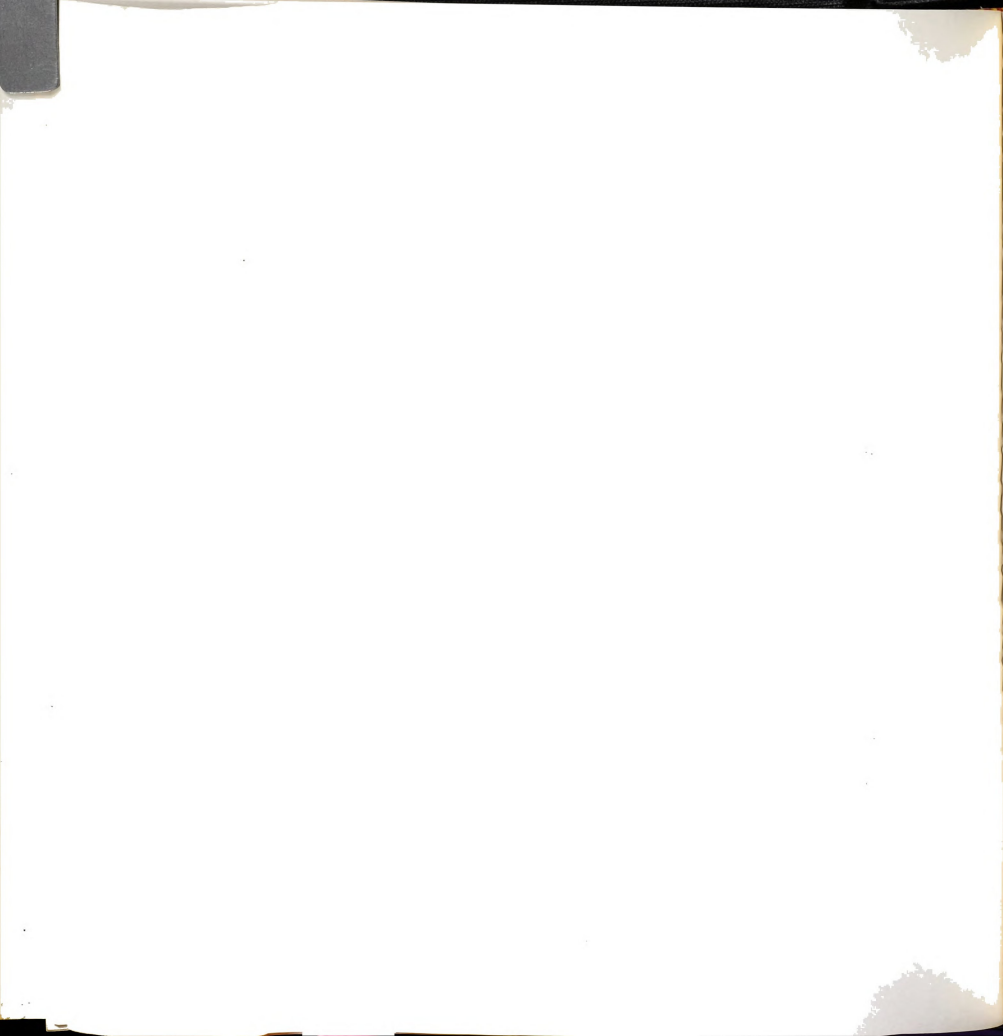
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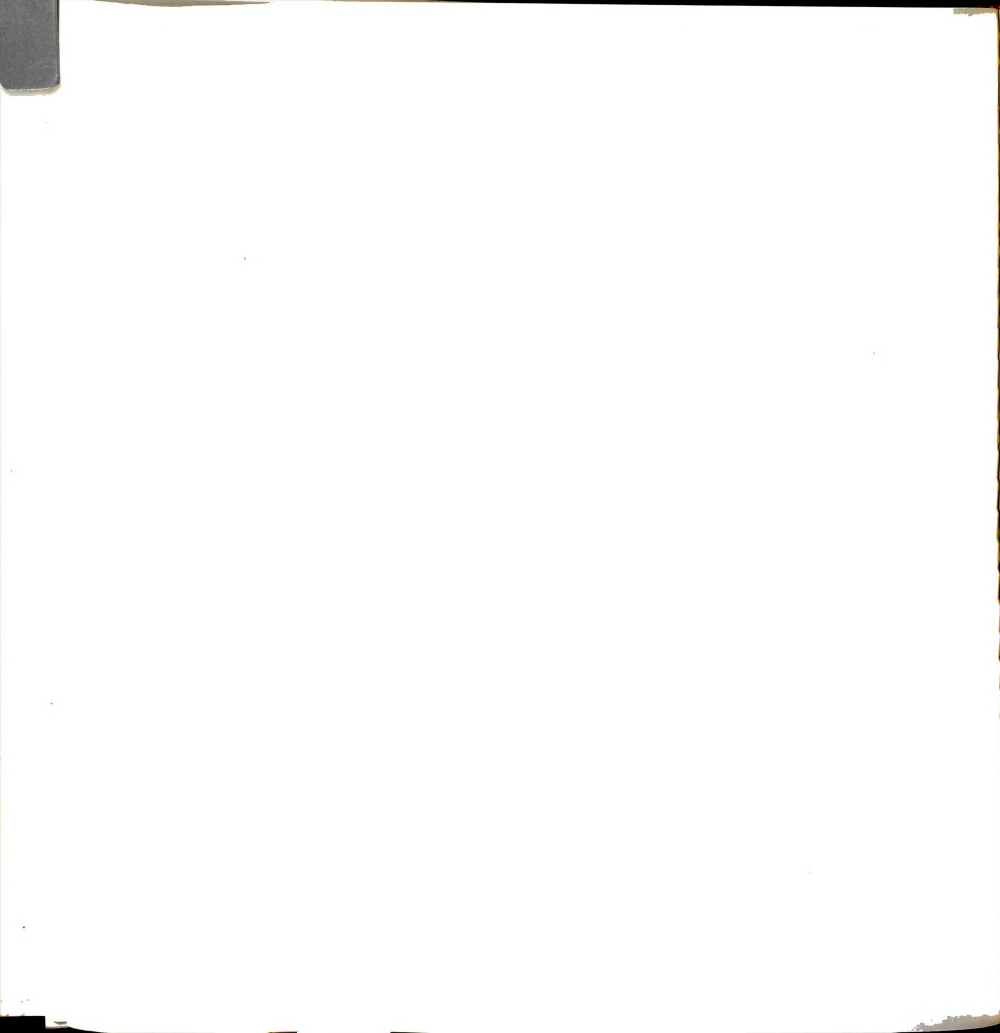
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