APPEARANCE AND REALITY IN CHAUCER'S EARLY DREAM-VISIONS

Dissertation for the Degree of Ph. D.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY
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1976

ABSTRACT

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By

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My purpose in this study is to demonstrate that Chaucer's earliest dream-visions, the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame, have a thematic unity within themselves and within Chaucer's poetic works as a whole. In them, Chaucer is not simply anglicizing a French love-vision nor retelling an old romance nor following a popular model. Rather, he is demonstrating a universally applicable ethical concept concerning the relationship of man to his human environment and to himself. The implication inherent in these poems is that man may not live within the boundaries of an artificially conceived or erroneously elevated ideal. That is, man may not renounce his humanity.

There are at least three elemental conflicts, I propose, which occur in Chaucer's poetry generally and in the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame specifically: experience versus authority; moderation versus excess, and natural, or Christian, love versus amor. My thesis is based on the belief that these oppositions or sets of contraries can be considered as being essentially a matter of appearance versus reality. I use "appearance" to mean

the attractive externals, the way things seem to the characters, though not necessarily to Chaucer or to us as reader. Authority, here the authority of books, is substitute for experience; it takes on the appearance of reality. Hence reliance on authority becomes reliance on appearance, an artificial view of the world and its workings.

Excess also grows out of misunderstanding the nature of humanity and its responsibilities as well as its limitations. To center all one's happiness on another being as mortal and mutable as oneself or to grieve excessively over the loss of that one is irrational, philosophically and theologically. To replace reality with the worship of an artificial and man-made ideal--worldly fame, for instance--is no less an example of excess and error. To love or act excessively, therefore, is to place one's faith in the appearance rather than the reality.

So it is with the two kinds of love. The convention--even if literary--of courtly love requires a code of behavior so artificial and elevated that it is impossible to achieve. This convention, invented by man and presented by him as "ideal," provides no allowances for the world of reality. It is wholly appearance without substance. But that natural love whose source is ultimately divine is an image of charity and, with the addition of grace, can be converted into charity. It can survive the harsher air of reality and its culmination is a lifetime.

This study, then, defines the unifying theme--the philosophical opposition of appearance and reality--which links these

dream-visions and the means--the three sets of contraries--by which that theme is demonstrated. Its examination of how Chaucer shapes his sources to his very individual artistic needs explicates his use of those disparate sources more fully than the studies of any single influence have done. Lately, we have benefited from such an approach to the various Canterbury Tales, but less attention has been focused on this aspect of the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame. I have tried to fill that blank here. I believe that this paper, by providing grounds for new questions and suggesting new directions for investigation, may contribute to our continuing understanding of this, the first master of English poetry.

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of English

1976

To John Yunck

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To adequately acknowledge the contributions of those who share responsibility for any value in this paper is difficult. First, of course, to Professor John Yunck, whose integrity, learning, and grand humanity have lightened my way, I tender respect and gratitude beyond words or time. To Professor William Heist, whose invaluable comments and limitless knowledge were shared generously and kindly, I can only offer my heartfelt thanks. I must also acknowledge the concern and careful criticism of Professor William Whallon. The patience and encouragement of Professor Bern Engel and the Department of American Thought and Language which consistently eased my task shall not be forgotten. And to my husband and daughter--who have willingly accepted both my preoccupation and the burden of housekeeping--I reaffirm my love and appreciation, and the promise of a vacation from dishwashing.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

My purpose in this study is to demonstrate that Chaucer's earliest dream-visions, the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame, have a thematic unity within themselves and within Chaucer's poetic works as a whole. I shall be concerned with the philosophical conflict which, I believe, these poems present. In them, Chaucer is not, I think, simply anglicizing a French love-vision nor retelling an old romance nor following a popular model. Rather, he is demonstrating a universally applicable ethical concept concerning the relationship of man to his human environment and to himself. The implication inherent in these poems is, I believe, that man may not live within the boundaries of an artifically conceived or erroneously elevated ideal. That is, man may not renounce his humanity.

There are at least three elemental conflicts, I think, which occur in Chaucer's poetry generally and in the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame specifically: experience versus authority; moderation versus excess; and natural, or Christian, love versus amor. My thesis is based on the belief that these oppositions or sets of contraries can be considered as being essentially a matter of appearance versus reality. I use "appearance" to mean the attractive externals, the way things seem to the characters, though not necessarily to Chaucer or to us as reader. Therefore, authority,

here the authority of books, is substitute for experience; it takes on the appearance of reality. But authority, especially if it is embraced with the fervor of Chaucer's narrator, is at best reality once removed. To read about an event or an emotion is not the same thing as to live it. Hence reliance on authority becomes reliance on appearance, an artificial view of the world and its workings.

Excess also, I believe, grows out of misunderstanding the nature of humanity and its responsibilities as well as its limitations. To center all one's happiness, one's life, one's reason on another being as mortal and mutable as oneself is irrational. To grieve excessively over the loss of that one is equally unrealistic, equally unnatural philosophically and theologically. To replace reality with the worship of an artificial and man-made ideal--worldly fame, for instance--is no less an example of excess and error. To love or grieve or act excessively is, I think, to place one's faith in the appearance rather than the reality, to mistake the ephemeral for the permanent.

So it is with the two kinds of love. The convention--even if literary--of courtly love requires a code of behavior so rigid, so artificial, so elevated that it is impossible to achieve. This convention, invented by man and presented by him as "ideal," is based on appearance. It is sterile, governed by ritual, existing only for itself with no natural growth possible. It provides no allowances for nor even a touchpoint with the world of reality. Fundamentally, courtly love is a pastime, a holiday, a moment of play-acting. It offers escape from routine, a "might-have-been"

to replace the imperfect and often difficult "is." Its very setting reflects artificiality: a garden clipped and weeded by magic, rivers which never flood, climate ever fair and balmy, the lover with no outside demands to interrupt his total concentration on his lady. Even the lady is less important for herself than as an object to be worshipped, preferably from afar. There is in this setting no hint of the mundane, and it is tempting. However, the love whose environment is this garden has no reality beyond its gates. It is wholly appearance without substance. But that natural love whose source is ultimately divine is an image of charity and, with the addition of grace, can be converted into charity. It is neither static nor sterile. It grows naturally out of character and merit, not external beauty and unavailability. It can survive the harsher air of reality and its culmination is a lifetime.

So I think the three sets of contraries which form the theme of these poems can be classified as aspects of two opposing philosophies: authority, excess, and courtly love or _amor_ as appearance; experience, moderation, and natural love as reality.

Perhaps the most important feature in the _Book of the Duchess_ and one which Chaucer was to use in every major poem was the introduction of the narrator-persona as a character in the poem. The _Book of the Duchess_ marks the first of Chaucer's appearances in the guise of a simpleton, a man of general incompetence but great good will, an avid follower but unsuccessful practitioner of Love, an asker of foolish questions and a giver of unwise answers. Even when these questions and answers are intrinsically wise, they are so

disguised by inaccurate comparisons, misquoted examples, or overpowering catalogues of mismatched authorities that their wisdom often goes unrecognized by the casual or too-literal reader. Later, in the House of Fame the literary Chaucer-narrator was to be lectured to and patronized by a bird, in the Canterbury Tales by an innkeeper. This narrator-persona allows Chaucer to take full advantage of a laugh directed inward, at himself. He can use it to simulate naiveté and so explore the personality of a character, or to make a subtle comment about a friar or a Venus or the conditions and responsibilities of man. The persona of narrator is capable of many moods--comic, ironic, devious, sly, or cutting. But it is always a reminder of reality.

One result of this persona is a kind of moral vision which cuts through the pretension and folly with which we, humanity, have too often replaced the reality of our lives and distorted our perception of our condition. If one insists that Chaucer was not a moral as well as a comic writer, the device of the persona may be taken as primarily serving comedy. But both views are made not only possible but compatible by the double vision which is the essence of Chaucer's irony and his art. He can affirm gently and tolerantly what is, while simultaneously defining for the perceptive reader on a different level what ought to be. And in the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame, he does just that. By a close reading of the poems themselves in conjunction with an examination of Chaucer's sources to discover how his omissions, changes, exaggerations, and additions contribute to the very different artistic product that results, this moral vision can be demonstrated.

CHAPTER I

BOOK OF THE DUCHESS

The Book of the Duchess is a small poem in terms of scene, character, and plot: unlike the bulk of Chaucer's work, it is not panoramic. In it, Chaucer does not present a world as he does in Troilus and Criseyde, the Canterbury Tales, especially the "General Prologue," or even in the House of Fame. Rather his dream-vision is personal--two men meet in a wood-garden and talk of death and grief and so, inevitably, of life itself. And life is an insistent part of the landscape. The hunting party which leads the narrator to the wood is not a part of the action but, by Chaucer's detailed and accurate description, it serves to remind us of the reality which is basic to the argument of the dream. The whelp who appears to the dreamer adds to the furniture of reality which pervades--as it must--the dream. By such small homely details as well as by the prologue which sets the scene for the dream vision, we are led into awareness of the subject of what is in a very real sense a débat, a battle between two different and opposing philosophies.

The first and lesser, in terms of the Book of the Duchess, is that of experience versus authority. That this opposition becomes a major and sustaining one, largely through the continued character of the narrator-persona, in the bulk of Chaucer's works does not

invalidate its position as subordinate here. The major set of contraries, integral to the action and theme of the poem, is that of reason and moderation versus excess, explicitly the excess of grief, which is sinful and against God. Medieval no less than classical philosophy from which it takes its secular models finds the greatest good in moderation. And the medieval Church, whose influence and power can hardly be overstated, propounds moderation as the path to the greatest good, quite literally the path to salvation. The seven deadly sins reflect, of course, behavior which is sinful because of its excess, and which, because of that excess, replaces the worship of Creator with the worship of creation. Hence gluttony is the obsession with food and the flesh to the exclusion of the spirit and the concern with God, His will and commandments. Pride or hubris must be denounced because it equates man with his God, creation with Creator. And wanhope, here the despair of excessive grief, denies first the sovereignty of God's will over man's, and rejects the comfort which God and the Church can offer. Moreover, it implies a greater love for a creature of God than for God Himself. It is to this last that Chaucer addresses himself in the Book of the Duchess.

The subject through which these two contraries will be examined is love: excessive love for one lost in the case of Alcyone and the black knight, for one apparently indifferent in the case of the narrator of the prologue. The case for moderation and reason is presented in the prologue by Ceyx and rejected; by the dreamer in the dream-vision and, by implication, accepted. The duality of love provides the third theme of opposition in that there

is, especially in the dream-vision, more than a hint of courtly love (amor) versus a more natural love whose source is divine. While Chaucer deals more explicitly with this opposition in the Parliament of Fowls and, especially, in Troilus and Criseyde, the roots are here as well.

The narrator in the prologue prepares us for the events of the dream but he has another function. He is Mankind, with all that term implies. As Chaucer developed his art, his narrator became the full-fleshed character which is presaged in the Book of the Duchess. As early as the House of Fame, Chaucer's persona had become determinedly bookish, a condition begun in this poem. The narrator's realism often serves a comic function. This realism has in fact been the source of much scholarly comment. Charles Muscatine, for example, finds "this attitude of realism already becomes a source of difficulty."[1] He concludes that the narrator's realism is "overtly humorous" to the detriment of "the body of the poem," that is, the dream itself.[2] But the prologue is necessary to a reading of the dream, and the narrator's realism obtains there as surely as in the prologue, although it manifests itself rather more subtly, in part, I suspect, because the narrator-dreamer speaks less than the man in black.[3] John Lawlor believes, "The humor of the poem offers possible

[1]Chaucer and the French Tradition (Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1964), p. 103.

[2]Muscatine, p. 104.

[3]The knight has 626 lines of dialogue to the dreamer's 85. F. N. Robinson, ed., The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Houghton Mifflin, 1961). All citations of Chaucer's poetry are to this edition, hereafter cited as Works.

misunderstanding where it does not provoke outright censure."[4] So eminent a scholar as C. S. Lewis concludes that Chaucer produces "comic effects that are disastrous and which are certainly not intended."[5] H. S. Bennett speaks for a sizable number of Chaucerians when he finds the Book of the Duchess interesting primarily because "it shows how dependent Chaucer still was on his French and Latin models."[6] Dorothy Bethurum maintains that Chaucer's narrator "meets the demand for the first person but fails to reveal his bleeding heart."[7] This curious comment is the sort of thing we find too common in the critical reaction to the Book of the Duchess. Such varied commentary may, I suspect, grow out of a preconceived notion of what Chaucer should be writing, a kind of automatic response triggered by the words, "dream-vision," combined with the early date of the poem. But Chaucer's early dream-vision, like his later works, is based on a form, here the French love-vision, which he made his own, marked by the "unmistakeable, individual stamp which Chaucer, even at this early date, set upon everything he touched," that

[4]"The Pattern of Consolation in The Book of the Duchess," in Chaucer Criticism: "Troilus and Criseyde" and the Minor Poems, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame, Ind.: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1960), II, 234.

[5]The Allegory of Love (New York: Oxford Galaxy, 1958). p. 170.

[6]Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), p. 34.

[7]"Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Dream Visions," Schoeck and Taylor, II, p. 216.

John Livingston Lowes recognized four decades ago.[8] Many critical comments pretty much ignore any examination of the character of the narrator to concentrate on the dream itself, despite Bertrand Bronson's influential study in which he finds, "The dreamer is the most complex of all the persons depicted."[9] And the dreamer-narrator justifies Bronson's judgment.

The first lines of the poem have a humorous informality of tone that is unlike the French love poetry exemplified by Froissart, Machaut, and Guillaume de Lorris. He has "grete wonder," the narrator tells us, that he still lives since he has been for so long sleepless from lovesickness. He concludes his plaint, "There is phisicien but oon / That may me hele" (39-40). Such a comparison of one's lady to a physician is a conventional equation which follows a conventional description of lovesickness and "defaute of sleep."[10] But to have suffered such lovesickness for eight years (37) without hope of cure surely goes beyond any requirements of the convention of courtly love. So, early in this, his earliest poem, Chaucer draws what will become as the poem progresses the battle lines, as it were, between excess and moderation or reason, between adherence

[8] Geoffrey Chaucer (1934; rpt. Bloomington: Univ. of Indiana Press, 1958), p. 95.

[9] "The Book of the Duchess Reopened," in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York: Oxford Galaxy, 1959), p. 273. Also see Paul Ruggiers, pp, 295-308 in Wagenknecht and H. S. Bennett, pp. 34 ff.

[10] Works, p. 774. John M. Hill, "The Book of the Duchess, Melancholy, and that Eight Year Sickness," Chaucer Review 9 (1974), 35-50, believes that the narrator suffered from "head-melancholy" rather than lovesickness.

to a man-made ideal and reality. That this is to be the subject of the poem is indicated by the narrator's earlier complaint:

> And wel ye woot, agaynes kynde
> Hyt were to lyven in this wyse;
> For Nature wolde nat suffyse
> To noon erthly creature
> Nat longe tyme to endure
> Withouten slep, and be in sorwe.
> (16-20. Italics mine.)

"Agaynes kynde" is a phrase which echoes throughout Chaucer's works. Virtually every use of the phrases "agaynes kynde" or "lawe of kynde" occurs at a point where a character is behaving against nature--that is, against the highest reality, against the nature he is capable of. In almost every usage, Chaucer seems to be presenting an opposition, a warning that such "unnatural" behavior carries a penalty. For example, Troilus had been ridiculing lovers, feeling superior to such foolish men, when Cupid's arrow struck him. Chaucer's narrator states the moral, "That Love is he that alle thing may binde, / For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde" (TC I, 238-39). This is in a sense very like the proverbial "pride goeth before a fall," so familiar that it has become cliché. Thus it is "agaynes kynde" for man to place himself above his fellows, that is, above humanity. "Agaynes kynde" and similar phrases are in almost every instance placed at the end of a line, the strongest and most emphatic position.[11] Considering Chaucer's

[11]Exceptions are Chaucer's prose works and Fragment B of the Romaunt which, according to Robinson (Works) is not Chaucer's. Also in House of Fame, Book II, in the eagle's discussion of sound, "kynde," used more heavily than anywhere else in Chaucer, occurs in all positions.

prosody, this is a very powerful position and significant in terms of assessing its importance. The philosophical importance of "kynde" is clearly explicated in "God that auctour is of kynde" (TC III, 1765) and demonstrated at greater length in the Parliament of Fowls. Excess is indeed "agaynes kynde," both theologically and philosophically. And the narrator has himself fallen into the trap of excessive, i.e., unnatural, grief, a trap which marks the poem. He has chosen appearance--exaggerated surrender to the mythic code of behavior which governs "courtly" lovers--over reality. He is literally "a mased thyng," melancholy and without "quyknesse"--life or intelligence. But the narrator, true to the character Chaucer has chosen, complains of the unnatural quality of his sleeplessness without recognizing that his extraordinary symptoms, his own excessive lovesickness, are in reality "agaynes kynde." This, too, is very human, understandable if not acceptable: we are quick to recognize our own weakness in another without recognizing it in ourselves. So the narrator will be capable of the most sensible advice to the knight in the dream without recognizing its applicability to himself. But we as reader can.

Having described his symptoms, the narrator gets to the matter of the poem. He has, he tells us, asked for a book to pass the sleepless hours, a book of old romances intended "for to be in minde / While men loved the lawe of kinde" (55-56), and again "kinde"--the law of nature--is emphasized. We are told of Ceyx and Alcyone, a story of love and loss. Chaucer's source for the tale of Ceyx's death and Alcyone's grief is of course Ovid's Metamorpheses, but

he uses that source to create a very different effect. In Ovid, Ceyx sails away to consult the oracles of the Clarion god.[12] His ship is sunk and Ceyx drowned. Ovid was at least as interested in Ceyx as in Alcyone: he described Ceyx's drowning and his thoughts of Alcyone in ninety-eight lines of careful verse. Chaucer, however, with a very different emphasis, spends only nine lines on Ceyx from his departure to his death. Fearful but uncertain, Ovid's Alcyone waited and prayed to Juno to remove her uncertainty and disclose the fate of Ceyx. Juno sent her messenger Iris to Sleep's cave with instructions that the god answer Alcyone's prayer. Her message delivered, Iris "effugit et remeat per quos modo venerat arcus" (XI, 632).[13] Sleep wakes Morpheus, of his thousand sons the one particularly talented at impersonation, to go to Alcyone in the guise of Ceyx to tell her of his death. Overwhelmed by grief, Alcyone drowns herself.

To this point, Chaucer follows Ovid's general outline. But where Ovid tells us that the unwavering love of Alcyone caught the pity of the gods,

[12] Metamorphoses, ed. Frank Justus Miller, 2nd ed. (1921; rpt. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1960), Book XI. All citations from Metamorphoses are to this edition.

[13] "fled away and retraced her course along the arch over which she had lately passed."

> et, tandem superis miserantibus, ambo
> alite mutantur; fatis obnoxius isdem
> tunc quoque mansit, amor nec coniugiale solutum
> foedus in alitibus:
> (XI, 741-44.)[14]

Chaucer has no use for such a reward. His purpose is a very different one. In the Book of the Duchess, Alcyone "deyede within the thridde morwe" after Ceyx appeared to her. As for the rest of the story, Chaucer tells us, "Hyt were to longe for to dwelle."

Within the story itself, there are alterations and emphases and exaggerations which turn Chaucer's tale of Ceyx and Alcyone into his own artistic product, different in tone and attitude from his source. Alcyone is presented as a very real character whose speech reflects her grief and personality. And the narrator empathizes: he felt such pity reading about her grief that he "ferde the worse al the morwe / Aftir, to thenken on hir sorwe" (99-100). By such passages, Chaucer makes us feel the immediacy of her pain. Moreover, in the narrator's version of Ovid, "Ful ofte she swouned, and sayed 'Alas!' / For sorwe ful nygh wood she was" (103-04). Ovid's Alcyone was more restrained. She does not speak directly from the time of Ceyx's departure until Morpheus appears to her as Ceyx's shade. We are told that she busied herself weaving clothes in anticipation of Ceyx's return and prayed to all the gods, especially Juno, to keep him safe and bring him home. Ovid devotes only eleven lines to this period: Chaucer not only extends that to fifty-four lines, he

[14]"And at last, through the pity of the gods, both changed to birds. Though thus they suffered the same fate, still even thus their love remained, nor were their conjugal bonds loosened because of their feathered shape."

omits her activities and focuses exclusively on her elaborate grief.

In Ovid's version, Juno "non ultra pro functo morte rogari" (XI, 583),[15] and sent Iris to Sleep's cave. Chaucer's Alcyone asked Juno directly for a dream: there is no such request in Ovid. In Metamorphoses, Iris--a shimmering rainbow of a spirit--darts to Sleep's cavern to deliver her message. There is little delay, no description of the terrain or the specific location. Not only has Juno's messenger in Chaucer's tale become a man, but the journey itself is changed as well as the climate of the cave and the path by which it is reached. Ovid spends sixteen lines to describe Sleep's cave, and locates it in two lines: "Est prope Cimmerios longo spelunca recessu, / mons cavus, ignavi domus et penetralia somni" (XI, 592-93).[16] In the corresponding passage of the Book of the Duchess, the landscape is described more fully. The "derke valeye" lies between "roches tweye":

> That 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
> Cam rennynge fro the clyves adoun,
> That made a dedly slepynge soun,
> And ronnen doun ryght by a cave
> That was under a rokke ygrave
> Amydde the valey, wonder depe.
> (155-65.)

[15]"could no longer endure these entreaties for the dead."

[16]"Near the land of the Cimmerians there is a deep recess within a hollow mountain, the home and chamber of sluggish Sleep."

There is in this passage a sense not only of distance from man but of a barrenness, a sense that Morpheus's cave was away from the track of man not so much because the god chose solitude but because the terrain was literally unsuited to human or natural life. It echoes more of Virgil's entrance to the underworld in its eeriness than of Ovid's straightforward rather splendid chambered cavern.[17] Morpheus, in Ovid one of Sleep's thousand sons, is here the god of sleep himself.

Chaucer's altered description continues. Both caves are dark, although Iris's rainbow had provided some light. Sleep's cave is not touched by sun or life or time. It is striking for its deliberate silence. But the lack of light and sound, in Ovid's poem within the cave itself, is a logical lack for the abode of a god dedicated to sleep. There is no implication that the sterility extends to the land itself, as there is in the Book of the Duchess. The interior decoration is different, too. In Metamorphoses:

> saxo tamen exit ab imo
> rivus aquae Lethes, per quem cum murmure labens
> invitat somnes crepitantibus unda lapillis.
> ante fores antri fecunda papavera florent
> innumeraeque herbae, quarum de lacte soporem
> nox legit, et spargit per opacus umida terras.
> ianua, ne verso stridores cardine reddati
> nulla domo toto, custas in limine nullus.
> (XI, 602-09.)[18]

[17] Aeneid VI, 236 ff., ed. with Eng. trs. H. Rushton Fairclough (New York: G. P. Putnam's [Loeb Classical Library], 1930). All citations of the Aeneid are to this edition unless otherwise indicated.

[18] "But from the bottom of the cave there flows the stream of Lethe, whose waves, gently murmuring over the gravelly bed, invite to slumber. Before the cavern's entrance abundant poppies

And in the central part was Sleep's bed. In the room filled with empty dreams, "quo cubat ipse deus membris languore solutis" (XI, 612).[19] There is a peace and stillness about Ovid's description which does not exist in Chaucer's poem. In his cave:

> There these goddes lay and sleep,
> Morpheus and Eclympasteyr,
> That was the god of slepes heyr,
> That slep and dide noon other werk.
> (166-69.)

And the narrator says with a certain inelegant envy, "They had good leysur for to route!" (171).

Not only do the inhabitants of Morpheus's cave snore, they sleep most energetically:

> Some henge her chyn upon hir brest,
> And slept upryght, hir hed yhed,
> And somme lay naked in hir bed
> And slepe whiles the dayes laste.
> (174-77.)

Chaucer's Morpheus and Eclympasteyr, the single survivor of Ovid's "thousand sons,"[20] are not the serene gods of Metamorphoses. They are at best lazy and very much like men: at least, the narrator implies, like those fortunate men who are not doomed to near-endless insomnia. But Chaucer's messenger is hardly Olympian either. In

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bloom, and countless herbs, from whose juices dewy night distils sleep and spreads its influence over the darkened lands. There is no door in all the house, lest some turning hinge should creak; no guardian on the threshold."

[19]"There lies the god himself, his limbs relaxed in languorous repose."

[20]In Froissart's Paradys d'Amours, Enclimpostair is one of the sons of the "noble dieu dormant" (28): Works, p. 774.

Metamorphoses when Sleep, "vix oculos tollens" (XI, 619),[21] asked her why she came, Iris addressed him as:

> Somne, quies rerum, placidissime, Somne, deorum
> pax anima, quem cura fugit, qui corpora duris
> fessa ministeriis mulces reparasque labori.
> (XI, 623-25.)[22]

Machaut retains the same politely formal language.[23] In the Book of the Duchess, we find an almost frenetic pace and a vastly altered tone. Chaucer's messenger bursts in:

> fleynge faste
> And cried, "Oh, ho! Awake anoon!"
> Hit was for noght; there herde hym non.
> "Awake!" quod he, "whoo ys lyth there?"
> And blew his horn ryght in here eere,
> And cried, "Awaketh!" wonder hÿe.
> (178-83.)

This is activa vita indeed; not gentle and certainly not respectful but realistic, down to earth, and unquenchably dedicated to his mission. Muscatine complains that Chaucer's very altered scene "transports us instantly from the mythical cave to an army camp."[24] Further, he maintains, "The narrator's prosaicism of outlook is most at odds with the dominant tone of the poem in the Ceyx episode."[25]

[21]"his eyelids heavy with the weight of sleep."

[22]"O Sleep, thou rest of all things, Sleep, mildest of the gods, balm of the soul, who puttest care to flight, soothest our bodies worn with hard ministries, and preparest them for toil again."

[23]Fonteinne Amoreuse in Oeuvres de Guillaume de Machaut, ed. Ernest Hoepffner (Paris: Firmin-Didot [SATF], 1908).

[24]Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 105.

[25]Ibid., p. 104.

It seems to me illogical to fault Chaucer for a technique in an early poem which is praised in a later one. We laugh--as we should--at Pandarus, the arbiter of the rules of courtly love, counseling Troilus:

> For if a peyntour wolde peynte a pyk
> With asses feet, and hede it as an ape,
> It cordeth naught, so nere it but a jape.
> (TC II, 1041-43.)

This is of course sound advice: keep the form of "thi matere," act naturally.[26] But the language in which it is framed is so antithetical to "courtly" language that the scene--and the advice--have the effect of high comedy. And the tone is totally Chaucer's. Scholars have generally accepted this as an example of Chaucer's comic genius. Muscatine concludes perceptively that Chaucer "deepens and humorizes" the shortcomings of courtly behavior in these lines.[27] Further, he finds that Pandarus "has in one respect the same function as that of the narrator of the Book of the Duchess, who has similarly suffered unrequited love 'this eight yeer,' but whose fate it is, rather, to minister to the needs of a nobler sorrow. The effect in each case is a light, comic irony which sets off the full seriousness of the other lover's position."[28]

In the Knight's Tale, Theseus, the knight's "gentil duc," says of Emelye:

[26]Pandarus is following sound doctrine according to The Art of Courtly Love of Andreas Capellanus, trs. John Jay Parry (Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1959), p. 152 and elsewhere. See also C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love, pp. 34 ff.

[27]Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 137.

[28]Ibid., p. 139.

She woot namoore of al this hoote fare,
By God, than woot a cokkow or an hare.
(KnT I, 1809-10.)

And this passage, too, is generally accepted as "ungentle" though realistic in its language and therefore comic in its effect. Yet the Knight's Tale is no less a subject for praise, particularly in modern scholarship.[29] Muscatine says of this passage, "The leavening balancing element of common sense is signalized here, as it is usually signalized in Chaucer, by a lapse of the high style and the introduction of colloquialism."[30] Such a conclusion is of course completely justified. Throughout Chaucer's work, realism ("common sense") and irony are marked by a shift to colloquial language.

The most cursory examination of the nature of the art by which Chaucer usually makes his comments about man and God and the society of which he is a part reveals certain consistencies. Chaucer uses incongruity, proverbs, and inappropriate, even barnyard, language to force reality into an otherwise highly elevated passage or sentiment and so to force his audience's recognition of the artificiality and error which underlies the elevation. Such incongruity and inappropriateness, however, is no less operative in the episode of Morpheus's cave than it is in the later poems. This artistic habit is the crimson thread that unifies Chaucer's poetic tapestry.

[29]See for example Paul T. Thurston, Artistic Ambivalence in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale" (Gainesville: Univ. of Florida Press, 1968); Paull F. Baum, Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, 1958), p. 90; H. R. Patch, On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1948), pp. 201-02.

[30]Chaucer and the French Tradition, p.185. Italics mine.

There is of course more than a hint of the military in the messenger's tone and bearing. Considering the changed nature of Chaucer's god of sleep, the determination of the messenger does not seem untoward. This passage is irresistibly comic; no modern reader could resist its charm, nor should he. Certainly nothing in the French tradition of love-visions remotely anticipates its realism.

Morpheus is cast in the same very human mold as Juno's dedicated messenger. After the horn and the final "Awaketh":

> This god of slep with hys oon yë
> Cast up, axed, "who clepeth ther?"
> "Hyt am I," quod this messenger:
> (184-86.)

and delivered his message and "wente hys wey." Morpheus, awake and obedient, bears Ceyx's drowned shape to Alcyone and "stood ryght at hyr beddes fet." There is no hint of Morpheus's talent as an actor in Chaucer's version. Juno had simply "bid hym crepe into the body" (144) and speak in its voice. To the narrator, the grief of Alcyone, "this noble wif," was a laudable and elevated emotion. But when Ceyx appears to her, he counsels:

> Awake! let be your sorweful lyf!
> For in your sorwe there lyth no red.
> For, certes, swete, I nam but ded.
> . . . . . .
> I praye God, your sorwe lysse.
> To lytel while oure blysse lasteth.
> (201-211.)

However, Alcyone, unheeding, "deyede within the thridde morwe."

The narrator, as unable to accept Ceyx's reasonable advice as was Alcyone, and blind to its application in its own case, dismisses the tale and explains that he only told it so we could

understand his prayer to Morpheus and its immediate answer. But the conflict has been set up, the premise made clear. Alcyone, representing excess--here of grief--has died. Had she accepted the counsel of Ceyx, representing reason and moderation, she might presumably have lived. The matter of the dream itself has been presaged, the two contraries have been identified.

The language of the narrator's prayer of convention is as realistic and practical and, indeed, as single-minded as that of Juno's messenger. He prays that "Morpheus, / Or hys goddesse, dame Juno, / Or som wight elles" would send him rest. In return, he vows, "O down of pure dowves white / I will yiv him a fetherbed" (250-51). The detailed description of this proposed gift and the promise that Morpheus will sleep comfortably on it must surely pass beyond any convention into the world of reality. So the premise of the prayer to Morpheus is convention but the practice--the form and language within the context of the poem--is original and true to the character of the persona Chaucer has created. Out of the events of the story of Ceyx and Alcyone, the narrator focused on a possible solution to his immediate problem. And, he tell us, he fell instantly asleep.

The use of a book as an introductory device appears to have been invented by Chaucer.[31] Certainly the effect is to shape the matter of the poem into a graceful whole. The leitmotif of the

[31]See M. W. Stearns, "Chaucer Mentions a Book," MLN 57 (1942), 28-30. For an opposing view, see W. O. Sypherd, "Chaucer's Eight Year Sickness," MLN (20) (1905), 240-43. I could find no examples of such a device in the French romances which predated Chaucer's dream-visions.

dream itself is not only anticipated by the narrator's description of his own lovesickness but is strengthened by the nature of the book and the tale of Ceyx and Alcyone. That this tale carries such thematic importance renders H. S. Bennett's judgment that "the poem of Ceyx and Alcyone is developed at too great length"[32] dubious at best. Before the dream begins, Chaucer has prepared us for the problem which will be its subject. This device is brought to final fruition in the Parliament of Fowls where Chaucer presents it on a larger scale as "bokes": not only has the "boke" of the Book of the Duchess been pluralized, it has become part of a lazzi, a commonplace. Before the Parliament is eight lines old, Chaucer tells us, "For al be that I knowe nat Love in dede," and we know what is to come. He knows no more than he finds "on bokes." And we expect him to happen on a particular book. So the device has become more than that: it anticipates the matter of the poem to follow and it introduces Chaucer's persona whom we've come to know. Moreover, by its familiarity, it allows Chaucer to compress his overture, as it were. In the Book of the Duchess, he spends forty-seven lines before he mentions his book; in the Parliament of Fowls only ten; in Troilus and Criseyde, a much longer poem, fifty-four lines; in the Legend of Good Women seventeen; and in Anelida and Arcite ten. In the House of Fame, Chaucer does not refer to a particular book but opens his poem with a welter of learned theory which substitutes for specific authority and serves the same purpose. With the device of a book

[32]Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century, p. 36.

in the hands of the learned but inexperienced narrator, Chaucer has evolved an ideal vehicle through which to comment ironically about the inadequacy of authority over experience. Man's reliance on authority instead of experience is, as I have said above, an example of the choice of appearance over reality which I believe is, in a very real sense, the theme which unites Chaucer's works.

The proclivity for long listings of impressive and varied authorities which Chaucer, in the persona of narrator, demonstrates to such great effect in his later poems has its origins here. The use of catalogues and authorities is a common literary convention, of course, but Chaucer adds a new dimension. His lists are invariably inaccurate or incongruous, either in motivation (that is, a long list of erudite authority to document a minor or irrelevant point) or in content (that is, the authorities, if they are not, like Lollius, themselves fictional, are forced into a form which fits the statement in question).

The narrator swears that the interpretation of his dream is beyond even the power of Joseph or Macrobius. But so enamored is he of impressive authority that he extends this simple statement into ten lines by elaborate identification of the two dream-analysts. When he wakes in his dream, he finds that not only was the story of Troy, with its heroes and kings and lovers--Paris and Helen and, evocatively, Medea and Jason--engraved on the stained glass windows, but "both text and glose / Of al the Romaunce of the Rose" (333-34). These subjects, familiar to medieval audiences, announced what was to come. The narrator was to tell a love story in the style of the

French poets. As the battle lines were set down for the débat between reason and excess earlier, so its location is here established.

While the Book of the Duchess is oten called an allegory,[33] the precise nature of this allegory remains undefined. Chaucer presents his allegory within a firmer and more realistic framework--the grief of the man in black over the death of his love. Some of the allegorical conventions are missing, notably the personification of such abstractions as Reason and Nature and the God of Love. Instead of Reason, Chaucer gives us King Ceyx and the dreamer. Opposing them as surely as the God of Love opposed Reason and Nature in the Roman de la Rose are the narrator of the prologue and Queen Alcyone.

In the Romaunt of the Rose, the God of Love so entangled the lover in the meshes of love that he thought of nothing else and went to desperate lengths to obtain his desire, the consummation of his passion. Reason warns the lover of the cruelty of Love and his helpers:

> Thou delest with angry folk, ywis;
> Wherfore to thee bettir is
> From these folk awey to fare,
> For they wole make thee lyve in care,
> This is the yvell that love they call
> Wherynne there is but foly al;
> For love is foly everydell.
> (Romaunt, 3265-71.)

[33] Works, p. 267. See also Bernard F. Huppe and D. W. Robertson, Jr., Fruyt and Chaf (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), p. 3. C. S. Lewis (Allegory of Love, p. 167) disagrees, believing on the contrary that, in Book of the Duchess, "allegory has disappeared."

But the lover continues in his folly and his service to love. The natural results of such a total commitment to love--or to any emotion--may be seen throughout the prologue to the Book of the Duchess.

The bird-song that wakened the dreamer, the marvelous windows, the bright clear air, the May morning are all traditional properties of the love-vision. And Chaucer's description is lush and graphic. But even here an ingenuous reference to the tangible and real appears: the music was so sweet, the dreamer says, that "for the toun of Tewnes, / I nolde but I had herd hem synge" (310-11).[34] While this is a small incident, when it is combined with others, the cumulative effect is to subtly interject the real world into the idealized garden of the Roman. The narrator's dream is rampant with activity. To the pervasive song and densely populated windows, Chaucer introduces a hunting party, "Men, hors, houndes, and other thyng." There is in this scene a kind of reminder of the tension between authority and experience we have noted before. The narrator wakening to the bright windows engraved with the story of Troy and the Roman de la Rose--his bookish world--is called out of it into the world of experience by the horns and hubbub of the hunting party. And the dreamer took his horse and joined the hunt. By this act he has allied himself not only with

[34]Robinson (p. 774) believes that "Tewnes" was chosen for rhyme but this does not negate its reality. Huppe and Robertson (p. 46) propose that the meaning of this line is "tune of tunes, i.e., song of songs, or Town of Towns, i.e., the New Jerusalem," a reading which I think is a bit strained.

experience but with reality as well, an alliance which becomes incontrovertible during his conversation with the man in black.

The hunting party is not, as Charles Muscatine believes, simply a device by which the narrator reaches the wood-garden.[35] With its "gret route / Of huntes and eke of foresteres," its "relayes and lymeres," it adds to the life with which this dream is permeated. The sense of reality which is never far away is intensified by the wealth of accurate details with which Chaucer surrounds this episode and the dream. Structurally, the hunt signals the beginning of the débat and, later, its resolution. But its primary function is to provide an insistent reminder of life. The first 154 lines of the dream are essentially busywork, extraneous to the plot itself. But these lines are not merely the ornamentation of the conventional garden of love. The outlines of the garden are here but neither flesh nor spirit is shaped in the image of Machaut or Guillaume.

Once in the wood, as sounds of the hunt fade in the distance, the dreamer is approached by a whelp that fawned as if "hyt had me yknowe" and led him to a flowery green and a grove with the huge orderly trees of the Roman. Beneath the trees romp so many animals that Argus, the "noble countour" of the Roman, could not have numbered them. The country of this dream is little traveled:

> 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.
> (398-401.)

[35] Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 103.

And "at the laste / I was war of a man in blak," and the preliminaries are almost over: the débat is about to begin.