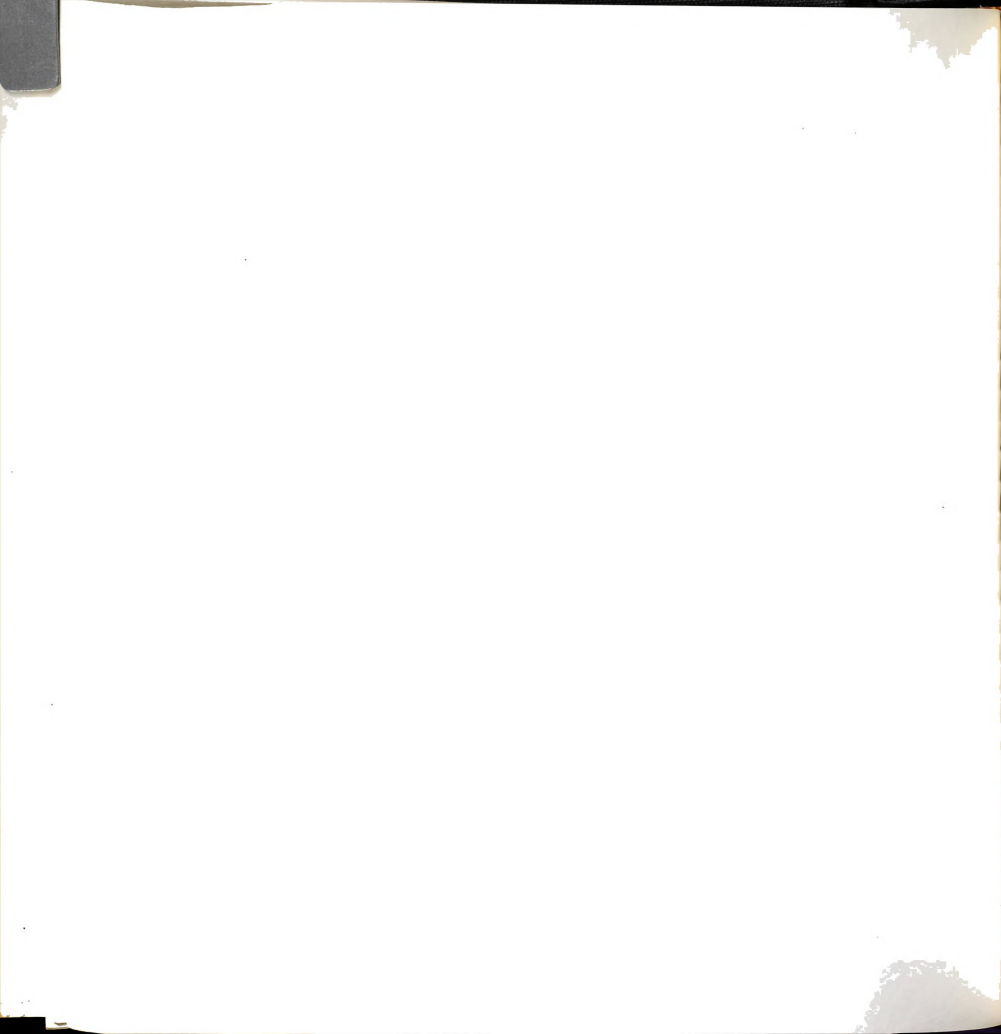
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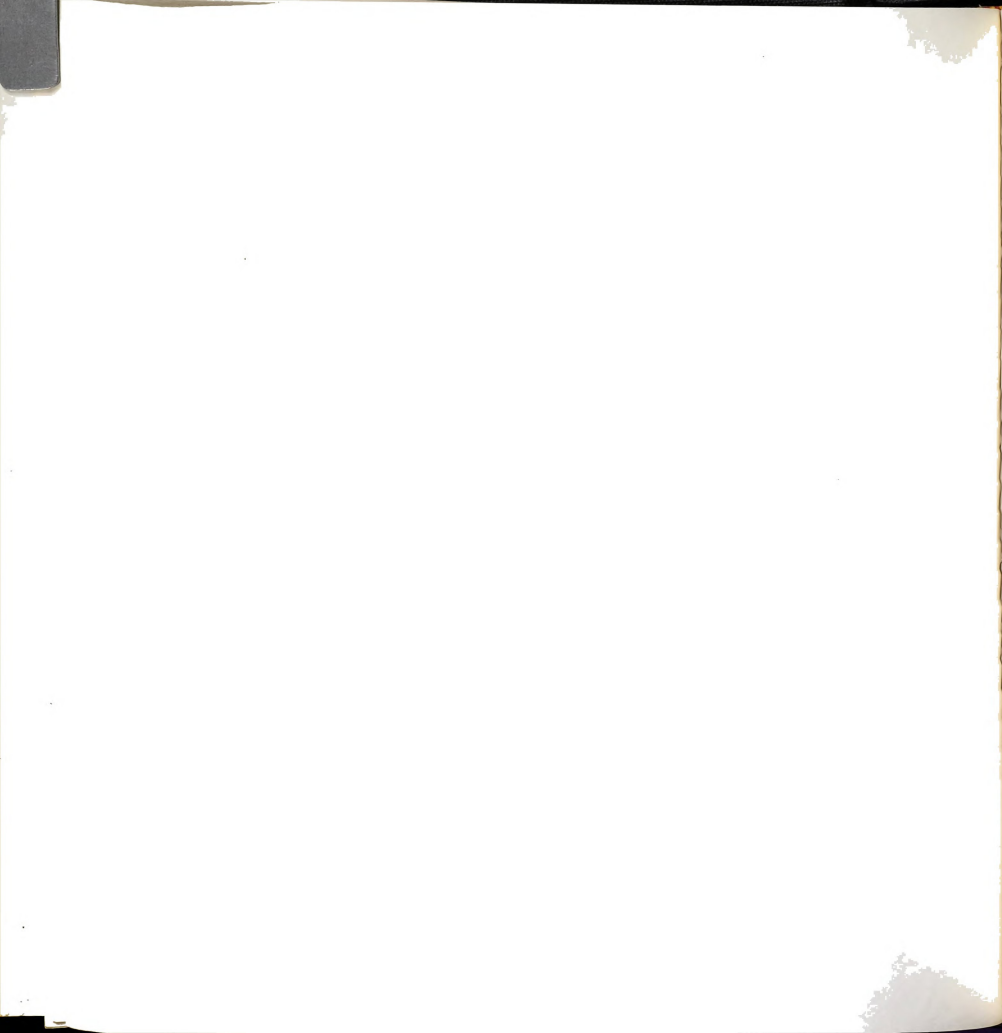
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