Before the dream, the narrator was suffering and full of care; he had lost "al lustyhede." When after such a wretched and long-lasting insomnia he falls asleep, he wakes in the dream apparently healed of his earlier malaise and, relieved of grief, takes full pleasure in his surroundings. The relationship between narrator-dreamer and the knight--in particular, the dreamer's specific role--has been much discussed in recent years.[36] Certainly we are aware of an alteration in the dreamer. In the dream his earlier sorrow and woe do not exist. While these emotions are not part of the dream-vision, as symptoms which do exist in the reality of the waking world, they affect our reading of the poem. But the dreamer is not changed intrinsically from the narrator; rather he is that narrator whole. In this mood of health, the dreamer comes upon the knight.

When he first sees the knight leaning against a huge oak, the dreamer notes the contrast between the verdant teeming garden and the lonely black figure. "'Lord,' thoght I, 'who may that be? / What ayleth hym to sitten her?'" and moved in for a closer look. Clemen and Kittredge have remarked on the subtlety with which the

[36]See for example J. R. Kreuzer, "The Dreamer in the Book of the Duchess," PMLA 66 (1951), 543-47; B. H. Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Reopened," Wagenknecht, pp. 271-94; D. C. Baker, "The Dreamer Again in the Book of the Duchess," PMLA 70 (1955), 279-82; Dorothy Bethurum, "Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Love Poems," Schoeck and Taylor, II, 211-31; and John Lawlor, "The Pattern of Consolation in the Book of the Duchess," Schoeck and Taylor, II, 232-60.

dreamer approached this "wel farynge knight" and, with others, have noted the difference in rank between dreamer and knight.[37] Most of these latter comments have their source, I suspect, more in the identification of the man in black with John of Gaunt than with the explicit internal evidence of the poem. Respective ranks of the characters have, I think, little relevance to meaning here. We know the knight was of good size, young, lightly bearded, and completely immersed in his own grief. Chaucer makes the knight's oblivion to his surroundings emphatically clear: the dreamer

> stalked even unto hys bak,
> And there I stood as still as ought,
> That soth to saye, he saw me nought.
> (458-60.)

As the dreamer stood unnoticed, the knight "heng hys hed adoun, / And with a dedly sorweful soun," lamented to himself "of ryme ten vers or twelve," still unaware of the dreamer's presence.

This complaint was, the dreamer tells us:

> The moste pitee, the most rowthe
> That ever I herde; for by my trowthe,
> Hit was gret wonder that Nature
> Might suffre any creature
> To have such sorwe and be not ded.
> (465-69.)

In the beginning of the poem, the narrator had said of himself:

[37] Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry, trans. C. A. M. Sym (London: Methuen, 1963), p. 43 ff.; George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1915), p. 39. See also S. T. Manning, "That Dreamer Once More," PMLA 71 (1956), 540-51; and Lawlor, p. 240. Lowes (p. 100), while admitting Chaucer's subtlety of perception, denies that quality in the dreamer.

> Agaynes kynde
> Hit were to lyven in thys wyse,
> For Nature wold nat suffyse
> To noon erthly creature
> Nat longe tyme to endure.
> (16-20.)

In no study I could find were there any statements of Boethian influence in the Book of the Duchess. In fact, at least two examinations specifically denied such influence in so early a poem.[38] Yet, as C. S. Lewis points out in The Discarded Image, Boethius was a major figure widely known in the middle ages.[39] I would not claim that Chaucer used the Consolation of Philosophy directly in this poem but only that some of the concepts expressed in it are, implicitly or explicitly, Boethian in nature. Chaucer's familiarity with Alanus's De Planctu Naturae and the Roman de la Rose is accepted virtually unanimously.[40] Alanus's and, especially, Jean de Meun's debt to Boethius is almost axiomatic. Certainly, Ceyx's "To lytel while oure blysse lasteth" is as Boethian in implication as Troilus's final laugh (TC, V, 1821-25). And the quality of Nature in the Book of the Duchess in these passages and throughout the poem is very like that in the Parliament of Fowls. The position of Nature as source or bringer of order is evident in the Parliament, but I think it exists here as well.

[38]B. L. Jefferson, Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1917), p. 55; Works, p. 773 and, by implication, p. 280.

[39]London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1964, pp. 77 ff.

[40]See for example Bethurum, pp. 212-14; and Muscatine, pp. 30 ff. (Guillaume) and pp. 82 ff., esp. 95-96 (Jean).

As the narrator was blind to the application of the story of Ceyx and Alcyone in the prologue, so is the dreamer unaware of the parallel to his earlier words in this passage. But we are not. The dramatic irony which results from these varied levels of understanding is striking. And it becomes stronger as the poem progresses. There is irony in the fact that the dreamer makes his comment with no apparent awareness of repetition. But we are able to compare both instances and note the difference in the objects. The narrator has been in the throes of sorrow caused by a love unreturned, a kind of a stock "courtly" reaction to a stock "courtly" situation. The man in black mourns a fulfilled love lost through death, a love consummated and natural in source. That the same refrain is used to describe both situations, both very different kinds of love and very different sources of sorrow alerts us, I suspect, to the courtly and romantic terms with which the knight will cloak his despair and, in essence, its cause.

The dreamer has heard the complaint of the knight: he knows the reason for his sorrow. Chaucer makes this unequivocally clear (459-86). Moreover, as he quotes the knight's lay, the dreamer says:

> And was thys, for ful wel I kan
> Reherse hyt; ryght thus hyt began.
> (473-74.)

The dreamer continues by describing the physical state of the mourner and points out that his grief lay "so colde upon hys herte" that he was oblivious to the dreamer "for he had wel nygh lost hys mynde" (511). To call the dreamer "obtuse" (archly conceding that

his intellect was "dulled perhaps by long lack of sleep"[41]) is to ignore the previous twenty-eight lines in which Chaucer painstakingly emphasized the dreamer's prior knowledge of the cause of the knight's sorrow. Moreover, the dreamer says his purpose is to "loke wher I myght ought / Have more knowynge of hys thought" (536-37). And so he sets about achieving this purpose. It is unlikely--in the fourteenth century no less than today--that one would begin a conversation with a stranger by admitting to deliberate eavesdropping, especially when that eavesdropping revealed a very private and deep personal grief. Only seven lines into the conversation, the dreamer acknowledges the knight's grief and offers:

> But certes, sire, yif that yee
> Wolde ought discure me youre woo,
> I wolde, as wys God help me soo,
> Amende hyt, yif I kan or may.
> . . . . . .
> Paraunter hyt may ese youre herte,
> That semeth ful sek under your syde.
> (548-57.)

In today's psychologically oriented society, it should be unnecessary to point out that the dreamer is following a fundamental and sound course of action here. Talking out a problem (here, an overwhelming grief) is accepted as a method by which to "ese youre herte" by psychologists from Freud to Joyce Brothers.[42]

The knight began his lament, we were told:

[41]H. S. Bennett, p. 36.

[42]For a particularly interesting discussion of Chaucer as natural psychologist, especially in the dream-visions, see Constance B. Hieatt, The Realism of Dream Visions (Paris: Mouton, 1967).

I see my lady bryght,
Which I have loved with al my myght,
Is fro me ded and ys agoon.
Allas, deth, what ayleth the,
That thou noldest have taken me
Whan thou toke my lady swete.
(477-83.)

This passage is particularly significant in that "deth" and "ded" are mentioned within two lines. Wolfgang Clemen has commented on the surprisingly few times "death" and other similar words common to elegiac verse occur in this poem.[43] With such explicit statement of the nature of the knight's grief, there is, I think no grounds for the scholarly stance that the dreamer did not realize the lady was dead until the last lines of the dream.

The artistic ambiguity which marks the Book of the Duchess can be seen in the dreamer's comparison of the knight's grief to Pan's, "that men clepe god of kynde." F. N. Robinson cites an unpublished note in which Kittredge suggests that Chaucer's usage came ultimately from Servius, who calls Pan "totius Naturae deus."[44] Certainly Pan as "God of all Nature" would be consistent with and almost literally "god of kynde." And there is the continuing suggestion that excessive sorrow is unnatural.

But the knight's grief is so great that no one can ease it:

[43] Chaucer's Early Poetry, p. 45 ff.

[44] Comm. on Vergil, Ecl. ii, 31. The statements of Servius, Kittredge shows, are repeated with variations by Isidore, Etym., viii, 11, 81-83 (Migne, Pat. Lat. LXXXII, 323); Vincent of Beauvais, Spec. Doctrinale, XVII, 10 (Douai, 1624); and by several of the mythographers. Robinson (Works, p. 775) also cites Bode, Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum, Cellis, 1824, I, 40-41, 91, 200; and Van Staveren, Auctores Mythographi Latini, Leyden, 19742, pp. 914 f.

> Nought al the remedie of Ovyde,
> Ne Orpheus, god of melodye,
> Ne Dedalus with his pleyes slye;
> Ne hele me may no phisicien,
> Noght Ypocras ne Galyen.
> (569-72.)

In his long lament, the knight shares some of the characteristics of Juno's messenger in the prologue: he is intensely serious, totally single-minded in his grief, and unaware of the irony with which his speech presents us. He means one thing by these lines but they are true on a level he does not recognize. Considering the source of his grief, the example which introduces this catalogue is inappropriate indeed. His lady is dead: the cures for love which Ovid lightly suggests and which he cannot himself accept are for a love gone stale, or unrequited; that is, for "courtly" love. So literally, the knight is quite correct. The cure for his grief does not lie in Remedia Amoris. The knight's sorrow is not subject to the suggestions there or in the traditional Romans.

Of the characters treated by Ovid in Metamorphoses, it would be hard to find two less suitable to the knight's situation than Orpheus and Daedalus. Orpheus's bride, Eurydice, died at her wedding celebration, and this would seem appropriate to the knight who had suffered a similar loss. But his love had died "many a yer" after her yielding, not before. Ovid tells us:

> quam satis ad superas postquam Rhodopeius auras
> deflevit vates, ne non temptaret et umbras,
> ad Styga Taenaria est ausus descendere porta.
> (X, 11-13.)[45]

[45]"When the bard of Rhodope had mourned her to the full in the upper world, that he might try the shades as well he dared to go down to the Stygian world through the gates of Taenarus."

Orpheus says, describing her death and the reason for his presence in Hell, "posse pati volui nec me temptasse negabo: / vicit Amor" (X, 25-26).[46] Ovid's implication is that Orpheus's love for Eurydice was externally imposed, not earned by her character or merit, of which we know nothing. This is in strong contrast to the picture the knight paints of his lady. In Ovid, the wonder was less Orpheus's love for Eurydice than his skill with his lyre. Moreover, little is said beyond the line cited above about this love. "Tunc primum lacrimis victarum carmine fama est / Eumenidum maduisse genas" (X, 45-46),[47] and they called for Eurydice to appear. For his skill at singing about his grief, then, Eurydice was returned, on condition that Orpheus not look back until he had reached the upper world. However, he did look back and she was lost. Stunned, he sat for seven days on the banks of the Styx, ragged and without food. His lament equaled the knight's. Up to this point the reference to Orpheus is fairly straightforward. Orpheus and the knight lost their loves, Orpheus and the knight lamented long, almost mad with grief. But Orpheus, we are told, betook himself to Haemus at the end of seven days. There:

[46]"I have desired strength to endure, and I will not deny that I have tried to bear it. But Love has overcome me."

[47]"Then first, tradition says, conquered by the song, the cheeks of the Eumenides were wet with tears."

> ille etiam Thracum populis fuit auctor amorem
> in teneros transferre mares citraque iuventam
> aetatis breve ver et primos carpere flores.
> (X, 83-85.)[48]

Later, in Book XI, Orpheus was killed by the Ciconian women crying, "hic est nostri contemptor" (XI, 7).[49]

Daedalus, in Metamorphoses an architect hired by Minos to make the Labryinth, "implet / innumeras errore vias vixque ipse reverti / ad limen potuit: tanta est fallacia tecti" (VIII, 166-68).[50] To escape Crete, "ignotas animum dimittit in artes / naturamque novat" (VIII, 188-89).[51] But Daedalus did not escape unscathed. Icarus his son died in the wings his father had made and Daedalus "devovitque suas artes" (VIII, 234).[52] So neither Orpheus nor Daedalus found or gave comfort through their songs or "pleyes slye." According to Clemen, "What most medieval writers seek in Ovid is a tale of wonder."[53] And the wonder is there. But Chaucer, I think, utilizes Ovid for the sake of the human interest in his material and stresses the realism in his presentation. We have seen the changed effect Chaucer has created in the earlier story

[48]"He set the example for the peoples of Thrace of giving his love to tender boys, and enjoying the springtime and first flower of their youth."

[49]"Here is the man who scorns us."

[50]"made those innumerable winding passages, and was himself scarce able to find his way back to the place of entry, so deceptive was the enclosure he had built."

[51]"he sets his mind at work upon unknown arts, and changes the laws of nature."

[52]"cursed his skill."

[53]Chaucer's Early Poetry, p. 35.

of Ceyx and Alcyone. There, as in this passage, that effect results from judicious selection. Chaucer in the first instance focused on Alcyone, developed her personality and hence the depth and exclusivity of her grief. Orpheus and Daedalus both paid for their attempts to deny nature and her laws. It is in light of the outcome of the adventures of Orpheus and Daedalus that the knight's reference to them is ironic.

With White dead, there is indeed, in the "courtly" sense of the term, "no phisicien" who can heal him, just as in the prologue there was "phisicien but oon"--his lady--who could heal the narrator. But there is also the literal sense of the word. Hypocras and Galen, the physicians from the Roman de la Rose, skilled as they were, could not reverse the nature of mortal men: Jean's Nature says, they "Li ront laissiee la coenne."[54] There is here and throughout the lament a kind of opposition. Grieving beyond reason, railing at the death which spared him, longing to rejoin his lost White, the knight's excess of sorrow is essentially a rejection of humanity, of his human state, as well as an attempt to force his will on Nature. And such an imposition is as impossible as Orpheus's or Daedalus's attempt to change Nature's laws. The knight's longing for death which echoes Alcyone's act is according to medieval and modern Catholic doctrine a sin against God. The knight in these lines is seeking external causes to blame for his loss when he should be seeking internal strengths by which to bear it.

[54]"all had to leave their skins": Roman de la Rose, ed. Ernest Langlois (Paris: Firmin-Didot [SATF], 1922). Unless otherwise indicated, translations are from Romance of the Rose, trans. Harry W. Robbins (New York: E. E. Dutton, 1962).

In the early part of the dream, the characterization of the dreamer reminds us of the Lover in the Romaunt of the Rose. There he addresses the portress with the highest courtesy and formality. The Lover says:

> I thanked hir as I best myghte
> And axed hir how that she highte,
> And what she was, I axide eke.
> (Romaunt, 487-89.)

The same regard for the social graces masking a very real curiosity is apparent in the Book of the Duchess. The dreamer tells us:

> He was war of me, how y stood
> Before hym, and did of myn hood,
> And had ygret hym as I best koude,
> Debonayrly, and nothing lowde.
> (515-18.)

But Chaucer's further development of this motif takes a quasi-dramatic form. The narrative of the bereaved lover is periodically interrupted by short colloquial interchanges designed to motivate its continuance (lines 742-58 and 1135-44, for example). Set in a dream, beside the generally conventional utterances of the man in black, their realism is startling and effective.

In many ways, Pearl and the Book of the Duchess are much alike: both are elegies cast in the dream form, following many of the conventions of the Roman de la Rose, both dreams are psychologically motivated. Chaucer makes use of many of the same dream qualities used by the Pearl poet, including the bemused dreamer and the dream transformation of a character into a somewhat different form. But the effect is very different. The two poems show the imprint of two quite individual poets.

The Book of the Duchess is much more closely related than Pearl to the courtly tradition and the poetry of courtly love. As many have commented, it incorporates lines, phrases, and situations from at least half a dozen earlier dream visions.[55] It shows, however, a significant difference from the treatment of similar material by Chaucer's predecessors: like Pearl, it is not nearly so allegorical. Abstractions are almost completely absent as characters. The central action of the poem concerns human beings and a realistic predicament of human beings. Because of this minimizing of the allegorical element, C. S. Lewis feels the dream loses any specifically dreamlike quality.[56] But dreams very often do contain material that is just what we might encounter in waking life, or so it seems at the time. Other writers have maintained that the use of individuals instead of allegorical figures makes the dream more, not less like a real dream.[57] Then too, the people in the dream are not just as they would be in waking life. Indisputably, the dream is more realistic than those in earlier poems of this tradition but the realism is dream-realism, not everyday waking realism, and the whole structure of the poem is attuned to Chaucer's observation of how a dream works. Chaucer's changed purpose, his movement out of

[55]Among scholars who have collated sources are Robinson, pp. 226 and 773; George Lyman Kittredge, pp. 55-56; Lowes, p. 101; Neville Coghill, The Poet Chaucer (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1949), p. 22; and Haldeen Braddy, Chaucer and the French Poet Graunson (Baton Rouge: Univ. of Louisiana Press, 1947), pp. 57-60.

[56]Allegory of Love, pp. 167-68.

[57]James R. Kreuzer, "The Dreamer in the Book of the Duchess," PMLA 66 (1951), 454, for example.

conventional allegory as well as conventional love-visions, seems at least suggested by what he rejects in his sources. His garden is virtually devoid of traditional personifications, despite their prevalence in his source material, particularly the Roman de la Rose and the other French romans although Metamorphoses is rife with possibilities for personification.

The knight promises to explain the cause of his grief after thirty-seven lines of lament: "Allas! and I wol tel the why" (598). After a rather lovely series of inversions ("My song is turned to pleynynge . . . My pees in pledynge and in werre" [599-615]) almost scriptural in tone, we and the dreamer are prepared for the knight to come to the point. Instead, he continues with an ambiguous attack against Fortune:

> For fals Fortune hath pleyd a game
> Atte ches with me, allas the while!
> The trayteresse fals and ful of gyle.
> (618-20.)

This whole passage is a tightly packed series of generally conventional metaphors for Fortune. She is "an ydole of fals portrayture," the "monstres hed ywrien," the "scorpioun / That is a fals, flaterynge beste," the "envyouse charite," "pley of enchauntment," and "the false thef": Fortune "turneth she hyr false whel / Aboute, for hyt is nothing stable" (644-45). And again, we are aware that the knight is speaking literal truth, again without recognizing it. His lament, we have said, is traditional. Lovers, particularly courtly lovers, are expected to complain of Fortune when their love is unfulfilled or betrayed: this is a property common to the genre of love poetry.

In the Roman, the God of Love introduces the Dreamer to the pains of love:

> A une part iras toz seus:
> Lors te vendrant, sospir e plaintes,
> Fricons e autres dolors maintes;
> En plusors sens seras destroiz,
> . . . . . .
> Les dolors d'amors essaiees.
> Or t'avenda maintes feiees
> Qu'en pensant t'entroblieras
> E une grant piece seras
> Ausi come une image mue,
> Qui ne se crole ne remue
> Senz piez, senz mains, senz doiz croler,
> Senz iauz movoir e senz parler.
> A chief de prece (?) revendras
> En ta memoire e tressaudras
> Au revenir en esfreor,
> Ausi come on qui a peor,
> E sosperras de cuer parfont,
> Car bien saches qu'ensi la font
> Cil qui ont les maus essaiez
> Don tu es or si esmaiez.
> (RR, 2274-98.)[58]

There is in this passage a remarkable similarity to the pains described by the bereaved knight. But in the Roman, the lover had first seen the Rose some 650 lines before and been struck by the God of Love's arrow 66 lines after that. The Lover of the Roman

[58]Then in your loneliness will come to you
Sighs and complaints, tremors and other ills,
Tormented will you be in many ways.
. . . . . .
The Pains of Love you will experience
Ere you recover thence; for times will come
When you will half forget yourself, bemused,
And long time stand like graven image mute
Which never budges, stirs or even moves
Its feet, its hand, its finger, or its lips.
At last you will remember with a start,
Your memory, reviving in a fright,
Like craven coward, from your heart you'll sigh;
For you should know all lovers act that way
When they have felt the way that you will feel.

had not yet approached the Rose. The God of Love is here educating him in what he must expect: he is explaining the rules of the game, as it were. The knight, on the other hand, is in a very different situation. He had fallen in love some time before and served his lady "many a yer." A year after he first spoke to White, she granted him the "noble yifte of hir mercy" (1270) and the pair had "lyved ful many a yere" happily together after that. Moreover, we and the dreamer know that White is dead. The knight is at a very different stage than the Lover of the Roman. During the year between White's first "nay" and the granting of "hir mercy," the knight underwent the suffering described by the God of Love in these lines, but not now. The knight of course does not recognize his error but we do.

The knight's dialogue here presents a problem which is elusive and difficult to pin down. I suspect the source of this problem is that he speaks in an idiom suitable and conventional to one kind of grief when he is in fact suffering a very different one. Once the knight has acknowledged the dreamer's presence, he has said nothing which specifies the real cause of his grief, White's death. The ambivalence between speech and subject which obtains here goes beyond the two kinds of suffering into an examination of the object of and reason for that suffering. We have seen earlier that "courtly" lovers were expected to grieve and lament over a love which is unfulfilled or betrayed. This kind of behavior is traditional. There has been so much said on this courtly convention that it should not be necessary to review its conditions here.

But despite his use of courtly language, the knight is not a courtly lover. His own words, which will be examined in more detail later in this study, prove that, if proof be needed. Almost every study I have found comments, in one way or another, on the "conventionally rhetorical" speeches of the man in black.[59] And, during the first part of his explanation, they are. The knight has been defeated by Fortune because he had relied on her in too great love for one of her gifts: his orientation echoes the instability he denigrates in Fortune. Not Fortune but he is at fault because he relied on her completely. The black knight does not understand that he should not lament so excessively over the loss of an earthly object, that no man may throw away his life because he has made his earthly good another human being.

This passage places the knight's grief in a perspective that will be made more explicit later in the poem. The Lover of the Roman and the knight when he had first seen his lady suffer the same pains of love for a situation that is remediable. The Lover and the young knight can each become worthy of his lady's grace or restore himself to her favor. But the knight's lady is dead. The knight apparently does not recognize that the love he and White shared was not courtly but rather natural love whose source is divine. That this is so becomes increasingly evident as he reminisces about Blanche. As he remembers her, his language grows simpler and the nature of their love becomes unmistakeable. But in

[59]Muscatine, p. 107, and C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love, p. 168, for example.

his lament, the knight couches his grief in the language of courtly love whose origin is more artificial than natural. Such ambivalence of language serves, of course, not only to provide the environment for Chaucer's elegy, but also to indicate the distance the knight is from understanding and hence from reconciliation and acceptance, both of loss and life. As his language changes, we are aware almost subconsciously that he is moving--no matter how slowly or haltingly--along the path of reason and acknowledgment of reality. By masking his words in the appearance of courtly convention, the knight avoids facing the reality of White's death. Only when he can discard the appearance can he begin to accept the fact of this loss and return to life.

There is sufficient precedent for the knight's complaint against Fortune in the earlier Romans. Robinson finds it reminiscent of at least four of Machaut's poems in addition to the Roman de la Rose.[60] But Jean de Meun's Reason remonstrates against the folly of trusting to Fortune:

> E, quant li plaist, tout en reporte;
> S'est mout fos qui s'en desconforte
> E qui di riens s'en esjoist,
> Puis que defendre s'en poist,
> Car il le peut certainement,
> Mais qu'il le vueille seulement.
> D'autre part, ce rest chose espresse,
> Vous faites Fortune deesse,
> E jusques es ceaus la levez,
> Ce que pas faire ne devez,
> Qu'il n'est mie dreiz ne raison

[60] Remede de Fortune, Jugement du Roy de Behaingne, the eighth Motet, and the Lay de Confort (Works, p. 776).

> Qu'ele ait en paradis maison;
> El n'est pas si bien eüreuse,
> Ainz a maison trop perilleuse.
> (RR, 5907-20.)[61]

Boethius also warns about man's folly in trusting Fortune which is by nature unstable. In Boece, Philosophy explains:

> Thow wenest that Fortune be chaunged ayens the; but thow wenest wrong, yif thow that wene; alway tho ben hir maneres . . . Thow hast now knowen and ateynt the doutous or double visage of thilke blynde goddesse Fortune . . . She hath forsaken the, forsothe, the whiche that nevere man mai ben siker that sche ne schal forsaken hem.
> (Bo. II, 49-70.)

Fortune, as Boethius shows, has control under God only over that which happens externally to man. To love one of Fortune's gifts too much is to abandon reason and deny her nature. To complain of Fortune is thus irrational.

The knight, still blind to his error in understanding, says of his chess game with Fortune:

> But God wolde I had oones or twyes
> Ykoud and know the jeupardyes
> That kowde the Greek Pithagoras!
> I shulde have pleyd the bet at ches,
> And kept the fers the bet thereby.
> (665-69.)

He cannot accept the fact of White's loss, the fact of his inability to change the nature of Fortune or himself. In this passage, the

61

> But when she will
> She takes back all her gifts. Great fool is he
> Who finds in anything delight or grief,
> For certainly he can defend himself
> By power of will alone. Another thing
> Most certain is: Men say she is divine
> And raise her to the skies, which is not right.
> Nor rhyme nor reason gives her heavenly home;
> Her house is perilous instead of being blest.

knight exhibits a very human--though unrealistic--reaction to loss. Like him, we retrace our paths, clinging to the notion that if we had done this or that, that or this would not have happened. Essentially, this attitude is very close to sinful pride. The knight--with men of all ages--finds it near-impossible to accept his helplessness, his inability to control events; that is, he cannot accept his humanity, with its limitations as well as its scope. And until he can recognize this in himself, he will be able to accept neither loss nor life. Here he is bound by excess. His concept of man's position in Nature is idealized, hence artificial. His speech, couched as it is in the elevated language of courtly love, serves to maintain a distance from reality, the reality that we and the dreamer recognize: White is dead. So the knight denies the fact of his pain by speaking of it in terms of convention whose function is to describe another kind of love. That those terms are exaggerated and excessive in quality does not negate their use by the knight to make White's death less immediate and hence less real. He cannot yet say the words that will begin the healing. While he clings to appearance--by blaming Fortune, by denying the powerlessness that is inherent in the human condition, by avoiding the direct statement of his loss to another--he cannot return to reality or to life.

The knight ends his speech with "I have more sorwe than Tantale" (709). And here, as in the catalogue examined above, we as reader are aware of the ironic appropriateness of this reference. In the Roman, Nature describes Tantalus:

> Qui toujourz en l'eve sa baigne
> Mais, combien que seif le destreigne,
> Ja n'aprouchera de sa bouche
> L'eve qui au menton li touche.
> (RR, 19283-86.)[62]

As long as the knight continues in his mistaken course, he will indeed be like Tantalus. As long as he rejects reality by inordinate surrender to grief, he will reach for the dead White, like the water forever just beyond his reach. The poet of Pearl had to learn to accept a similar painful reality. There he tells us:

> Delyt me drof in yye and ere,
> My maneȝ mynde to maddyng malte.
> Quen I sey me frely, I wolde be þer,
> Beyonde þe water þagh ho wer walte.
> I þoght þat noþyng myght me dere
> To fech me bur and tak me halte,
> And to start in þe strem schulde non me stere,
> To swymme þe remnaunt, þagh I þer swalte.
> (Pearl, XX, 1153-60.)[63]

It is important to note that the poet's action was, like the knight's attitude, a conscious one: that is, he placed his will in direct opposition to that of God, as defined by Pearl. And he admits:

> Hit payed hym not þat I so flonc
> Over meruelous mereȝ, so mad arayde,
> Of raaȝ þas I were rasch & ronk.
> (Pearl, XX, 1165-67.)

The knight has not yet reached this point of acceptance: he is still trying to cross the River of Life of Pearl which can be crossed only in death. Moreover, he shares the Pearl poet's earlier "wrecched

[62]Who stood in water reaching to his chin,
But, howsoever much he suffered thirst,
Could ne'er succeed to reach it with his lips.

[63]Pearl, ed. Sir Israel Gollancz (London: Chatto and Windus [EETS], 1921). All citations from Pearl are to this edition.

wylle" (I, 56) and his excessive grief. And like the Pearl poet, he is long unable to resign himself to God's will.

Chaucer's dreamer reacts as we would expect. Undone by the sadness of the knight's tale, he responds in character. When the knight rejects his first brief reminder to "Have some pitee on your nature / That formed you to creature" (715-16), the dreamer rephrases this most reasonable advice in more emphatic terms:

> Thogh ye had lost the ferses twelve
> And ye for sorwe mordred yourselve,
> Ye sholde be dampned in this cas
> By as good ryght as Medea was,
> That slough hir children for Jasoun;
> And Phyllis also for Demophoun
> Heng hirself, so weylaway!
> For he had broke his terme-day
> To come to hir. Another rage
> Had Dydo, the quene eke of Cartage,
> That slough hirself for Eneas
> Was fals; which a fool she was!
> And Ecquo died, for Narcisus
> Nolde nat love hir; and ryght thus
> Hath many another foly doon;
> And for Dalida died Sampson,
> That slough himself with a piler.
> But there is no man alyve her
> Wolde for a fers make this woo!
> (722-41.)

There is of course intense dramatic irony in the situation of the two men here. That the lovesick narrator of the prologue who had not slept for eight years because of the pain of unrequited love should as dreamer advise the man in black against excessive grieving presents an incongruity which cannot be overlooked. In addition, this passage reminds us that Chaucer's narrator-dreamer reads widely but invariably interprets wrongly. This dependable misunderstanding produces frequent passages of broad comedy. In his attempt to rouse

the knight from his disproportionate and impious grief, the dreamer catalogues lovers who have killed themselves over unhappy love affairs. He ends his list: "And for Dalida died Sampson / That slough himself with a piler." This is a comic picture indeed and a prime example of Chaucer's characterization of himself as muddle-headed and naive. But the humor in these lines should not blind us to the sound philosophy which they express or the structural function they serve. The dreamer is explicating the medieval belief that virtue lies in moderation and that excess is or leads to sin. In this case, the specific sin to which the catalogue is directed is suicide which Chaucer bluntly and quite rightly describes as murder. His final word of counsel dismisses the artificiality and impracticality--as well as sinfulness--of such a surrender to grief: "But ther is no man alyve her / Wolde for a fers make this woo!" Thus the statements and conclusions of the dreamer in this speech serve a more profound purpose than that of mere humor. Through them, Chaucer juxtaposes the mythic and acceptable and expected behavior of the courtly love code with a course of action governed by reason and the acceptance of God's will over man's desires. So we see again the underlying motif, the artistic environment of the poem, as the choice between the two opposing philosophies.

It is interesting to note the omission of one who would seem logically to belong in this catalogue; that is, Alcyone whose story is told at such length in the prologue. But closer examination of the characters of the catalogues reveals the reason for such an omission: none of the lovers in the list died of sorrow for a lover

who was dead. Each was betrayed or rebuffed to a greater or lesser degree by a beloved. That the most outrageous example--and the final one--is Samson, the only male in the list, provides more than a hint to the structural importance of this passage. We have noted that the knight has not spoken of his lady in any but courtly terms. And Chaucer has made it very clear that the dreamer knows the lady is dead. By this catalogue--comic, realistic, vibrant with common sense and sound doctrine--the dreamer provides a perfect opportunity for the knight to correct his apparent misunderstanding, to tell him the catalogue does not apply to the knight's case since his lady was lost through death, not betrayal. That he does not, I think, suggests the knight's spiritual state: he is not yet ready for consolation.

In Remedia Amoris, Ovid points out:

> Cum dederit lacrimas, animumque expleverit aegrum,
> Ille dolor verbis emoderandus erit.
> Temporis ars medicinae fere est: data tempore prosunt,
> Et data, non apto tempore, vina nocent.
> Quin etiam accendas vitia, irritesque vetando,
> Temporibus si no adgrediare suis.
> (129-34.)[64]

We remember the knight's earlier statement that "Nought al the remedyes of Ovyde" could cure his sorrow. As he was literally

[64]"When she [bereaved mother] has shed tears and fulfilled her mind's distress, then may words set a limit to that grief. The art of being timely is almost a medicine: wine timely given helps untimely, harms. Nay, you would inflame the malady, and by forbidding irritate it should you attack it at an unfitting time": Remedia Amoris, ed. with Eng. trans. J. H. Mozley (New York: G. P. Putnam's [Loeb Classical Library], 1929). All citations from the Remedia are to this edition.

correct then, so is he still. The time is not yet propitious. And the knight rejects the opportunity to acknowledge the finality of his loss. He answers with the same ambiguity which has marked his speech throughout the dream:

> Thou wost ful lytel what thow menest;
> I have lost more than thow wenest.
> (743-44.)

And again we are aware of the dual levels of meaning in his words. Every one of the dreamer's later questions and remarks, seeming at a superficial level to show his misunderstanding, reveals a deeper psychological wisdom.[65] In fact, these questions and remarks, springing from his "failure to understand," all draw more of the knight's story from him than any sympathetic query could have done. Furthermore, through this apparent failure to understand, this talk at cross-purposes, a dramatic impetus is imparted to a conversation already dramatically conceived. And the dreamer will not let the matter stand: he asks the knight to tell him "in what wyse, how, why, and wherefore / That ye have thus youre blysse lore" (747-48). And he does, but not until the dreamer's oath that he will hearken to the story with "al thy wyt."

Throughout the knight's long (282 lines) description of seeing and serving his White, we are struck again with the parallels

[65]There is a wide divergence of view on whether what we have here is a genuine misunderstanding or indeed merely a certain degree of awkwardness in Chaucer's presentation. See for example Kittredge, pp. 48 ff.; J. S. P. Tatlock, The Mind and Art of Chaucer (1950; rpt. New York: Gordian Press, 1966), p. 30; Lowes, p. 100; and B. H. Bronson, "The Book of the Duchess Reopened," p. 273 ff. On "the discrepancy between the known sophistication of the poet and the obtuseness of the part he has made for himself," see Muscatine, p. 104.

between the love of the knight for his lady and that of the Lover of the Roman for the Rose. The first part of the knight's explanation follows pretty closely the outline of the Roman. He has, the knight says, "with good entente, / And throgh pleasaunce" been Love's thrall since he was old enough to understand what love was. He served him as he did his lord, and devoutly prayed to him that he would "besette myn herte" to worship a lady.[66] But for a long time, "many a yer" in fact, he did not fall in love. We are told in detail to what degree he served Love and how total was his devotion before he saw White, one who was so superior "of beaute, / Of maner, and of comlynesse" that he was stricken instantly. At this point in his story, however, the knight is still unreconciled. He calls Fortune "the fals trayteresse pervers" which caused him to come to the place where he first saw White. Even as he describes her beauty and virtue, he curses the Fortune that caused his grief, forgetting that if Fortune was responsible for sorrow, she was also responsible for the happiness which preceded it.

The knight still has not accepted the nature of Fortune as unstable and continues his irrational complaint. Such complaint is, however, still conventional. The knight, once stricken by Love, acts very much like the Lover of the Roman. There is, of course, a

[66]I do not think there is need to speculate on "lord" here, as Mr. Robertson did in Fruyt and Chaf, p. 73 ff. I think the line is a straightforward reference to his king, his fealty to his secular lord, a common enough statement even in the 14th century: although feudalism was for all practical purposes dead, the language lingered on for some years, especially in literature. See, for example, Malory and Spenser.

system of rules in the formal and ritualized medieval love poetry for describing a lady.[67] And Chaucer followed them. Yet compared with its models and parallels, the general effect of this portrait of White is fresh, alive, vigorous, and personal. She is almost as human as Criseyde. She is beautiful, of course: but what counts for most in Chaucer's portrait is the character, the person. Physical beauty appears simply as a confirmation of its owner's noble qualities. So to his catalogue of good qualities, based as it is on the scheme of courtly virtues, Chaucer adds a few traits not typically of the court but belonging to the character itself--human sympathy, friendliness, and goodness of heart. There is no equivalent in Machaut for White's consideration for others which Chaucer stresses.[68] We are told:

> But goode folk, over al other,
> She loved as man may do hys brother
> (891-92.)
> Ther was never yet throgh hir tonge
> Man ne woman gretly harmed.
> (930-31.)
> Therwith she loved so wel ryght
> She wrong do wolde to no wyght.
> (1015-16.)

By making White human and real, Chaucer emphasizes the unnatural excess of the knight's grief for her death. So even the knight's

[67]See especially W. C. Curry, The Middle English Ideal (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1916).

[68]The virtues are from Machaut's catalogue in the Remede, the outline of the description from the Behaingne (Clemen, p. 54). Some details are found in the Lay de Confort, according to Kittredge, "Guillaume de Machaut and the Book of the Duchess," PMLA 30 (1915), 1-24.

description of the object of his grief works to add a sense of reality to the scene.

After the most hyperbolic description of White's virtue and her unparalleled goodness, the dreamer interjects thoughtfully:

> "By oure Lord," quod I, "I trow yow wel!
> Hardely, your love was wel beset;
> I not how ye myghte have do bet."
> (1042-44.)

At the knight's astonished, "Bet? ne no wyght so wel," the dreamer adds figurative insult to injury:

> I leve yow wel, that trewly
> Yow thoghte that she was the beste,
> And to behold the alderfayreste,
> Whoso had loked hir with your eyen.
> (1048-51.)

Faced with this highly unromantic but practical judgment, the knight continues his description to prove that "alle that hir seyen / Seyde and sworen hyt was soo." In a catalogue whose sources cover a wide range of French romances, the very length and scope forces the most reluctant reader to recognize the knight's over-elaborated and excessive comparisons. In a riot of superlatives, the knight tells us that if he had been the most beautiful of men, the strongest, the richest, the worthiest, the wisest, and the hardiest, he would have been proud to love her, the fairest and best and truest of women. But we have met White earlier and been charmed by her reality. She is a woman, not a figure of mythology or marble.

There is, in this catalogue, a passage which might be dismissed simply as an example of digression. Listing twelve heroes of legend and their outstanding qualities, the knight includes Hector:

That Achilles slough at Troye--
And therfore was he sleyn alsoo
In a temple, for bothe twoo
Were sleyne, he and Antylegyus,
And so seyth Dares Frygius,
For love of Polixena--
(1066-71.)

This parenthesis might of course reflect the medieval love of authority. But I think it might also reflect the knight's attitude toward the dreamer. Earlier, we discussed the dreamer's catalogue of unfortunate lovers and the knight's dismissal of it and the dreamer with "Thow wost ful lytel what thow menest." I think it not improbable that the knight saw the dreamer as Chaucer presented him --as a bookish bag of proverbs ineptly applied--and could not resist the opportunity to educate him, as the eagle could not resist in House of Fame.

Irritation at the dreamer's failure to recognize White's uniqueness assuaged by his catalogue, the knight returns to his point:

But wherfore that I telle thee
When I first my lady say?
I was ryght yong, soth to say . . . .
(1088-90.)

And we are again plunged from the elevated to the mundane, from courtly convention to language that is human and natural, from hyperbolic fancy to fact. The knight behaved in the most courtly way, he says. The sight of White eased all his sorrow and:

Me thoghte, nothing myghte me greve,
Were my sorwes never so smerte.
(1105-06.)

This is one of the most touching passages in the poem: a simple statement of past emotion which, in light of the present situation,

takes on immense pathos and irony. Chaucer's dreamer does not let the moment pass:

> "Now, by my trouthe, sir!" quod I,
> Me thynketh ye have such a chaunce
> As shryfte withoute repentaunce."
> (1112-14.)

B. H. Bronson, I think interprets the sense of this passage correctly: he maintains that the "Dreamer leads him [the knight] toward self-realization by suggesting, figuratively, how much he had to rejoice over, since he could still think of her."[69]

And the knight rises to the bait:

> "Repentaunce! nay, fy!" quod he,
> Shulde y now repente me
> To love?"
> (1115-17.)

With this denial, the knight has taken the first step toward acceptance and reconciliation. Early in the dream, he had longed for death (lines 481, 584, 690); he had cursed the day he was born (lines 573, 577); and he had denied cure for his grief (lines 563 ff.). He had even cursed Fortune for placing him where he would see White and fall in love with her:

> Shal I clepe hyt hap other grace
> That broght me there? Nay but Fortune,
> That ys to lyen ful comune,
> The false trayteresse pervers!
> (810-13.)

There has been throughout his reminiscenses of White, especially from line 817 to 1111, a growing movement toward, if not yet acceptance, certainly release. It is as though with the final outburst against Fortune, a crisis was reached and survived. But the change

[69] "The Book of the Duchess Reopened," p. 288.

in attitude was subtle and implied until the knight's vigorous and impulsive defense of his love.

With his passionate "I nyl foryete hir nevermore" ringing in our ears, the dreamer reminds him that he has not yet fulfilled his promise to relate their first words, "how she knewe first your thoght," whether he loved her or not, and "what ye have lore" (1135). The knight is not yet cured: he recoils from the pain of the bare words and says, as he had earlier, "I have lost more than thow wenest." But this time the dreamer presses him:

> "What los ys that?" quod I thoo;
> "Nyl she not love yow? ys hyt soo?
> Or have ye oght doon amys,
> That she hath left yow? ys hyt this?
> For Goddes love, telle me al."
> (1139-43.)

And the knight continues: when he first dared approach White--long after he had fallen in love with her--she said "nay" and he was cast into the depths of sorrow. The fusion of courtly love tradition and lament which has colored the dream is particularly remarkable in this passage. Earlier, when the knight first loved White, he was "warished" of all his "sorwe" at the sight of her. Here he tells us, he suffered the conventional lovesickness of the Roman at her rejection:

> With sorweful herte, and woundes dede,
> Soft and quakynge for pure drede
> And shame, and styntynge in my tale
> For ferde, and myn hewe al pale,
> Ful ofte I wex bothe pale and red.
> (1211-15.)

There, we recall, the God of Love had described similar symptoms to the Lover. As these symptoms were suffered by the knight early in

the dream, when he was lamenting White's death, so had they been suffered by him as he nerved himself to speak to the lady. And they are suffered equally when she rejects his first offer of love.

There is also in this passage, I think, explanation of the critical judgment of the dreamer as stupid or obtuse in his failure to acknowledge that he knows the reason for the knight's grief.[70] Earlier we have seen that the knight speaks in courtly terms of his loss and the cause of his despair. Clemen has pointed out how seldom the word "death" occurs in the knight's lament addressed to the dreamer. When the dreamer first offers comfort, the knight rejects such a possibility. And his most specific reference to death occurs in this passage of rejection:

> Y wreche, that deth had made al naked
> . . . . . .
> The pure deth ys so ful my foo
> That I wolde deye, hyt wolde nat so.
> (577-83.)

Yet here, in a passage in which the knight states categorically that he has not yet approached his lady, he uses "ded" twice to describe the extent of his suffering: "And but I telle hir, I nam but ded" (1188) and "I most have told hir or be ded" (1202). To die of love, or at least to be in danger of dying, was not unusual according to the literary convention of courtly love. Troilus in Troilus and Criseyde, according to C. S. Lewis speaking for a sizable group of critics, the most perfect courtly lover,[71] had a conspicuous

[70] See for example Tatlock, Patch, Robert Kilburn Root, The Poetry of Chaucer (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1922), Lewis, and others.

[71] Allegory of Love, pp. 180, 195.

penchant for this activity. Criseyde was warned at least three times of the imminence of his death if she did not yield herself to him immediately. Palamon and Arcite in the Knight's Tale were in similar danger (KnT, I, 1220 ff.). It does not seem to me unreasonable that the dreamer could assume that the same idiom governed both usages. He knew the truth, of course, because Chaucer tells us he did. But the knight has not told him explicitly and the dreamer could hardly admit such knowledge otherwise. Were it not for the sheer bulk of academic dismay the dreamer's apparent failure to unravel the knight's euphemism has engendered, I should not feel any comment to be necessary.

Rejected by the lady, the knight continues his conventional courtly practice: he waited in "seche sorwe" for a year--again, a conventional time period--before approaching her again. This time, however, the results were happier: the lady gave him "hir mercy" and a ring. He was, the knight says, as full of joy as he had previously been sad. The explication of their ensuing bliss is tender and loving and requires only sixteen lines. These lines, however, are virtually a celebration of "we." From the knight's description of his joy and the technical arrangements ("She toke me in hir governaunce"), the passage contains no singular pronoun. This is as tight and lovely a portrait of the love of two people as I have found: and Chaucer's sensitive choice of unaccented words contributes much to the aura of contentment. This is the first instance in the poem of such plural pronouns and it is effective. The knight says:

Our hertes wern so evene a payre,
That never nas that oon contrayre
To that other, for no woo.
For sothe, ylyche they suffred thoo
Oo blysse, and eke oo sorwe bothe;
Ylyche they were bothe glad and wrothe;
Al was us oon, withoute were.
And thus we lyved ful many a yere
So wel, I kan nat telle how.
(1289-97.)

I think it is important to recognize that the love depicted here does not have its source in the French romances. The knight has relinquished the courtly metaphor which has heretofore marked his speech. The last instance of it was "governaunce." The love described in these lines is not amor but that natural love whose source is divine. And another step toward acceptance has been taken. But still the knight has a little way to go. He may not remain in the past, no matter how happy. To do so would be as much rejection of reality, as sinful, as his earlier longing for death. The past remembered, as we and the dreamer know, can heal but cannot be relived. It is in this knowledge, I believe, that the dreamer asks, "Where is she now?" The knight pales and reminds him for the third time:

Bethenke how I seyde here beforn,
"Thow wost ful lytel what thow menest;
I have lost more than thow wenest"--
God wot, allas! ryght that was she.
(1304-07.)

But the dreamer persists: the knight must say the words if he is to bear the fact. And finally it is out:

"She is ded!" "Nay!" "Yis, be my trouthe!"
"Is that youre los? Be God, hyt is routhe!"
(1309-10.)

The brevity of these lines is remarkable in contrast to the knight's former manner of speech. Their directness, however, acknowledges the reality of pain, intense almost beyond words but not now beyond endurance. The pain is a fact as it had not been before.

With that acceptance, the hart-hunt which had led the dreamer to the wood-garden and the knight ends. The king, presumably Octavian whose hunt it was, rides homeward. And that is all. The knight is, in effect, the ideological prize. He may choose to accept either of the two opposing philosophies of the poem, reason or excess. He may, as he did at the beginning of the débat, surrender himself completely to his grief, allow despair to overrule reason and, like Alcyone, be destroyed by it. Or he may accept his sorrow as reality, place it in its proper perspective, accept divine will over his own, and live, with the memory of happiness as consolation. The knight may be said to symbolize the grieving lover, a kind of Everyman of the genre. Whether he has his origin in history or whether he is representative of the narrator's love-sorrow,[72] or whether the two are inseparable, he acts as catalyst in this poem. It is to him that the argument has been directed, he who must choose how he will express his grief and spend his life. The sentiment expressed by the narrator about himself and the dreamer about the knight is true: it is "agayns kynde" to grieve so completely.

Chaucer presents the conflicting sides of the débat but forces no conclusion save by implication. He tells us only that:

[72]See for example Bronson, p. 281; Lawlor, p. 241; and Huppe and Robertson, p. 50.

With that me thoght that this king
Gan homwardes for to ryde
Unto a place there was besyde,
Which was from us but a lyte.
A long castel with walles white,
By seint Johan! on a riche hil
As me mette; but thus hyt fil.
(1314-20. Italics mine.)

The white-walled castle by implication represents life, a return to the real world, a rejection of the lovely but artificial garden. Much of the comment dealing with this passage is centered on the punning reference to Lancaster ("long castel") and Richmond ("riche hil"), that is, John of Gaunt, with the corrollary reference to his duchess, Blanche ("faire White" and "walles white"). These comments are so widespread as to have become scholarly commonplaces and so require no further discussion here. More serious are those examinations which assume, at least by implication, that the "king" is the knight and read this passage as explicit proof of the knight's acceptance and return to reality.[73] But the first lines of the vision place a king in the wood, "the emperour Octovyen," who is leader of the hunt. When the hunt ends, "this king" rode homeward to a place a small distance from "us"--that is, the dreamer and the knight. At least the dreamer thought he did. But he is not sure. That the knight has accepted White's death, that he recognizes the truth of Ceyx's "to lytel while oure blysse lasteth," with its

[73]Hieatt, p. 70; Clemen, by implication, p. 66. Huppe and Robertson have the Hunter-king as Christ, and the message as the knight's necessary return to Blanche not just in memory but as followers of Christ, with Blanche very like Pearl or Beatrice (pp. 91-92). Bronson ends his study with the last words of knight and dreamer (p. 293); see also Lawlor, pp. 256 ff.

painful reminder of the ephemeral nature of human happiness is virtually assured. The knight has learned the lesson of Pearl:

> For, marre oþer madde, morne and myþe,
> Al lyeþ in hym to dyght and deme.
> (Pearl, VI, 359-60.)

The bells of the castle end the dream and the narrator wakens in his own bed, still holding the book "Of Alcione and Seys the kyng." Then:

> Thoghte I, "Thys is so queynt a sweven
> That I wol, be processe of tyme,
> Fonde to put this sweven in ryme
> As I kan best, and that anoon."
> This was my sweven; now hit ys doon.
> (1330-34.)

So at the end of the poem, the knight has, we are sure, chosen reason and reality over excess by accepting the death of White. Natural and permanent love between man and woman has, by the knight's words, been shown as superior to the artificiality and ritual of courtly love. And the narrator, awake, has taken refuge again in his safe world of authority, still not understanding that reality lies in experience. But we understand and that is the important thing--for Chaucer's audience and for us who read and appreciate the Book of the Duchess today. And there will be another poem and another chance for Chaucer's bookish narrator.

CHAPTER II

HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK I

The House of Fame is at once more elusive and more direct than the Book of the Duchess or, for that matter, the Parliament of Fowls. In it, Chaucer continues, through the character of the narrator, to examine the conflict between experience and authority; the addition of the pedantic eagle simply strengthens this conflict and, in effect, stacks the deck in favor of experience. But where the fundamental conflict between reality and appearance, of which experience versus authority is a part, was presented by means of the opposition of reason or moderation and excess in the Book of the Duchess, in the House of Fame that conflict is seen unobscured. The houses of Venus, Fame, and Rumor--ephemeral, unstable, and founded on human vanity and false values--are unmistakably figures of appearance. That they are the mirror image of reality, reversed and distorted, is clear and unarguable. So clear, in fact, is their artificial character that there is no necessity to place them in contrast to specific and equal figures of reality in the poem: their own nature identifies them. The duality of amor and natural love is only one example of the means through which man may be hostage to Fame and Rumor and exhibit his flawed vision and mistaken ideals.

In the House of Fame, the burden of the telling falls again on Chaucer's bookish narrator. The Proem begins, after an expressed wish that "God turne us every dreme to goode," with a catalogue of types of dreams. The narrator insists that he has no understanding of the reasons for the various categories: in fact, he is as "mazed" as he was earlier in the Book of the Duchess. There he opens the poem with "I have grete wonder be this lyght, / How that I lyve." In House of Fame, his wonder remains but it has a different object. Here he says:

> For hyt is wonder, be the roode,
> To my wyt, what causeth swevenes
> Eyther on morwes or on evenes.
> (I, 2-4.)

In the Proem to Book I, the narrator denies understanding the causes of dreams six times in sixty-five lines. It has become almost axiomatic to read such denials with, if not a grain of salt, at least some suspicion. And so we should here. The narrator's frequent protestations of ignorance precede and intertwine an enumeration of the kinds and causes of dreams which would do justice to the "gretes clerkys" to whom he refers us for authority. The relevance of the narrator's ironic disclaimer to the poem as a whole is suggested at the end of the Proem, where the opening appeal to God to turn "every dreme to goode" is directed at his own dream.

The catalogue of dreams and their causes is interesting beyond examination of sources, although much scholarship exists in which this passage is examined either in terms of source or adherance

to medieval dream-theories.[1] And these studies are necessary and valuable. But I think a reading of the catalogue in light of the poem as a whole is equally legitimate and fruitful. Dreams, the narrator tells us, are caused by humours, feebleness of brain, abstinence, sickness, prison, worry or distress, the disordering of usual habits, over-curiosity in study, melancholy, fear, devotion, contemplation, love, spirits, and the ability of some souls of "propre kynde" to prophesy. The dream opens in the temple of Venus, which is the setting for vitually all of the Story in Book I.[2] Jove's eagle who bears the narrator to the houses of Fame and Rumor, the subjects of Book III, does so, he tells us, as reward for Geffrey's service to the God of Love. Yet in the catalogue, love is only one of sixteen causes the narrator lists for dreams. And even there, love is described in somewhat curious terms, especially in a poem which is generally placed in the genre of love-vision. In the catalogue, the narrator says one cause of dreams is

[1]See for example Neville Coghill, p. 49; W. C. Curry, Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences, pp. 32-33; C. B. Hieatt, Realism in Dream Visions, pp. 34-49; Bernard H. Huppe and D. W. Robertson, Jr., Fruyt and Chaf (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 40-41, 92-93, and elsewhere; Aldous Huxley, "Chaucer," in Essays Old and New (New York: George H. Doran, 1927), p. 265; B. G. Koonce, Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1966), pp. 46-56; Frank Seafield, Literature and Curiosities of Dreams (London: n.p., 1865), p. 45; W. O. Sypherd, Studies in Chaucer's "Hous of Fame" (New York: Haskell House, 1965), pp. 74-76 and elsewhere; and Works, p. 779.

[2]Of the 397 lines of the dream, 359 lines are set in this temple.

> the cruel lyf unsofte
> Which these ilke lovers leden
> That hopen over-muche or dreden,
> That purely her impressions
> Causen hem to have visions.
> (I, 36-40.)

Love, as it appears in this passage, is neither elevating nor desirable. I think we should be warned by such lines as these which are easy to overlook both because of their position in the catalogue and the speed which marks this passage and, indeed, the House of Fame as a whole. In this poem, more perhaps than in any other of Chaucer's works, it is dangerous to accept such apparently straightforward statements, to read them too literally. To assume that the matter of the House of Fame is to be Love or love-tidings is to limit the poem and, worse, to misread it by ignoring the subject which is signaled, however subtly, throughout. The first such signal lies, I think, in this catalogue. We are not to be concerned exclusively or even primarily, then, with love but rather with life, the examination of man. That love is a part of life, an emotion that colors man's human concerns, is of course not to be denied. But it is not all. In this catalogue, we have an overall view of the attitudes, emotions, and practices which concern man to such a degree that they affect his inner being, his sleeping or unconscious state. And the Invocation, with its elusive and provocative duality, should serve to force our recognition of this danger.

In using a discussion of dreams to establish the allegorical content of his own dream, Chaucer follows the example of the Roman de la Rose, and ultimately of Macrobius who, at the beginning of the

Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, includes a classification of dreams in order to define the prophetic nature of Scipio's dream.[3] But Chaucer's classification also echoes other "grete clerkys" who follow scriptual authority in affirming that some dreams are inspired by God and contain a spiritual meaning to be discovered beneath a veil of symbol. These echoes were perhaps more important to the medieval audience who would be familiar with the meanings and types of dreams. In Chaucer's House of Fame, they remain echoes rather than explication.

However, dreams and their causes are patently a matter of interest to Chaucer. In the Parliament of Fowls, the narrator expresses the notion that dreams reflect waking preoccupations:

> The wery huntere, slepynge in his bed
> To wode ayeyn his mynde goth anon;
> The juge dremeth how his plees been sped;
> The cartere dremeth how his cartes gone;
> The riche, of gold; the knyght fyght with his fon;
> The syke met he drynketh of the tonne;
> The lovere met he hath his lady wonne.
> Can I not seyn if that the cause were
> For I hadde red of Affrican byforn
> That made me to mete that he stod there. . . .
> (PF, 99-108.)

In Troilus and Criseyde, Troilus, the believer in predestination, insists that his dreams are prophetic. In the first case, Troilus has suffered from a series of frightening dreams: that he was alone in a horrible place, that he was captured by the Greeks, that he was falling from a high place (TC, V, 246-59). Pandarus immediately diagnoses the cause of these dreams as melancholy and

[3]Comm. I, 3, Macrobius, Commentary, v. 2, ed. J. Willis (Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1963).

goes on to say that he wouldn't give a straw for the significance of any dream; no man knows what they mean (TC, V, 358-64). His reason, interestingly enough, is that the explanation of dreams are too many and too inconclusive (TC, V, 370-83). This idea is reminiscent of the narrator's confusion in the House of Fame: after listing all the things said to cause dreams, he concludes it is futile to try to make sense of it all. But the second time Troilus reports a dream, the situation is somewhat different. He has been just as melancholy, even more troubled; however this dream is not nightmarish but figurative.[4] He sees Criseyde kissing a boar and accepts the dream at once as allegorical, signalling Criseyde's infidelity, although he does not know the identity of the boar. Pandarus reacts to this dream differently but still matter-of-factly:

> Have I nat seyd er this,
> That dremes many a maner man bigile?
> And whi? For folk expounden hem amys.
> How darstow seyn that fals thy lady ys,
> For any drem, right for thyn owene drede?
> Lat be this thought; thow kanst no dremes rede.
> (TC, V, 1276-81.)

And the subject is closed once and for all.

In Anelida and Arcite, Anelida, suspecting her lover is false, dreams that he is emphatically true and finds the dream terrifying (328 ff.). Absolom, in the Miller's Tale, interprets a dream of feasting to betoken kisses, an explanation much to his liking (MT, 3683-84). An orthodox story of dream-interpretation is provided by the Monk in his tale of Croesus. Also orthodox in very different

[4]Earlier Criseyde had dreamt of an eagle which bore away her heart, very close in nature to Troilus's second dream (TC, II, 925-31).

ways are the two dream passages in the Squire's Tale: Canace's dream caused by her interest in the wonderful mirror (SqT, 370 ff.); and the dream of the gentlemen who had feasted all night, which the Squire dismisses contemptuously (SqT, 356-59). Another conventional dream interpretation is that of the Man of Law, whose heroine suffers bad dreams while her mother-in-law plots to have her and her child cast out to sea. The Wife of Bath relates a dream in her Prologue and interprets the blood in the dream as signifying gold and therefore good fortune: this association is standard and correct according to the dream-books.[5] Certainly the telling of the dream accomplished its purpose, to catch Hankyn's attention.

Sir Thopas dreams of an elf-queen and immediately goes off in search of her. Since this poem is a brilliant parody of the metrical romance, it is tempting to assume that Chaucer was also parodying a serious belief in dream interpretation. But there is the Parson's Tale to consider: there, Chaucer's saintly parson advances still another view of dream interpretation, that it is impious. This approach classifies such activity as a branch of sorcery, and as such, it was certainly frowned on by the Church.[6] But even the Church did not take an inflexible stand: after all, the prophets of the Bible practiced dream-interpretation, and many of the Christian saints saw visions. The Church, therefore, found

[5]W. C. Curry, Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences, pp. 212 and 265.

[6]Cf. John of Salisbury, Policraticus, ed. G. C. Webb (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1909), pp. 84-86.

itself in the position of saying that it was impious to interpret dreams without divine guidance--and in so saying, it tacitly expressed a belief in the divine origin of dreams.[7] Interpretation seems to have been forbidden, then, because it involved meddling with divine things, not because dreams had no meaning. Chaucer's most elaborate exposition of dreams occurs in the Nun's Priest's Tale, which contains both an example of a dream and a general discussion of the subject. The dialogue about dreams between Chaunticleer and Pertelote is a kind of summary of medieval thinking on the subject (NPT, 2922-3171). But although it presents the arguments for the various theories of dream-causes, it seems to more a reopening of the subject than a statement of generally accepted solutions. Such a conclusion, I think, applies as well to the catalogue in the Proem of House of Fame.

In these various instances, Chaucer explores many possible ways of explaining dreams, but at no point does he commit himself to any one view or combination of views. The Parson's Tale reminds us, if reminder is needed, that Chaucer was a medieval Christian. As such, he must have accepted to some extent the possibility of divine inspiration and guidance in dreams. However, this acceptance need not have prevented him from believing that such inspired dreams are the exception that proves the rule. It seems that the most we can be sure of is that Chaucer did not unquestioningly accept the officially approved views, that he saw the question was not yet

[7] G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama (London: Noonday Press, 1938), pp. 103-18.

settled, and that he may have felt the solution was likely to lie in the direction of psychological and physiological explanations. In the House of Fame and other dream poems, it is not impossible that Chaucer was being as enigmatic as possible about a subject he found fascinating, amusing, and quite unresolved.

After a few more lines, the narrator concludes that he cannot bother his poor brain with any more of the complications of dream interpretation. This is either heresy against the accepted authorities on dreams or a comic assumption of innocent obtuseness, and probably it is a compound of the two. Kemp Malone remarks that "All this was meant to be funny. Chaucer's audience knew perfectly well he was a man of learning and anything but a lazybones."[8] While this is undoubtedly true, the passage does convey a suggestion that Chaucer's real attitude is one of scepticism, since it questions "universally accepted conclusions."[9] And in this detailed exposition, Chaucer has evoked an ambivalence of tone which will mark the events and activities of the dream which is the House of Fame.

After promising he will tell us "everydel" of his dream, the narrator launches into the forty-five-line Invocation. With the subject of the Invocation identified as the "god of slep," that Morpheus whom we met earlier in the Book of the Duchess, we are suddenly plunged into that particular kind of ambiguity which is notable throughout Chaucer's work. In the Proem, the narrator

[8]Chapters on Chaucer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 48.

[9]W. C. Curry, Chaucer and the Mediaeval Sciences, p. 218.

bracketed his learned treatise on dreams with appeals to God and references to the cross. And in the Proem, this Christian prayer seems straightforward and unequivocal. But with the Invocation to Morpheus, the unequivocal shifts beneath our feet and we recall the most human god of sleep of the earlier poem. Moreover, in this passage, Chaucer uses parts of the Metamorphoses which he omitted in the Book of the Duchess: "the strem that cometh from Lete," the "slepy thousand sones," here of Morpheus rather than of Ovid's Sleep, and the "folk men clepeth Cymerie."[10] In this Invocation, the narrator prays Morpheus:

> That he wol me spede
> My sweven for to telle aryght,
> Yf every drem stonde in his myght.
> (I, 78-80.)

But earlier he had prayed to Morpheus for sleep. The ambiguity which was suggested in the Book of the Duchess by the narrator's aside, "For I ne knew never god but oon," is here intensified. Immediately following the narrator's prayer to Morpheus, we find:

> And he that mover ys of al
> That is, and was, and ever shal,
> Do yive hem joye that hyt here
> Of alle that they dreme to-yere,
> And for to stonden alle in grace
> Of her loves, or in what place
> That hem were levest for to stonde,
> And shelde hem fro poverte and shonde
> And from unhap and ech disese,

[10]Three of Ovid's similes that Chaucer had no occasion to use in his accounts of Morpheus he inserts at different points in House of Fame: "Somnia varia iacent totidem, quot messis aristas, / silva gerit frondes, eiectas litus harenas" (Meta., XI, 614-15). Cf. Fame, 692, "mo . . . then greynes be of sondes"; 1946, "as fele as leves been on trees"; and 698, "mo . . . then ever cornes were in graunges."

> And sende hem al that may hem plese,
> That take it wel and skorne hyt noght,
> Ne hyt mysdemen in her thoght
> Thorgh malicious entencion.
> (I, 81-93.)

This passage refers to no resident of Olympus. If the paraphrase of Dante's Primo Mobile were not enough to make this certain, the echo of the Gloria Patri would. In these lines, especially in conjunction with the bracketing appeals to the Christian God in the Proem, there is an elusive admixture of deities. Pagan and Christian are so intermingled that Morpheus, the comic, snoring god of sleep in the Book of the Duchess, has here become a type of God the Father. I believe a reconciliation if not an explanation of this duality may be found in the now-established character of the narrator. Chaucer's narrator, literal minded as usual, has simply confused the two. He says, later in the Invocation, still serious, still stating traditional doctrine:

> Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God
> That (dreme he barefoot, dreme he shod)
> That every harm that any man
> Hath had syth the world began,
> Befalle hym thereof, or he sterve,
> And graunte he mot hit ful deserve.
> (I, 97-102.)

The narrator has not changed: the incongruity of his parenthetical "dreme he barefoot, dreme he shod" in the midst of a passage of sound Christian doctrine is comic in its effect. Moreover, it jars us back to earth and the realization of just who is speaking these lines. The naive, bookish narrator, wholehearted servant to authority has, he told us earlier, only read of Morpheus. Since, as he had explained in the Book of the Duchess, he had never known

"god but oon," his mistake is a natural one. He addresses Morpheus --whom his books have called "god of slep"--in the language and tone proper to God the Father, the only God, as he has been taught. Again, the narrator has read widely and interpreted wrongly. But the narrator is not Chaucer. The shadow-presence of God and Christian doctrine has been introduced, and it continues throughout the poem, never overt but never far below the surface.

The narrator's love for and reliance on authority is emphasized by his reference to the dream of "Cresus, that was kyng of Lyde, / That high upon a gebet dyde!" But even in so brief a reference, there is a suggestion of the subject of the dream to follow. In the Roman, source for this episode,[11] Reason recounts the tale as a warning against reliance on Fortune and against human vanity. Croesus's daughter Phania cautions him that elevated position or earthly fame is no protection against Fortune, and correctly interprets the dream Croesus in his pride had read wrongly. Chaucer's House of Fame, then, will be concerned with the matter of human vanity and the fickleness of Fame and "hire suster, Dame Fortune."

Chaucer stresses the date of the dream of Fame, December tenth, by mentioning it not only in the Proem (I, 63), but in the first line of the Story. The setting of the dream-vision in midwinter is an example of the minor contradictions of the conventions of love-visions which abound in this poem. The choice of December instead of May or even February, as in the Parliament of Fowls and

[11] RR, 6489 ff. The story is told in greater detail in MkT, 2740 ff.

other Valentine poems, for example, sets the stage for other inversions of the traditional dream-vision and, again, for the very different artistic product which results.

So the narrator went to bed "Ryght ther as I was wont to done": the matter-of-fact tone we have noticed before is maintained. The night was an ordinary night, unusual only because he fell asleep "wonder sone," like one who was weary after two miles of pilgrimage to the shrine of Saint Leonard, patron saint of captives. There is, I suspect, in these lines some fun being poked in passing at those pilgrims whose sedentary lives leave them exhausted after two miles, as well as, perhaps, at the attitude that makes it "chic" to go on pilgrimages, a suspicion which is not weakened by the opening lines of the General Prologue nor by the assortment of Canterbury pilgrims. That is, pilgrimages have become, to some, more a matter of fashion than faith. As usual, Chaucer takes the sting out of the joke by having his narrator include himself, by implication, among those easily-wearied pilgrims. I find the choice of Saint Leonard as "patron saint," as it were, of the poem interesting and suggestive. Certainly, the dreamer in the vision has no options or alternatives: he is literally picked up and deposited at the location of his dream. And certainly he is on pilgrimage, although to the shrine of no Christian saint. Such an analogy is borne out by Chaucer's description of Venus's temple. And in a broader philosophical sense, the dreamers of the Proem as well as Fame's supplicants are captives, at least of their own false values and irrational reliance on her power. That is, I think, another example of an episode or reference,

insignificant in itself which, combined with others equally minor, works to strengthen the effect of the poem and emphasize the nature of its environment.

The narrator dreamt he was "within a temple ymad of glas" furnished with gold statues, rich tabernacles and pinnacles, portraits, and figures of "olde werke." This temple is the first evidence of the architectural quality which pervades the House of Fame and functionally unites the three books. Not only is the poem architectural, the movement of the architecture is vertical, full of rises and descents. Moreover, the action takes place in settings which can only be described as urban: rooms and buildings crowded with sound and activity and comings and goings and, most of all, with people. These arenas of action are separated from each other by vast barren spaces: the desert beyond the glass temple, the uninhabited and alien space through which the narrator is borne upward, the rock of ice topped by the palace of Fame, and finally, the unoccupied valley echoing with the din of Rumor's house, inaccessible to man without supranatural aid. The separations between urban and empty areas are so carefully drawn and balanced that they seem more mathematical than poetic. But the architecture never outweighs the poetry. Of Chaucer's works, the structure of the House of Fame is surely the most remarkable example of his genius at concealing the machinery of his art.

Equally remarkable is the fragility and impermanence of these splendid buildings. There is in them no hint of the natural: all is artifice thinly disguising mutability. The glass temple, for

all its extravagant decoration, is wracked with the danger of destruction, as are all the constructions of this dream-country. In the context of the poem, we must acknowledge the aptness of the building materials used, and their incongruity in terms of traditional love conventions, or even worldly ones. So the folly of men's pursuit of worldly fame is prepared for and subtly strengthened by having Fame's palace grounded on ice, that most mutable of substances. The details--the melting, for example--add to the sense of impermanence, of course. Glass is only slightly less perishable, very expensive and rare, especially as a building material. Moreover, it carries with it a sense not only of vanity but of distortion; the reflection in a glass is reversed. And so the much-praised quality of love, the _amor_ which Venus represents, is seen to be distorted. While such love has the appearance of beauty, happiness, and fulfillment, closer examination reveals it as the opposite of reality, essentially unnatural and inhuman, hence foolish to pursue as an end.

The narrator, here as in the _Book of the Duchess_, comes to awareness within a building decorated with the story of Troy. But where in the earlier poem, the painted windows and birdsong were essentially conventional romantic furniture, the appointments of Venus's temple are central to the meaning of Book I. The traditional garden setting of courtly love poetry is of course artificial in its impossible and idealized neatness; its symmetrical groves, flowers, and constant climate; its ornamental walks and benches and carefully placed conduits. It is perfection frozen. But no matter

how artificial the execution, the rivers do flow, the flowers do bloom, and the grass does give beneath a lover's feet. Nature, no matter how shaped, sculptured, and stylized, is model for the love garden. But the House of Fame is light years beyond even such a forced and exaggerated imitation of Nature. There is literally nothing in the geography of the dream that is not almost blatantly man-made. Even the materials are crafted or smelted or mined. But Chaucer blends these elements and textures with such artistry and control that we are scarcely aware of the artificiality of the background on which the action is played out.

In the temple of Venus, surrounded by the richness of gold and glass and portraiture, the narrator finds a tablet of brass on which is engraved the story of Troy. So rapid is the pace of these lines that the implication of the material of the tablet may pass almost unnoticed. As far as we know, and Chaucer's narrator is no careless reporter, the tablet is the only brass in this ornate temple. Since it is engraved with so long a tale, one which in fact makes up three-quarters of the Story, we know it is of central importance to the temple and to the goddess who inspired it. Yet this significant piece is fashioned of brass, a base metal, useful and strong but neither pure nor precious. Since copper is traditionally the metal associated with Venus, the presence of brass cannot be so explained away.[12] It must be recognized as incongruous in its setting. And such incongruities are, we have seen,

[12]Robinson believes that Chaucer mistook the two alloys (Works, p. 781). This is an easy and comfortable theory but, I think, untrustworthy.

almost always signals that all is not as it seems. In the Clerk's Tale, Chaucer's only comment on the nature of brass, the clerk says that if most women were put to the tests Grisilde survived:

> The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes,
> With bras, that thogh the coyne be fair at ye,
> It wolde breske a-two than plye.
> (CkT, 1167-69.)[13]

And it is of this baser metal that the major shrine in Venus's temple is shaped.

The engraving on the dubious tablet begins conventionally enough. The narrator, literal as always, recites the first lines, a translation of Virgil's opening passage:[14] having given credit to the unnamed poet, his authority for the tale, the narrator continues in his own words. The first hundred lines of summary are remarkable for two reasons. First, in them Chaucer alters minor details of the Aeneid to emphasize the activity and power of Venus. For example, the narrator says:

[13]Other uses of "bras" in Chaucer's works occur in GenProl, 366-67, "Hir knyves were chaped nought with bras / But al with silver"; RvT, 3944, "With hire he yaf ful many a panne of bras"; SqT, 81, "There cam a knyght upon a steede of bras," and 181, "The hors of bras"; NPT, "Of bras they broghten bemes"; Bo. 4, m. 5, "The comune errour moeveth folk, and maketh weery hir basyns of bras by thikke strokes"; LGW, 1432, "And with two boles, maked al of bras." None of these lines use "bras" pejoratively as the passage from CkT does, except possibly the first: there, brass is a useful, strong, somewhat common, even lower-class metal, with which knives might logically be mounted. That the knives were mounted with silver places them in a different and higher class.

[14]"Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris / Italiam fato profugus Laviniaque venit / litora" ("Arms I sing and the man who first from the coasts of Troy, exiled by fate, came to Italy and Lavinian shores"), Aen. I, 1-3.

Ther saugh I graven eke withal,
Venus, how ye, my lady dere,
Wepynge with ful woful chere,
Prayen Jupiter on hye
To save and kepe that navye
Of the Trojan Eneas,
Syth that he hir sone was.
Ther saugh I Joves Venus kysse,
And graunted of the tempest lysse.
(213-220.)

In Book I of the Aeneid, the storm is quieted by Neptune and it is not until Aeneas has landed that Venus asks Jupiter to protect him. But more important than such tangible alterations, Chaucer has changed the whole tone of the poem. The narrator's sympathy is clearly caught by the plight of the Trojans and his personal interjections ("and aftir this was grave, allas," "Cryinge 'Allas!' and welaway," "That hyt were pitee for to here," which occurs twice, "Cruel Juno," and the like) not only reflect his sympathy but invest the inhabitants of the tale with life and immediacy.

Venus's activities comprise one-quarter of the introductory material, the effect of which is to elevate her considerably above her position in both Virgil and Ovid. This elevation is not accomplished only by enlarging her role: as important are the narrator's comments which emphasize traits for which Venus is not traditionally noted. In the Aeneid, she does very frequently intervene in behalf of Aeneas, but one feels such intervention is motivated more by pride in her position among the Olympians--a kind of "How dare they do this to my son"--than motherly love. Yet Chaucer's narrator paints a more sympathetic maternal concern. Aeneas told his troubles at his mother's knee, as it were, when he landed in Africa. And Venus reacted in kind:

She gan him comforte thoo,
And bade hym to Cartage goo,
And ther he shulde his folk fynde,
That in the see were lefte behynde.
(235-38.)

And, as added help, "She made Eneas so in grace / Of Dido" that the queen fell desperately in love with him.

Virgil spends far more space on this episode and his Venus is openly calculating. She instructs Cupid clearly:

quocirca capere ante dolis et cingere flamma
reginam meditor, ne quo se numine mutet.
sed magno Aeneae mecum teneatur amore.
. . . . . .
ut, cum te gremio accipiet laetissima Dido
regalis inter mensas laticemque Lyaeum,
cum dabit amplexus atque oscula dulcia figet,
occultum inspires ignem fallasque veneno.
(Aen., I, 673-88.)[15]

That the Venus of the Aeneid is a political creature, as much at war with Juno as the Trojans had been with Greece, is also clear:

frater ut Aeneas pilago tuus omnia circum
litora iactetur odiis Iunonis acerbae,
nota tibi, et nostro doluisti saepe dolore.
(Aen., I, 667-69)[16]

But Chaucer's changed focus precludes such motivation: this aspect of Venus would be unsuitable in a temple dedicated to her worship. Throughout, Chaucer's irony is intricate and subtle, but it is no

[15]"Wherefore I purpose to outwit the queen with guile and encircle her with love's flame, so that no power may change her, but along with me she may be held fast in love with Aeneas . . . when in the fulness of her joy, amid the royal feast and flowing wine, Dido shall take thee to her bosom, shall embrace thee and imprint sweet kisses, thou may inbreathe a hidden fire and beguile her with thy poison."

[16]"How thy brother Aeneas is tossed on the sea about all coasts by bitter Juno's hate is known to thee, and often hast thou grieved in our grief."

less devastating for its obliquity. And this unobtrusive irony is seldom more skillfully controlled than in the noncommital tone of Chaucer's account of Venus's very equivocal position. There is still the base metal of Venus's altar to contend with.