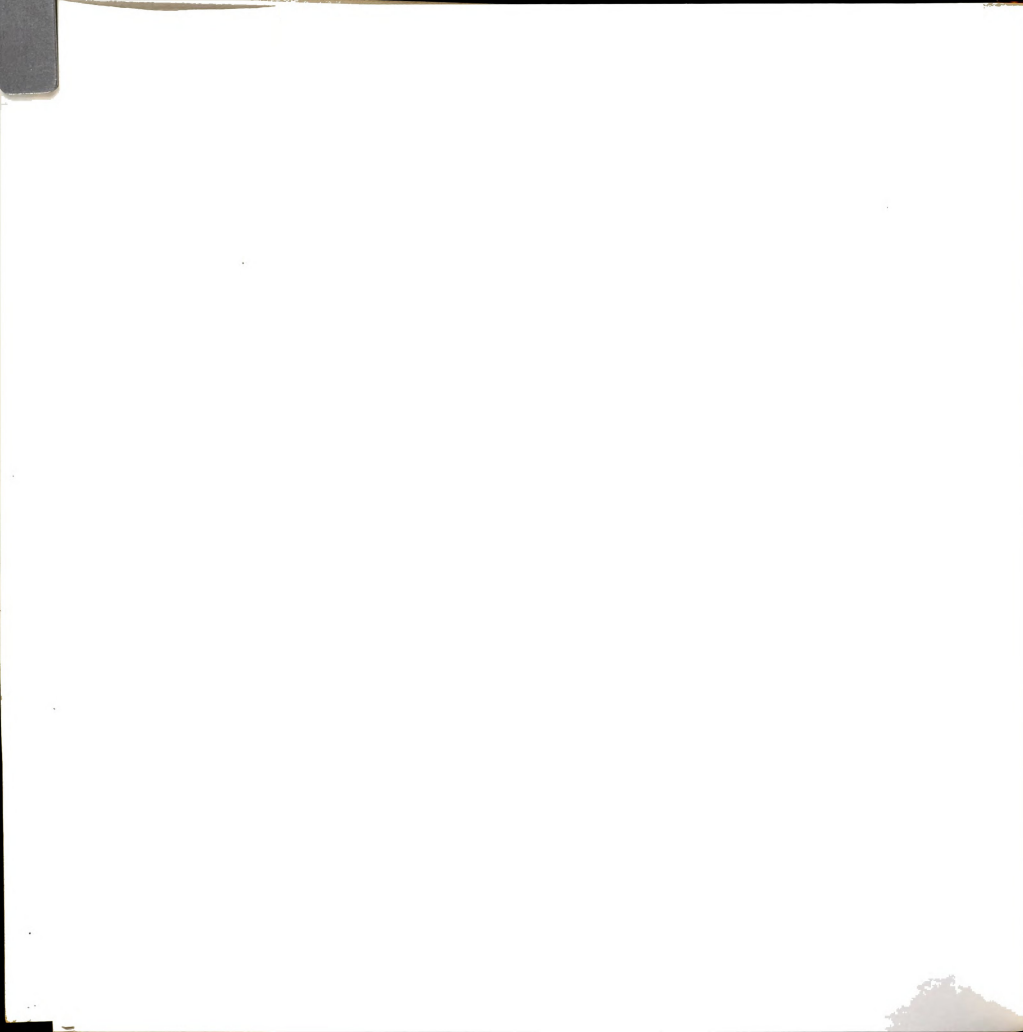
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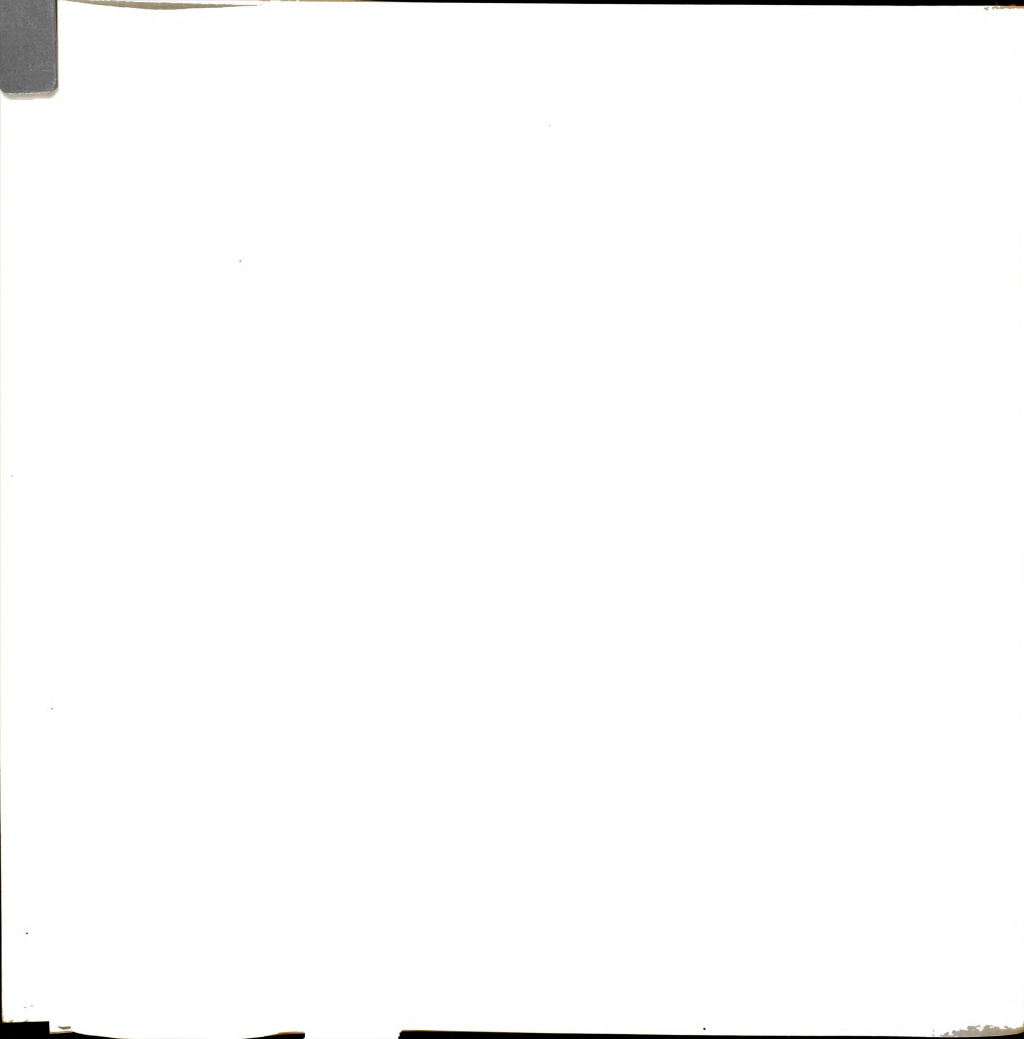
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