After the passing references to Venus's machinations, the emphasis is almost totally on Dido. As the narrator's sympathies were with Alcyone in the Book of the Duchess, so they are with Dido here. Virgil's primary concern was, of course, always his hero. The narrator, naive and protective, says of the affair's beginning only that shortly she "Becam hys love, and let him doo / Al that weddynge longeth too." There is in this passage a continuation of the narrator's denial of skill and knowledge begun in the Proem. He explains his lack of further details:

> What shulde I speke more queynte,
> Or peyne me my wordes peynte
> To speak of love? Hyt wol not be;
> I han not of that faculte.
> (245-48.)

Moreover, to do so would be "a long proces to telle, / And overlong for yow to duelle." Such disclaimer is in the character of the narrator: he is, we know, without experience in love despite his wide reading. In this poem and those which follow, Chaucer has begun a pattern, a kind of game between narrator and audience, in which denial of expertise precedes proof of such expertise. Thus, in the Proem, the narrator's claim of ignorance is followed by an exceedingly learned discussion of types and causes of dreams. This pattern reaches its apogee in the Tale of Sir Thopas in the Canterbury Tales.

But throughout the poems Lowes calls "the mastered art,"[17] this device has become a commonplace, almost a topos. And the pattern obtains here.

On the heels of his disclaimer of knowledge or craft, the narrator tells us that Dido

> Made of hym shortly at oo word
> Hyr lyf, hir love, hir lust, hir lord,
> And dide hym al the reverence,
> And leyde on hym al the dispence,
> That any woman myghte do,
> Wenynge hyt had al be so
> As he hir swor; and herby demed
> That he was good, for he such semed.
> (256-64.)

This passage is not only a clear, concise, and expert description of Dido's emotions and committment to Aeneas, it reveals her character and hints, more pejoratively, that the character of Aeneas is the root of the tragedy to come. No strumpet-queen nor sophisticated politician, Dido is presented in these lines as a sincere and generous woman whose only fault is trusting too readily. Aeneas, on the other hand, is seen as devious, manipulative, and potentially false. Chaucer drives home this judgment with a sententia. The narrator says:

> Loo, how a woman doth amys
> To love him that unknowen ys!
> For, be Cryste, lo, thus yt fareth:
> "Hyt is not al gold that glareth."
> (269-72.)

This parenthetical warning to women of men's perfidy continues for twenty lines, ending with a final proverb:

[17] Geoffrey Chaucer, pp. 133 ff.

"He that fully knoweth th'erbe
May saufly leye hit to his yë:"
Withouten drede, this ys no lyë.
(290-92.)

In this passage, we find if not a new at least a more highly developed aspect of Chaucer's persona. In the Book of the Duchess, and earlier in this poem, the narrator has made brief editorial comments on the events of a book or a character. In the Book of the Duchess, for example, he says of Dido, "which a fool she was" (BD, 734); and in House of Fame, we recall the involvement with the destruction of Troy which is reflected in the narrator's "pitee for to here," and "allas" and "Cruel Juno." But nowhere have we found the narrator stepping back from his authority and making such an extended moral judgment on its matter. The only comments I could find on these reflections on men as deceivers were concerned with identifying the sources for the passage.[18] But it seems to me that this sententia is significant to the development of Chaucer's narrator persona. Here, I believe, we have the foreshadowing of the narrator who will tell the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde. In these lines, Chaucer, for the first time, steps out of character of "narrator" to speak at least partly in his own voice. He does not discard the persona, of course, either here or in the later poems. But the disguise has become, if not thinner, certainly more a fusion of Chaucer the poet and Geffrey the bondservant of academia. Perhaps as Chaucer became more confident of his poetic powers, more comfortable in the cloak of narrator, he could more

[18]See for example, Works, p. 781.

easily mold and shape it to his own figure.[19] The artistry with which Chaucer achieves this very delicate balance between poet and persona can hardly be overstated. He maintains the personality we have come to expect in the narrator, proverbial, earnest, and given to piled-up examples to prove his point. But this passage remains the first instance in which Chaucer the narrator moves outside the poem to address his audience directly.

The moral spoken, the narrator deals with Aeneas's betrayal and departure in six tight lines. Even here, the focus remains on Dido. Chaucer uses "hir" four times, "she" once, but after the initial "Eneas," uses "he" only twice. In contrast to the terseness of Chaucer's treatment of Aeneas, Dido's lament extends for fifty-six lines, interrupted only once for the narrator to pledge that he only recites what he has read; "Non other auctour alegge I" (314). And we recall the earlier similar disclaimers of expertise. This ingenuous reassurance of the narrator's inexperience and his fidelity to authority provides further foreshadowing of the philosophical opposition which is the theme of the poem. Here, as in the Book of the Duchess, the character is to provide the stage for the conflict between experience and authority, a conflict which is to become more explicit with the appearance of the eagle.

Dido's lament is deserving of close examination, I think, especially since it--and Book I of which it is so central a part--

[19]This is, of course, purely speculative and not intended as The Answer. But it does seem reasonable in light of the later poems. Whatever the reason, the fact of the change--or enrichment--in the character of the narrator does, I believe, obtain.

has led to the frequent critical judgment that the House of Fame lacks unity.[20] Dido says bitterly:

> Of oon he wolde have fame
> In magnifyinge of hys name;
> Another for friendshippe, seyth he;
> And yet ther shal the thridde be
> That shal be take for delyt,
> Loo, or for syngular profit.
> (305-10.)

This passage, the first direct allusion to Fame in the Story, is opposite in tone and meaning to what we would expect to find engraved in a shrine dedicated to Venus and, by extension, the love over which she has dominion. Moreover her involvement with this particular love affair is not impersonal: she is directly responsible for Dido's passionate love for Aeneas. That Aeneas betrayed that love, apparently consciously,[21] is a further denial of the conventions of courtly love-visions. It is literally blasphemy against the "religion of love."[22] With Dido's appraisal of the nature of men and of their far-from-courtly reasons for love, we are virtually afloat in incongruity. And the scope of this incongruity forces an examination of the nature of the love Venus represents.

[20]That Paul Ruggier's interesting essay is called "Unity in Chaucer's House of Fame" indicates how widespread is this critical belief. Even when scholars accept the existence of such a unity, they are far from unanimous as to what it is and how it is achieved. See for example Coghill, p. 49; Emile Legouis, Geoffrey Chaucer (London: J. M. Dent, 1913), pp. 87-88; W. C. Curry, Mediaeval Sciences, p. 233; Percy Shelley, The Living Chaucer (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), p. 84; Marchette Chute, Geoffrey Chaucer of England (New York: Dutton, 1946), p. 110; and J. S. P. Tatlock, p. 59.

[21]In the Aeneid, he regretted hurting Dido, and left reluctantly because of a higher duty.

[22]C. S. Lewis, Allegory of Love, pp. 18 ff.

By any standard, it is pictured as far from sincere or desirable, much less ideal. Courtly love, amor, has its source, then, in worldly vanity and lust. Aeneas, hero-son of Venus, is exposed as a perfidious seducer who, having had his way with the active assistance of his mother, moves on to greener fields.

Dido, as Chaucer paints her, is human and sympathetic but her sorrow bears little relationship to the disillusionment and passionate grief of the proud and royal woman Virgil describes. Clemen comments, "With a kind of shrewd everyday common sense he [Chaucer] examines this famous love story under a magnifying glass, subjects it to a colder, disillusioned scrutiny, and divests it of the last shreds of romanticism which the episode may still have possessed at that period."[23] While I suspect this conclusion is somewhat overstated, there is some truth in it. But the whole notion of courtly love has been placed perforce under that same magnifying glass. If the lovers have been stripped of their illusion and romanticism, it is, I think, because the love they pursued, especially as it is described in the French romances, was flawed and unnatural. Of the tale engraved on the brass tablet, over half deals with the episode of Dido and Aeneas.[24] Yet this, the major episode on a tablet which is of central importance in the temple and which should logically contain the most elevated praise of Venus and her works, in fact details a love betrayed, a love marked by back-alley seduction culminating in suicide. The reasons Dido lists for love bear

[23] Chaucer's Early Poetry, p. 83.

[24] Of 322 lines, 192 were concerned with Dido and Aeneas.

out this sordid judgment of courtly love. Desire for fame, that is, a kind of parasitic self-aggrandizement, is unrelated to love as we think of it and as it is described in the romances.[25] Thus a man seeks out a woman for her wealth and position in order to raise his own status. We know what love "for frendshippe" is from Troilus and Criseyde, and there is something of Pandarus's cynicism in Dido's "seith he" which insinuates that such love (which between men Chaucer elsewhere celebrates without reservation) is not as pure and abstract as it claims to be. When he urges that no scandal could result from Troilus's liaison with Criseyde, Pandarus says:

> Every wight but he be fool of kynde,
> Wol deme it love of frendshipe in his mind.
> . . . . . .
> Swych love of frendes regneth in al this toun,
> And wrye yow in that mantel ever mo.
> (TC, II, 370-79. No equivalent in Il Filostrato.)

Or what man defines as "love" is, in fact, lust, purely physical with no object but "delyt" and profit.

While these lines are clearly pejorative, Dido's longest and most bitter complaint is to come. She says:

> O wikke Fame! for ther nys
> Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!
> O soth ys, every thing ys wyst,
> Though hit be kevered with the myst.
> Eke, though I myghte duren ever,
> That I have don, rekever I never,
> That I ne shal be seyd, allas,
> Yshamed be thourgh Eneas,
> And that I shal thus juged be,--

[25]Andreas specifically condemns this motive (The Art of Courtly Love, pp. 144-45, 151 ff.).

'Loo, ryght as she hath don, now she
Wol doo eft-sones, hardely;'
Thus seyth the peple prively.
(349-59.)

What emerges certainly contrasts with tradition and comic effects frequently result from it. But the more the hearers or readers were familiar with the original Dido legend, the better they could have appreciated the irony that flashes out both here and in the other books of the House of Fame.

Worldly Fame is reduced in these lines to a kind of neighborhood busy-body. The Fame of Dido's complaint is no splendid figure but rather a smaller personality, more akin to Rumor, the fickle and feckless holder of local reputation. Chaucer has, we have seen, elevated Dido's personality, the size of her role. She is human, warm, and gullible. But this alteration has another effect: by making her human, Chaucer has--deliberately, I think--minimized her royalty, her dignity, and her rank. One result of this reduction is to bring Dido closer, to diminish the distance between classical queen and current audience. But there is another, I think, equally viable and significant in terms of the subject of the House of Fame; that is, the society out of which Dido operates becomes correspondingly less regal and less grand. With the romance of flattering distance and rank removed, the figures of both Venus and Fame appear equally less glamorous. With Chaucer's rejection of mythology, his insistent shaping of his source-characters into occupants of a real world who feel human emotions, the personification of allegorical figures is also shaped and changed. They appear in the harsh glare of reality. Dido is treated by Venus, protector and patron of

lovers, as an object rather than a human being. The cynicism and cold expediency of this act is unparalleled in the bitterest lines of Jean de Meun. The love which in the French romances was presented as courtly and ideal is seen, in Chaucer's more personal exposition, as lust and ambition, ephemeral as the glass walls of the temple and base as the brass of the tablet-altar.

In Book III, we will find details of Fame's bipartite personality. That Chaucer's Fame is as unlike Virgil's mighty abstraction as the Venus whose fragile and base nature is reflected in her temple is unlike the goddess of mythology and courtly love is made manifest in these lines. It is important to note that when Dido cries out against her fate, her complaint is specifically lodged against wicked Fame, the lament being a neat blend of the two phases of Fame's function, rumor and reputation. The evil fortune of love, the slander, the loss of reputation, all of which Dido laments in this passage, point toward the third book where Fame is seen in action.

If Book I is to be understood in terms of the unity of the poem as a whole, we must deal with the relationship between the activities of Venus and those of her sister Fortune.[26] W. O. Sypherd argues that Chaucer's conception of the goddess Fame was greatly influenced by the current notions of the goddesses of Love and Fortune, and that the idea of Fame or Rumor was enlarged by adding to her simple function of hearing tidings and spreading them

[26]That Chaucer was well aware of this practical identification of Love and Fortune may be seen from "A Complaint to his Lady" (33-36); "Fortune" (50); and Troilus and Criseyde (IV, 323 ff.)

abroad, the more powerful attribute of sitting as a divinity to decide on the worldly fame of mankind.[27] In this guise, she shares the mutability of Venus and Fortune, as defined both by Boethius and Jean de Meun.

There is sufficient practical identification of these three deities in the House of Fame to warrant the recounting of a fateful love story in a poem which is to be concerned chiefly with the meting out of fame as well as with the nature of the goddess herself. Book I provides a specific account of Dido caught in the contrivances of Venus, of the fortunes of Love, and of Fame, as an introduction to what Geffrey is to behold in Book III, the goddess Fame doling out favor and disgrace with random caprice to mankind, in matters of love as well as the countless other pursuits of men. By showing the Carthaginian queen aware of the ill-repute that Fame will bring to her unhappy love, Chaucer relates Love to Fame in a way that explains why Jove's eagle, in the following book, can suggest that tidings of love are logically to be found in Fame's house.

The narrator's comment on Dido's lament is drily sensible:

> But that is don, is not to done;
> Al hir compleynt ne al hir moone,
> Certeyn, avayleth her not a stre.
> (361-63.)

And we are plunged once more into the cold air of reality. We have noted earlier Chaucer's use of this technique to bring his audience back to the real world when highly colored or over-elevated sentiments threaten to become too unwieldy or too ethereal. The narrator

[27] Chaucer's "Hous of Fame," pp. 116 ff.

is of course correct: all Dido's tears will not change the facts. The nature of Fame and her relationship with Love was, I think, the lesson Chaucer intended to draw from the legend of Dido. That point made, Dido's lament is placed in its proper perspective and we are forced to recognize its excess and futility. Dido does not speak directly again and Chaucer takes only sixteen lines to describe her later actions and her suicide. There is no implication of moral or theological condemnation of suicide here as there was in the Book of the Duchess: Chaucer's purpose and subject in House of Fame render such a judgment unnecessary. He is concerned in Book I with the influence of Fame on a specific individual. That influence established, Chaucer'a narrator compresses the remaining eight books of the Aeneid into seventy-eight lines (387-465). Of these, thirty-eight make up a catalogue of unfaithful lovers. Aeneas, of course, heads the list. And only after this catalogue does Chaucer offer any softening explanation of Aeneas's actions.

An example of the relationship between Chaucer and his source, as well as of the poetic mandates of his period, occurs in this six-line justification. The narrator says, with palpable lack of enthusiasm:

> But to excusen Eneas
> Fullyche of al his grete trespas,
> The book seyth Mercurie, sauns fayle,
> Bad hym goo into Italye
> And leve Auffrikes regioun,
> And Dido and hir faire toun.
> (427-32.)

Virgil, on the other hand, spends over half of Book IV describing the necessity of Aeneas's departure, his destiny and the higher duty

he owed it, and his sorrow at hurting Dido. As Aeneas listened to Dido's plea, Virgil says, "ille Iovis monitas inmota tenebat / lumina et obnixus curam sub corde premebat" (IV, 331-32.)[28] Moreover, Aeneas explains the need for his departure in twenty-eight lines of logical, often tender poetry (IV, 333-61). After Dido's passionate outburst ends in a swoon, Virgil eloquently describes his hero's feelings as he watches her carried away:

> At pius Aeneas, quamquam lenire dolentum
> solando cupit et dictus avertere curas,
> multa gemens magnoque animum labefactus amore,
> iussa tamen divum exsequitur classemque revisit.
> (IV, 393-96)[29]

We have seen how Chaucer shaped his source to focus on Dido, and how Aeneas, conversely, was painted from the first as villain of the piece. In the Aeneid, Aeneas has no choice and Virgil places the major blame for the tragic outcome on Rumor, who is described at length and in consistently condemnatory terms. But the Story of Troy is familiar to medieval audiences, and Chaucer--or any poet of his age--can shape but cannot change the story entirely, nor would he want to. That Chaucer's brief dutiful excuse of Aeneas's perfidy is half-hearted is, of course, obvious. But it is included and so fulfills the requirements of literary custom.

The narrator's prayer to Venus, "The whiche I preye alwey save us, / And us ay of oure sorwes lyghte," serves to end the dream

[28]"He by Jove's command held his eyes steadfast and with a struggle smothered the pain deep within his heart."

[29]"But good Aeneas, though longing to soothe and assuage her grief and by his words turn aside her sorrow, with many a sigh, his soul shaken by his mighty love, yet fulfills heaven's bidding and returns to the fleet."

with a picture of the goddess with whom it began. Yet this prayer is as ambiguous as the Invocation. It may be construed as addressed to Venus--a construction which the matter of the dream renders improbable. Or, as J. A. W. Bennett believes, it may be read as addressed to Jupiter.[30] But there are echoes of the Christian God in Chaucer's Jupiter, king of gods. That there is a connection is indicated certainly by the narrator's expletive which immediately follows the prayer: "'A, Lord!' thoughte I, 'that madest us.'" Similar juxtaposition of Christian and pagan deities has occurred before in this poem. We remember, especially, the Invocation where Morpheus is almost literally superimposed on God, "the movere of us al." This ambivalence is compounded in the next lines. The narrator summarizes his impression of the multi-faceted temple of Venus:

> Yet sawgh I never such noblesse
> Of ymages, ne such richesse,
> As I saugh graven in this chirche.
> (471-74.)

The narrator's respect for authority is unimpaired: this is his judgment of the temple. But we know that the nobility of the images and the richness of the engraving is appearance. The reality of Venus and the love she represents has been exposed as brass; cruel and unstable and founded in illusion. The narrator had unknowingly described the nature of Venus and her temple earlier, in another context: "Hyt is not al gold that glareth." The reference to this most profane temple as "chirche," particularly in conjunction with the narrator's earlier appeal to the God "that madest us," and who

[30] Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 46.

alone can "us ay of our sorwes lyghte," is as strongly ironic as any line in Chaucer.[31] Chaucer further forces our recognition of the irony by stressing the anonymity of the engraver of these wonders: "But not wot I whoo did hem wirche."

In a transition remarkable for its brevity as well as its conformity to the character of the narrator, Chaucer changes the subject and sets up motivation for his exit from the temple and the appearance of the eagle. The narrator is reminded by his statement of ignorance about maker of temple and engraving that there are other things he does not know:

> Ne where I am, ne in what contree
> But now wol I goo out and see,
> Ryght at the wiket, yf y kan
> See owhere any stiryng man,
> That may me telle where I am.
> (475-79.)

But outside, he finds only wasteland, as sterile and empty of life as the country which surrounded Morpheus's cave in the Book of the Duchess.

There are a number of studies which deal with the origin of this desert.[32] But Chaucer's narrator himself has provided us with two. Earlier, in the catalogue of betrayed lovers, he cited Virgil and Dante, with Claudian, as authorities on the lower world. And Virgil and Dante have great significance to the House of Fame.

[31]Christopher Marlowe used the same metaphor to create the same effect in Hero and Leander over two centuries later. He writes: "So fair a church as this had Venus none: / The walls were of discolored jasper stone." L. C. Martin, ed., Marlowe's Poems (London: Methuen, 1931), I, 135-36.

[32]See for example Works, p. 781; Clemen, pp. 88-90; and Sypherd, pp. 52-54.

Virgil, author of the matter of Book I, described the cave-entrance to Pluto's underworld in similar terms (Aen. VI, 236 ff.). In his description of the "domos Ditis vacuas et inania regne" (VI, 269),[33] there is the same feeling of total unfitness for the feet of men that we sense in the empty land which surrounds Venus's temple. And Dante, unanimously accepted as source for the eagle who is Geffrey's guide, describes a similar barren plain:

> Dico che arrivammo ad una landa
> che dal suo letto ogni pianta rimove.
> . . . . . .
> Lo spazzo era una rena arida e spessa,
> non d'altra foggia fatta che colei
> che fu da'piè di Caton già soppressa.
> (Inf., XIV, 8-15.)[34]

Moreover, Books II and III have echoes of Dante beyond the borrowing of the eagle-guide. I think in this reference to Virgil and Dante, Chaucer was signaling, perhaps, an addition to his primary literary sources: as Virgil, with Ovid, had been his "auctour" in Book I, Dante was to become a third influence in the rest of the poem.[35] This speculation is borne out, first of course, by the introduction of the eagle, but also by the phrase, "movere of us al" which occurred early in the poem. Dante was not, I think simply discovered

[33]"the empty halls of Dis and his phantom realm."

[34]"I have to tell you that we reached a plain that rejects every plant from its bed . . . The ground was a dry deep sand, much like that once trod by the feet of Cato." Divine Comedy I (Inferno), ed. John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961). All citations from Dante are to this edition.

[35]See for example Koonce, pp. 73-88; Sypherd, pp. 44-72; H. S. Bennett pp. 46, 51; J. A. W. Bennett, pp. 49-51 and elsewhere; and Muscatine, p. 108 for a discussion of Chaucer's debt to and use of Dante.

fortuitously between the writing of Book I and Book II, as Lowes implies,[36] but is rather used deliberately when his work and philosophy best serve Chaucer's subject, as they do in Books II and III.

This stretch of empty sand is the first of the wastelands which separate the urban arenas of action, so to speak. That these are as unnatural as Venus's temple and the houses of Fame and Rumor is clear: the narrator comments on the lack of any "maner creature / That ys yformed be Nature," and we are again reminded of the artificiality which governs the dream-country of this poem. Moreover, in these lines there is the strong implication that it is an artificiality which is more than an imitation of life: rather, it is literally "ageyns kynde."

Chaucer signals again the ambivalence which is inherent in the House of Fame. The narrator prays to Christ "that art in blysse" to save him "fro fantome and illusion." This is a singularly appropriate prayer: not only does it specify the nature of appearance--"fantome and illusion" which Dido had early identified as undesirable--but it implies the source of that reality to be sought, Christ or God. The irony of this prayer lies of course in the fact that we as reader know that the narrator is indeed surrounded by such illusion and that the eagle which seems to appear as answer to that prayer will only bear him to another plane of "fantome and illusion." That the narrator does not recognize it, of course,

[36] Geoffrey Chaucer, pp. 106-07.

does not negate the existence of such irony. As he looks to heaven "with devocion," he sees what he thinks is an eagle but can only be certain is gold. And Book I ends with the gilded bird's downward flight.

CHAPTER III

HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK II

As in the Proem to Book I the narrator had catalogued the causes and kinds of dreams, in the Proem to Book II he catalogues famous dreamers: Isaiah, Scipio, Nebuchannezzer, Pharaoh, Turnus, and Elcanor.[1] In this catalogue as in the earlier Proem and Invocation, the references are mixed, although the numerical stress is on the Biblical dreamers. Again classical and Christian authority is merged to continue the ambivalence with which Chaucer ended Book I. But not even these varied authorities ever dreamed such a dream as the narrator is about to describe. Its scope is beyond the experience of all history, Christian or pagan. The Proem prepares for the dream which is to be played on a stage outside of nature and alien to it. The narrator, acknowledging his lack of wit and skill to "endite and ryme" its wonders adequately, begs Venus to favor him and the muses help him write all he dreamed so that

> Now shal men se
> If any vertu in the be
> To tellen al my drem aryght.
> (II, 525-28.)

[1]See Works, p. 782, for critical comment on sources for the still-unidentified Elcanor.

This proem serves the primary function of further linking Books I and II: it is addressed to Venus, whose temple was the subject of Book I, and the muses. According to J. A. W. Bennett, "To invoke the Muses, either at the outset or at a turning point in the action was the prerogative of epic poets."[2] And Chaucer does, throughout the House of Fame and particularly Book II, work within the technical framework of heroic poetry. But, especially in Book II, the subject and tone are far from epic. The heavenward journey of Geffrey and his guide is brilliantly mock-heroic. As he has done before and will continue to do, Chaucer follows the letter of the literary form he has chosen as model, but the spirit is all his own, original, lively and wonderfully crafted. In contrast to the sixty-five lines of received medieval dream lore which opens Book I, the second proem, crisp and fast paced, produces an effect of eager expectancy. We are prepared for marvels and Chaucer does not disappoint us.

As Book I ended, the narrator had spied a huge golden bird spiraling downward. Awed by and uncertain of the nature of the approaching bird, Geffrey tells us:

> But this as sooth as deth, certeyn,
> Hit was of gold, and shon so bryghte
> That never saw men such a syghte,
> But yf the heven had ywonne
> Al new of gold another sonne.
> (I, 500-05.)

The implication that the golden bird appeared in answer to the narrator's prayer to Christ for delivery from "fantome and illusion"

[2] Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 54.

further elevates the creature's stature. As he neared the desert on which the narrator stood, the wonder and grandeur of him grew. Not only is doubt of his kind removed--he is indeed an eagle--but his supranatural quality is intensified:

> This egle, of which I have yow told,
> That shon with fethres as of gold,
> Which that so hye gan to sore,
> I gan beholde more and more,
> To se the beaute and the wonder;
> But never was ther dynt of thonder,
> Ne that thyng that men call fouder,
> That smot somtyme a tour to powder,
> And in his swifte comynge brende. . . .
> (II, 529-39.)

The narrator's description continues and further power and glory are ascribed to the marvelous bird. His strength and implacability are detailed in the ease with which he lifted the narrator "as lyghtly" as if he had been a lark. There is no small emphasis placed on the danger implicit in so large a fowl. The eagle gripped Geffrey "with hys grimme paws stronge, / withyn his sharpe nayles longe" (541-42) and bore him upward "in his clawes starke" (545). This is a formidable creature indeed, supranaturally large, beautiful, strong, and armored, appearing without warning--surely a bird worthy of a deity.

Chaucer's eagle is generally acknowledged to be derived in part from the eagle which carries Dante aloft in Purgatorio IX.[3] There, of course, in the valley of negligent princes, Dante is

[3]Conversely, Sypherd, p. 89, follows Lounsbury, Studies in Chaucer (New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), p. 246, in citing Metamorphoses X as major source for the eagle. Certainly Metamorphoses was a strong influence on both BD and HF but in Book X, the reference is brief (the whole episode is covered in seven lines,

assailed by thoughts of corruption and decay of Empire. A golden eagle, appropriately the symbol of Empire, law, and justice, snatches the dreaming Dante into the fiery sphere: the dream is a prophetic almost prefatory one and Dante awakes from it with a sense of the disparity between the ideal of the empyrean and the flawed environment of this earth. Certainly there is connection between Chaucer's bird and the awful eagle of Dante. But I have not found this connection examined in terms of its application to the sense of Book II and, indeed, of Fame herself. The similarities are superficial and essentially physical. The narrator, like Dante, was borne out of a wasteland; that for Dante this wasteland was of the spirit while for the narrator it was primarily physical does not make the likeness less. It does however insist subtly and from the start that Chaucer will describe a more secular journey. Chaucer's eagle, like Dante's, bears his narrator to a place in the limbo between heaven and earth. Both birds are messengers of a higher power; both have as their stated purpose the increased understanding of their passengers. But we must note the very different quality of these respective similarities. Where Dante's eagle shows him the "Empire of God's intention,"[4] Chaucer's bird bears Geffrey to the house of Fame. Where Dante's eagle brings him to the "sommo

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Meta., X, 155-61) and shorn of detail. Too much of the description of Chaucer's bird occurs in Dante's eagle for this ascription to be accepted. A major support, other than Chaucer's use of Ovid in general, may be his inclusion of Ganymede in his catalogue of aeronauts (582-92). Still, the argument seems thin.

[4]Sinclair, Pur., p. 127.

consistoro," the divine conclave, Chaucer's bird takes him on an equally marvelous journey to hear love tidings. Where Canto IX is concerned with divine order and the commitment of the mortal soul to God with salvation as the ultimate reward, Book II prepares us for chaos and the whimsical judgment of Fame as reward for Geffrey's commitment to Venus. In a sense, Chaucer's eagle is, like Dante's, a symbol of Empire, law, and justice, but the Empire is Jupiter's, the law is Venus's, and the justice is Fame's.

Moreover, the eagle of the Purgatorio presages another eagle which Dante is to see, the lecturing, rebuking eagle of the Paradiso. Paul Ruggiers finds, "Both the eagle of Jove in Purgatory and the eagle of God in Paradise seem implicit in Chaucer's talking bird."[5] And he is, I think, correct. John Sinclair writes in his note to Canto VI of the Paradiso, "The victorious flight of the eagle, 'the bird of God,' from land to land and from age to age, following 'the course of heaven' from Troy to Rome and from Rome to the ends of the earth, was the divine preparation for the Christian Gospel and the appointed co-operation with it."[6] The narrator's prayer to "Crist that art in blysse" in Book I, as well as our familiarity with Dante as source for the golden bird, leads us to expect a similar function for the eagle who appears from nowhere in answer to that prayer. It is not a long step from the aloof, learned eagle of Dante to the pedagogical, somewhat pompous,

[5]"Unity in Chaucer's House of Fame," Shoeck and Taylor, II, 265.

[6]Sinclair, Par., p. 98.

generally self-satisfied bird of Chaucer's poem: the difference is one of attitude.

Chaucer's eagle is clearly of this world. As the brass tablet was incongruous in the richness of Venus's temple, so is Jove's bird incongruous in a different way. Supranaturally large, descending with the strength and speed of the thunderbolt which marks his coming, splendidly golden, the eagle engenders awe and amazement in the narrator and arouses us as reader to the expectation of event or message equally magnificent. That he seizes Geffrey and bears him upward in silence increases our sense of his power. But scarcely does he open his beak than he reveals himself as no heavenly being but a bird neither grand nor wise. Rather, he is prolix, proverbial, somewhat vulgar, and inordinately proud.

As the contraries--experience versus authority, moderation and reason versus excess, and amor versus natural love--were operative in the Book of the Duchess and in Venus's temple, so are they here. In Book II, the opposition is primarily between authority and experience, as it was to a lesser degree in the Book of the Duchess. But here, it is played out on a stage at once larger and more subtle than in the earlier poem. Chaucer's bookish narrator has met his match in the pedantic eagle, so devoted to authority and so bent upon impressing his hapless captive.

The narrator tells us that he "longe in hys clawes lay" (554) in a swoon until the eagle, "in mannes vois, cried out "Awak! / And be not agast so, for shame!" (558) and called him by name. Moreover:

> And for I shulde the bet abreyde,
> Me mette, "Awak," to me he seyde,
> Ryght in the same vois and stevene
> That useth oon I koude nevene.
> And with that vois, soth for to seyn,
> Me mynde cam to me ageyn,
> For hyt was goodly seyde to me,
> So nas hyt never wont to be.
> (559-67.)

There is much scholarship dealing with the autobiological elements in this passage[7] which need not concern us here. What is significant, I think, are the final lines of the passage. According to the narrator, the eagle had pierced his swoon by calling "Awak! / And be not agast so, for shame!" By no stretch of the imagination can this statement be read as "goodly seyde": rather, in it the eagle rebukes the narrator roughly for his terror and apparently is gentle neither in tone nor word. As we have noted before, Chaucer's denial of expertise frequently precedes or follows proof of such expertise and contradictory statements usually serve to point an incongruity between what seems to be and what is, as well as to provide much of Chaucer's comic irony.

In the Miller's Tale, for example, the characteristics manifest in "hende Nicholas" are not, I think, generally ascribed to one who is truly "hende"--that is, gentle and courteous as well as near at hand.[8] This term, commonly used to reflect approbation, is, when

[7]Note for example Bethurum, p. 217; Muscatine, p. 110; J. A. W. Bennett, p. 58; and Kemp Malone, p. 55. Koonce, pp. 143-44, however, finds the lines not autobiographical but scriptural--logical, I suppose, for a study which reads Book I as "Hell," Book II as "Purgatory," and Book III as "Paradise."

[8]According to OED, "courteous, gracious, kind, gentle"; "gentle, polite" in Halliwells' Dictionary of Archaic and Provincial Words (London: J. R. Smith, 1847); "prompt, gracious" in Stratmann's

used to describe the "swete clerke," a startlingly incongruous one in the context of the tale. The incongruity is underscored by the un-gentle, discourteous but clever and, indeed, dextrous deportment of Nicholas. Allison loved Nicholas in part because "Alwey the nye slye / Maketh the ferre leeve to be looth" (MT, 3392-93). In the next five lines there are two further references to "hende Nicholas," reiteration which usually indicates an incongruity or ambiguity which Chaucer seems to want made obvious. The lines succeeding this repetition are:

> And hende Nicholas and Alisoun
> Accorded been to this conclusioun,
> That Nicholas shal shapen hym a wyl
> This sely jalous housbonde to bigyle;
> And if so be the game wente aright
> She sholde slepen in his arm al nyght.
> (MT, 3401-06.)

There is further precedent which lends authority to this conclusion. In the General Prologue, Chaucer the pilgrim judges the Monk, "Now certeinly he was a fair prelaat" (GenProl, 204), immediately following a catalogue of the Monk's activities and qualities which are dubious if not actually blasphemous.

The same incongruity obtains in the description of the Friar:

> He was an esy man to yeve penaunce
> Ther as he wiste to have a good pitaunce.
> (223-24.)

Middle English Dictionary (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891); and "gentle, courteous, comely" in Shipley's Dictionary of Early English (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955). See also RR in which the word is used to mean "gentle and courteous" in the chivalric or courtly sense (RR, 285, 1306, and 3345, for example).

> He knew the tavernes wel in every toun
> And everich hostiler and tappestere.
> (240-41.)
> It is nat honest, it may nat avaunce
> For to deelen with no swich poraille.
> (246-47.)

Chaucer the pilgrim concludes his description of this most unworthy churchman with the judgment: "This worthy lymytour was cleped Hubert" (269, italics mine). Later, in the Knight's Tale, the most unchivalric, uncourtly behavior on the part of Theseus is followed by the same type of seemingly unsuitable praise. So we have

> . . . and he ful soone hem sente
> To Atthenes, to dwellen in prisoun
> Perpetuelly--he nolde no ransoun.
> And whan this worthy duc had thus ygon. . . .
> (KT, 1022-25.)

I cannot stress too strongly the contradiction implicit in the use of "worthy" to describe Theseus in this line. Chaucer emphasizes Theseus's action: in fact, he repeats to eliminate any possible misunderstanding. A true knight following the code of chivalry would not imprison other knights, much less royal princes, forever, without hope of ransom. Politically practical as it is, this act is diametrically opposed to the premise of the courtly code. Yet the knight who narrates the tale continues immediately to relate further doings of "this worthy duc." The satire on the artificiality of the chivalric code is strengthened and made manifest by the incongruous use of "worthy duc."[9] Similarly, I believe Chaucer uses

[9]This conclusion is not based on the one instance cited here. There are in the Knight's Tale enough other examples of similar incongruities to make this point valid and defensible: for example, 952, 1001-02, 1809-10, to name a few.

"hende" in the Miller's Tale to intensify the difference between what Nicholas appears to be and what he is in reality. In Book I of House of Fame the difference between what Venus appeared to be and what she was in reality was made clear by similar incongruities. So does Chaucer, I think, utilize that technique here. The eagle's words deny the narrator's generous judgment: there is no kindness in them, and we as reader can recognize that fact whether or not Chaucer's narrator does.

The rough "Awak!" however has had its effect. Consciousness returned, Geffrey began to stir in the great bird's grip. Encouraged by such immediate reaction to his ministrations, the eagle set about comforting his passenger: he

> sayde twyes, "Seynte Marye!
> Thou art noyous for to carye,
> And nothyng nedeth it, pardee!
> For also wis God helpe me,
> And this caas that betyd the is,
> Is for thy lore and for thy prow;--
> Let see! darst thou yet loke now?
> Be ful assured, boldely,
> I am thy frend."
> (573-82.)

This, the first extended speech of the splendid bird, is significant for several reasons. First, of course, is that in these lines Chaucer prepares us for the character of the eagle and sets the tone which will govern the relationship between the bird and his human burden throughout the book. To the eagle, Geffrey is no superior creation, little less than angel. On the contrary, he is too heavy, too frightened for no reason the eagle can recognize, and not very bright--all in all, a rather inferior specimen. Although the eagle assures his terrified burden, "I am thy frend,"

there is the strong implication that, to the eagle at least, such friendship is certainly not between equals.

The eagle's speech is further notable in that it provides very little solid information. Chaucer has specifically prefaced this speech with a statement of the eagle's intent: when he knew Geffrey had recovered from his faint, the narrator says, he began "me to disporte, / And with wordes to comforte" (571-72). We are of course accustomed to read such introductory remarks with suspicion, and this passage, like the earlier example, surely merits such distrust. There is little of comfort in the eagle's words: in fact they could only add to the narrator's uncertainty. The irritated invocation to "Seynte Marye," the chiding reference to Geffrey's weight and general unwieldiness, and the obscure statement of the reason for his unceremonious seizure would do little to allay the narrator's terror at his situation. Moreover, the vast gulf between the first sight of the shining bird, appearing as relief from "fantome and illusion," and its reality, the sudden transition from desert--barren and strange but still within the range of natural law--to alien space, dangling from the talons of an unknown and perhaps malevolent force requires more than a few ambiguous words to bridge.

There is humor and immediacy in the narrator's thoughts about his unexpected and quite unwanted flight. Always the accurate reporter, he records the mechanics of the eagle's grip as well as his reaction to every aspect of an experience which would destroy a less curious man. He even dissects his own terror with an interest

more clinical than personal. The narrator reacts to his unique situation as he had to every previous one: he is interested, seeks precedence and comfort in authority, and strives, naive and single-minded as always, to relate every detail clearly and precisely.

Of the three books of House of Fame, Book II is the most thoroughly wasteland: here, however, the setting is the desert of space, that most alien of atmospheres. Not only is the setting of Book II an empty space which separates the urban arenas of Books I and III, the action itself is virtually nonexistent. Despite the swooping soaring flight, the piled-on authorities and lessons which make up the eagle's speech--all of which give the illusion of speed and activity--over two-thirds of Book II is dialogue. And of the remaining one hundred seventy-four lines, forty-three are concerned with the narrator's description of his situation and state of mind, twenty-one with the narrator's view of the earth spinning far below him, seven with the philosophy of Boethius, and seven with their arrival at Fame's mountain.

The eagle's last words, "for thy lore and for thy prow," unsatisfying as they are to Geffrey, remind us that Chaucer regularly presents himself as searching in and through his poetry for "lore" as much as for "luste," for "sentence" as much as for "solace." However, this assurance of benevolence and benefit comforts the narrator not a whit:

> "O God," thoughte I, "that madest kinde,
> Shall I non other weyes dye?"
> (584-85.)

There is a kind of desperate hope in his remembrance here that the eagle is one of Nature's creatures and so obedient to that

"vicaire of the almighty lord" whose hierarchy of birds is displayed in the later Parliament of Fowls. "Kinde" in that poem as in the Book of the Duchess and here includes not only animate nature but the universe that was created by the joining of the elements, a universe which includes all things from stone to star. That reference gains strength as the narrator begins to wonder if his fate is to be "stellified." To create another star would expand the universe while to be transmuted to heaven alive would violate the natural order. To the hapless Geffrey, these alternatives appear equally unnatural and equally undesirable. But when the eagle assures him that Jove has no intention of making him a star "as yet"--a delightfully ambiguous reservation--we realize that the matter of destination is still unresolved.

At last, after some prefatory comment about Jupiter and his own function as messenger, the eagle explains--elaborately and at length--the reason for Geffrey's adventure. Promising to take Geffrey to a place where he may hear love tidings, the eagle's recapitulation of Jupiter's concern is provocatively qualified: it is because, despite Geffrey's long service to "hys blynde nevew Cupido" and Venus, the eagle says,

> That thou hast no tydynges
> Of loves folk yf theye be glade,
> Ne of noght elles that God made.
> (644-46.)

Such qualification of course has precedent earlier in the poem. As it prepared us there for a rather dubious view of love, so does it here. And this doubtful vision is borne out in both instances.

The tidings Geffrey is to hear are neither idealized nor traditional in a love-vision. That the house of Fame is to provide the setting for a very different exemplum is made manifest in the eagle's next speech. In Fame's house, the eagle promises, the narrator will hear:

> Mo wonder thynges, dar I leye,
> And of Loves folk moo tydynges,
> Both sothe sawes and lesinges;
> And moo love newe begonne,
> And longe yserved loves wonne. . . .
> (674-78.)

Even here, of course, the eagle is promising the narrator not experience but more authority, albeit authority more immediate.

There is a progression in this catalogue of "sawes and lesinges" awaiting the narrator. These first lines describe kinds of love acceptable to Venus and the genre of courtly love. But with the next lines, a new element enters the list. The eagle continues:

> And moo loves casuelly
> That ben betyd, no man wot why,
> But as a blynd man stert an hare;
> And more jolytee and fare,
> While that they fynde love of stel,
> As thinketh hem, and over-al wel.
> (679-84.)

The overall effect of this litany of love tidings is achieved by a subtle and pervasive build-up of images. Beginning with the conventional references to loves newly begun and loves successful after long service, the catalogue moves into less innocuous areas. The narrator will hear of more casual loves, loves rising as senselessly and automatically as a hare starts at a blind man's step. The unromantic homeliness of the eagle's proverbial simile, its

inappropriateness in its setting, forces us to look more closely at the lines which inspire it. While accident is no proscribed cause for love, it lacks the elevated idealism which marks the courtly romances. With the next lines, suspicion becomes certainty as the eagle, blithely blind to implication, completes his list of "wonder thynges":

> Mo discordes, moo jelousies,
> Mo murmures, and moo novelries,
> And moo dissymulacions,
> And feyned reparacions;
> And moo berdys in two houres
> Withoute rasour or sisoures
> Ymad, then greynes be of sondes;
> And eke moo holdynge in hondes,
> And also moo renovelaunces
> Of olde forleten aqueyntaunces;
> Mo love-dayes and acordes;
> Then on instrumentes be cordes;
> And eke of loves moo eschaunges
> Then ever cornes were in graunges.
> (685-98.)

The jealousy, disagreement, pretense, cheating, casual couplings, and assorted infidelities which mark the love tidings with which Geffrey's service to Venus is to be rewarded take up well over half of this twenty-five line catalogue. And only two examples of love are unequivocally desirable by either natural or courtly standards. The eagle has promised "jolytee and fare" in Fame's house but there is little evidence of either in the cruelty and ignoble ratiocination of "Loves folk." Chaucer uses "mo," "moo," and "more" fifteen times, ten of which occur in the last fourteen lines where the most cynical and antithetical results of love's influences are explicated. Yet this is not enough. As the listing of love-doings grows more uncourtly, as the activities become more a matter of games and

manipulation, Chaucer marks the intensification by increasingly frequent comparisons. The first of these occurs eighteen lines into the passage; the second, five lines later; and the last, two lines after that. The primary effect of these comparisons is to further emphasize the frequency of such experiences in Fame's house. Grains of sand and the strings of instruments are very like the Biblical "seventy times seven": each implies a number so great as to be literally uncountable but is not, in itself, particularly ungentle. But neutrality vanishes with the final comparison. "Then ever cornes were in graunges" is the coarsest and least suitable to any discussion of love of the three. This is reality intruding with a vengeance. Barns have no place in courtly romances or in dream-visions; their proper literary milieu is the fabliau. And it is with this incongruous figure that the eagle's catalogue of marvels ends.

Jove's bird, unconscious of irony or inconsistency, then reveals to Geffrey, in the tone of one academician to another, the location of Fame's house, "So thyn oune bok hyt telleth." The book, of course, is Metamorphoses, and in Book XII there is, of course, a structure very like the eagle's description of Geffrey's destination. And here Chaucer follows Ovid's geography closely: Fame's house stands between heaven, earth, and sea, and all the words of the world are heard there.

After the eagle describes Fame's house, he offers "a worthy demonstracion / In myn ymagynacion":

"Geffrey, thou wost ryght wel this
That every kyndely thyng that is
Hath a kyndely stede ther he
May best in hyt conserved be;
Unto which place every thyng,
Thorgh his kyndely enclynyng
Moveth for to come to,
Whan that hyt is awey therfro. . . ."
(729-36.)

We have noted before that Chaucer is concerned with the nature of things but nowhere has he been so insistent: "kyndely" occurs three times in this passage. To underestimate its importance to an understanding of the House of Fame, particularly of Book III, for which Book II is in large part a preparation, would be to fly against the wind. The many-sourced philosophy expressed in these lines is, I think, central to the meaning of the poem. Essentially, the eagle is arguing strongly and convincingly for natural law. There is no sense of the comic which marks his usual speech. There is no incongruous "Seynte Marye," no harsh "Awak": once he has got past the inevitable vaunt which prefaces his treatise on natural order, his tone is consistently serious. Moreover, his explanation represents the received view of Chaucer's time. The concepts the eagle espouses are true: if one lifts a stone and releases it, the stone will drop; fire and smoke do rise; rivers "by kynde" flow to the sea and trees grow out of the earth. The humor of the passage --for it is humorous--is external. This champion of natural law is himself an unnatural creature. The setting out of which he speaks is, by any standards, contrary to nature. Their destination has its source in Ovid's description of the house of Rumor, the

pseudo-Fame.[10] The tidings Geoffrey will hear in this cacaphonous structure are not of love but of artificial passions, distorted and misshapen, which men have in their ignorance mistaken for love. The practices the eagle cited earlier are for the most part the diseased machinations of lust, not love, that highest human emotion according to both courtly and Christian doctrine.[11] Our awareness of these contradictions provides the irony which permeates this passage. But its major significance, I think, is that by the introduction of natural order, Chaucer presents the opposition of reality and appearance explicitly within the framework of this book. The lines are here clearly drawn: we are not dependent on incongruity, proverbial statements, or inappropriate language to remind us of the unnaturalness--that is, the unreality--of eagle, environment, situation, and, indeed, of Fame herself.

After his discussion of "kynde," the eagle returns to the character we have grown to expect. He is again comic follower or authority, unable to resist citing sources to bolster the weight of his words:

[10]Ovid's "Fama" is glossed as "Rumor" in both scholarly and popular translations. See for example Frank Justus Miller, Metamorphoses, p. 183, and Horace Gregory, Metamorphoses (New York: Mentor Books, 1958), p. 326, respectively. And normally in Classical Latin, if "fama" is used as "fame," it means "ill fame": it is "what people say."

[11]That the courtly tradition is concerned with worldly and the Christian with spiritual love does not invalidate their agreement on its position in their respective canons.

> Loo, this sentence ys knowen kouth
> Of every philosophres mouth,
> As Aristotle and daun Platon,
> And other clerkys many oon.
> (757-60.)

In Chaucer's bird, we see authority unobscured. The narrator, until now major proponent of authority, becomes in Book II essentially a witness to the theory and lore presented by the eagle. As Chaucer provided the narrator of the Book of the Duchess with a logical and consistent motive for his position as listener, so does he in this episode. But where the Book of the Duchess was, by its nature, necessarily serious, here Chaucer is working under no such stricture. Book II is unabashedly comic. Poor Geffrey's taciturnity is founded in terror. And his monosyllabic answers, literally forced from between teeth clenched against a very natural scream, are funny, particularly since the eagle is totally impervious to any problem.

The eagle is traditionally a symbol of pride. And Jove's messenger is no exception. His pride, however, is greater than its source. But nothing in the House of Fame is as it seems: not the richness of the temple nor the grandeur of the eagle, nor, later, the houses of Fame and Rumor. As the love celebrated in Venus's shrine is in reality lustful and self-seeking, so is the eagle's pride and magnificence exposed as vanity: as Venus's brass tablet was of base metal, the eagle's glorious plumage is merely gold-plate. And, by extension, the Jove we do not meet but whose servant this gilt bird is becomes diminished, as Juno was by Chaucer's characterization of her messenger in the Book of the Duchess. The tone here is very different than it was in Book I. In a real sense,

the generally serious tone there gives way to a tour de force of Chaucerian humor, urbane, witty, gently aimed at the folly of men--and birds--who take themselves too seriously.

Nowhere in a book full of such examples is the eagle's promise that the purpose of this journey will be "for thy lore and for thy prow" more literally carried out. With "Soun ys noght by eyr ybroken" (765), the eagle begins his longest lecture on scientific theory in Book II. Much has been written about the source and science of the eagle's discourse and it is unnecessary to rehearse it here.[12] It is sufficient to my purpose to acknowledge that the science of this passage reflects the medieval enthusiasm for encyclopedic knowledge.[13] In these lines, the eagle's attitude toward the narrator, indicated earlier, is wonderfully limned. We have heard Geffrey rebuked for his fear, but that was understandable: after all, the eagle is in his element and throughout shows no empathy with those unlike himself. We can dismiss the bird's contempt as simply insensitivity. But in this passage, the eagle reiterates obvious statements to be sure the "lewed" narrator understands: for example, he says, "Soun is noght but eyr ybroken" (765), and "every speche . . . In his substaunce ys but air" (766-68).

[12]See for example D. S. Brewer, Chaucer (Norfolk, Eng.: Longman, 1973), p. 56; Clemen, p. 98; Sheila Delany, Chaucer's "House of Fame" (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 71-75; Malone, p. 57; Muscatine, pp. 111-12; Ruggiers, pp. 266-57; and James Winney, Chaucer's Dream Poems (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), p. 92, among others.

[13]John Lawlor, "The Earlier Poems," in Chaucer and Chaucerians, ed. D. S. Brewer (University, Ala.: Univ. of Alabama Press, 1966), p. 47, for example.

Finally he repeats, "Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke" (770). In all, he defines sound as air disturbed six times. He offers elaborately detailed examples reduced, we feel, to simplest language so as not to strain the narrator's faculties: pipes or harps or speech are all carefully qualified for accuracy ("lowd or pryvee, foul or fair," "moche or lyte"). Here the eagle's tutorial character is most perfectly displayed. The passage is rich with remonstrances which reek of the schoolroom: "lo, thus ys my sentence" (776); "Thus wost thou wel" (781); "Now hennesforth y wol the teche" (782); "take hede now" (787); "Wel wost thou" (790); "Although thou mowe hyt not ysee" (804); "Although thou thenke hyt a gret wonder" (806); "yf thou have mynde" (823); and "Mayst thou fele" (826). The cumulative effect is of a teacher instructing a not very apt pupil in his ABC's.

But these interjections to the narrator have further significance. In what is, in fact, a monologue, they provide a sense that the narrator is participating, that while the eagle dominates the conversation, it is a conversation nonetheless. By this point in Book II, a pattern has been established: the narrator speaks only when he cannot avoid it; otherwise he remains silent.

Chaucer's bird, we have seen, is not without intellectual pride: He says "I preve hyt thus" (787), "As I have of the watir preved" (814), and "wel I preve" (826). Even his "Take yt in ernest or in game" (820) is aimed more at the narrator's unlearned state than at any suspicion of criticism. As Clemen points out, "The eagle's zeal to instruct becomes a vehicle--as the character of the

narrator himself has been--through which Chaucer can parody medieval didacticism on the score of complacency, polixity, and exaggerated self-importance."[14] But I think he is also parodying logical inconsistency if not, in fact, error. The eagle, we have noted, repeats the simplest examples and examines obvious physical phenomena to the point of absurdity. For example, he says:

> For yf that thow
> Throwe on water now a stoon,
> Wel wost thou, hyt wol make anoon
> A litel roundel as a sercle,
> Paraunter brod as a covercle;
> And ryght anoon thow shalt see wel,
> That whel wol cause another whel,
> And that the thridde, and so forth, brother,
> Every sercle causynge other
> Wydder than hymselve was;
> And thus fro roundel to compas,
> Ech aboute other goynge
> Causeth of othres sterynge
> And multiplyinge ever moo,
> Til that hyt be so fer ygoo,
> That hyt at bothe brynkes bee.
> (787-803.)

Further, he maintains, "Although thou mowe hyt not ysee / Above, hyt gooth yet alwey under" (804-05). This, while delightful and not illogical, has on closer examination no roots in science and no proof in earlier lines. Yet it is after this statement that the eagle issues his strongest challenge to the narrator and to authority: "And whoso seyth of trouthe I varye, / Bid hym proven the contrarye" (807-08). Later he makes another leap to arbitrary conclusion, followed by a similar claim to proof:

[14] Chaucer's Early Poetry, p. 99.

> And of thys movynge, out of doute,
> Another ayr anoon ys meved,
> As I have of the watir preved,
> That every cercle causeth other.
> (812-15.)

The movement from the example of circles in water--a single and elementary cause-effect relationship--to "every cercle causeth other" (italics mine) is breathtaking in its solecism. And it establishes a pattern which will be maintained throughout the eagle's impressive lectures. When his point is simple and easily proved, he belabors it in a manner which would be suitable to the most abstruse and difficult theory. When the point is dubious or complex, he passes over it casually. And Chaucer insures our recognition of this by having his vainglorious bird follow each such assertion by claiming it to be proved.

The eagle closes his peroration:

> Now have I told, yf thou have mynde,
> How, speche or soun, of pure kynde,
> Enclyned ys upward to meve;
> This mayst tho fele, wel I preve.
> (823-26.)

And there is truth in this statement: the eagle has told the narrator several times that sound, by its very nature, does move upward. But he has offered no proof. I suspect that this aspect of medieval didacticism, more even than "complacency, polixity, and exaggerated self-importance," is Chaucer's target in this passage. But the scope of Chaucer's philosophical attack is, I think, broader than this. Certainly the eagle's sincere but erroneous belief in his own wisdom and superior logic is a trait not limited to medieval academecians. Rather it is a trait to which all men can fall

victim if they surrender their humanity to a flawed perspective of the world and their place in it.

As the eagle introduced his discussion of sound with "Every kyndely thyng that is / Hath a kyndely stede," he follows it with very similar words:

> And that same place, ywys,
> That every thyng enclyned to ys,
> Hath his kyndelyche stede:
> That sheweth hym withouten drede,
> That kyndely the mansioun
> Of every speche, of every soun,
> Be hyt eyther foul or fair,
> Hath hys kynde place in ayr.
> (827-34.)

And every word of every man "Moveth up on high to pace / Kyndely to Fame's place" (851-52). With these lines, a reason for the emphasis on "kynde," on natural law, becomes inescapable. Thematically, such detailed concentration on the theory of sound is not only justifiable but necessary, since Chaucer's presentation of the nature of Fame's house rests upon it. And by bracketing this passage with references to immutable natural law, Chaucer imbues it with respectability and so strengthens our acceptance of Book III which is to follow. In these lines, the focus is firmly on the power and influence Fame holds over the affairs of men. Moreover she is cloaked with the appearance of adhering to, if not, indeed, being a part of Nature. And again the elemental conflict between appearance and reality is made manifest.

Before we are lost in the contemplation of this paradox, the eagle reverts to form. Delighted with his skill and erudition, he cannot refrain from crowing: "Telle me," he exhorts the narrator,

> Have y not preved this symply,
> Without any subtilite
> Of speche, or gret prolixite
> Of termes of philosophie,
> Or figures of poetrie,
> Or colours of rethorike?
> (853-59.)

First, of course, this speech is high comedy indeed. It bares and intensifies Chaucer's tolerant satire of the rhetoricians. The humor is increased by our recognition that the eagle has used medieval academic rhetoric throughout what Lowes rightly calls "one of the most masterly pieces of exposition as exposition that I know."[15] And there is irony in the bird's assumption that the dreamer we know as poet would be grateful for a simple explanation free of "figures of poetrie" from a bird who shares our knowledge. The irony is intensified by the narrator's polite terse answer to the bird's demand for applause: "Yis," he says, firmly but apparently too succinctly for the eagle's taste. His pride in his skill is inexhaustible and he restates his triumph:

> "A ha!" quod he, "lo, so I can
> Lewedly to a lewed man
> Speke and shew hym swich skiles
> That he may shake him be the biles.
> So palpable they shulden be.
> But telle me this, now preye y the,
> How thinketh the my conclusyon?"
> (865-71.)

Beyond demonstrating the eagle's irrepressible immodesty, this passage is interesting for other reasons. As in his previous apotheosis to his technique, the eagle's attitude here is not unlike that of Harry Bailly of the later Canterbury Tales. As "oure

[15] Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 111-12.

hoost of Tabard" was self-appointed arbiter of literature and good taste there, so is the eagle arbiter of intellect in this book. The comic irony in both cases lies in our recognition that neither are qualified for the position they assume. As Harry Bailly rejects Chaucer's brilliant Tale of Sir Thopas as "rym dogeral . . . nat worth a toord" (ToST, 925-30), so the eagle judges Geffrey "a lewed man" which even in the persona Chaucer affects we know he is not. And the eagle's patronizing tone intensifies the attitude of contempt we have noted earlier in his exchanges with the narrator and so emphasizes his bird's-eye view of man.

This time Geffrey's answer, still terse, is full enough to satisfy and the vain bird promises that everything he has said will be proved by Geffrey's experience in Fame's place, if not as participant, at least as direct audience.

Serious discussion over, at least for a time, the eagle declares a recess: "Now wil we speken of game" (886), and queries whether "yond adoun, / Wher that thou knowest any toun, / Or hous, or any other thing" (889-91). For long periods we almost forget where we are, but references like this and the earlier "Shake hem be the biles" remind us of the height as well as the fact that the speaker is a bird. So reality intrudes again. For the next sixty-five lines, there is more than a hint of the tour guide in the eagle's tone. The narrator, following instructions to look below, describes the panoramic view in much the same terms Troilus used later. And it is wonderful--fields, plains, valleys, forests, brooks, rivers, cities, great trees, and ships. But there is

qualification here, too. Only briefly was the narrator allowed a clear view of the world below:

> But thus sone in a while he
> Was flowen fro the ground so hye
> That al the world, as to myn ÿe,
> No more semed than a prikke;
> Or elles was the air so thikke
> That y ne myghte not discerne.
> (904-09.)

Later Troilus, from the "holughnesse of the eighthe spere" (TC, V, 1809), looks down upon "his litel spot of erthe" and repudiates earthly love as "Al vanite" (TC, V, 1817). The contrast between earthly and heavenly love was, of course, one of the most familiar commonplaces of the age and, as Professor Robinson points out, "is more than once brought out by Chaucer."[16] In this passage, however, the implication of such a contrast, made viable by the echo of Dante's "vidi questo globo / tal, ch'io sorrisi del suo vil sembiante" (Par., XXII, 134-35)[17] which is, I think, operative both here and in the passage from Troilus, is ambivalent at the least. It falls in the category of "loves tydynges yf they be glade," discussed earlier, and continues the hints of doubt about the nature of Fame which color Book II.

As Chaucer uses proverbs, colloquialisms, and commonsensical comments to remind us of the reality behind the seductive appearance of a situation, so does he provide elusive references to the Fame Geffrey is to meet in Book III. These references are fleeting and

[16] Works, p. 837.

[17] "and I saw this globe such that I smiled at its paltry semblance."

casual but their function is nonetheless achieved: we are prepared for the explication of Fame's effect on men and so of her nature in Book III. Such ambiguities and ambivalent allusions are not disjunct. They have in common their source in either Boethius or Dante. Overt acknowledgment of these authorities serve to strengthen and give credence to the covert and casual allusions by which Chaucer maintains the tension between the contraries with which this book and the poem are concerned.[18]

In what has become his habit, the eagle interrupts any philosophical pondering with a second "Seest thou any toun / Or ought thou knowest yonder doun?" (911-12). The narrator's negative a foregone conclusion, the great bird repeats what we have already been told. With great satisfaction, he admits, "No wonder nys," for Alexander nor Scipio nor Daedalus nor Icarus had risen "half so high as this." This litany of aeronauts includes no Christian examples. Moreover, two references--Daedalus and Icarus--are mythological and a third--Alexander--is a figure from the romances.[19] Only Scipio has either philosophical significance or significance in terms of experience with a dream vision. This passing reference to Scipio "That saw in drem, at point devys, / Helle and erthe and paradys" is one of the few reminders in Book II that the narrator

[18]D. W. Robertson, (Preface to Chaucer, pp. 252-53) denies the existence of both contraries and tension, a signal, I suspect, of the richness and genius of a poet who can provide grounds for such variant readings.

[19]Robinson (Works, p. 783) points out that in the "Ethiopic version in E. A. T. W. Budge, Life and Exploits of Alexander, London, 1896, p. 277 ff," Alexander was carried aloft by an eagle.

is himself in the midst of just such a dream, although the heaven and hell and earth he will witness in Fame's place are metaphorical and worldly indeed. The progression of ascension implicit in the eagle's words is provocative as well and further stresses the vertical architecture which marks the structure of the House of Fame.

After this bow to the narrator's earthly origin, the eagle points out the wonders of his own milieu:

> "Now turn upward," quod he, "thy face,
> And behold this large space,
> This eyr; but loke thou ne be
> Adrad of hem that thou shalt se."
> (925-28.)

But before the narrator can do more than glance at the "eyryssh bestes," the figures of the zodiac, his guide is eagerly pointing out the galaxy above them:

> Se yonder, loo, the Galaxie,
> Which men clepeth the Milky Wey,
> For hit ys whit (and somme, parfey,
> Kallen hyt Watlynge Strete).
> (936-39.)

This is delightful fun, combining high and serious learning with the colloquial name--in case the dreamer didn't understand the "scientific" term. Its comedic impact is increased by the setting and position of both eagle and dreamer. Here, of course, Geffrey, frightened nearly speechless, is being borne through space to an unknown though not unnamed destination. Moreover, the speaker is servant to Jupiter, mightiest of gods. It is, like the alteration of Juno's messenger into the top sergeant of the Book of the Duchess, strikingly un-Olympian and irresistibly comic. As that messenger

shared the narrator's single-minded attention to the problem at hand, so does the eagle share not only that single-mindedness but Geffrey's devotion to authority as well.

Moreover, these lines provide the most compressed example of the combination of elevated and colloquial language which mark the eagle's character. "Galaxie" or even "Milky Wey" is not in the same class with "Watlynge Strete" as a descriptive term. "Watlynge Strete" is of course completely English,[20] affectionate in tone, and, perhaps most important, less of the courts than the commons. We have noted before that Jove's bird has a fairly comprehensive knowledge of and fondness for what we would call "street slang" today. While this lends verve and vitality and humor to his speech, it is nonetheless unexpected if not inappropriate in a messenger of Jupiter.

There has been throughout Book II a duality between Jupiter and God, between pagan and Christian, which has added to the ambiguity of the nature of the eagle, the nature of Fame's house as well as of Fame herself, and the nature of the tidings the narrator will hear there. And this ambiguity has been present from the first. The golden bird appeared as if in answer to a prayer to Christ but his arrival was announced by a thunderclap, symbol of Jove. He swears to God ("wis god helpe me," "By God," "wis God rede me," and "God of hevene sende the grace") and by the saints ("Seynte Marye,"

[20]Robinson (Works, p. 783) cites similar uses of certain Southern European placenames ("la vie de San Jocabo" and "la strada di Roma," etc.) as analogues.

"Seynt Jame," "Peter," "Seynt Julyan," and "Seynte Clare") but the eagle is a creature of Jupiter, cognizant of his power and obedient to his will. His glorious and supranatural appearance is countered and diminished by his speech and attitude. And what do we know of the Jove whose servant this bird is? We know that he has heard of the narrator's long and unrewarded service to "hys blynde nevew Cupido, / And faire Venus also," that he considered that the narrator had no knowledge of "Loves folk" nor "of noght elles that God made" beyond his books. We know Jove "thorgh hys grace," ordered his messenger to carry Geffrey to the house of Fame to remedy this lack. Outside the dream frame of the poem, Chaucer has spoken of the "All-Mover," Dante's "Primo Mobile," as being aware of lovers and as having the power to give them joy (ll. 81-89). The identity of this deity with Jupiter is implicit in the eagle's discourse and is confirmed when he avers that the poet lacks tidings not only of love but of "noght elles that God made" (italics mine). Essentially, Jupiter is presented as omniscient, powerful and merciful. Father and highest of pagan gods, he merits respect. In some ways he is prototype, as it were, of God the Father,[21] an ur-God served by those without knowledge of God Almighty. Jove is, however, neither Creator nor divine. His influence is limited to the secular side of man's life. That the eagle is more a guide to amor than natural love is made clear in Book III. Jupiter's relationship with Fame is likewise made clear by Chaucer's bird when he describes Jupiter

[21]This view is held by Koonce, pp. 124-25 and elsewhere, for example.

as a god who "thorgh his merite" metes out reward in recompense for earthly "labour and devocion." This labor, of course, is the labor of writing poetry, the devotion is to Venus and Cupid, both most secular occupations, especially in the context of Book II. So Fame is no less a servant of Jupiter than the eagle, although she is a more powerful one. As earlier Venus's intervention in Aeneas's behalf was essentially a family affair, so does Jupiter repay the narrator's service to love because of similar family feeling. His scope is set by his relationship to Cupid, "hys blynde nevew," and to Venus, and his rewards are meted out by Fame, as Jupiter's judge.

The eagle's lecture on astronomy gives way to mythological digression: having cited several names for the galaxy, he continues with further--and essentially superfluous--identification. It is, he tells the narrator, that which was once "ybrent with hete" during Phaeton's wild chariot ride. This passage is, I think remarkable for several reasons. First, as Jupiter's servant, the eagle would be particularly conscious of an episode in which his master literally saved the world from destruction. The whole passage, moreover, iterates the tendency to over-explanation noted earlier in the eagle's exposition on sound. And the eagle's aside ("the rede") reminds us of the narrator's dedication to authority which will be the subject of their next exchange and for which this journey is to substitute experience. In this passage, too, we find the only reference to a specific astrological sign:

> Til that he sey the Scorpioun
> Which that in heven a sygne is yet.
> (848-49.)

In the corresponding lines of Metamorphoses II, source for this passage, the Scorpion is used dramatically: Phaeton saw the creature, black, shining with poison, poised to sting, and, at the sight, "mentis inopo gelida formidine,"[22] dropped the reins. Moreover, Ovid had earlier used the figures of the Zodiac to warn Phaeton of the dangers of the ride:

> Utque viam teneas nulloque errore traharis
> per tamen adversi gradieris cornua Tauri
> Haemoniosque arcus violentique ora Leonis
> saevaque circuitu curvantem bracchia longo
> Scorpio atque aliter curvantem bracchia Cancrum.
> (Meta II, 79-83.)[23]

But the reference to "Scorpioun" here, shorn of Ovid's elaborate imagery, has another interpretation which strengthens the ambiguity of the nature of Fame and Love. In A Treatise on the Astrolabe, Chaucer discusses zodiacal influence:

> And everich of / these 12 signes hath respect to
> a certeyn / parcel of the body of a man, and hath
> it in / governaunce; as Aries hath thin heved, and /
> Taurus thy nekke and thy throte, Gemini thin /
> armholes and thin armes, and so furth, as shall /
> be shewid more pleyn in the 5 parties of this /
> tretis.
> (I, 70-77.)

The Treatise was of course never completed and we cannot know what Chaucer would have written there. We do know, however, that the ascription of the control of certain parts of the body to certain

[22] Meta., II, 200: "bereft of wits from chilling fear."

[23] "And though thou shouldst hold the way, and not go straying from the course, still shalt thou pass the horned Bull full in thy path, the Haemonian Archer, the maw of the raging lion, the Scorpion curving his savage arms in long sweeps, and the Crab reaching out in the opposite direction."

signs follows received medieval theory. And according to that theory, Scorpio governs the hips as well as the sexual organs and their disorders.[24] Koonce likens Scorpio to the "'fals flaterynge beste' which Chaucer elsewhere compares to Fortune."[25] Curry explicates the unfortunate aspects of Scorpio, "the darker house" of Mars, at some length.[26] Here again, in passing, we have another signal that love's tidings are not what they appear to be.

The eagle ends his astrological excursion with:

> Loo, ys not a gret myschaunce
> To lete a fool han governaunce
> Of thing that he can not demeyne?
> (957-59.)

As elsewhere, the eagle is speaking sound commonsense. But the echoes of the poem are heavy around us. Geffrey, who studies love in books, is being spirited to Fame's house to experience "Loves folk"; the eagle, Jove's servant, full to the beak with examples and theory is, as we have seen, unaware of the implications of his learning. The eagle's judgment is harsh indeed but there is truth behind the sanctimony. That this truth is as applicable to the eagle as to the unfortunate Phaeton provides the comic irony in

[24]Paul Christian, History and Practice of Magic (New York: Citadel Press, 1969), p. 474. See also Curry, Mediaeval Sciences, p. 9.

[25]Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, p. 165.

[26]P. 174 ff. The scorpion is an image of Fortune in Book of the Duchess, 636-41, and the Merchant's Tale, 2057-60. Cf. H. R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1948), p. 52. Chauncey Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1970), p. 279, believes rather that this reference is used with connotations extrinsic of astrology.

these lines. Moreover, Chaucer intensifies the effect of the irony by having Jove's bird, straight-faced and unaware, deliver the judgment, as it were, against himself.

So rapidly have the pair ascended that the "ayerissh bestes" are below them, and the terrified Geffrey, acknowledging the power of God "that made Adam," turns his thoughts to Boethius

> That writ, "A thought may flee so hye,
> With fetres of philosophie,
> To passen everich element;
> And whan he hath so fer ywent,
> Than may be seen, behynde hys bak,
> Cloude."
> (973-78.)

The ironic implications of the narrator's very special journey are, I suspect, made manifest and irreducible by Chaucer's references to Boethius and Dante. Throughout this book, paraphrases of or lines from either the Consolation or the Commedia usually signal some basic disparity between the situation, statement, or example in the poem and its source. In the Consolation, Book IV, Pr. I, which immediately preceds Me. I, the source of the narrator's words, Philosophy, having rehearsed for Boethius the form of true happiness, promises to show him the road which would lead him to his home. In Me. I, according to Chaucer's Boece, when the "swifte thoght hath clothed itself in the fetheris, it dispiseth the hateful erthes" in favor of the "verray knowleche of God": Boethius's mind, free of the "felounious tyrantz" of the world, "schal be makid parfit of the worschipful lyght of God." It is important to recognize the very different objects of the two passages. In Book II, the wings of the eagle are bearing the very corporeal narrator to an intensely

worldly neighborhood to hear tidings of wholly secular loves. But Boethius was concerned with transcending the world and its affairs. Philosophy, throughout the Consolation, urges a rejection of worldly values in favor of higher spiritual ones.

Led by thoughts of Boethius and philosophy to his own condition, the narrator admits:

> Thoo gan y wexen in a were,
> And seyde, "I wot wel y am here;
> But wher in body or in gost
> I not, ywys; but God thou wost!"
> (979-82.)

And he seeks further comfort in authority:

> And than thoughte y on Marcian,
> And eke on Anticlaudian,
> That sooth was her descripsion
> Of alle the hevenes region,
> As fer as that y sey the preve;
> Therfore y kan hem now beleve.
> (985-90.)

According to Lowes, in On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury of Martianus Capella, Philology lightened herself for her astonishing flight by "ejecting from her brain the learned treatises whose ponderousness weighted her down."[27] Certainly the lectures of the eagle who bore the narrator into similar heights contradict such a theory: they are heavy with authority, burdened with "learned treatises" to prove the eagle's extraordinary erudition. The place in the Anticlaudianus to which Chaucer refers is summarized by Bossard: "Prudentia goes in a chariot driven by Ratio through the immense fields of the sky, considers all things and the causes

[27] Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 110.

of things."[28] Both journeys are, as James Winney points out, "flights of fancy taken by allegorical or mythological figures: and of this fabulous element in their work Chaucer's pseudo-solemn asseveration that 'sooth was hir descripcioun' is an ironic reminder."[29] Whenever journeys to the heavens appear in medieval literature, they serve some specific noble aim and are treated as a lofty theme.[30] There is no need to stress the fact that this journey contrasts ironically with its medieval models. One area of irony of course lies in the fact that only when such authorities support the eagle's lesson does Geffrey believe his guide or, in fact, the reality of his situation.

As the narrator seeks precedent and comfort in remembered accounts of others who had journeyed similarly heavenward, the eagle rejects such philosophical musings in favor of the concrete:

> "Lat be," quod he, "thy fantasye
> Wilt thou lere of sterres aught?"
> (992-93.)

And we are suddenly in the middle of an overt and explicit debate between authority and experience, a debate the narrator wins. Refusing the eagle's offer of one more lesson, he says, "For y am now to old" (995) and, besides:

[28]Eugene Bossard, Alani de Insulis: Anti-Claudianus cum Divina Dantis Aligihieri Comoedia Collatus (Andigavi: n.p., 1885), p. 39 ff.

[29]Chaucer's Dream Poems, p. 93.

[30]Clemen, p. 96, for example. This comment occurs in so many studies that it almost amounts to a commonplace.

I leve as wel, so God me spede,
Hem that write of this matere
As though I knew her places here;
And eke they shyne here so bryghte,
Hyt shulde shenden al my syghte,
To loke on hem.
(1012-17.)

And so, after some five-hundred lines, the narrator rejects simply and flatly the proffered experience. The eagle has told him the purpose of the journey, provided unsolicited orations on science and geography and Fame's house, offered examples of Jupiter's might and love's variety, and displayed the wonders of space, his world. Interestingly, it is only this latter which touched on experience; the rest were simply different versions of authority. No matter: Geffrey is unmoved, still loyal to his books. Surprisingly, the eagle contents himself with a cryptic last word--"That may wel be"--which in its uncharacteristic brevity catches our attention. There is in this line further substance for the eagle's established attitude toward his burden: he is of course twitting the narrator for his human vision, weak indeed compared to the traditionally sharp eyesight of his own race. But it is, I think, defensible to read it on another level as a response to the narrator's last words: that is, as "If you look upon the stars (experience), their brightness may very well destroy your sight since you are accustomed to seeing only second hand (authority)."[31]

[31]Koonce (p. 169) reads this line as indicating "the soundness of Chaucer's [Geffrey's] attitude." A major problem with this study is, I think, Koonce's failure to differentiate between Chaucer and his persona.

Characteristically, Chaucer allows us little time for speculation: almost immediately the eagle proclaims their proximity to Fame's house with, "Seynt Julyan, loo, bon hostel!" Chaucer's use of minor saints to enhance his effect demands acknowledgment. We have noted earlier the ironic appropriateness of Saint Leonard to the House of Fame (117). St. Julian, as patron saint of hospitality, is equally appropriate--almost excessively so in light of the eagle's insistence that all sounds find harbor in Fame's mansion. The use of "hostel"--that is, a public lodging place--emphasizes the aptness and irony of "Seynt Julyan" and, at one deft stroke, reduces Fame's position from goddess to concierge. Later the eagle's oath, "by Seynt Clare" (1066), continues this pattern of ironic significance, coming as it does immediately before their arrival at the very noisy mansion of Fame, sister of Fortune and arbiter of worldly reputation.

The ruling quality of Fame's house is previewed, reiterated, and made immediate in the eagle's words. Where earlier he had described sound and its destination abstractly, here we are immersed in the fact of it and the sensation is intense and almost physical in its power:

> "The grete soun,"
> Quod he, "that rumbleth up and doun
> In Fames Hous, ful of tydynges,
> Both of feir speche and chidynges,
> And of fals and soth compouned."
> (1024-29.)

This passage is notable, too, in that it contains no mention of love. What had begun as a promise of specialized and specific

tidings has, in the course of Book II, been subtly metamorphosed into news of all mankind, as varied as humanity. There is, in the eagle's words, a magnification of the stage upon which Book III will be played. The hint of the darker nature of these tidings, however, is present here as it has been in the earlier lines. The linkage between the catalogue of causes of dreams in the Proem to Book I is here made concrete. The matter of Book III, the examination of Fame's justice and her influence on men, is not to be limited. The contraries will be displayed there without disguise.

It is interesting to note in passing that, as the eagle's arrival was heralded by thunder, so the imminence of Fame's place is similarly announced. It sounds, the narrator says,

> Lyk the last humblynge
> After the clappe of a thundringe,
> Whan Joves hath the air ybete.
> (1039-41.)

Certainly these lines suggest that we are approaching the heart of the work, that its "sentence" is shortly to be pronounced. And that suggestion is confirmed by the Invocation which follows at the head of Book III and which drives home the point that the purpose of Book III is much more than to dazzle us with "novelries."