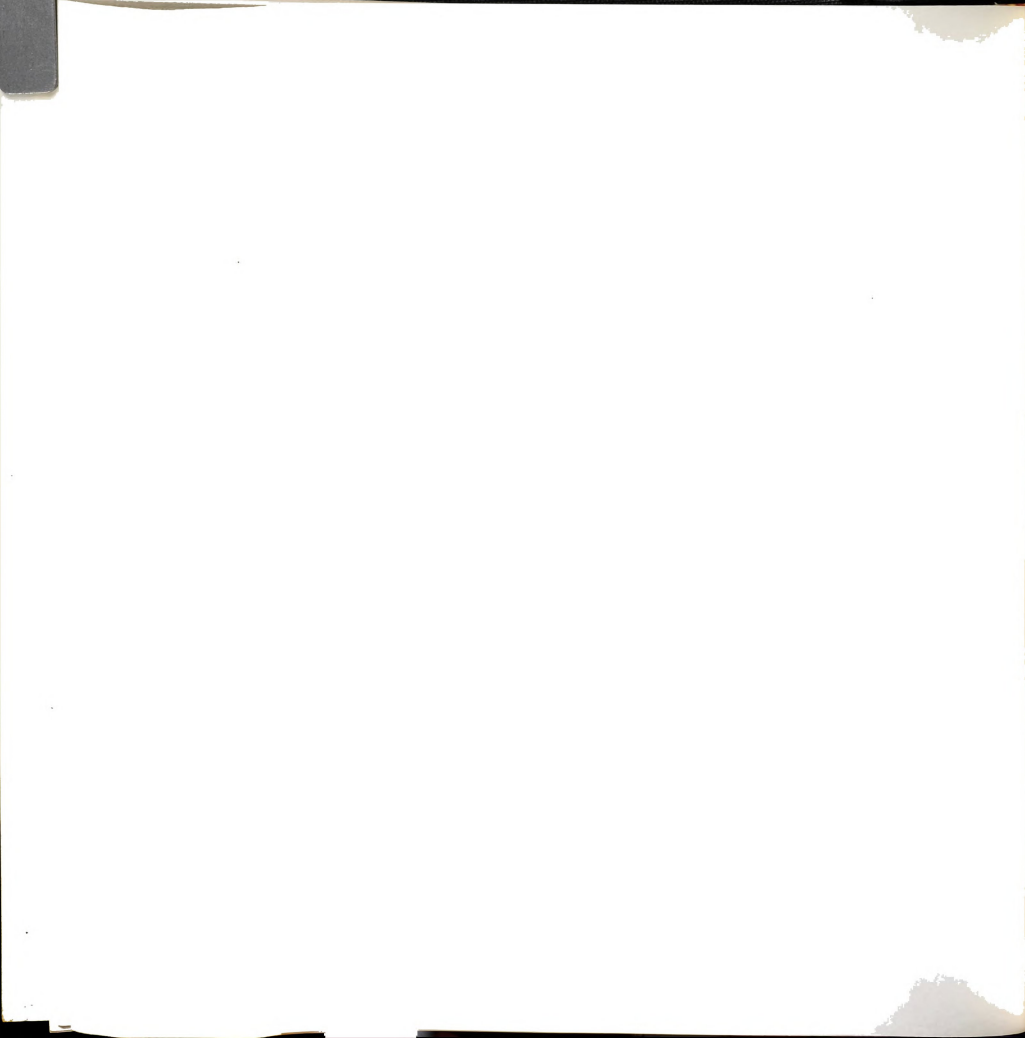
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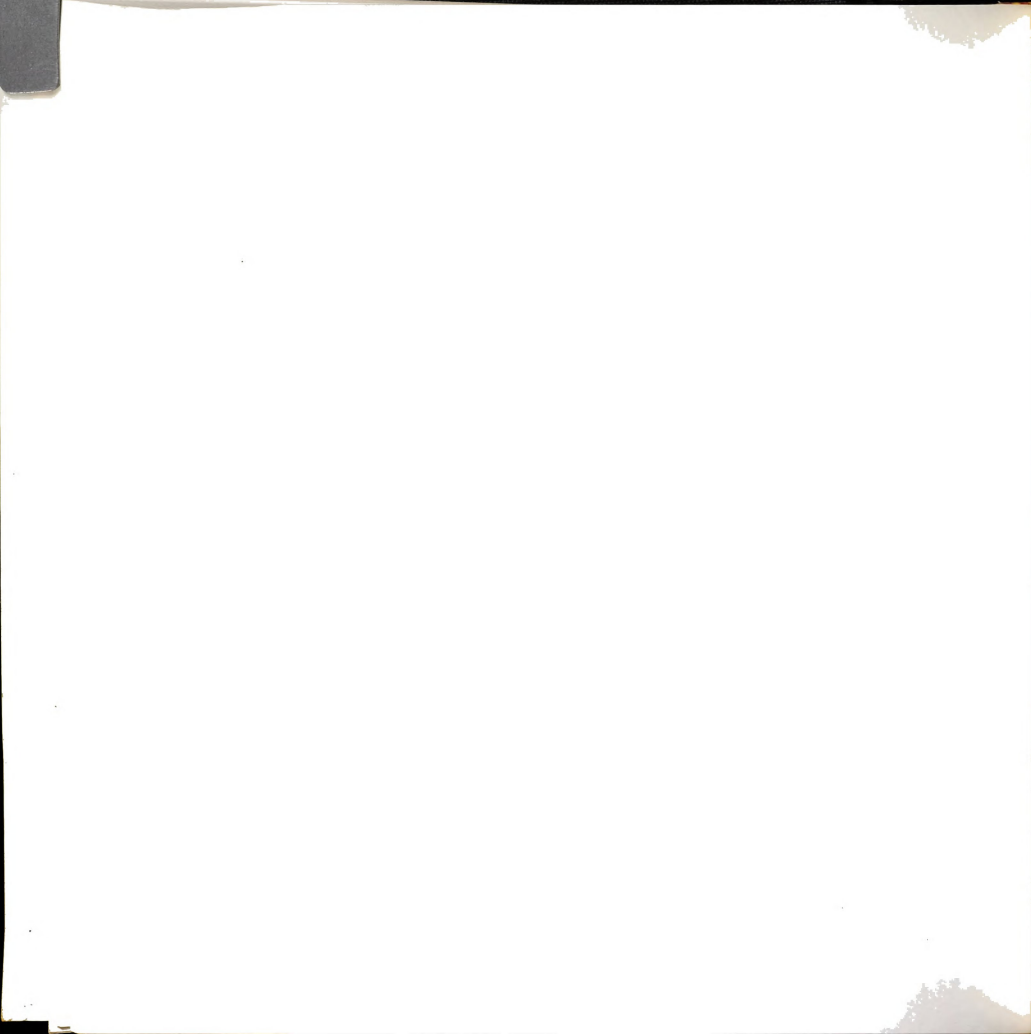
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