At the overwhelming wave of noise, the narrator's terror returns, but before the eagle can do more than assure him that "Thou shalt non harm have trewly," they have arrived. With a final --and structurally necessary--explanation of the nature of noise in Fame's house, the eagle says:

> But understand now ryght wel this,
> Whan any speche ycomen ys

Up to the palays anon-ryght
Hyt wexeth lyke the same wight
Which that the word in erthe spak,
Be hyt clothed red or blak;
And hath so verray hys lyknesse
That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse
That it the same body be,
Man or woman, he or she.
(1073-82.)[32]

In this brief passage, Chaucer has prepared us for the personification of sound: essentially he has removed to Fame's house--unnatural, allegorical, and completely imaginary--the world from which the narrator began his long dream journey. Ovid, of course, gave a similar quality to his description of Fame's place: "unde quod est usquam, quamvis regionibus absit, / inspicitur" (Meta, XII, 41-42).[33] This of course is the same passage which provided the source for the eagle's earlier description of Fame's house. But the tone and effect are very different. Most obviously, Chaucer's lines are more vivid and elaborate. In the straightforward description of the Metamorphoses, this is one quality among many which mark Fame's place. Moreover, Ovid simply tell us, "whatever is . . . is seen," with neither need nor inclination for the mechanics of the phenomenon. Chaucer's bird of science, we know, is less succinct. And Chaucer's poetic plan has different requirements. This example of Chaucer's craft is particularly lovely. The idea of sounds carrying, somehow, the shapes of their sources, invisible until they reach

[32]Koonce, p. 175, finds "red or blak" to mean charity or cupidity, God or Lucifer, respectively. Certainly this is an appealing interpretation although I think the more obvious "truth" or "falsehood" makes the point clearly enough.

[33]"From this place, whatever is, however far away, is seen."

Fame's house, is not only delightful but, of course, necessary. Otherwise Geffrey would sojourn in a mansion of ghosts, bombarded by disembodied voices, an effect obviously unsuitable to the environment of Book III. By saving this particular aspect of Fame's mansion until their arrival, Chaucer continues a habit begun with the eagle's first long speech: Geffrey's guide does not tell his passenger more than he thinks he needs to know. From the first "for thy lore and for thy prow," through the incomplete tally of the wonders of Fame's place, to this final delineation, he has teased his mortal burden--and the audience--with increasingly detailed bits of information. In addition to maintaining interest and providing a sense of movement in an essentially static episode, this device is dramatically effective. We, with Geffrey, are prepared for the wonders of the next Book. Moreover, the groundwork is laid for the reappearance of the eagle later in the poem.

These lines have also prepared the way for physical as well as aural onslaught: not only will the narrator's ears be assaulted from all directions, his physical being will also be subject to the chaos that is Fame's place. Such a conceit intensifies beyond exaggeration the busy-ness and turmoil which will replace the sterile and alien space which was the environment of Book II.

The flight is over and Jove's bird sets his passenger down on a "strete" (1049), a construction suggestive of civilization. That this road is constructed continues the pattern which began in Venus's temple. Everything in this most singular dream vision

is "made." Nothing is natural, all is artifice: in this dream there are no brooks nor trees nor mossy paths. Earlier, I noted that the House of Fame was divided into urban and desert areas. The "strete" upon which the narrator was deposited marks his arrival at what is, in an entirely modern sense, the urban environment of Book III.

The eagle leaves, as abruptly as he appeared, with a final word of advice to his passenger:

> And Gode of heven sende the grace
> Some good to lernen in this place.
> (1087-88.)

J. A. W. Bennett reads this couplet as reflecting the same "faint doubt whether the narrator is capable of profiting by such 'good'"[34] that colors Africanus's parting words:

> And if thou haddest conning for t'endite
> I shal the shewen mater of to wryte.
> (PF, 167-68.)

But the eagle is not the solemn Africanus and Chaucer's way in the Parliament of Fowls is not the path he walks in House of Fame. There are the earlier catalogues of loves as well as the exposition of the theory of sound with their echoing hints of duality to contend with. To read "some good" as expressing hope that there will be some good for Geffrey to hear amid the indiscriminate noise of the world which is drawn to and reverberates through Fame's house is equally viable. But Geffrey is unconcerned with recondite questions of interpretation. Unchanged by his marvelous flight,

[34]Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 99.

grateful for solid ground, however fabulous, and the eagle's final instructions, the narrator "of him tok leve anon" and set about exploring the strange country of Fame.

CHAPTER IV

HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK III

The Proem and Invocation of Book I are echoed by Book II's Proem and Book III's Invocation to retain the structural unity within the poem. In each pair of Proems and Invocations, Chaucer moves from the general to the specific. As the Proem of Book I is concerned with the subject of dreams, the second Proem deals with the specific matter of this dream. A similar relationship exists between the Invocations: in Book I, the narrator prays to Morpheus to grant men the dreams they deserve and, in Book III, he begs Apollo, "god of science and of lyght," to give him craft to describe his dream of Fame's house. There is, of course, additional delight in one more instance of Chaucer denying craft or art in his persona of narrator, a gentle irony which convinces few of his audience, either his medieval listeners or his modern readers.[1]

In the Invocation, Chaucer's use of his source, generally accepted to be the opening lines of the Paradiso,[2] is as ambiguous and elusive as we have grown to expect. J. A. W. Bennett asserts that "when he [Chaucer] begins his 'little last book' by invoking Apollo it is primarily because Paradiso opens with the prayer that

[1]For comment on the sophistication of Chaucer's audience, see Clemen, p. 67, and Discarded Image, p. 206 ff.

[2]Works, p. 784, for example.

Apollo will bless the work and grant its maker the laurel crown."[3] But Dante appeals to Apollo only as god of light, a figure of that great light whose source is divine. Moreover, Dante's prayer immediately precedes his vision of Beatrice and the sublimation of his human love to the greater love of God. And Dante's vision is of an ordered universe, made forever quiet ("sempre quieto," Par., I, 122) by the regulation of Providence and Nature. That Chaucer's subject will be a different one is signaled in the first line of Book III: he appeals to Apollo as "god of science and of lyght." The order of Apollo's areas of authority is important here, I think. That Chaucer stresses science at the beginning of Book III rather than of Book II whose matter would more aptly merit such a god's protection is interesting and evocative.[4] In Fame's house there will be little of science: rather we will find whimsy, caprice, impulse and unreason, certainly the antithesis of any requirements of science which has at its base order and natural law. There, too, we will find little of Dante's hushed silence. Even the light of Fame's house is artificial, far beyond the authority of Apollo as god of the sun, nature's great light. Moreover, " in medieval tradition, Apollo was especially the god of poetry and music."[5] That Chaucer evokes the god of poetry is logical enough. He is, after

[3]Chaucer's Book of Fame, pp. 100-01.

[4]Similarly, in Book I, the narrator evokes Morpheus for aid, though it is about the temple of Venus, while in Book II, whose subject is of the three least about love, he invokes Venus.

[5]Bert Dillon, A Chaucer Dictionary: Proper Names and Allusions (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1973), p. 13.

all, a poet. And such commentators as J. A. W. Bennett, John Norton-Smith, Laurence Shook, and James Winny have considered "ars poetica" to be the theme of the House of Fame.[6] But to evoke Apollo at the beginning of a book whose hallmark is disharmony, dissonance, and discord is surely as ironic as the eagle's earlier oath to St. Clare, whose followers were pledged to silence,[7] was as preface to his lesson on the personification of sound in Fame's house. And Chaucer's audience would recognize the irony. So from the first line of the Invocation to Book III, we are enmeshed in the web of contradiction.

For the remainder of the Invocation, Chaucer continues the self-deprecating posture of his persona. He would not wish for mastery, he says, but only asks:

> Yit make hyt sumwhat agreable,
> Though som vers fayle in a sillable,
> And that I do no dilligence
> To shewe crafte, but o sentence.
> (1097-1100.)

Geffrey does not ask, as Dante did, to be granted the laurel crown,[8] but only pledges that, if Apollo helps him tell his dream:

[6]Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 102; Geoffrey Chaucer (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 39; "The House of Fame," in Companion to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), pp. 341-54; and Chaucer's Dream Poems (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973), p. 92, respectively, and elsewhere.

[7]Catholic Encyclopedia III (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America, 1967), p. 913; and Marie Neville, "Chaucer and St. Clare," JEGP 55 (1956), pp. 423-30.

[8]Par., I, 13-15.

> Thou shalt se me go as blyve
> Unto the nexte laure y see,
> And kisse yt, for hyt is thy tree.
> (1107-09.)

As the narrator had promised Morpheus a feather bed in exchange for sleep in the Book of the Duchess, so here he promises Apollo to honor the laurel in his name in exchange for poetic help. There is no similar sense of bargaining in the Invocation and Proem to Book I or the Proem to Book II. In those, however, as we have seen, the Christian God was superimposed upon and merged with the pagan deities. In the Book of the Duchess and this Invocation, there is no such obvious duality. Apparently, while Chaucer's narrator feels free to negotiate with classical gods, he, quite properly, takes no such liberties with God the Maker of us all. And the matter of Book III, the nature of Fame and the vanity of worldly greatness, is far indeed from that Maker.

With this rather brief prayer, the narrator returns to the matter of the dream. He immediately begins to explore his new environment with the endearing curiosity and enthusiasm for detail we have come to associate with his character. Geffrey takes us with him on his journey of discovery. All we have been told is that he was set down on a "strete." The technique of step-by-step unveiling builds the dramatic tension throughout this book. In the first lines, the fact that Fame's place is located on a mountain is mentioned, but no more information is given. And this artistic pattern is continued in what can be called a series of vignettes. Fame, her house, servants, and supplicants are, from the outset, presented

almost as a series of theatre sets, each impressive, each adding to the total drama of Fame but each clearly art, fiction, and hence unreal. The structure and skeleton of the poem itself places appearance in opposition to reality, a reality which is unstated but against which every excess, every catalogue, and every action is juxtaposed by implication.

Geffrey continues his examination of the peak which "Hier stant ther non in Spayne" (1117). The unreality of the place is further implied in this line. J. A. W. Bennett has suggested that castles in Spain meant fantasy, in Chaucer's time as in our own.[9] And the painstaking investigation continues:

> But up I clomb with alle payne,
> And though to clymbe it greved me,
> Yit I ententyf was to see,
> And for to powren wonder lowe,
> Yf I koude any weyes knowe
> What maner stoon this roche was.
> (1118-23.)

As J. A. W. Bennett has pointed out, these lines are significant as indication that Fame's house (i.e., renown) was not easily achieved.[10] But the repetition is also, I think, a sly reminder that the narrator is no man of action but a sedentary student of the actions of others, as they are described in his books. The narrator's curiosity, his determination to discover the nature of "thys place"--a delightfully noncommital statement--despite the pain of exercise, is set. Here there is no authority but his own

[9] Chaucer's Book of Fame, pp. 103-04. For a different view, see Works, p. 784.

[10] Chaucer's Book of Fame, pp. 104 ff.

senses--what he can see, touch, smell, taste or hear. Geffrey is touchstone to reality, as he has been in the earlier books of this poem as well as in the Book of the Duchess. But here, he is our only anchor, our only reminder of what-is, in a kingdom of what-seems-to-be.

The mystery, sustained and enlarged by the use of neutral phrases like "thys place" and "thys roche," continues. The narrator tells us:

> For hyt was lyk alum of glas
> But that hyt shoon ful more clere;
> But of what congeled matere
> Hyt was, I nyste redely.
> (1124-27.)

It--itself indefinite--was like glass but shone more brightly. That the rock shone like glass suggests, of course, Venus's temple "ymad of glas." But this structure, we will find, is even more ephemeral. "Ful more clere" marks the first of a long series of superlatives which, taken in toto, present a picture of Fame's house as not only fantastic and unnatural but excessively so. The cumulative effect of the superlatives which this passage begins is to emphasize and magnify the excess which identifies all aspects of Fame's house, her creatures, and Fame herself. And the governing set of contraries--here, reason and moderation versus excess--by which the opposition between reality and appearance will be explicated is made manifest. Even, we shall see, her penalties and rewards are excessive and, indeed, separate from any requirements of justice. The "congeled matere"--a very technical sounding term which was

apparently original with Chaucer[11]--is significant in that it assumes that the base of Fame's house was unnatural. This assumption of man-made or artificial material is manifest in Geffrey's realization that it was "yse and not of stel" (1130). As J. A. W. Bennett says, "the emphatic negative is not a mere trope: it underlines the double _significatio_."[12] Certainly the material of Fame's hill is as impermanent as steel is enduring. But steel, too, is a man-made substance.

The wonder of the structure diverts Geffrey from his destination. Throughout the poem, the architecture of the dream has been increasingly artificial and this artifice culminates in the environment of Fame's house, the narrator's final destination. Not only is Fame's palace man-made and unnatural, the material of its setting is the most evanescent of substances, a fantasy hill indeed.

Geffrey, however, is unimpressed by the fabulous material of Fame's hill: with the uncompromising eye of a contractor, he pronounces it "a feble fundament" and its builder a fool. So before we have even glimpsed the marvelous palace which is our objective, we are brought again to reality. The effect of this early pragmatic dismissal of the fantastic is, of course, to color our attitude toward Fame and her work later in the poem. The grandeur of Fame is torn asunder and exposed as appearance by the narrator's prosaicism.

[11] _Works_, p. 784.

[12] _Chaucer's Book of Fame_, p. 104.

But there is more to be seen on this glimmering peak. Geffrey finds carved in an ice wall the names of many folk whose fame, he declares, had been widespread:

> But wel unnethes koude I knowe
> Any lettres for to rede
> Hir names by; for out of drede,
> They were almost ofthowed so
> That of the lettres oon or two
> Was molte away of every name,
> So unfamous was woxe hir fame.
> (1140-46).

The oxymoron of fame made unfamous, ironic and evocative, simply emphasizes the fragility of worldly renown demonstrated by the melting names. But Geffrey has no time for tedious and insistent sermons on the theme of contemptus mundi: he comments only, "But men seyn, 'What may ever laste?'" Continuing his dogged exploration of this strange "roche," he discovers that the names were "molte away with hete / And not awey with stormes bete" (1149-50). This discovery is reminder that Fame's place is closer to the sun than earth and also, presumably, above weather or at least untouched by it. Its alien location is subtly underscored by such small and insignificant references throughout Book III.

The arbitrary and equivocal climate of this hill is still not complete. On the north wall, Geffrey finds the names of "folkes that hadden grete fames / Of olde tyme" (1154-55), as clear as if they were newly carved. There is a fleeting hint in this discovery that perhaps the names of these folk were preserved by a merit not earned by the others. "North," however, has more sinister connotations in folklore and in Chaucer's own poetry. We recall the

yeoman of the Friar's Tale whose origin in the "north countree" (FT, 1413) suggests his demonic nature before he admits it (FT, 1448).[13] But even this recognition has no place in Fame's uncertain realm. With the echo of hell still clear in our minds, Geffrey suddenly discovers the immediate explanation for the pristine state of these names:

> But wel I wiste what yt made;
> Hyt was conserved with the shade
> Of a castel that stood on hye.
> (1159-61.)

So, we find, these have been preserved by simple chance, not merit nor satanic intervention, as the others have melted because of the accident of location.

This passage, fifty-one lines into the dream of Book III, contains the first concrete mention of Fame's house since the last line of Book II. The art by which Chaucer introduces the castle is lovely indeed. Rapt in the examination of the names engraved on the ice hill, puzzling over the melting of some and the clarity of others, the narrator suddenly discovers the solution: the names of those who "hadden grete fames / Of olde tyme" were protected by

[13] As Robinson points out, "both in Biblical tradition and Germanic mythology the North is associated with the infernal regions" (Works, p. 705). J. A. W. Bennett, p. 108, disagrees, saying that "out of the commonplaces about human vanity grows the conception of a fame that endures for at least some folk," with the implication that their endurance was due to merit. Koonce, p. 193, finds those whose names are preserved to represent those "who achieved renown . . . under the Old Law, the state of man without charity" while the melting names are those "in whom the ice of cupidity or the desire for renown has been removed by the heat of the Holy Spirit." Most studies simply accept the passage, agree with Bennett, or ignore it.

the shadow of a castle which he only then noticed looming above him. Moreover, this castle is set on the coldest point--so cold that no heat could melt its anchorage--of this cold mount, apt setting indeed for the goddess whose home it is.

The words Chaucer uses to describe this marvelous castle are worthy of close examination. It is, of course, beautiful beyond the wit of man to duplicate or describe. But this beauty is alien and artificial. It was "wonderlych ywrought," its "grete crafte, beaute; / The cast, the curiosite" quite beyond description. "Ywrought," "crafte," "cast" (that is, contrivance), and "curiosite" serve to emphasize the manufactured quality of its construction and its distance from the world of man and Nature which is reality. And the emphasis on "crafte" and "curiosite" persists through the fare more detailed description of the castle. Fame's house is no more suitable climate for man than the desert beyond Venus's temple or the vast space through which the narrator traveled to reach it. Today, to readers accustomed to the excesses of science fiction, such a description would trigger immediate recognition of an alien universe, ordered and erected by a non-human intelligence, neither necessarily better nor worse than human but certainly different. This supranatural quality is intensified by the details of the architecture which Geffrey swears "by Seynt Gyle!" he will always remember. Slipped inconspicuously and casually in the account of the castle's wonders is this natural-sounding oath. As St. Leonard, St. Julian, and St. Clare proved ironically appropriate in the earlier books of this poem, so is this: St. Aegidius (Gyles) is

patron of cripples, beggars, and, incidentally, lepers.[14] While the subject of leprosy does not arise in the hordes of Fame's supplicants, certainly they are all beggars and many, we will find, are at least moral cripples. As in the cases of St. Leonard and St. Julian especially, this invocation serves to diminish the actors in Chaucer's drama of Fame.

For Geffrey, the inveterate investigator, the practical details--the "hows" and "whats"--are of prime importance. And his careful study of the castle continues. He says:

> Al was of ston of beryle,
> Both the castel and the tour
> And eke the halle and every bour,
> Wythouten peces or joynyges.
> But many subtil compassinges,
> Babewynnes and pynacles,
> Ymageries and tabernacles,
> I say; and ful eke of wyndowes,
> As flakes falle in grete snowes.
> (1184-92.)

Chaucer has decked this antechamber with a prodigality of architectural features, so many and so varied that we are breathless with the reading of them. In twelve lines of tightly packed verse--one sentence, by the way--he has described nine such features. But one of these, I believe, is of signal importance to our understanding of the nature of Fame's house, hence of Fame herself. There are, Geffrey tells us, "babewynnes" carved on the walls of the antechamber. Robinson glosses this term as "baboons, grotesque figures, and gargoyes," and to us, accustomed as we are to gargoyles on early cathedrals and castles, this would seem an obvious meaning. But I

[14]Dillon, p. 3.

think Chaucer may well have meant the term literally, as "baboons." Twenty-three lines later, we are told of the "smal harperes" who sat below the famous minstrels

> And counterfete him as an ape,
> Or as craft counterfeteth kynde.
> (1212-13.)

There is here and throughout Book III an underlying sense of "craft" aping "kynde," and the carved baboons become apt indeed as signal that such imitation of nature is the rule in Fame's house.

The sources for Chaucer's portrayal of Fame and her place have been subject to much scholarly attention. Edgar Shannon's study of the influence of Ovid, Virgil, and other classical poets has been particularly enlightening and fruitful. Sypherd's examination of love-vision poetry and other continental genres for analogues is also helpful, although his argument that these were Chaucer's primary models is perhaps overstated. Koonce, I think, is the most dedicated of those scholars who have investigated Chaucer's debt to Dante.[15] The value of such commentaries is great and our debt to them hardly needs acknowledgment here. But I am more interested in how these sources were used, particularly in the catalogues. The thematic unity in this poem is maintained in part, I suspect, within the characters of these catalogues. Arion, in the catalogue of musicians, earned his place in Fame's anteroom

[15] Chaucer and the Roman Poets (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1929), Chaucer's "Hous of Fame," and Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, respectively. This is not, of course, a complete list of such source studies but it does represent the major "schools" of such studies.

through his skill with a lyre: lost at sea, his music attracted a dolphin who bore Arion and instrument safely ashore. As reward, both dolphin and lyre were translated into stars.[16] Earlier, the eagle had previewed what he could have told Geffrey about the stars if the narrator had been willing:

> How goddes gonne stellify
> Bridd, fissh, best, or him or here,
> As the Raven or eyther Bere,
> Or Arionis harpe fyn,
> Castor, Pollux, or Delphyn,
> Or Athalantes doughtres sevene,
> How alle these arn set in hevene.
> (1002-08. Italics mine.)

Hercules and Dianira are included in the list of faithless lovers in Book I (402) as are Jason and Medea (401). And both Hercules and Medea reappear in Fame's castle: Hercules, with Alexander, is borne up on Fame's shoulders in her hall and Medea is included in the catalogue of seers and magicians in Fame's anteroom. The identifying detail attached to Hercules in Book III--"Hercules, / That with a sherte hys lyf les" (1413-14)--serves to emphasize the interweaying as well as point up the ironic disjunction of qualities in Fame's house, I think, especially to an audience more conscious than we of the matter of the old stories.[17] Certainly the sordid death inspired by his infidelity is not the traditional fame attached to the great Hercules. According to Sheila Delaney, the reputation of Hercules was "consistently virtuous. He is admired as an example of the

[16]Dillon, p. 17.

[17]The Discarded Image, pp. 211-12.

virtue of fortitude, the moral strength symbolized by his physical prowess."[18]

Medea's inclusion among the magicians serves the same structural function and is as ambiguous. She was famous less for her ability as an enchantress than for her single-minded obsession with revenge and the murder of her children which resulted from that obsession. But there is more. Both these mythological characters were included as examples of failed love--Hercules as betrayer, Medea as betrayed--in Venus's anomalous temple. And Geffrey in Book II is carried to Fame's place specifically to hear love tidings, tidings, we recall, which were of a very dubious nature. In the characters of these permanent servants of Fame, there are echoes and reminders of the ambiguity which has colored all comments about love in this poem. Moreover, we find that Fame shares many of Venus's servants. The relationship between Venus and Fame which has been subtly established in the earlier books is here made manifest. Such echoes force our attention to the other figures in the catalogues, both within and without Fame's gilded hall.

In the minstrels' niche, Orpheus is primary. But Orpheus, we recall, possessed a reputation as divided as any of these figures. He was often taken as a symbol of unnatural lust, "a tradition, like his reputation as a figure of virtue, so widespread

[18] Chaucer's House of Fame (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 92. The Ovide Moralisé, ed. C. deBoer (Amsterdam: M. Sandig, 1966), refers to him consistently as "Diex li glorieuz vainquerres," and Boethius provides a list of Hercules' heroic labors with an exhortation that men should take him as a model to emulate. Chaucer glosses this exhortation in Boece, 4, me. 7.

that Chaucer could hardly have been unaware of it."[19] Moreover, both he and Arion with whom he shares this highest niche are famous for their skill, so great that their music can bind beasts to their will or need. Chiron, third of this first rank of minstrels, is himself a fabulous creature, called by Ovid "geminique,"[20] half-man, half horse, who as turor to Achilles and Jason used music to soothe and win his pupils.[21] Glascurion, last of this group, according to J. A. W. Bennett the English counterpart of Orpheus, harped a fish out of water and water out of stone.[22] So in this highest level of harpers and poets, all have won fame primarily in terms of their power over or commonality with beasts. While this connective thread is not openly pejorative, it does diminish their stature.

Of the second ranked minstrels listed by name, Atiterus (Tyrtaeus[23]), Pseustis, and Marsyas are certainly questionable representatives. Indeed the narrator's identification, very like the description of Hercules, forces our doubt. He says:

[19]Delaney, p. 79.

[20]"Two-formed," Meta., II, 630.

[21]"Phillyrides puerum cithara perfecit Achillem, / Atque animos placida contudit arte feros" ("The son of Philyra made the boy Achilles accomplished on the lyre, and by his peaceful art subdued those savage passions"), Ars Amatoria, I, 12-13, ed. with Eng. trans. J. H. Mozley (New York: G. P. Putnam Sons [Loeb Classical Library], 1929).

[22]Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 122. I should think there would be a closer analogy with Arion, but no matter.

[23]Works, p. 785.

> And Marcia that loste her skyn,
> Both in face, body, and chyn,
> For that she wolde envien, loo!
> To pipen bet than Appolloo.
> (1229-32.)

The emphasis on how completely Marsyas "loste her skyn" in the second line of this ingenuously insistent couplet should be hint enough to look further. Marsyas is presented less as musician--which would be suitable and relatively credible--than as challenger to the god of music, Apollo himself, subject of this book's Invocation. Moreover, envy--here of a greater musician--has been introduced, a dissonant emotion which will recur later in Fame's hall. The mention of Apollo, of course, also serves to remind us that he, most famous classical musician, is not represented in this catalogue, a further diminution of its stature.

Pseustis, we find, is similarly less a symbol of musicianship than of hubris. He is generally identified as the shepherd who challenged Alithea to a poetical debate and lost in the Ecloga Theoduli.[24] But according to J. A. W. Bennett, Chaucer associated Pseustis "etymologically and archtypically" with Fraud.[25] Moreover, in the Ecloga Theoduli, Pseustis debated on the strength of pagan mythology and Alithea drew upon the Old Testament for support.[26] So in both of these we have examples of arrogant and ape-like envy of their betters, ironic indeed in the castle of Fame, Jove's judge. Moreover, in Pseustis, we have the first hint of the opposition

[24] Works, p. 785.

[25] Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 123.

[26] Dillon, p. 86.

between theological truth and pagan falsehood. Tyrtaeus, apparently something of a flatterer and arrogant beyond his station, was more a popular military elegist than a conventional minstrel.[27] Certainly neither his renown nor his musicianship merit his position here. But, like the two with whom he is linked, he was an overreacher whose aspirations exceeded his abilities. As we shall see in the remaining catalogues and in the workings of Fame's court itself, these characteristics become almost a unifying link among the denizens of this uncertain kingdom.

I have said above that nothing is as it seems in Fame's place. All is appearance, an imitation of reality, of "kynde." Earlier the eagle said truly, "Every kyndely thyng that is / Hath a kyndely stede" (730-31). And here is ironic evidence of that truth: Fame's house draws to it all things which share her nature. But her "stede" is lodestone for the artificial, the unnatural, and the flawed. Here all is the Fals-Semblaunce of Jean de Meun. There is no life on this hill and the cold of its setting is the cold of death or of life sold cheap or of imitation. The "smal harperes" who ape the minstrels are in fact imitating imitations, minstrels whose fame is dubious or whose arrogance destroyed them.

After a nod to "famous, olde and yonge, / Pipers of the Dutch tonge" (1233-34) who taught and learned "love-daunces,

[27]According to Charles Anthon, A Classical Dictionary (New York: Harper Bros., 1841), p. 1387, contests were held among Spartan soldiers on campaign to see who could recite his elegies best. The victors won a larger portion of meat--practical but hardly elevated. On march and in battle, his marching songs were sung.

sprynges, / Reyes" and other "straunge thynges," Geffrey describes the martial musicians who stood in "an other place," those

> that maken blody soun
> In trumpe, beme, and claryoun;
> For in fight and blod-shedynge
> Ys used gladly clarionynge.
> (1239-42.)

And we are in the midst of another of the illusory catalogues which mark this most equivocal book. In this, Misenus, Joab, and Theodamas, with all the Catalonian heralds[28] share the spotlight. And certainly the first two, at least, were warrior trumpeters. But, like the figures in the earlier catalogues, they were more. While Misenus was trumpeter to Hector and Aeneas, Virgil spends more space on another aspect: he challenged the gods to a musical contest and Triton dragged him to sea and drowned him for his impiety.[29] So Misenus is linked spiritually to Pseustis and Marsyas. All three were losers in contests they initiated. Moreover, in the generally accepted sources of all three, their arrogance was subject to lengthier comment than their artistic or poetic ability.[30]

And Joab is an equally suggestive example. He is, of course, the first Biblical character in Fame's house, King David's nephew and captain. Joab's trumpeting is frequent and apparently

[28] See Works, p. 785, for comment.

[29] Aen., VI, 162 ff.

[30] Misenus is only referred to by name as a trumpeter in Aeneid. The challenge and loss is the only extended comment I could find. Pseustis is not mentioned in Ecloga Theoduli except in terms of the debate. For Marysas, see Meta., VI, 382-400.

effective.[31] But he also betrayed his king and broke his vow: moreover, that betrayal involved the murder of David's son Absolom when he was trapped and helpless.[32] Theodamas, like Pseustis, is an anomaly. As Pseustis was a poet-debater among minstrels, so is Theodamas a seer among martial musicians. Structurally, his inclusion here forms a link between this catalogue and the next. But Theodamas is still an oddity and as such is distracting and ambiguous. As Robinson points out, in Thebiad VIII, "His invocation is followed by trumpeting though he is not actually mentioned as himself being a trumpeter."[33] This ambiguity is particularly dangerous to ignore considering the ambiguity of the other figures of this as well as the preceding catalogue. In the Thebiad, Theodamas incited the besiegers to attack the city with his augeries so he was not totally alien to the music of war.[34]

Chaucer, we recall, links Theodamas with the trumpeting of Joab in the later Merchant's Tale:

> At every cours thanne cam loud mynstralcye,
> That never tromped Joab for to heere
> Nor he Theodomas, yet half so clere,
> At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute.
> (MerT, 1718-21.)

[31] II Samuel 2.28, 18.16, 20.22.

[32] II Samuel 18.5-17. Because Joab "shed the blood of war in peace," David bade Solomon on his death bed, "Let not his [Joab's] hoar head go down to the grave in peace" (I Kings 2.5-6).

[33] Works, p. 785.

[34] Statius Thebiad, VIII, ed. with Eng. trans. J. H. Mozley (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons [Loeb Classical Library], 1928), 342 ff.

It is difficult to imagine minstrels more inappropriate to a wedding celebration than these two veterans, and that inappropriateness is signaled by the inclusion of Theodamas who was apparently not a musician at all. The irony implicit in this comparison is made concrete three lines later in the picture of January, old and impotent, as Venus's knight. This connection rather increases than diminishes the ironic unsuitability of both of these in a catalogue of Fame's servants. All in all, the peripheral activities of these footmen of Fame are so ignoble and so inappropriate--both in nature and degree--for the retinue of a goddess that we are caught in a tangle of paradox that will persist throughout this book.

And the ambivalence continues into the list of

> jugelours,
> Magiciens, and tregatours,
> And Phitonesses, charmeresses,
> Olde wicches, sorceresses,
> That use exorsisacions
> And eke these fumygacions;
> And clerkes eke, which konne wel
> Al this magik naturel,
> That craftely doon her ententes
> To make, in certeyn ascendentes
> Ymages, lo, thrugh which magik
> To make a man ben hool or syk.
> (1259-70.)

Even before we meet the practitioners of this curious catalogue of unnatural arts, we are prepared for further examples of craft. J. A. W. Bennett finds that while the array of magicians, jugglers, sorcerers and illusionists "may seem at first pointless or supererogatory . . . their presence on the outer walls betokens some of the operations within just as surely as do the pipes and

harps and trumpets."[35] And of course they do just that. But by their nature, they force us to define the meaning of those "operations within."

The inclusion of masters of illusion as a major element of Fame's staff is of course questionable in itself. But Chaucer's mages are not simply practitioners of the dark arts: they are betrayers, misusers of their skill for personal and unacceptable reasons. The members of the first company of magicians have actively embraced the side of the warped, the selfish, and the blasphemous. The reference to "phitonesse" in the introductory catalogue--identified as the biblical Witch of Endor[36]--is the first concrete internal sign that the litany of sorcerers to come is highly suspect. So from the first the mages who work their art in Fame's anteroom are to be outside God's or Nature's pale, the antithesis of fame won honestly on merit. This duality is continued with "exorsisacions," exorcism being properly a function of the Church, a formal term for a formal ceremony. We are prepared for the mixture of classical and biblical figures which follow as well as for the ambivalence which surrounds them as Fame's creatures.

With this dubious introduction, the litany of Fame's sorcerers begins. Medea, the leader of this company, is less famous, then as now, for her magical powers than for her obsession with revenge against Jason and the bloodiness of her parricide: historically she has become synonymous with unnatural womanhood,

[35]Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 124.

[36]Dillon, p. 239.

symbol of the ultimate and most frightening perversion of Nature's order.[37] Circe and Calypso were both enchantresses who imprisoned Odysseus against his will for long periods of time.[38] Earlier, Circe's irrational jealousy and her use of magic to attack the source of that jealousy had been spelled out in Metamorphoses XIV, 4-67. Both used feigned friendship to cover their less friendly purposes. Moreover, all three--Medea, Circe, and Calypso--were motivated by lust and their use of enchantment grew out of the frustration of that lust: they represent the excesses of power, uncurbed by reason or nature. The futility of such power is made clear by Jean de Meun's Roman de la Rose where three of the figures of this catalogue are linked:

> Mais gart que ja ne seit si sote
> Pour reins que clers ne lais li note,
> Que ja riens d'enchantement creie,
> Ne sorcerie, ne charaie,
> Ne balenus, ne sa science,
> Ne magique, ne nigromance,
> Que par ce puisse ome esmouveir
> A ce qu'il l'aint par estouveir,
> Ne que pour li nule autre hee:
> Onques ne pot tenir medee
> Jason pour, nul enchantement;
> N'onc Circe ne tint ensement
> Ulixes qu'il ne s'en foist
> Pour nul sort que faire en poist.
> (RR, 14395-408.)[39]

[37]August Staub, "Viewpoints in Modern Drama," Diss. Louisiana State University 1961, pp. 17 ff.

[38]Meta., XIV, 8-74, 241-357; and Ars Amat., II, 125-26, respectively. Circe imprisoned Odysseus for one year, Calypso for seven.

[39]But let no woman be so great a sot
As to believe, whatever clerks may say,
Or laymen, that by magic, sorcery,
Enchantment, necromancy, or by charm,

Chaucer's "Ballenus," less famous than his master Hermes Tresmegistus by whom he was identified, was the reputed author of a work on astrological images and "two reprehensible books of necromancy," according to Lynn Thorndyke.[40] He was generally associated with what can only be called "black magic" and which apparently involved the names (and calling up) of demons:[41] that his magic is associated with the worship of Venus would indicate the accuracy of Jean's characterization, at least in terms of medieval tradition. And the opposition between amor and natural love, here secondary but nonetheless important to our understanding of the theme of the House of Fame, is recollected. That there is no overt example of natural love in this kingdom of appearance does not obviate our awareness of its function as unstated standard against which the baseness of amor must be measured. The presence of this set of contraries is made explicit later in Rumor's house, but it exists throughout Book III.

From those pagan sorcerers who misused their power in the name of amor, the catalogue moves to the New Testament seers.

Though Balenus should help with all his lore,
She may compel a man to fall in love
With her or hate another for her sake.
Medea's incantations could not hold
Her Jason; nor could Circe's witchcraft keep
Ulysses when he wished to flee from her.

[40] History of Magic and Experimental Science (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1923), II, 214 ff.

[41] Thorndyke, p. 698, and elsewhere. There is a thread of unsavoriness which runs through Thorndyke's discussion of any material attached to Belenus. This is not limited to his comments alone but exists in other commentators he cites.

Limote,[42] a "false prophet," sought to persuade his master to reject the teachings of Paul and was blinded for his disbelief.[43] Simon Magus is an even more meretricious figure. A sorcerer of Samaria, he attempted to buy the power of the Holy Spirit and was rebuked by Peter for his blasphemy.[44] According to J. A. W. Bennett, it is Simon Magus "with whose name we must associate the ancient tradition that linked him with deviltry, bogus alchemy, and even Antichrist himself."[45]

With the introduction of these New Testament figures, the theological batteries are brought to bear against the servants of appearance. There are no virtuous prophets in this list. From the Invocation to Book I, we remember the prophetic "avisiouns" which are acceptable to the Church. Such a prophet was Samuel, adviser to Saul until the king disobeyed God and linked to this catalogue by the earlier reference to "phitonesse." In his books, the differing attitudes toward false wizards and God's prophets are explicated. Saul had continued to "put away those that had familiar spirits, and the wizards, out of the land."[46] And when Saul complained to the shade of Samuel called up by the witch of Endor that "God is

[42]Identified by both Dillon (p. 138) and Koonce (p. 203) as Elymas or Bar-Jesus.

[43]Acts 13.6-11.

[44]Acts 8.9-20.

[45]Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 125.

[46]I Samuel 28.3.

departed from me and answereth me no more, neither by prophets nor by dreams,"[47] he was clearly aware of the difference.

In the face of the New Testament prophets of reality, the apostles, the falseness of Fame's seers is unmistakable. The thread which links these figures is similar to that which bound those of earlier catalogues. They are losers to a greater reality, all slaves of misdirected lust and false masters. That their stage is pagan or Christian does not matter. They represent in their variety the varied faces of appearance. In the last line of this passage, Geffrey says, "That by such art don men han fame" (1276). Our examination of the followers of "such art" has made the fame they give seem flawed indeed.

The catalogue of mages is complete when Geffrey tells us:

> Ther saugh I Colle Tregatour
> Upon a table of sycamour
> Pleye an uncouth thynge to telle;
> Y saugh hym carien a wynd-melle
> Under a walsh-note shale.
> (1277-81.)

From the magicians of Troy and Samaria, false and lost but on a grand scale, we descend to the picture of a local sleight-of-hand artist, part of the stock in trade of every fair or traveling show in the land, mystifying us with his tricks. That his stage is a "table of sycamore like that table in the Chambre of Beautes on which ships were shown sailing and fishes swimming and horned men and apes"[48] does not add to his stature but only underscores his

[47] I Samuel 28.15, italics mine.

[48] Lowes, p. 113.

status as a small-scale prestidigitator, entertaining, but inspiring neither belief or fear.

With this catalogue, appropriately, Geffrey ends his investigation of the habitués of Fame's anteroom and turns his attention to the fabric of its walls of beryl,

> That shoon ful lyghter than a glas
> And made wel more than hit was
> To semen everything, ywis,
> As kynde thyng of Fames is.
> (1287-90.)