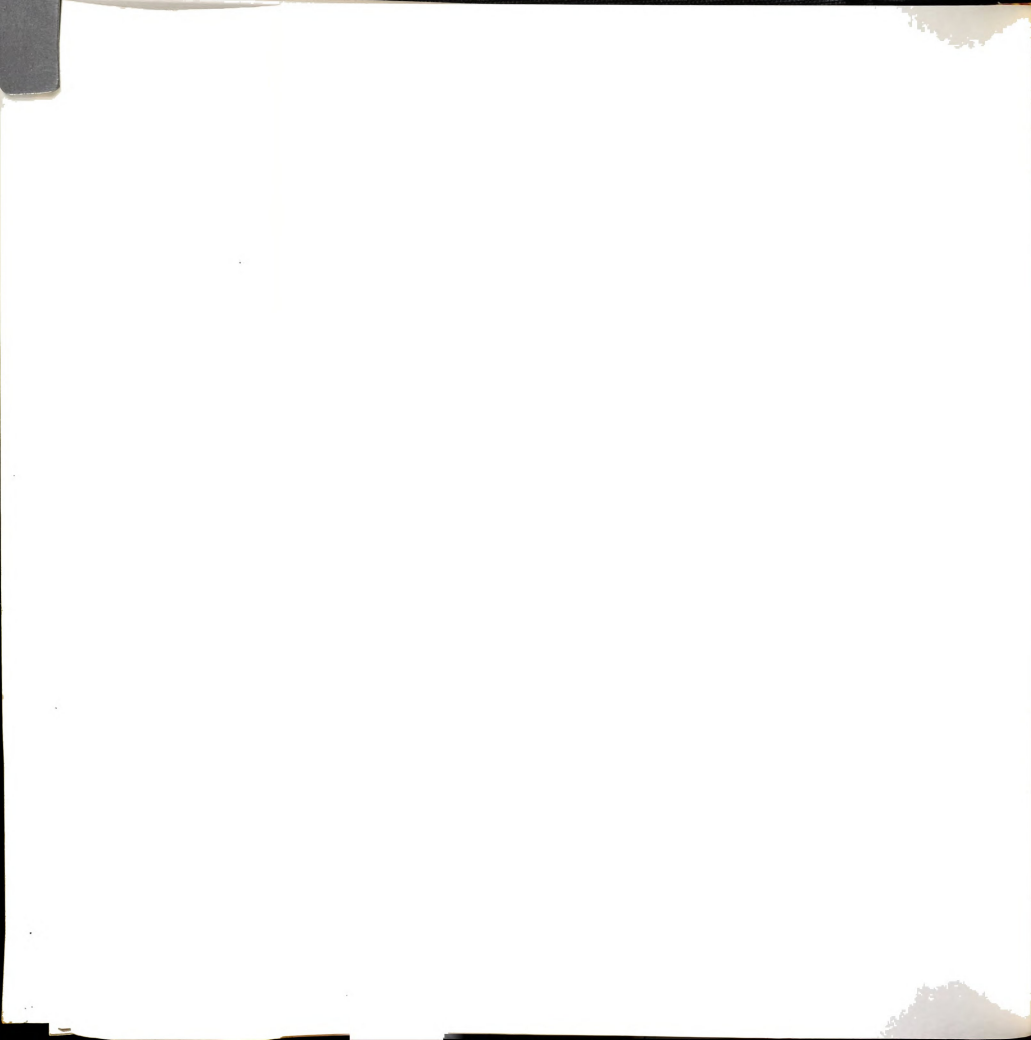
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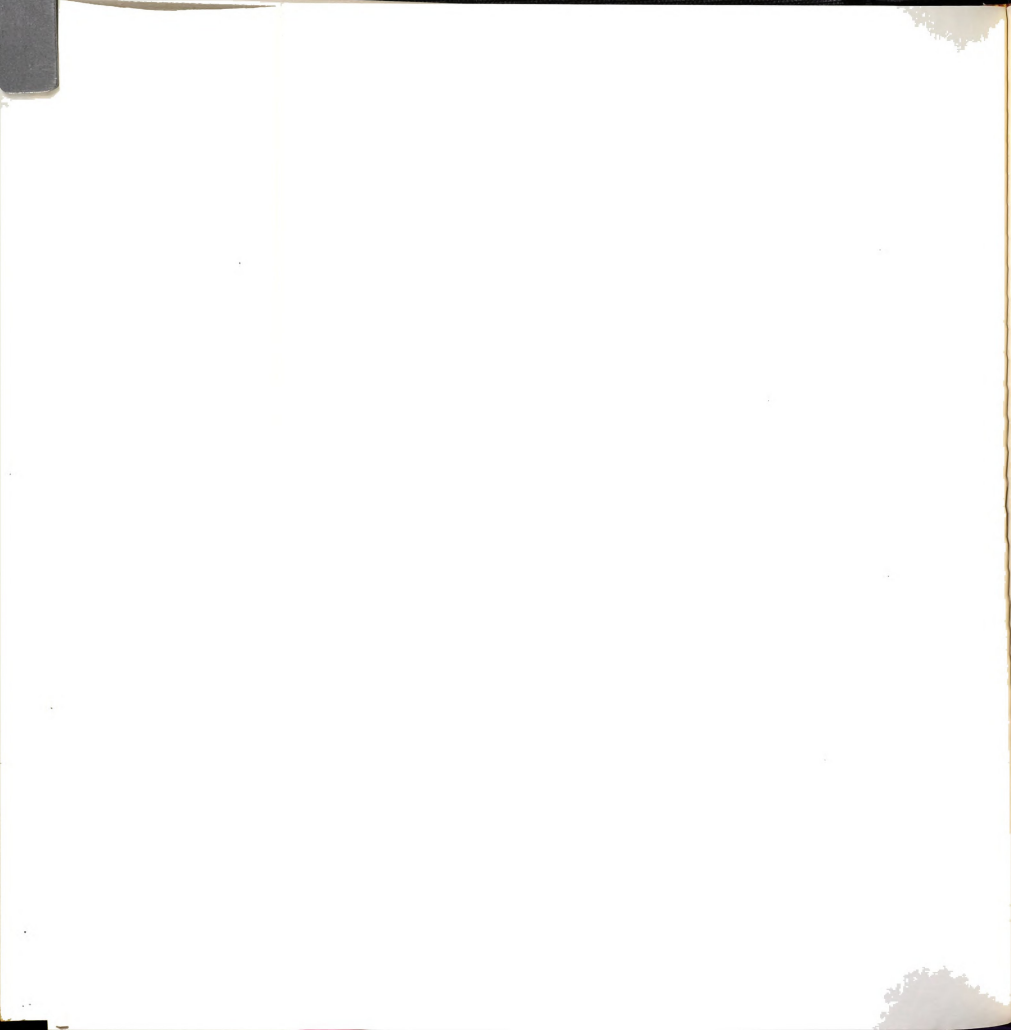
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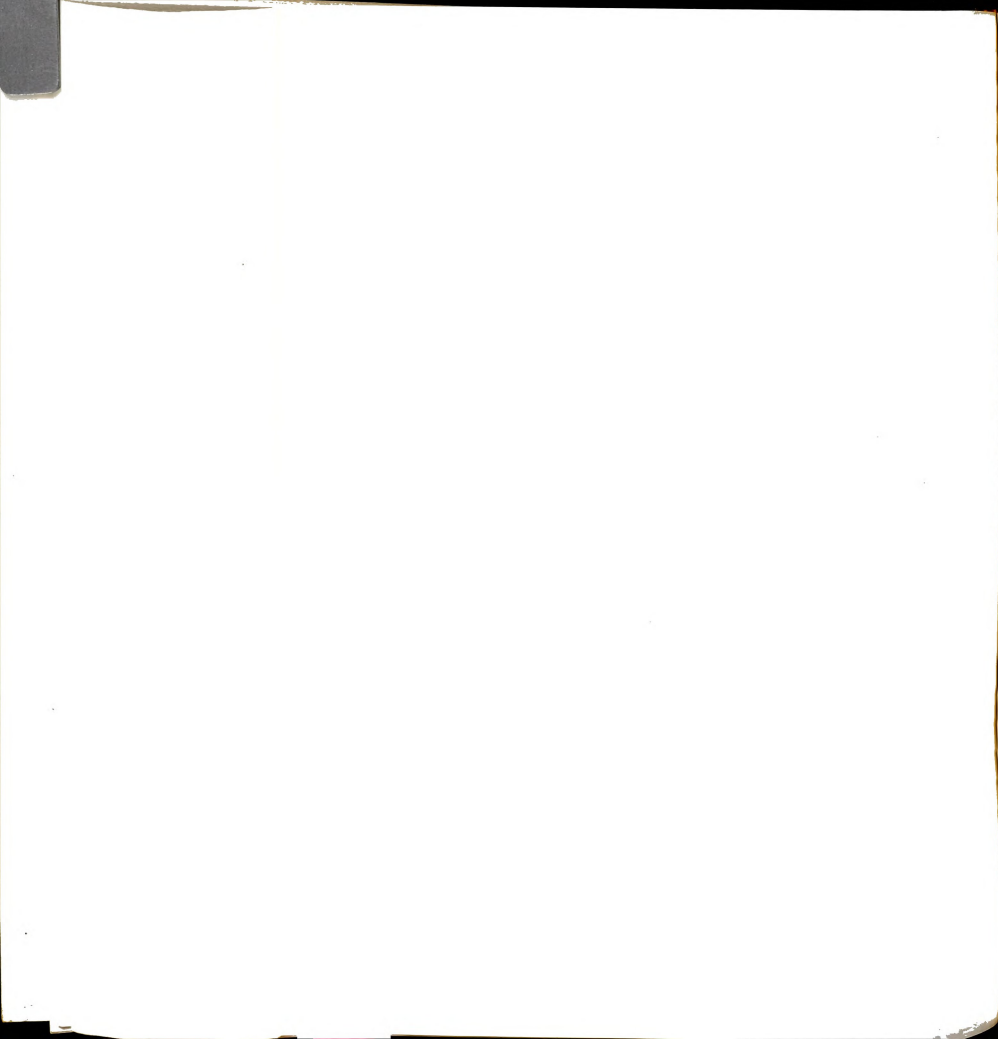
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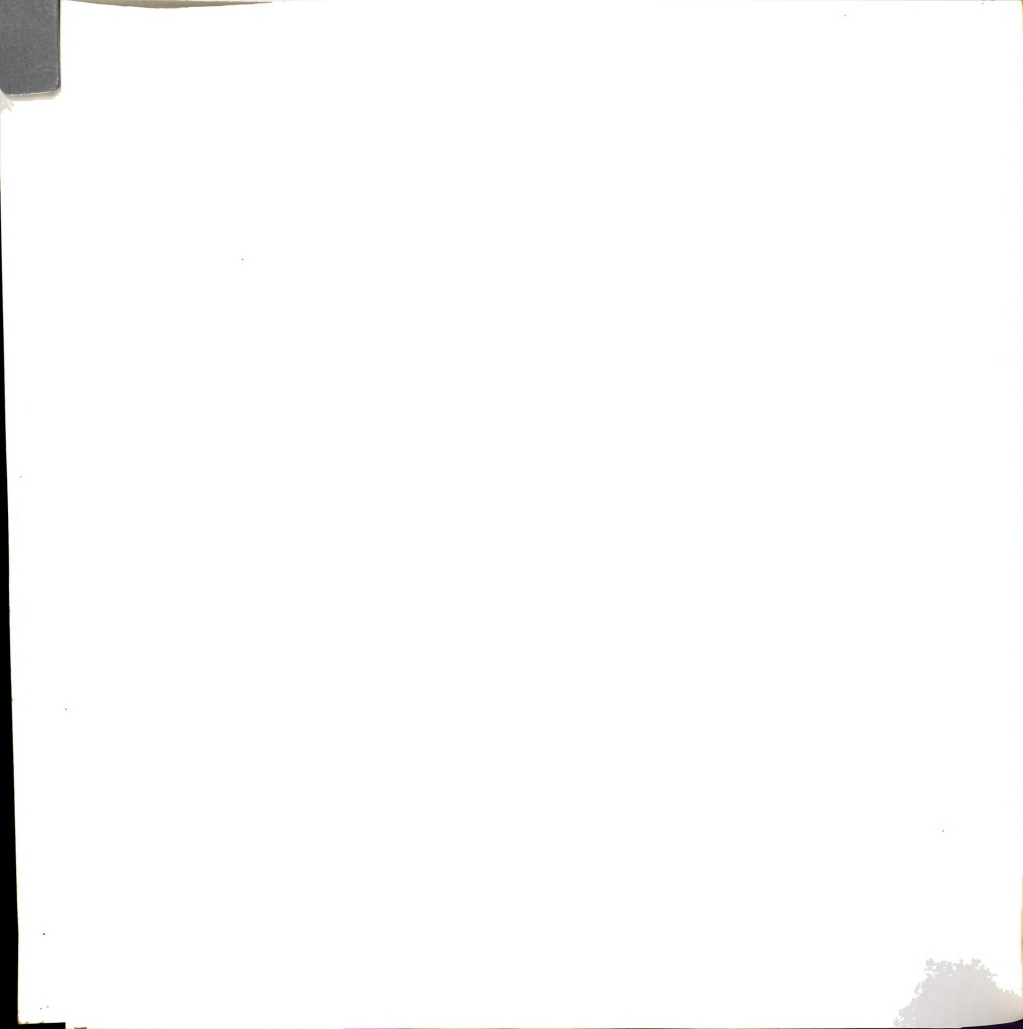


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