The magnifying properties of beryl were almost axiomatic when Chaucer wrote, part of the furniture of the romances and stories his audience would surely know.[49] Similarly, in the Aeneid, Fama magnified Dido's fault,[50] a detail Chaucer had withheld in his adaptation of Virgil's passage in Book I. J. A. W. Bennett finds, "This magnifying power (and this alone) is the feature common to Virgil's Fama (the 'wikke Fame' or malicious rumor of Dido's exclamatio, IV, 349) and to the goddess of renown whose house this proves to be."[51] And Jean de Muen's Reason had eloquently warned against such deceptive "glas" and its effect upon its beholder:

> E quant ainsinc sont deceu
> Cil qui teus choses ont veu
> Par miroers ou par distances
> Qui leur ont fait teus demonstrances,
> Si vont puis au peuple e se vantent,
> E ne dient pas veir, ainz mentent,

[49]Sypherd, p. 133, and Koonce, p. 186.

[50]Aen., IV, 189-90: "haec tum multiplici populos sermone replebat / gaudens" ("At this time, exulting with manifold gossip, she filled the nations").

[51]Chaucer's Book of Fame, pp. 115-16.

Qu'il ont les deables veuz,
Tant sont es regarz de ceuz.
. . . . . .
N'il n'est nus qui si bien se gart
Qui souvent ne faille en regart.
(RR, 18231-44.)[52]

If Colle with his trick of size manipulation had not adequately prefigured the physical and philosophical caprice of Fame, as well as the magnification or shrinkage of good and ill which will mark her court, the properties of beryl--which Chaucer mentions twice--certainly does. Again, we find the casual reference to artifice: the mountain upon which this changeable castle rests, we remember, also shone like glass. Even artifice wears the guise of another artificial material. These two lines again link Fame's place with Venus's temple "ymad of glas," a connection subtly maintained by those figures in the catalogues who either appeared there or whose activities were motivated by amor.

That Fame's nature will be marked by instability, trickery, ambivalence, and appearance is stated with remarkable directness in the last line of this passage. Here, Geffrey drives home the lesson of what we are to see, the final scene of what may be called the prologue to Fame. And with the nature of Fame's "thyngs" clear in

[52]How many times when men have been deceived
By mirrors or the effect of distances
Which have made things appear as they are not,
They straightway to their neighbors run and boast,
Not telling truth, but lies, that they have seen
The demons, so their eyes have been betrayed!
. . . . . .
There is no man who sees so well
That he may never be betrayed in vision.

our minds, the narrator finds "the castel-yate on my ryght hond." In a cascade of negatives, he describes its wonders:

> Hyt nedeth noght you more to tellen,
> To make yow to longe duellen,
> Of this yates florisshinges,
> Ne of compasses, ne of kervynges,
> Ne how they hatte in masoneries,
> As corbetz, ful of ymageries.
> (1299-1304.)

Suffice it to say the gate was made of gold. We have noted earlier the use of certain words--"curiosite," "craft" and the like--which permeate Geffrey's tale. "Ymageries," glossed as "carved work," onomatopoeically calls up "imaginings" or "images," again artifice and unreality. The refrain of some form of "too great [beautiful, rich, complex, or whatever] for men to describe," used by Chaucer both before and after this poem, takes on an air of commonplace in this book. In a structure crowded with marvels, wonders, magic, and, above all, craft, only of Fame's gate does Geffrey say:

> And yit it was be aventure
> Iwrought, as often as be cure.
> (1297-98.)

"Aventure" governs the mood and tone of Book III. Chaucer uses it four times in this book, a fairly heavy usage, each time at an important turn in the narrative.

Within Fame's hall, the crowds of petitioners overpower the senses: they all cried at once;

> A larges, larges, hold up wel,
> God save the lady of this pel,
> Our owne gentil lady Fame
> And hem that wilnen to have name
> Of us.
> (1309-13.)

The flatterers who mill about Fame's court, ribboned, fringed, each wearing a coat of arms, are so many and so varied, Geffrey says in another flurry of negatives, that to describe them:

> Men myght make of hem a bible
> Twenty foot thykke, as y trow.
> For certeyn, who so koude iknowe
> Myghte ther all the armes seen
> Of famous folk that ban ybeen
> In Auffrike, Europe, and Asye,
> Syth first began the chevalrie.
> (1334-40.)

This picture of a twenty-foot bible (almost as tall as a modern two-story building) fat with the livery of great houses is comic, of course. But the hyperbolic metaphor and its prosaic measuring tone cuts into the grandeur of these colorful folk: they are the servants of the great, "pursevants and heraudes, / That crien ryche folkes laudes" (1321-22), imitators and agents. Beneath the spectacle, they are not only flatterers of Fame but of their masters as well, seeking the crumbs of the fame they beg for those they serve. The emphasis on "ryche folkes" is ironically juxtaposed with the temporal qualification, "Syth first began the chevalrie." There is little of chivalry about Fame's anonymous army of hangers-on, or about Fame herself. Chivalry implies "gentilesse," courtesy, kindness, and grace. Moreover, there is a sense of aristocracy about the word which is totally lacking here, in this suburb of Fame's court. And the irony is strengthened by the fact that this is the first--and only--use of the term in the House of Fame. It increases the impression that Fame is eminently purchasable.

As he has done before, Geffrey dismisses the rout of sycophants to describe the hall itself--floors, walls, and ceiling, all

plated six inches thick with gold, "and that nas nothyng wikke" (1346). Once more, we recognize the excessive richness and ornamentation, a tumult of things. The effect of Geffrey's assurance that there was nothing wicked in all this is of course to spotlight the excess which marks the environment of this book. Moreover, we are reminded that Fame's throneroom imitates the nature which has no place here. While the anteroom had windows, though they faced the sere and frozen icescape, in this room there are none: only the pseudo-brightness of Sol's metal to ape his light. And in the next lines the smell of the real world cuts through the perfume of Fame's hall. First Geffrey, reminded by the gold-paved hall of the lightness of his own purse, complains ruefully that it is

> As fyn as ducat in Venyse
> Of which to lite al in my pouche is.
> (1348-49.)

Then he finds the walls

> were set as thik of nouchis
> Ful of the fynest stones faire,
> That men rede in the Lapidaire,
> As grasses growen in a mede.
> (1350-53.)

The narrator ends with a simile of fields and grass and sun and sky, the antithesis of Fame's ornate construction. At last, he says, with a hint of ennui:

> But hit were al to longe to rede
> The names; and therfore I pace.
> (1354-55.)

There is, it seems a limit even to Geffrey's indefatigable interest in listing and naming. This dismissal further diminishes the stature of Fame's house. In most cases in Chaucer's poetry, this

formula is used in conjunction with an acknowledgment of authority, a kind of "This is where you may read it for yourself." But here there is no authority, only dismissal.

At last, he says, in "this lusty and ryche place," above a dais in a "see imperiall" made of a single ruby:

> Y saugh perpetually ystalled
> A femynyne creature,
> That never formed by Nature
> Nas such another thing yseye.
> (1364-67.)

So, after almost a quarter of the Dream of Book III, we meet the "creature" who is its subject. The delicacy of Chaucer's word choice in this passage merits acknowledgment: Fame was a female creature, a "thing" the likes of which was never again formed by nature. Here, the hints and suggestions of Fame's essential alienness merge into the concrete. The gods and even the planets of classical mythology are anthropomorphic, as are allegorical personifications of abstracts. Fame is a grotesque, as unlike in form to the men who woo her as she is in psychology. She varies in size and shape and is as amorphous as a cloud, and as impossible to capture. But, more wonderful, Geffrey says:

> For as feele eyen hadde she
> As fethres upon foules be,
> Or weren on the bestes four
> That Goddes trone gunne honoure,
> As John writ in th' Apocalips.
> (1381-85.)

The argus-eyed beasts of the Apocalypse[53] were of course servants and worshipers of God, allegorical creatures in an allegorical book. Here the simile is jarring in its unsuitability. We have noted the naive simplicity of Chaucer's persona earlier and seldom has that simplicity been used to greater effect. This simile has two parts and only in the last does Geffrey think of the four beasts of Revelations. First, he says, she has as many eyes as birds have feathers. Then, apparently in what is almost a stream-of-consciousness connection of images, he recalls the feathered and many-eyed beasts who surround "Goddes trone." To read this passage literally would not only deny all we know of the narrator-persona Chaucer has created but would ignore the essential conflict such juxtaposition provides. The vast gulf between Fame's jewel throne and the throne of God has been hovering about the description of Fame's hall at least since the "berile" walls of the outer chamber were first mentioned. Koonce is, I think, correct in recognizing the inversion of values which exists here.[54] Further, I believe, Chaucer intended such an inversion to be recognized as ironic: certainly that is its effect. Geffrey's comparison of Fame to the servants of God, creator and source of all good, simply stresses that inversion. As his assurance that there is nothing "wikke" in the gold which framed Fame's hall reminds us that such excess is at odds with Nature's and God's rule, so does this

[53]Revelations 4.6-10. This passage read literally as Chaucer's voice and given inordinate weight provides much of the impetus, I suspect, for such eschatological studies as Koonce's.

[54]Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, p. 205 and elsewhere.

reference to "Goddes trone" accentuate the opposing values which govern the respective seats of God and Fame. The grotesquerie of her being is emphasized and enlarged by the juxtaposition presented in this brief simile.

But there is more. Geffrey tells us:

> Hir heer, that oundy was and crips,
> As burned gold hyt shoon to see;
> And soth to tellen, also she
> Had also fele upstondyng eres
> And tonges, as on bestes heres;
> And on hir fet woxen, saugh y,
> Partriches winges redely.
> (1386-92.)

Fame's golden hair, Chaucer's single nod to traditional standards of feminine beauty, takes on a different texture in these surroundings: "crips" and "burned" imply a bristliness which is more appropriate to the multiple ears and tongues, as many "as on bestes heres," than to any romantic heroine. The whole description in fact is more bestial than human. J. A. W. Bennett believes Chaucer may have changed Virgil's "pernicibus alis"[55] to "partriches winges" because he found "this chattering bird an appropriate symbol" for his characterization of Fame.[56] However Chaucer arrived at the image, certainly there is less grandeur in it than in Virgil's less homely and specific original.

Exposition, we are told, is inadequate to describe the jewelry and richness she wore or the music and "hevenyssh melodye"

[55] Aen., IV, 180: "swifte wings." In Troilus, IV, 661, Chaucer correctly translates this phrase.

[56] Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 131. Koonce, p. 212, reads this "striking alteration" as "another instance of Fame's metamorphosis into a Christian symbol."

which filled her palace. In five lines of exclamatio, Geffrey invokes God twice ("But Lord," 1393; and "And Lord," 1395), the heaviest use of such epithets in this book. In conjunction with the "heveynssh" music and the allusions to the Apocalypse, these invocations solidify the inversion and, by their irony, strengthen the lesson that fame is a perversion of nature and of the divine order that is God's.

The riot of description over, Fame's appearance set, and the inversion of values which mark her seat established, Geffrey becomes aware that "thys ilke noble quene" bore the arms and name of Alexander and Hercules on her shoulders. Chaucer, we have noted, has included many of the figures of the catalogues or characters in their stories elsewhere in the poem. Triton who punished Mesinas for his impiety appears in Fame's hall as Eolus's trumpet-bearer, itself a strange demotion for the god of the sea. Further, Virgil refers to Mesinas as the son of Eolus: even if the relationship is metaphorical, the three are still tied together in their source. Certainly, this is a piquant and provocative intermingling of relationships. Chiron, one of the quadrivium of minstrels, was tutor to Jason, Medea's husband, and Achilles whose name is upheld by Statius in Fame's hall. Moreover, Chiron was killed by Hercules whose name and arms, with Alexander's, are supported on the shoulders of Fame herself. To make this ambivalent interlocking inescapable, Chaucer emphasizes it by the reminder of Hercules's death: he was, we recall, poisoned by a shirt soaked in Chiron's blood sent by Dianira to her unfaithful husband.

Alexander, in Book II one of a catalogue of heavenly travelers (915), also has a mixed reputation. With Julius Caesar (occupant of the sixth pillar) one of the Nine Worthies,[57] Alexander is sometimes mentioned in the chivalric romances as the model of largess, one of the foremost courtly and chivalric virtues. But far more dominant is the use of Alexander as an example of pride and ambition, a medieval overreacher who must be taught the lesson of humility.[58] Vincent of Beauvais's Speculum Historiale tells the story of Alexander at some length in Book IV. Some chapter headings reflect his use of the material: 31, de luxuria Alexandri, et superbia; 42, de insolentia Alexandri post victoriam; 61, de iactantia et ambitione Alexandri; and 62, de superstitione eiusden, ac livore.[59] Boccaccio, too, presents a harsh judgment of Alexander in De Genealogia Deorum Gentilium.[60] Delaney finds that "Hercules as setter of limits and Alexander as trespasser of limits form a pair with implications sufficiently important to warrant their being supported by Fame herself."[61] This reading, of course, has its basis in the concept of the dual nature of Fame; that is, as source of merited renown as well as rumor. But I think the pair imply a more

[57] Discarded Image, p. 181.

[58] Delaney, p. 92. See also George Cary, The Medieval Alexander (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1956.)

[59] Ed. with Eng. trans. Arpad Steiner (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press [Loeb Classical Library], 1938).

[60] Liber 13, Cap. 71, Charles G. Osgood, Boccaccio on Poetry (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1930).

[61] Chaucer's House of Fame, p. 94.

complete indictment of Fame, one that was prefigured in the blind causality that operated on the names carved in the ice of her hill and that will be demonstrated later in her final judgment as well as in the events of Rumor's house. There is still the provocative addendum to Hercules--"By shert he lys his lyf"--to contend with.

With this, Geffrey iterates Fame's position:

> Thus fond y syttynge this goddesse
> In nobley, honour, and rychesse.
> (1415-16.)

Earlier we have discussed the technique by which Chaucer draws our attention to a questionable quality or action by praising it. Certainly that technique obtains here. We have met Fame's servants in the antechamber, we have seen the flatterers who circle her hall, we have recognized the excess and artifice and ambivalence which are the hallmark of her house, and we have experienced, through Geffrey's detailed report, her unnatural, not to say monstrous appearance. We have, through the scriptural allusions and invocations to God, been taught the inverted and transient values by which her domain is ruled. And none of these in any way merit the use of such words as "noble" or "honour."

With another of the lightning changes of subject we have noted before in this book, Geffrey says:

> Of which I stynte a while now,
> Other thing to tellen yow.
> (1417-18.)

And with the last astonishing and ironic description ringing in our minds, we are off on a further tour of the wonders of the hall. On either side of the throne, we discover, are rows of great pillars

made of metal "that shoon not ful clere," extending the length of the huge hall. As Fame's shoulders supported the renown of Alexander and Hercules, these pillars support Fame's surrogates, the means by which men's fame is propagated.

The first of these worthies is the only historian of the group, "The Ebrayke Josephus the olde" (1433) who, with seven others to help him "bere up the charge," supported the "fame up of the Jewerye." His pillar, Geffrey tells us twice, is of iron, Mars's metal, and lead, "the metal of Saturne, / That hath a ful large whel to turne" (1449-50). Chaucer's use of "whel," here and in the eagle's scientific lectures in Book II, does not in context refer to Fortune's wheel but it does recall that most pervasive medieval image subliminally. Certainly, that the two goddesses share powers and characteristics is explicit later in the poem. Interestingly, as Dillon points out, "To the middle ages, he [Saturn] represented Prudence and was the protector of . . . beggars, cripples, and prisoners."[62] This is the third suggestion that Fame's folk are in need of such a protector. The appropriateness of St. Leonard as patron of Fame's folk and of Geffrey's pilgrimage to Fame's house is underscored here. Fame's mendicants, because they have accepted appearance as reality, are as surely prisoners of their false aspirations and mistaken ideals as any cutpurse in Old Bailey. And these darting subtle allusions, each insignificant in itself, are one means by which Chaucer, I think, keeps us as reader aware of the contraries which underlay this poem.

[62] Chaucer Dictionary, p. 207.

The second pillar, of iron covered with "tigres blod," was occupied by Statius,

> That bar of Thebes up the fame
> Upon his shuldres, and the name
> Also of cruel Achilles.
> (1461-63.)

Close to this pillar is another, also of iron, on which stood "the gret Omer," flanked by Dares and Titus and Lollius, Gudo delle Colonne and "Englyssh Gaufride," each of whom was "besy for to bere up Troye" (1472). With this catalogue of "auctours," we are again deep in ambiguity. Josephus, as author of the Historia Judaeorum,[63] would seem a satisfactory representative of the Hebrew era of the history Chaucer is presenting on these pillars. That there are seven unnamed others with him simply contributes to the sense of numbers with which Fame's house is heavy. But with "cruel Achilles," we begin to wonder. Chaucer's identification of Statius as "Thelosan," a native of Toulouse, is generally cited as evidence of Dantean influence.[64] But where Dante calls Achilles "grande," Chaucer calls him "cruel," an unsettling epithet for a hero, even one under the patronage of Mars, but still possible. The presence of Homer, too, seems logical. Dillon says that even though he was "known to the middle ages in piecemeal translations and selections," Homer was universally revered.[65] Dares and Titus, though their

[63] Works, p. 786.

[64] Pur., XXI, 89, according to Robinson, Works, p. 786, and others.

[65] Chaucer Dictionary, p. 114.

accounts of the Trojan War were fraudulent, are also not inherently unsuitable.[66] But the inclusion of the fictional Lollius, "auctour" of Troilus and Criseyde, in such a company, is suspicious indeed. While Guido delle Colonne is historical, his Historia Trojana is a rhetorical Latin paraphrase of Benoit's Roman de Troie.[67] Sypherd, however, cites Benoit as source for much of Chaucer's material on Troy,[68] and nowhere could I find ascription of Chaucer's Trojan references to Guido's book.

Although Chaucer's elevation of the apparently fictional Lollius and Guido the Sicilian judge to major supporters of the fame of Troy is provocative, it does not necessarily impeach the other poets who support the fame of the world. Adhering strictly to chronology, as he had done in the earlier catalogues--most notably in the catalogue of magicians--Geffrey ends his list of the poets of Troy with "Englyssh Gaufride," Geoffrey of Monmouth whose History of the Kings of Britain was largely responsible for the tradition of Brut as a descendant of Aeneas, hence the British connection with the story of Troy. But after explaining the difficulty of bearing up the heavy fame of Troy, Geffrey confides:

> But yet I gan ful wel espie,
> Betwex hem was a litil envye.
> Oon seyde that Omer made lyes,

[66]See Discarded Image, pp. 11-12, 149, and 174 ff. for medieval attitudes toward authority.

[67]Dillon, p. 107.

[68]Chaucer's "Hous of Fame," p. 211, as well as Shannon, p. 11.

> Feynynge in hys poetries,
> And was to Grekes favorable;
> Therfore held he hyt but fable.
> (1475-80.)

In Fame's anteroom, we have seen the results of envy in the figure of Marsyas. Here the picture of the poets squabbling over viewpoints atop the great iron pillar is comic indeed. Geffrey's delicately tactful "oon" only adds to the comedy. Moreover, this homely and realistic touch serves to continue the diminution of the great or exalted which has stamped the House of Fame.

The third column, of "tynned yren cler," is occupied by

> The Latyn poete, Virgile,
> That bore hath up a longe while
> The fame of Pius Eneas.
> (1483-85.)

Tin, of course, is the metal of Jupiter, a suitable medium for the celebration of the fame of "Pius Eneas," as Virgil called him,[69] especially in light of Geoffrey of Monmouth's presence among the poets of Troy. But in Book I, largely an examination of the relationship between Dido and Aeneas, piety is hardly the hero's dominating characteristic. The weight of the irony is made manifest with the description of the fifth pillar. There Ovid, ensconced on a pillar of copper, is celebrated as Venus's clerk:

> That hath ysowen wonder wide
> The grete god of Loves name.
> And ther he bar up wel hys fame
> Upon his pillar, also hye
> As I myghte see hyt with myn yë;
> For-why this hall, of which I rede,

[69] Aen., IV, 393, and throughout.

Was woxen on heighte, length, and brede,
Wel more, be a thousand del,
Than hyt was erst, that saugh I wel.
(1488-96.)

While Virgil has presented Aeneas as heroic, generous, virtuous, and, indeed, pious, Ovid in the Heroides portrays him as a fickle seducer of women, a portrait very like Chaucer's.[70] As Delaney points out, "The placement of Virgil between these two major critics of Aeneas --Ovid and the anti-Homerites--illustrates the ironic possibilities of juxtaposition as a structural device."[71] And, as we have seen, such juxtaposition abounds in Fame's house.

This passage is evocative for other reasons, of course. First, while Ovid is "Venus clerke" and is seated on a column made of her metal, he is praised for spreading the fame of Eros, her son, Jupiter's "blynde nevew" of Book II. So there is the further diminution of Venus's stature which was begun in Book I. In these lines, too, we find the reiteration of the waxing and waning which is a major faculty of Fame herself. Apparently the pillars share the properties of the goddess whose hall they ornament.

The penultimate column, "of yren wrought ful sternely," is occupied by Lucan:

And on hys shuldres bar up than,
As high as that y myghte see,
The fame of Julius and Pompe.
(1500-02.)

[70] Heroides, VII, "Dido Aeneae," ed. with Eng. trans. Grant Showerman (New York: Harvard Univ. Press [Loeb Classical Library], 1947).

[71] Chaucer's House of Fame, p. 110.

Caesar, second of the Nine Worthies represented in Fame's hall, seems a straightforward and logical choice. But Lucan, whose Pharsalia narrated the wars between the two, portrays Caesar as a monster of egotism, hypocrisy, and treachery and exalts Pompey as symbol of freedom. The unnamed "clerkes / That writen of Romes myghty werkes" (1503-04) who shared Lucan's pillar apparently did not share his bias, considering the general respect accorded Caesar in the middle ages. Certainly the two warriors for whose renown Lucan is given primary credit are uneasy pillar-mates, at best. Moreover, according to Delaney, Lucan was not only a critic of Caesar but of Virgil, too.[72] His presence, then, is a silent ironic commentary on the hero whose fame he upholds as well as on Virgil, the greatest poet of the story of Troy.

Claudian, the last of Fame's saints, stands on a pillar of sulphur, symbol of the underworld,[73]

> That bar up al the fame of helle,
> Of Pluto, and of Proserpyne,
> That quene ys of the derke pyne.
> (1510-12.)

This passage, with its poignant last line, serves to remind us, I think, of the folly of men's petty clamoring after a fame which is transitory at best, a brief glory that flares and dies and leaves no trace that it has ever been. With this echo of the earlier "What may ever laste?" the description of the pillars and their occupants ends:

[72] Chaucer's House of Fame, p. 101.

[73] For further discussion, see Robert Pratt, "Chaucer's Claudian," Speculum 22 (1947), 419-45.

> What shulde y more tell of this?
> The halle was al ful, ywys,
> Of hem that writen olde gestes,
> As ben on trees rokes nestes;
> But hit a ful confus matere
> Were alle the gestes for to here,
> That they of write, or how they highte.
> (1513-19.)

The subject is closed with a typical reprise: Fame's hall, Geffrey says, was full of as many writers of old tales as there are rooks' nests in trees. The laconic inelegance of this most graphic simile removes any grandeur which might adhere to the metal monuments to Fame's saints, and we turn to the first of Fame's supplicants with the raucous cawing of crows evoked by Geffrey's very earthly image echoing about us. The last couplet is necessary only for emphasis: the confusion concomitant with sorting out the matter of their tales or understanding the mechanics of the elevation has been made very clear in the preceding one.

We, with Geffrey, however, have an even greater confusion and noise before us. The first of the nine groups of petitioners to Fame are arrived:

> A ryght gret companye withalle,
> And that of sondry regiouns
> Of alleskynnes condiciouns
> That duell in erthe under the mone,
> Pore and ryche.
> (1528-32.)

The variety--in class, condition, and nationality--of Fame's folk increases the sense of chaos that pervades this hall and stresses the universality of Fame's appeal. This passage contains the only specific mention of "poor" among the press of seekers after fame and it is rather a nominal nod at variety than a serious description

of the company, I suspect. And Chaucer's "under the mone" only underscores the inconstancy of the Fame to whom this company offers obeisance. All we are told, fall on their knees before "this ilke noble quene"--interestingly, the second use of this phrase to describe Fame--and beg, "Ech of us of thy grace a bone." The panoply of royalty governs the scene: the subjects enter, kneel before their sovereign, and are dealt with according to their merit. It is so like a royal court we can almost hear the trumpets and see the banners of the realm. And Geffrey continues the mood as he recites Fame's adjudication: some of the requests she granted immediately, others she cautioned "wel and faire," and still others she granted the opposite of their requests. That the similarity is appearance only, however, is soon demonstrated. Geffrey--naive, eager to believe the best, and puzzled by what he sees--confesses:

> But thus I seye yow, trewley,
> What her cause was, y nyste,
> For of this folk ful wel y wiste
> They hadde good fame ech deserved
> Although they were dyversely served;
> Ryght as her suster, dame Fortune,
> Ys wont to serven in comune.
> (1542-48.)

The most striking part of this passage is, of course, Fame's relationship with Fortune. Robinson finds no definite authority for the assertion that they are sisters but points out that "the frequent association of the two and the obvious derivation of much of Chaucer's description of Fame from the accounts of Fortune, make it natural for him to invent the relationship (if he did)."[74] Sypherd agrees in a

[74] Works, p. 786.

lengthy discussion of the connection based on analogies in other love-visions and supports his agreement by citing "the frequent association of Fortune (and with Fortune may be joined Aventure) and Love."[75] Kemp Malone finds that Chaucer used "traditional accounts of the Goddess Fortuna in creating his character of Fame, and he directly acknowledges this debt in the passage where he makes Fame sister to Fortune."[76] J. A. W. Bennett says, "Justly is Fame described as Fortune's own sister: she shares Fortune's duplicity, symbolized by her one auspicious and one drooping eye, or by a countenance now fair, now fierce."[77] Koonce maintains, "Fame's own providential role, suggested by her admission that she has no justice, is implicit in her elevation to the rank of 'her suster, dame Fortune.'"[78] Despite this cannonade of comment, no study I could find proposes any analogue or presents any evidence denying Chaucer's invention of the relationship. Certainly it is an inspired one.

As important, I think, as the connection between the two goddesses are the lines which inspire the comparison in which it occurs. Geffrey had confessed himself confused by Fame's judgments, admitted her "cause" unfathomable by the standards of reason, and found her as unjust and capricious as Fortune, whose arbitrary and erratic wheel was a commonplace of his time. Certainly the two have

[75] Chaucer's "Hous of Fame," p. 126.

[76] Chapters on Chaucer, pp. 58-59. Clemen, pp. 104-05, agrees.

[77] Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 147.

[78] Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, p. 229.

been sisters under the skin, whatever their genealogy. And to prove the truth of Fame's injustice, Geffrey says:

> Now herke how she gan to paye
> That gonne her of her grace praye.
> (1549-50.)

The tone of the second line is at odds with the first, as indeed the attitude of Fame is at odds with those who seek her favor: the first is rude and abrupt while the last reflects the subservience and acknowledgment of inferiority of those who worship a deity. But the identity of that deity is ambiguous. The second line, reminiscent of a lover's suit in the courtly love tradition, reminds us of Fame's connection with Venus and so of the opposition of amor and natural love. To pray for grace, however, has another meaning which evokes the shadow of the Christian God. Here again is the ironic inversion of values we have noticed before but, intensified by the multiple connotations of "of her grace praye," it becomes almost a double parody of the worship of God, rightful subject of man's aspiration. And the inversion continues. The company beseeches their goddess to give them "good renoun" in recompense for their good works. And Fame answers their plea in her first words of the poem:

> "I werne yow hit," quod she anon;
> "Ye gete of me good fame non,
> By God! and therfore goo your wey."
> (1559-61.)

A ruder, less elevated response would behard to imagine. The goddess, we find, is a fish-wife. When the petitioners cry, "Allas!" and ask her to explain her judgment, she tells them bluntly:

"For me lyst hyt noght," quod she;
"Ne wyght shal speke of yow, ywis,
Good ne harm, ne that ne this."
(1564-66.)

Fame's first words come almost halfway through Book III. And with them, it is clear that Fame's justice is a travesty. Sypherd spoke rightly when he linked Aventure with Fortune, hence with Fame. Chance governs all Fame's judgments.

The unnamed company disposed of, Fame summons

Her messenger that was in halle
And bad that he shulde faste goon,
Upon peyne to be blynd anon,
For Eolus, the god of wynd.
(1568-70.)

We have grown familiar with the messengers of gods, both here and in the Book of the Duchess, and Fame's messenger, we will find, is cut from the same cloth. All are single-minded and dedicated to the rapid fulfillment of their orders. Usually they are brusque and often they are comic. But in the earlier instances, there was no specific pejorative action by the controlling deities: their loss of stature came largely through the character of their messengers. Both Juno in the Book of the Duchess and Jupiter in Book II were victims of such diminution. But in neither of those earlier episodes did the deities themselves speak or act, as far as we know, uncharacteristically, that is, in a way unbefitting their status. Here, however, the goddess threatens her servant with instant blindness, not if he should fail in his mission, but if he should not fulfill it rapidly enough.

The caprice which has governed Fame's brief judgments is operative here: apparently her decision to call Eolus was as

impulsive and as arbitrary as her treatment of those who "good fame ech deserved." Moreover, the careless cruelty and unreason which her dealings with servant and subject alike reflect is prefigured here. In this scene, as in the earlier cases of Juno and Jupiter, Fame's behavior is, we realize, consistent with her character. That character has, of course, been covertly demonstrated by the nature of her hill, her house, her footmen, and her saints. The subtle deterioration of her grandeur has been steady and corrosive. Geffrey has reported her inequity and her own words have proved her lack of "gentilesse," despite the decoration with which she masks her essential cheapness like a bandage. Fame's own fame is set. Her disposition of the eight remaining companies of supplicants for her favor will only detail and intensify the fickleness and futility of the worldly fame for which she is symbol.

The messenger, spurred by her threat, does indeed "faste goon": that Chaucer uses "faste" twice in the nine lines describing the journey emphasizes, I think, the threat and its ironic inappropriateness in the mouth of a goddess, hence Fame's un-god-like nature. The messenger, we are told, finds Eolus in "a cave of ston" reminiscent of Morpheus's cave of sleep. The beleaguered god, hard-pressed to hold the winds of the world in check--a delightful picture--heeded the messenger's frantic plea:

> "Rys up," quod he, "and faste hye,
> Til thou at my lady be;
> And tak thy clariouns eke with the,
> And sped the forth."
> (1592-95.)

Pausing only to collect Triton to bear his trumpets, the wind god sped to answer Fame's command: so rapidly did he obey, in fact, that he

> let a certeyn wynd to goo,
> That blew so hydously and hye
> That hyt ne lefte not a ske
> In alle the welken long and brod.
> (1598-1601.)

Nowhere in the source studies of this passage[79] nor in my reading of those sources could I find any reference to Eolus's loss of control and the ensuing disaster. If, as it appears, it is original with Chaucer, this detail, almost an aside, is a further small example of the humanizing touch that Chaucer brings to the most exalted subjects or most closely followed sources.

With Eolus, Triton, and the trumpets "Clere Laude" and "Sklaundre" at her side, Fame declares her court in session. A second company of "goode folk" appear before her crying:

> "Lady, graunte us now good fame,
> And lat our werkes han that name
> Now in honour of gentilesse,
> And also God youre soule bless!
> For we han wel deserved hyt,
> Therfore is ryght that we been quyt."
> (1609-14.)

The fawning subservience and flattery which marks the first two groups' speech will be common to most of those who seek Fame's grace. A hint of doubt about their worthiness was raised by Geffrey's identification of them as "goode folk," a continuation of the technique which has become almost a signal that what is to

[79] Sypherd, Shannon, and Robinson, among others.

follow should not be taken at face value. But this is still only implication. Fame's rejection of their claim and her judgment, "Good werkes shal yow noght availle," seems harsh and, as before, unfounded in reason. And she calls on Eolus to break out "Sklaundre" to "trumpe all the contrayre / Of that they han don wel or fayre" (1629-30).

The whim and irrationality of this decree does not pass without comment. Geffrey says:

> "Allas!" thoughte I, "what aventures
> Han these sory creatures!
> For they, amonges al the pres,
> Shul thus be shamed gilteles.
> But what! hyt moste nedes be."
> (1631-35.)

The second use of "aventure" intensifies the climate of uncertainty and casual impulse which was prefigured in the "castel-yate," despite its richness achieved more by chance ("aventure") than by intent ("cure"), and which governs the residents of Fame's place. That these petitioners were guiltless, shamed without cause, continues the sense of chance and emphasizes it. But Geffrey, we know, has little patience with disturbing implications. In the same tone and with the same effect as his earlier proverbial "What may ever laste," he dismisses the episode with "hyt moste nedes be," and turns his attention to the drama before him.

The effect of Eolus's black trumpet, "fouler than the devel," is dramatic enough for the most blasé. Chaucer's description of it and its results is redolent of war or hell. Three times described as "foul," its sound spread through the world "As swifte

as pelet out of gonne, / Whan fyr is in the poudre ronne" (1643-44). Eolus blew his trumpet "As all the world shulde overthrowe" (1640). From its bell came smoke "Blak, bloo, grenyssh, swartish red, / As doth where that men melte led" (1647-48). Our senses are assaulted by this noxious horn. And the effect is to personalize the loss of reputation, to display it as it is, a destruction of self for those who live by such values. The speed with which Scandal's blast covers the land obviates any possibility of defense, the smoke which issues from its throat is as impossible to trap or control as the wind which slipped Eolus's grasp. Sound and smoke are intangible, echoing and pervasive, beyond escape or denial. That the childhood chant of "Sticks and stones / May break my bones / But words will never hurt me" is bluff and bravado has never been so clearly demonstrated as in this passage. And the shape and scope of this foul trumpet's breath is as amorphous and unnatural as Fame herself. The narrator says:

> And therto oo thing saugh I wel,
> That the ferther that hit ran,
> The gretter wexen hit began,
> As dooth the ryver from a welle.
> And hyt stank as the pit of helle,
> Allas, thus was her shame yronge,
> And gilteles, on every tonge.
> (1650-56.)

Appropriately, not even our sense of smell can escape the blight of Scandal. We have noted before, in another context, the irony which Chaucer achieves by juxtaposition of figures or events or words. In the midst of the black foulness of Scandal's effluvium, Geffrey evokes sweet nature with his image of a river welling from a spring:

the picture of clear water bubbling and racing cuts through the rankness of Fame's blight to expose it as sham, dangerous and hurtful but based on lies, a thing of shadows. That Fame's opprobrium is appearance, important and real only if we in our folly make it so, is underscored by the clashing discordance of the next line: "hyt stank as the pit of helle." Simple, straightforward, and factual, Geffrey's unadorned evaluation is striking and true. The irony achieved by the juxtaposition of these apposite images cannot, I think, be overstated. Nor can the artistic control from which they sprang. If, as Muscatine suggests, Chaucer in this poem was struggling for the mastery which marked his later works,[80] certainly in this passage, at least, he found it.

With the caprice of Fame clear before us and the stink of Eolus's great black horn still in our nostrils, Geffrey announces the third company of Fame's pilgrims, who fell upon their knees,

> And seyde, "We ben everychon
> Folk that han ful trewly
> Deserved fame ryghtfully,
> And praye yow, hit mote be knowe,
> Ryght as hit is, and forth yblow."
> (1560-64.)

With the petition of this group, a pattern is established which will continue through the lists of Fame's supplicants. Like those who preceded them, they merited Fame's grace; moreover, the words each group used to phrase their desires are similar. Both are polite and respectful to a fault; if anything, the first group exceeds in

[80] Chaucer and the French Tradition, p. 115.

courtesy, although neither gives examples or proof of their merit. But Fame's reaction to this third company is very different:

> "I graunt," quod she, "for me list,
> That now your goode werkes be wist,
> And yet ye shul han better loos,
> Right in dispit of all your foos,
> Than worthy is, and that anoon."
> (1665-69.)

Not only does Fame rule in favor of this almost identical group, she offers them more than they asked for. Moreover, she admits the inconsistency which directs her justice. In her answer to the company of mendicants who preceded her call for Eolus, she had explained her rejection with "For me lyst hyt noghte." And in condemning the next group to Scandal's blast, she had said,

> Good werkes shal yow noghte availle
> To have of me good fame as now.
> (1616-17.)

Later, in the most direct admission of the indiscriminate nature of her rule, she says, "Al be ther in me no justice" (1820). So she is not unaware of her casuistry: rather, it seems, she glories in it. She judges "for me list," without consideration of merit, on whim, the only constant her innate instability. This time she calls for Clere Laude to advertise their fame. And its notes are as clear and lovely as Scandal's were foul, and as carrying: as loud as any thunder, the narrator says, and as far-reaching. As Fame's judgment here is the opposite of her last one, so is Clere Laude opposite of Scandal. It, too, appeals to our senses:

> And, certes, al the breth that wente
> Out of his trumpes mouth it smelde
> As men a pot of bawme helde

Among a basket ful or roses.
This favor did he til her loses.
(1684-88.)

As infamy stank like the "pit of helle," so praise smells of spring and rose gardens. Certainly the siren appeal of worldly fame is presented in the strains of Clere Laude's notes as sweet and desirable indeed. And we can understand why men pursue it. But the lingering stench of Scandal, with Geffrey's reminder that it was undeserved only twenty lines away, is not so easily dispelled. Here, too, is appearance, renown granted on whim, not worth. Seductive and tantalizing, it is no more real nor lasting than the unmerited fame which was attached to the first of this pair of Fame's suitors.

That the eight groups of petitioners can be divided into pairs becomes palpable with the fourth and fifth groups who approach Fame's seat. Both of these, Geffrey tells us, ask to be granted no renown. But there are differences. The fourth company--"wonder fewe," as we are told--stood in a row,

And seyden, "Certes, lady bryght,
We han don wel with al our myght,
But we ne kepen have no fame.
Hyde our werkes and our name,
For Goddys love; for certes we
Han certeyn doon hyt for bounte,
And for no maner other thing."
(1693-99.)