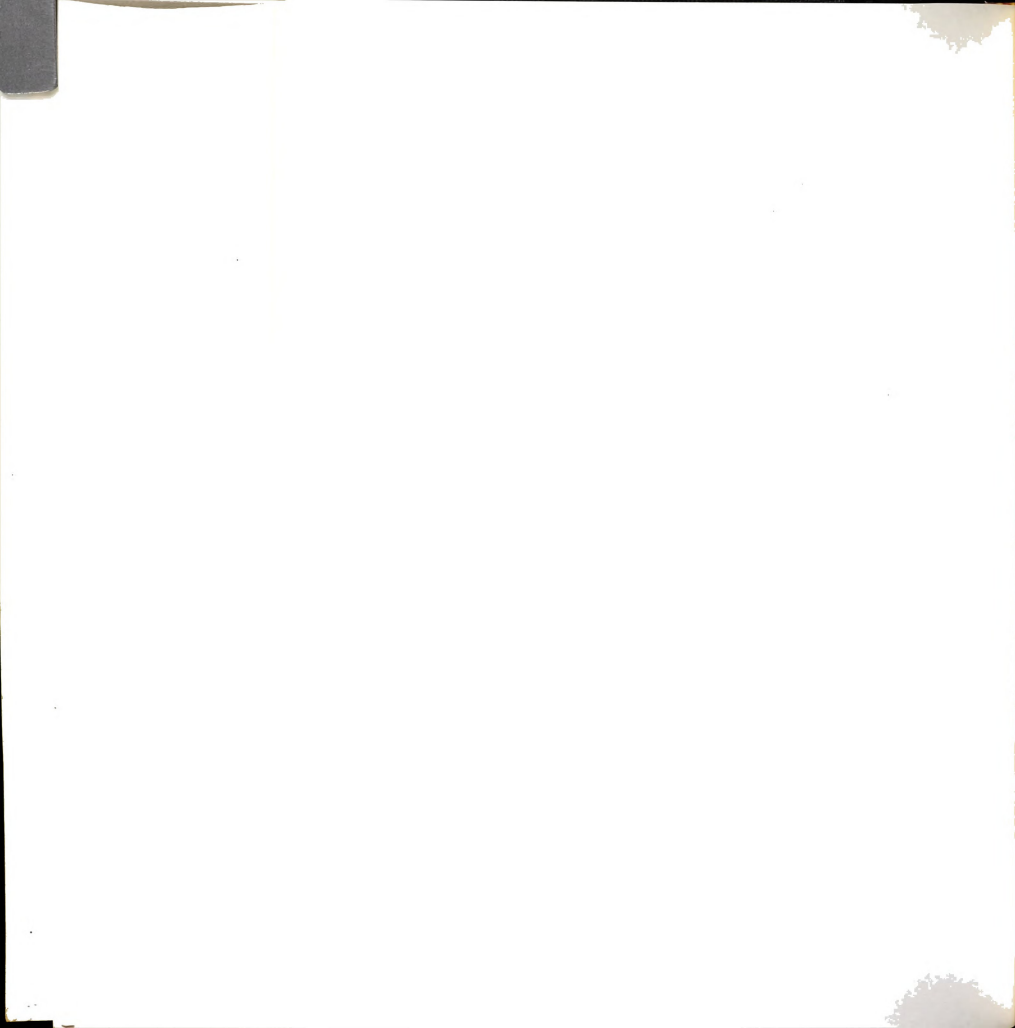
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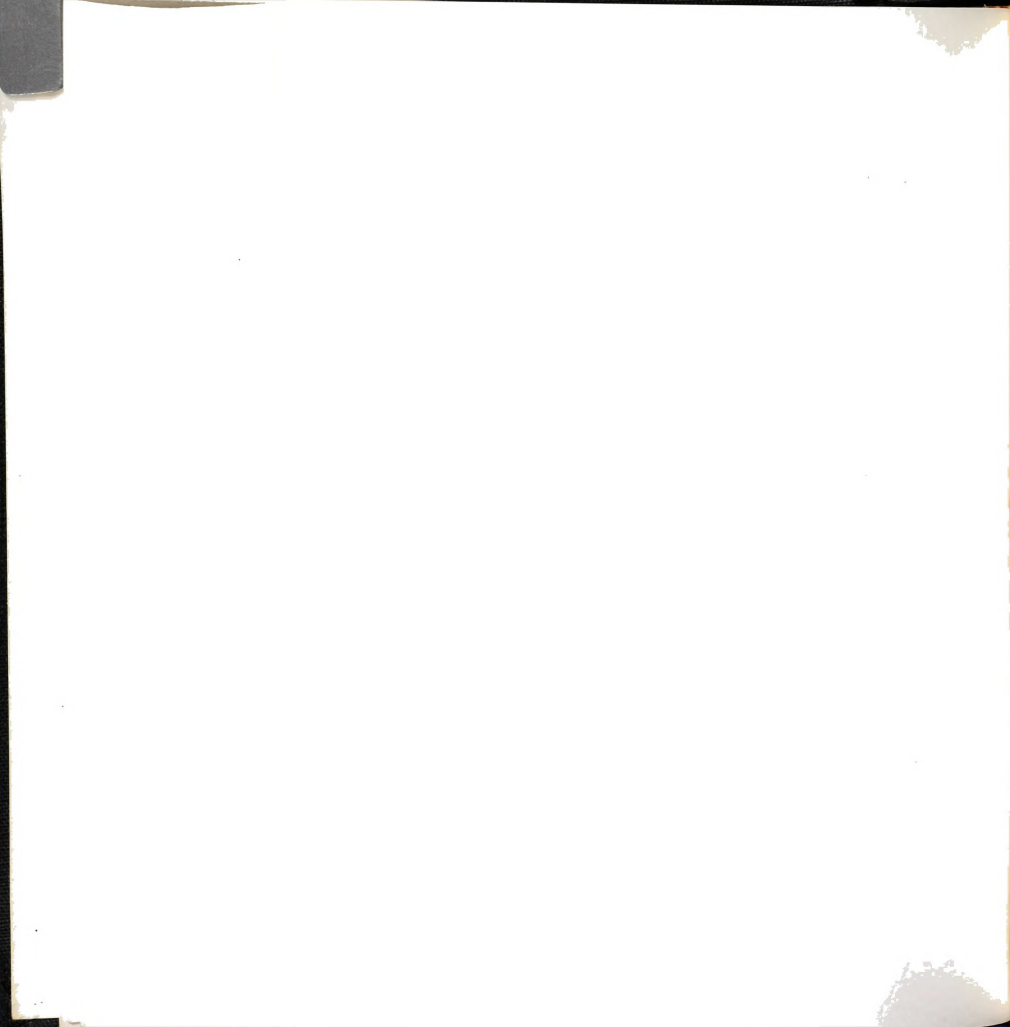


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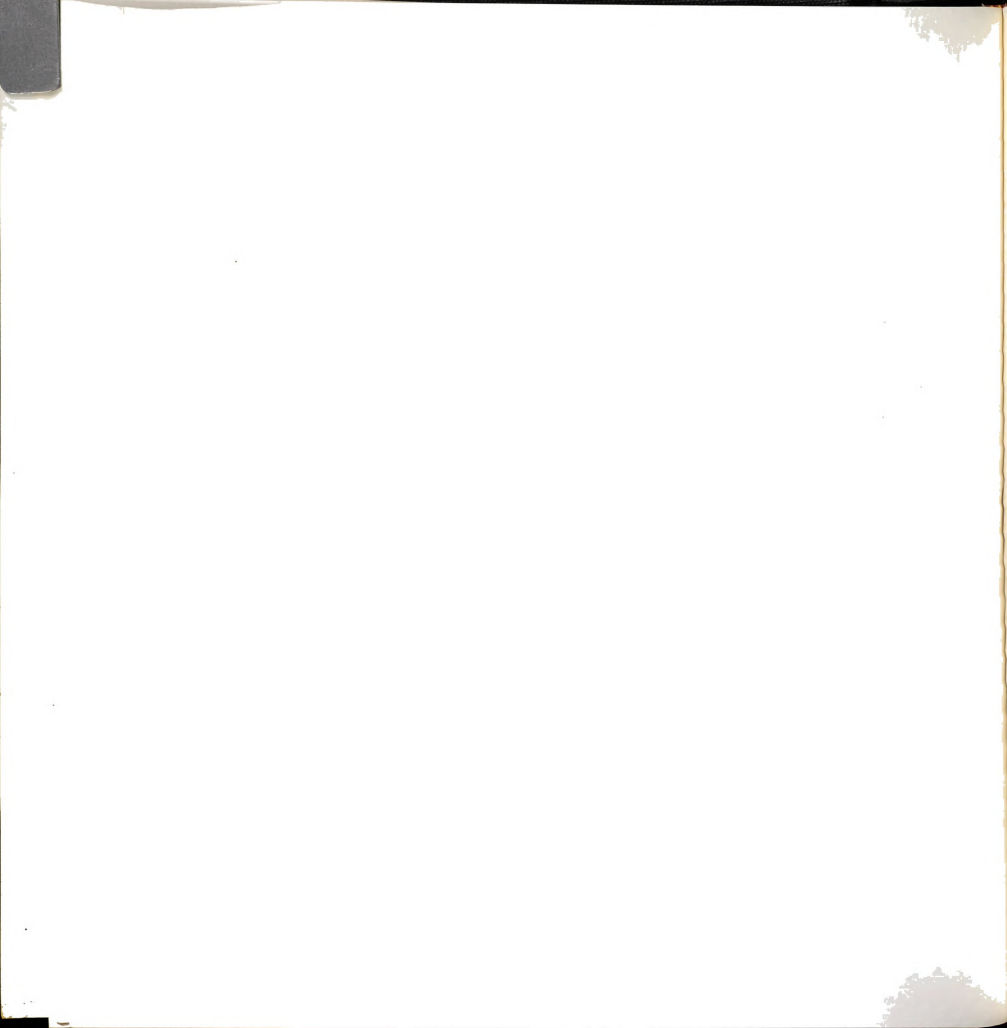
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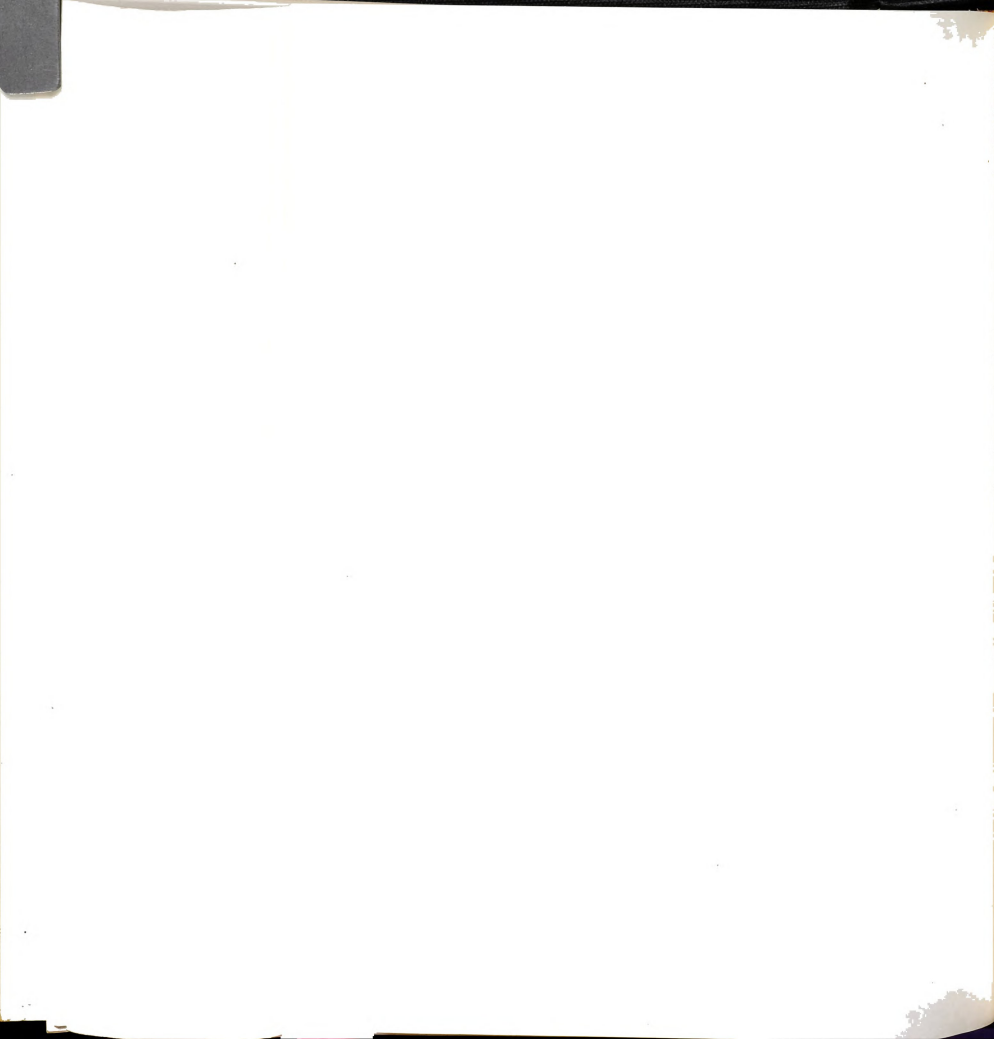
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