This group was remarkable among Fame's supplicants for several reasons. First, of course, they neither knelt nor flattered. The evaluation of Fame's pilgrims, suggested earlier by Geffrey's "goode folk," is here, by contrast, made concrete. To this point,

the focus has been on the bench, as it were. Fame has held the spotlight. This group's posture, however, emphasizes the sycophancy of the others. And our recognition that fame, if it is granted at all, has little relationship to value or virtue is assured. But the pilgrims who bracket this small band exhibit no such awareness. Aiming for what they consider the heights--that is, worldly fame--they have set their sights too low. Men have made Fame a goddess: she has no natural place either on Olympus or in heaven.

Certainly Fame handles the request of this fourth group with unorthodox dispatch and forthrightness:

> "I graunte yow alle your askyng,"
> Quod she, "let your werkes be ded."
> (1700-01.)

This is the briefest of the encounters between Fame and the solicitors at her bar, eleven lines from start to finish.

The second of the repudiators of fame are hard on the heels of their counterparts. And with their first act we see them as pretenders,

> That to this lady gunne loute,
> And doun on knes anoon to falle;
> And to hir thoo besoughten alle
> To hide her goode werkes ek,
> And seyden they yeven noght a lek
> For fame ne for such renoun;
> For they for contemplacioun
> And goddes love hadde ywrought,
> Ne of fame wolde they nought.
> (1704-12.)

Structurally, this passage is separated from its predecessors. It is one of the only two instances in which the supplicants do not speak directly, the other being the eighth group, traitors,

criminals, unreconstructed villains all. The hypocrisy of this group is clear: they are outdone by none in their boot-licking servility. Moreover, there is suggestion of a slanginess in "they yeven noght a lek" not usually associated with the contemplative life.[81] Their venality is intensified by their juxtaposition with the upright and quiet disclaimer of the fourth company. These sly and meretricious poseurs are intended, I think, to be assessed by us the reader as among the most despicable of Fame's petitioners. Certainly that is the effect of this brilliantly ironic passage.

Fame's judgment of these two groups is among the most interesting and provocative of any in Chaucer's three-hundred-line delineation of the goddess in action. To this fifth company:

> "What?" quod she, "and be ye wood?
> And wene ye for to doo good,
> And for to have of that no fame?
> Have ye dispit to have my name?
> Nay, ye shul lyven everychon!
> Blow the trumpes, and that anon."
> (1713-18.)

Beyond the further amplification of the contradiction between Fame's rank and her language, a contradiction which will increase in intensity as the poem progresses, her verdict here in conjunction with the preceding one is intriguing. This is the only pair of petitioners who are both awarded according to their desires, although, in the latter case, that desire is overtly denied. To the small band who rejected Fame's largess, she granted oblivion. And to the pseudo-contemplatives groveling at her feet, she gave world

[81] See Works, p. 656, for discussion of such "homely" and "vivid" comparisons used to denote worthlessness in this period.

renown, spread by Eolus's golden horn, the notes so clear, Geffrey says,

> That thrugh the world wente the soun
> Also kenely and eke so softe;
> But atte last hyt was on-lofte.
> (1724-26.)

The contrast between this lovely description and the hypocrites who inspire it further intensifies the illogic and inconsistency which dominates the proceedings in Fame's court. Koonce, who interprets the pair as identical in motive, purity, and virtue, finds "Fame's awards to these two groups--oblivion and praise, respectively--are the high point of this ironic drama of earthly fame."[82] Moreover, he makes much of "the Apocalyptic parallel as the sweet odor of 'Clere Laude' spreads throughout the world and at last goes 'on-lofte'"--that is, to God.[83] That this passage is ironic is, of course, indisputable. But the irony lies more in the fact that Clere Laude's notes have wended heavenward in praise of poseurs who ape humility to gain renown. Theirs is Grisilde's sin without her sincerity, the sin of pride.[84] Such a reading, I believe, is at least more defensible in terms of the passage as a whole. Certainly the "ironic drama of earthly fame" is rather increased than diminished by this interpretation.

[82] Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, p. 239.

[83] Ibid., p. 240.

[84] Patricia W. Cox, "Ethical Conflicts in Chaucer's Portrayals of Grisilde and Criseyde," Thesis University of Florida 1965, pp. 26-27.

The sixth and seventh groups, marked by the frenzied speed of their approach, are idlers, committed to nothing, with neither "noble gestes," nor love, nor labor to commend them. In the longest speech of any of the supplicants (thirty-two lines), the members of this company ask:

> That we mowe han as good a fame,
> And gret renoun and knowen name,
> As they that han doon noble gestes,
> And acheved alle her lestes,
> As wel of love as other thyng.
> (1735-39.)

An air of good humor seems to underlie Chaucer's attitude toward these ingenuous aspirants: their plea is free of malice and meanness. The proverbial ending of their speech is comic: "Leet men gliwe on us the name! / Sufficeth that we han the fame" (1761-62). This is first instance among Fame's petitioners of such pure comedy. Generally, the climate there seems more amenable to serious, often desperate, glory-seeking. While the idlers are not deserving, they are harmless and even amusing, especially to us who only observe them. And Fame orders the golden clarion for this eager boisterous crowd.

The seventh rout, idlers too, simply ask for the same thing their predecessors had received. In her longest speech, the mercurial goddess reveals herself as harridan, crude and shrill, more alley cat than queen:

> "Fy on yow," quod she, "everychon,
> Ye masty swyn, ye ydel wrechches,
> Ful of roten, slowe techches!
> What? false theves! wher ye wolde
> Be famous good, and nothing nolde

> Deserve why, ne never ye roughte?
> Men rather yow to hangen oughte!
> For ye be lyke the sweynte cat
> That wold have fissh; but wostow what?
> He wolde nothing wete his clowes.
> Yvel thrift come to your jowes,
> And eke to myn, if I hit graunte,
> Or do yow favor, yow to avaunte!
> Thou Eolus, thou kyng of Trace,
> Go blow this folk a sory grace."
> (1776-90.)

Fame's tirade is, of course, a masterful example of the rant. Nowhere in Chaucer's work could I find an equal in coarseness to "ye masty swyn" or "roten, slowe techches." Even the common proverb of the cat who liked fish but would not wet his claws is couched in gutter language. One rather expects pots and pans and rolling pins to clatter about the ears of the unfortunate idlers. As the sixth band had not deserved the laud they received, neither, of course, do these merit such calumny. But the whim by which Fame's court is ruled is almost lost in the shrieks of her fury. And she is not done with her mad attack. Having ordered Scandal blown, she continues, but in a different tone.

She orders the horn to announce:

> These ben they that wolde honour
> Have, and do noskynnes labour,
> Ne doo no good, and yet have lawde;
> And that men wende that bele Isawde
> Ne coude hem noght of love werne,
> And yet she that grynt at a querne
> Ys al to good to ese her herte.
> (1793-99.)

Here is unreason indeed. Apparently, in the first clause, Fame has ordered this company condemned for their unwarranted assumption that she would grant unearned renown, that she could be cozened into

false judgment. But we know, because Geffrey has told us, that her court is founded on false--or at least capricious--judgment. Moreover, Fame herself admits, "Al be ther in me no justice." The sanctimony of these lines, immediately following the vulgarity of her rant, simply accentuates the vast gulf between what men believe Fame to be and what she really is. By elevating worldly fame to the position of a deity, an object of worship, an end in itself, man has created a false and empty ideal. By accepting as true and real what is only appearance, man has perverted his own humanity and denied the divine spark that makes him man.

The sententia which ends this instruction is, I think, curious and out of place. Robinson explains it as a comparison between the beauty of Isolde (apparently "earned renown") and the menial who grinds at a handmill.[85] And that is useful as far as it goes. But the company to whom it is directed is made up of idlers who, as far as we know, did not even such useful if lowly work. And the final line, "Ys al to good to ese her herte," is puzzling. I suspect that this passage is further evidence of Fame's essential unreason. It sounds lofty and meaningful but, on close examination, dissipates into smoke. That Fame is a charade, plated and powdered and bejeweled to cover her warped and tawdry person, is by this point in the poem inescapable. That her judgments are based on impulse and vagary is equally unequivocal. The alien nature of her seat and herself has been established. And that the sterility and mutability of her

[85] Works, p. 787.

place emanates from Fame and reflects her nature has also been recognized. But in this speech, we have some indication that at the core of her nature lies swirling swelling unreason. Her virulent attack on the seventh company hints at the fragile control which holds this chaos in check. The possibility of a mad goddess empowered by foolish men to arbitrarily mete out praise or shame is staggering in its irony. But it is, I think, nonetheless possible.

And the black horn blares its message of perfidy; a sound, we are told,

> As lowde as beloweth wynd in helle;
> And eke therwith, soth to telle,
> This soun was so ful of japes
> As ever mowes were in apes.
> And that wente al the world aboute,
> That every wight gan on hem shoute,
> And for to lawghe as they were wod,
> Such game fonde they in her hod.
> (1803-10.)

These lines echo the imagery of hell which accompanied the earlier loosing of Scandal's notes. But this is a hell of a different color, the hell of ridicule. The scandal suffered by the hapless idlers is devoid of the seriousness and dark grandeur which stalked the earlier victims. Their doom is laughter, cruel, biting, and ignominious. Moreover, the imagery continues, appropriately, the suggestion that men act like apes as they dance to Fame's tune.

With these lines, the final pair of Fame's pilgrims approach her throne. The eighth company, like the toadies of the fifth group, do not, as we have observed, speak in their own voices. They are villains, perpetrators of the greatest harm and "wikkednesse" that

"any herte kouthe gesse" (1814). Fame gives them short shrift and rejects their plea for "good renoun" out of hand:

> "Nay, wis," quod she, "hyt were al vice.
> Al be ther in me no justice,
> Me lyste not to doo hyt now,
> Ne this nyl I not graunte yow.
> (1819-22.)

Even here, the ambivalence and whim which surrounds Fame's activities color her answer. The judgment is valid in this case: these mendicants were given justice, perhaps the most honest justice of any in this strange court. But here, Fame seems at pains to explain that her ruling has nothing to do with merit. Rather she does not grant their plea because she chooses not to, at least not now. This qualification adds further ambiguity to a statement already weighted with it.

The last group to approach is the most frenetic of all: they leap and push and "choppen al aboute." At first, this assembly speaks as the others have, in one voice. They have, they say, delighted in wickedness as "goode folk han in godnesse," and take pride in their reputation for vice. Their plea is that such reputation be extended. As the other groups had yearned for the benediction of Clere Laude, these court the foul smoke of Scandal to make their crimes immortal. And Fame grants their plea. But she singles out one among them dressed in the stripes and bells of a fool for more specific identification. And we are in the midst of the only real conversation between Fame and her folk in the poem. He answers her comfortably that he it was who fired the temple of

Isis at Athens.[86] To Fame's "Wherfore didst thou so?" he admits, still comfortably, that since he did not merit good fame,

> That other nyl y noght forgoon.
> And for to gette of Fames hire,
> The temple sette y al afire.
> (1856-58.)

This reference to Herostratus is highly ironic, of course. According to William Smith, under torture for his arson Herostratus confessed he had fired the temple to immortalize himself: the Ephesians, setting the punishment to fit the criminal, passed a decree condemning his name to oblivion.[87] This, the only reference to a specific figure in this part of Book III, serves neatly as capstone to Fame's parade of pilgrims. He who committed blasphemy to win her favor is granted his reward. Moreover, the granting overrides the punishment decreed by his people. He has taken his ambition for renown to a higher court, as it were. And Fame has overruled the judgment of men. She underscores her earlier and more impersonal order, and Eolus obeys graciously, in his second speech of the poem: "'Madame, yis, ful wel,' quod he, / 'And I wil trumpen it, parde!'" (1863-64). Scandal blares for the last time the acrid notes of ill fame. And Fame's audience is, for us, at an end.

[86]Generally believed to be Herostratus who burned the temple of Diana, at Ephesus (Works, p. 787, but assumed in every study I have read in which this passage was mentioned).

[87]Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology I (London: Taylor & Walton, 1884), p. 439. Other similar sources contain the same information.

With this ruling, the final strokes of Fame's portrait are laid on. The canvas is complete. Herostratus, alone among the faceless importunates, has involved the goddess in the subversion of a human court. And she is revealed in all her perversity, no friend to man but actively involved in his corruption.

But Geffrey has had enough. For the first time, his attention wanders from Fame and her minions: he notices another standing behind him who "goodly to me spak" (1870), and who asked his name and if he, too, was a pilgrim to Fame. The alacrity and firmness of the narrator's reply leaves no doubt about the effect of what he has witnessed:

> "Nay, for sothe, frend," quod y;
> "I cam noght hyder, graunte mercy,
> For no such cause, by my hed.
> Sufficeth me, as I were ded,
> That no wight have my name in honde.
> I wot myself best how y stonde;
> For what I drye, or what I thynke
> I wil myselven al hyt drynke,
> Certeyn, for the more part,
> As fer forth as I can myn art."
> (1873-82.)

This passage is, I think, a crucial one. First, it marks Geffrey's longest speech in the House of Fame. And there is a passion in it we have not seen before. The intensity of Geffrey's denial is increased by his resounding negatives. Moreover, the epithet, "by my hed," casual and natural as it is, prompts us to recall that while Fame's house is rampant with emotion, there is precious little thought. The only intelligence here is committed to shaping men's minds, not freeing or enlarging them. Moreover, this passage, in its matter-of-factness, reminds us that the pilgrims whose fates

we have watched are similacra, creatures of shadow and air, personified noise.

Geffrey explains to the friendly stranger that he came to learn of "somme newe tydynges" of love or other happy subjects:

> For certeynly, he that me made to comen
> To comen hyder, seyde me,
> Y shulde bothe here and se,
> In this place, wonder thynges;
> But these be no suche tydynges
> As I mene of.
> (1890-94.)

In these lines, Chaucer's narrator has shaken off the shock of his experience and returned to the character we have come to expect. Fame's fabulous realm, her creatures of legend, and her saints have been examined, analyzed, recorded and dismissed. Fame's court, her supplicants, her judgments and her character have been observed, assessed, reported, and dismissed. None of this is what the eagle promised. The plaintive tone of his statement is clear and humorous. In this place, he tells the unidentified stranger, he has learned nothing about men he had not known "sith that first y had wit." And again there is an echo of the introduction of common sense into Fame's excess we had noted earlier in the epithet, "by my hed." True, Geffrey confesses:

> y nyste how
> Ne wher that Fame duelled, er now,
> And eke of her descripcioun,
> Ne also her condicioun,
> Ne the order of her dom,
> Unto the tyme y hidder com.
> (1901-06.)

But that is mere geography and statistics: the narrator, we know, is interested in news of people. The stranger, dismissing his own

rhetorical question about the nature of the tidings Geffrey seeks, says enigmatically:

> But now no fors, for wel y se
> What thou desirest for to here.
> Com forth and stond no lenger here,
> And y wil thee, withouten drede,
> In such another place lede,
> Ther thou shalt here many oon.
> (1910-15.)

And the final measure of Fame's antic dance is begun.

The mysterious stranger has been subject of general scholarly comment, the majority of which accepts his presence as similar to Geffrey's: that is, as a friendly observer.[88] Koonce, alone of the commentators I know, finds the stranger demonic, one whose position is not only "the same as Satan's in the role of tempter" but who holds "also, with equal appropriateness to Chaucer's allegory, the position of the detractor or backbiter" condemned by Chaucer's parson.[89] This reading seems to me essentially unnecessary. Certainly the stranger's presence is defensible structurally: he provides a means for Geffrey to make his complaint, thus reminding us of the reason for his presence as well as the means by which that presence was achieved. Moreover, he provides an artistically consistent way out of Fame's house and prepares us for the reappearance of the eagle. Too, the matter-of-fact conversation between

[88]See for example J. A. W. Bennett, pp. 163-64 ("new interlocator, amiably. . . ."); Clemen, p. 108 ("friendly stranger"); Delaney, p. 102 ("fellow bystander"); Ruggiers, p. 269 ("the passer-by"); Shook, p. 352 ("the friend at Chaucer's back"); and Shannon, p. 51 ("the stranger").

[89]Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, p. 245.

the two furnishes one more reminder of the unreality and unnaturalness of Fame's court.

At any rate, Geffrey, as we have seen, does not question the nature of his convenient guide who leads him out where he saw, in a valley below the castle:

> An hous, that Domus Dedaly,
> That Laboryntes cleped ys.
> Nas mad so wonderlych, ywis,
> Ne half so queyntelych ywrought.
> And evermo, as swifte as thought,
> This queynte hous aboute wente,
> That never mo hyt stille stente.
> (1920-26.)

Sypherd and Shannon, among others, have noted the influence of Ovid in "Domus Dedaly" and Virgil in "Laboryntus."[90] This reference, I find, is particularly interesting in that it provides further structural unity within the poem. Daedalus or some part of his story has functioned in the matter of all three books of the _House of Fame_. The _Aeneid_ has also provided material for the events of the poem from Dido through the description of Fame to this strange whirling house. And Ovid and Virgil, both Fame's saints, have been, I think, the primary authorities for Chaucer's dream vision, with Boethius its guiding philosopher.[91] The governing word in this passage is "queynt," used twice, and we recall the similar description of Venus's

[90] _Chaucer's "Hous of Fame,"_ p. 203; and _Chaucer and the Roman Poets_, p. 83. The maze of Daedalus, described in _Meta._, VIII, 161, is named Labyrinth in _Aen._, V, 588.

[91] Sypherd, pp. 20 ff., disagrees, finding Chaucer primarily influenced by the French romances. Koonce, p. 10 and elsewhere, maintains that Dante is the guilding spirit of the poem. Shannon, pp. 15 ff., shares my view of the poem but properly, considering the nature of his study, does not investigate the unification which these sources provide within the poem.

temple in Book I. The curious contrivances, the artificiality which has pervaded the poem dominates the house that is Rumor's seat, as well. Surely "aventure" is the watchword of this place and the folk who people it.

The noise, Geffrey notes, is deafening, as loud as it had been when first he entered this strange domain. And we remember that since the "loude faire" of Book II, some 860 lines before, neither we nor Geffrey have been bombarded with the almost physical barrage of sound which heralded and identified Fame's place. Here, however, the noise is so loud that it could carry from Paris to Rome. In a rollicking passage crowded with similes--"as dooth the rowtynge of the ston / That from th'engyn ys leten gon" (1934-35); "Swich as men to these cages thwite / Or maken of these panyers" (1938-39); "As fele as of leves ben in trees / In somer, when they grene been" (1946-47)--Geffrey describes the noise and the unlikely structure which is its source. It is made of twigs, yellow, red, green, and white: the noise which emanates from it is, in part, the squeaking and "chirkynges" which result from its movement and material. So noise is part of the nature of the house itself, inherent to and inseparable from it. We are told of the thousand holes in its roof and its uncountable doors, all perpetually open. The superlatives, cut with the homely prosaic similes, point up the excess of this house, as they had earlier of Fame's grander castle. In its way, it is as fragile and protean as the hill which anchors Fame's beryl seat, and more impossible.

There are, Geffrey tells us in the flurry of negatives which have marked his descriptions in this book, no porters, no check nor limit to tidings: unsurprisingly, "ne never rest is in that place" (1956). There are tidings everywhere and of every kind:

> Of werre, of pes, of mariages,
> Of reste, of labour, of images,
> Of abood, of deeth, of lyf,
> Of love, of hate, acord, of stryf,
> Of loos, of lore, and of wynnynges,
> Of hele, of seknesse, of bildynges,
> Of faire wyndes, and of tempestes,
> Of qwalm of folk, and eke of bestes;
> Of dyvers transmutacions,
> Of estats, and eke of regions;
> Of trust, of drede, of jelousye,
> Of wit, of wynnynge, of folye;
> Of plente, and of gret famyne,
> Of chepe, of derthe, and of ruyne;
> Of good or mys governement,
> Of fyr, and of dyvers accident.
> (1961-76.)

In this catalogue, Chaucer pretty well exhausts the possibilities of the human condition. And we recall the catalogue in which Geffrey's guide promised him "moo tydynges" (675) earlier in Book II. Here, however, the dubious nature of love--with its discords, jealousies, dissimulations, pretense, and betrayals--has been extended to cover all activities of man. As the eagle's lecture on sound extended the scope of the matter which reached Fame's house, so this catalogue further broadens it. Interestingly, the list deals almost exclusively with universals: birth, death, and life; government of all kinds, feast and famine--all the good or ill which shapes and affects men's lives.

That Rumor's house is cage-shaped iterates the aptness of its material and implies again that those whose personified voices

inhabit it are indeed trapped by the falseness of the values to which they do homage and the ideal to which they aspire. It is large--"sixty myle of lengthe"--and paradoxical in nature. Geffrey says:

> Al was the tymber of no strengthe,
> Yet hit is founded to endure
> While that hit lyst to Aventure.
> (1980-82.)

This, the third occurrence of "aventure" in Book III, recollects the force that governs Fame's land. Rumor's house, like the rest, is dependent on chance, not design nor any natural law. The thrum of "aventure" throughout this book echoes and stresses the connection between Fortune and Fame's stead. Immediately after this acknowledgment of instability, Geffrey tells us that Rumor's house is "the moder of tydynges, / As the see of welles and of sprynges" (1983-84). The comparison of the status of this fragile wicker cage with the sea stresses the contrast between the impossible and the natural, of course. But it does more, I think. With this couplet, Rumor's house takes on a new dimension. It is not, apparently, simply a receiving and transmitting station. Rather, in these lines, Rumor is represented in a more active role: one of propagating or, at least, aiding in the promulgation of "tydynges." Such a function, which has no source in Ovid or Virgil, forces us to reevaluate the character of Rumor. While she is not herself creative, once started the tidings which fill her house grow beyond intent and change, we will find, into a new form. And, of course, this is an accurate and profound description of the workings of rumor.

As Geffrey marveled at the wonderful spinning structure, he became aware, as suddenly as he had earlier discovered the castle,

of "myn egle" perched on a stone. When he approached the bird for help in reaching Rumor's house,

> "Petre, that is myn intente,"
> Quod he to me; "therfore y duelle."
> (1000-01.)

The great bird's oath to Peter is provocative: it continues the irony which has surrounded the invocation of saints throughout this poem. Peter, of course, is symbol of stability, that rock upon which, according to Matthew, Christ would build his church,[92] and his invocation here, in a place whose hallmark is instability, is ironic indeed. Further, it reminds us that the "ston" upon which the eagle roosts is not stone at all but ice.

Having established that his purpose is to bear Geffrey to Rumor's wicker house, the eagle, garrulous and pedantic as always, embroiders his intent in twenty-six lines of explanation, erudition, explication of Jupiter's sorrow that "Fortune hath mad amys," and his own fealty to the god his master. Jupiter has commanded him, he says,

> To further the with al my myght,
> And wisse and teche the aryght
> Where thou maist most tydynges here,
> Shaltow here anoon many oon lere.
> (2023-26.)

And "with this word"--a nice comic touch, considering the eagle's long oration--the great bird lifted Geffrey "betweene hys toon" and carried him through one of the innumerable windows of Rumor's house.

[92]Matthew 16.18.

One of the marvelous properties of this structure is immediately made clear. As soon as Geffrey enters, its spinning ceased.[93] As they have been consistently in this book, the narrator's description of its occupants is heavy with negatives. There were such a congregation of folk,

> Some wythin and some wythoute,
> Nas never seen, ne shal ben eft;
> That, certys, in the world nys left
> So many formed be Nature,
> Ne ded so many a creature;
> That wel unnethe in that place
> Hadde y a fote-brede of space.
> (2036-42.)

In this passage, the negatives combine with "Nature" to stress once more the unnaturalness of this place. Moreover, a major difference between the climate and character of Rumor's house and Fame's castle is established. Fame's palace, we know, expands to accommodate the press of people and things which occupy it. In all the crowded lists of richnesses, footmen, columns, and companies, there was not the sense of hurly-burly, bodies touching and jostling, that there is here. Chaos was there and anti-nature, but with some sense of antic order. In Rumor's twig house, however, chaos is unchecked: a teeming wave of creatures, incessantly talking, never listening nor, indeed, finishing a sentence, swarm about. "Tydynges" are constant and, whether private or open, move loudly and aimlessly about the room.

Interestingly, no one says anything memorable or important. Geffrey describes the conversation of this milling throng:

[93]See Sypherd, pp. 140 ff., for analogues of such magical structures and their source in folklore.

"Thus hath he sayd," and "Thus he doth,"
"Thus shal hit be," "Thus herde y seye,"
"That shal be founde," "That dar I leye"--
(2052-54.)

In Rumor's house, there is no first-hand experience; all is hearsay. Nothing is proven but all is claimed: true and false mingle with equal authority. And all the swelling sound is simply noise without meaning, petty and empty. Confusion is complete and circular, and the "tydynges," as we have seen, have a life of their own:

Thus north and south
Wente every tydyng fro mouth to mouth,
And that encresing ever moo,
As fyr ys wont to quyke and goo
From a sparke spronge amys,
Til al a citee brent up ys.
(2075-80.)

The destructive power of rumor unleashed could not be more strongly or graphically shown than in this homely but impressive simile. The swelling tide of Rumor's restless folk is echoed in the "tydynges" themselves.

Moreover, Geffrey stresses the slyness and craft with which rumor spreads. After a rumor was "ful yspronge" and had "woxen more in every tonge / Than ever hit was" (2081-82), it sought exit, by window or crevice. And we are reminded that the eagle had explained:

When any speche ycomen ys
Up to the paleys anon-ryght
Hyt wexeth lyk the same wight
Which that the word in erthe spak.
(1074-77.)

So human-like have the embodied voices in Rumor's house become that, until the upward swirling of truth and falsehood, we have almost forgotten their incorporeal nature. There is humor and irony as

well as reminder of their essential falseness in the bickering at the window. Each of them, "a lesyng and a sad soth sawe" (2089) that "of aventure" met there, began to push:

> Til ech of hem gan crien lowde,
> "Lat me go first!" "Nay, but let me!
> And here I wol ensuren the
> Wyth the nones that thou wolt do so,
> That I shal never fro the go,
> But be thyn owne sworen brother!
> We will medle us ech with other,
> That no man, be they never so wrothe,
> Shal han on [of us] two, but bothe
> At ones, al beseyde his leve,
> Come we a-morwe or on eve,
> Be we cried or stille yrounded."
> (2096-2107.)

So "fals and soth compouned" winged toward Fame's castle as one.

The nature of "tydynges" as well as the hierarchy which operates in Fame's realm is clearly registered in these lines. The twig structure is a clearing house, apparently, through which all the news of the world passes, shaped and altered though it is by its sojourn there. And this news reflects, we find, not only the seeking of fame but all the doings of humanity. Its course is laid out: from earth to Rumor's rickety creaking house and thence to Fame's ornamented castle. The mechanics thus exposed and the sham and dishonesty of the "tydynges" revealed, Rumor is recognized as Fame's poor relation, stripped of her elegant trappings but no less meretricious. The petty squabbling at the window, and truth's easy partnership with falsehood, ensures our recognition of the vanity of all worldly renown, whether elevated or debased in scope, courtly or plebeian in station.

Geffrey provides further explanation of the relationship between Fame and Rumor and of the make-up of the companies who appear in Fame's court: every "tydynge" goes, he says,

> streght to Fame
> And she gan yeven ech hyr name,
> After hir disposicioun.
> (2111-13.)

And the numbers in each company of petitioners to Fame is estimated for the first time. There are, we are told, "twenty thousand in a route," and the judgments we had witnessed become even more indiscriminate and arbitrary with our realization of the immensity and variety of each group whose fate is so determined.

Geffrey's rehearsal of the folk who people Rumor's house continues the sense of excess and error which has marked this shadow kingdom from the start. There are, he says, shipmen and pilgrims with "scrippes bret-ful of lesinges." He follows with what is, I think, the most poignant and telling assessment of the nature of these captive pilgrims, bound by their mistaken and inverted values, trapped in the conviction that their man-made ideal, their invented goddess, is worth the candle. Despite their numbers, Geffrey says, each was "eek allone be hemselve" (2125). The pathos--and essential truth--of this statement tolls in our minds like a bell. And there were even more of these lonely hordes pressing and shifting in the cluttered room:

> O, many a thousand tymes twelve
> Saugh I eke of these pardoners,
> Currours, and eke messagers,
> With boystes crammed ful of lyes
> As ever vessel was with lyes.
> (2126-30.)

Apparently truth was destroyed. At least, it has no further place in Rumor's house. If there lingered any doubt about the character of the folk in this room, the inclusion of pardoners, with the couriers and messengers who are logical clients of Rumor and Fame, would, I think, eliminate it. Later, in the Canterbury Tales's bitterest indictment, Chaucer made his feelings about pardoners quite clear. And there is much of the Pardoner of Rouncivale's bag "bretful of pardoun" (GenProl, 687) in the "boystes crammed ful of lyes" of this passage.

Immediately following the images of bags bursting with "lesinges" and "lyes," the first mention of love-tidings is heard. As he listened to the babble about him--of which, he says, others "kan singe hit bet than I"--Geffrey heard a great noise from a corner of the room where, at last, "men of love-tydynges tolde." But when he arrived there, eager for the news which was the purpose of his marvelous journey, he says:

> I saugh rennynge every wight,
> As faste as that they hadden myght;
> And everych cried, "What thing is that?"
> And somme sayde, "I not never what."
> And when they were alle on an hepe,
> Tho behynde begunne up lepe,
> And clamben up on other faste,
> And up the nose and yën kaste,
> And troden fast on others heles,
> And stampen, as men doon aftir eles.
> (2145-54.)

The clamor and tumbling disorder of this scene hardly needs the inelegant final simile to accent its mindlessness. Here indeed are men acting like apes, the qualities that make us men discarded in the simian avidity for news. And the news they seek, we feel,

is little more than locker-room lechery, amor at its basest, subject of joke and leer and nudge, an ugly thing, coarse and animal in its panting, sweating squalor. The love that men too often profess is, as Dido proclaimed and Geffrey agreed, like fame, a hollow thing masquerading as substance. And neither lovely words nor rich adornment disguise the fact that both are warped and unnatural appearance, without basis in reality. Love, the highest and most ennobling emotion of man, is here counterfeit. Fame, properly based on merit, earned but not sought, is here founded on vanity and lies, desired for its own sake and twisted into error in the process. Moderation, the golden mean of both pagan and Christian philosophy, is lost to excess. The truth the eagle promised is only debased authority, pretense and puffery parading in the cloak of experience.

In Rumor's cage-house, the three contraries which I believe govern this poem and are its lesson are exposed. Here, amor is seen to be cheap imitation of that natural love which is desirable and divinely inspired. Here, excess is seen to replace that reason which marks man and makes him little less than angel. Here, there is no experience, only hearsay. Even the authority of the poets so dear to Geffrey's heart has been reduced to gossip. The only truth in this domain, we know whether or not Geffrey does, has been discovered through his senses, his experience. In Fame's castle, authority was seen to be skewed, limited when not false. Here in Rumor's house, it has no truth at all. In Fame's kingdom, we recognize the essential emptiness of appearance. Only in reality is there life and substance and any hope of safety or salvation.

The brutish scramblers for news of love are the last of Rumor's folk we see. Chaucer ends his unfinished excursion to Fame's place:

> Atte laste y saugh a man
> Which that y [nevene] nat ne kan;
> But he semed for to be
> A man of gret auctorite. . . .
> (2155-58.)

There has been, of course, much speculation about the identity of this "man of great auctorite," and the question is provocative.[94] I suspect, however, any final answer is unlikely, failing the fortuitous discovery of the ubiquitous "lost manuscript," a possibility which daily grows less likely.

Equally futile, it seems to me, is speculation about Chaucer's plan for ending this most delightful poem. Perhaps, as Sypherd believes, he would have returned to the subject of love.[95] Perhaps, as Ruggiers supposes, he would have made his philosophical identification with Boethius and ended with some statement of _contemptus mundi_.[96] Perhaps J. A. W. Bennett is correct when he

[94]For example, R. C. Goffin, "Quiting by Tidings in _The House of Fame_," _Medium Aevum_ 22 (1943), 44, suggests, in the form of a question, that Boccaccio may be the man of authority: Koonce, pp. 266-67, maintains that he can only be Christ; Ruggiers, p. 271, believes him to be Boethius; R. J. Schoeck, "A Legal Reading of Chaucer's _House of Fame_, _Univ. of Toronto Quarterly_ 23 (1953), 191-92, identifies him as "Master of Revels"; and James Winney, p. 110, sees him as representing the discipline which must control the creative activity. While this list is not complete, it is, I think, representative of the variety of theories.

[95]_Chaucer's "Hous of Fame,"_ p. 220.

[96]"The Unity of Chaucer's _House of Fame_, p. 272, a proposal I find rather difficult to reconcile with Chaucer's other works.

suggests that the "true conclusion was to be found in the poetry that was to follow," the Canterbury Tales.[97] Perhaps, as Clemen proposes, Chaucer would have postulated the "new critical attitude toward poetry" which, he believes, is the theme of the poem.[98] In fact, of course, we simply do not know.

Rather, such attempts may distract us from an examination of what is in the poem we have. In the House of Fame, I think, there is a thematic unity which does not demand an ending or an identification or the elimination or alteration of any part of the text itself. Chaucer called his poem the House of Fame. I do not believe it is too simplistic to assume that Fame was, therefore, to be its subject. In Book I, beyond the trappings and scenery of a love-vision, we have the effect of Fame on one individual, Dido. In Book II, we hear Fame described by Jove's bird, hence a picture of Fame and the mechanics of her place by a detached though, of course, sympathetic familiar who is not himself subject to her power. In Book III, we see Fame in action on a larger stage. Her caprice, her unreason, and her essential falseness are exposed in her own house by her own words as she dooms or rewards the vast numbers who seek her "grace." Rumor's suburban shack and the activities there simply document what has been implied from the first: that worldly fame is fraud and artifice; that its worship reduces men to apes; and that not only is the winning of fame uncertain but, once won, it

[97] Chaucer's Book of Fame, p. 185.

[98] Chaucer's Early Poetry, pp. 113-14.

has neither permanence nor virtue nor worth. This is, I think, the point of Chaucer's House of Fame. And certainly it is enough.

CONCLUSION

In both the House of Fame and the Book of the Duchess, Chaucer exposes false and man-made ideals and we recognize them as appearance. Structurally, there are many differences in these early dream-visions. The Book of the Duchess is an elegy, slow-paced and quiet; it has only two characters, a single plot-line, and its tone is essentially serious. Conversely, the House of Fame is an examination of the effects of Fame on various levels, frenetic and cacaphonous; it has multiple settings, characters, and plots, and it is less serious in tone, especially in the comedic tour de force which is Book II. But the underlying conflict of appearance versus reality exists in and motivates both dream-visions. In both, Chaucer utilizes the three sets of contraries--excess versus moderation and reason, authority versus experience, and amor versus natural love--to examine the larger elemental conflict.

Chaucer, like Shakespeare or Milton or Pope, was a man of his age writing for an audience of that age. Such a truth is, of course, self-evident. But that does not imply that modern readers can find no truths, no application to self, no sense of recognition in the inhabitants of Chaucer's poems, or no joy in his humor and humanity. Rather, each generation, I suspect, focuses on aspects of the poetry to which it is particularly sensitive and in which its particular identity is reflected.

To enjoy and understand Chaucer's works, we need only read the poems honestly and lovingly, aware that our reading is a personal one, conscious of the danger of casual presumption, and bound only by the evidence of the text itself. Trevor Whittock makes an important contribution to modern scholarly understanding, I think, when he insists that "the poet's intention must be apprehended in terms of the poem's own structure, its own 'inner logic.'"[1] A valid reminder about the work of any poet, this is particularly vital for a student of Chaucer. This "inner logic" is, in part, what I have tried to identify and analyze in my interpretation of these dream-visions.

The scholarship of Kittredge, Lowes, Robinson, Lewis, Robertson and the rest continues to increase our appreciation of Chaucer's early dream-visions, and our debt to them is great. But there is more to be learned. This study has, I hope, continued their tradition by defining the unifying theme--the philosophical opposition of appearance and reality--which links these dream-visions and the means--the three sets of contraries--by which that theme is demonstrated. Its examination of how Chaucer shapes his sources to his very individual artistic needs explicates his use of those disparate sources more fully, I think, than the studies of any single influence (the French poets, the Roman poets, the Italian poets, etc.) have done. Lately, we have all benefited from such an approach to the various Canterbury Tales, but less

[1] A Reading of the Canterbury Tales (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1968), p. 10.

attention has been focused on this aspect of the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame. I have tried, in part at least, to fill that blank here. I believe that this paper, by providing grounds for new questions and suggesting new directions, may contribute to our continuing understanding of this, the first master of English poetry.

In the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame, Chaucer was, I think, as much concerned with universals as in his later masterworks. His moral vision, generally recognized in the Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde, was no less discerning in these early poems. In them, as in the later works, he was, I believe, holding the mirror of reality up to the folly, the pretense, the erroneously conceived ideals, and the hypocrisy of men. Whether they recognized their reflections is, of course, another matter. But the mirror does exist in Chaucer's poetry, in the private débat of the Book of the Duchess as in the complex world of the Canterbury Tales; in the flamboyant contrivance of Fame's kingdom as in the besieged city of Troilus and Criseyde.

It is hard to imagine more diverse settings than the quiet wood-garden, the familiar tavern where the pilgrims met, the nervous and threatened Troy, and the alien artifice of the ice hill. That Chaucer can use these diverse settings and can reduce their very dissimilar inhabitants to their essentials to imply the universal truths they share is signal of his art. In the Book of the Duchess, the black knight's grief is gently exposed as excess, as error, and as an essential denial of humanity, hence as appearance, unnatural

and, in fact, sinful. In the House of Fame, Fame's kingdom, her minions, and her saints are also exposed as appearance: the insistent numbers, decoration, and "crafte" reveal the excess which disguises emptiness and imitation. The artificiality and futility of worldly greatness is subtly delineated throughout the poem and the folly of men who pursue this false ideal is made manifest through its progression.

The duality of love, the conflict between amor and natural love, has been recognized, especially in Troilus and Criseyde and what Professor Kittredge called "the marriage group" of the Canterbury Tales, as well as in commentaries on the individual tales. That duality--with amor representative of appearance, natural love of reality--is seldom so strongly linked with the duality of man's other activities as in the House of Fame, although, as we have seen, it occurs clearly in the Book of the Duchess as well.

The opposition of experience as handmaiden of reality and authority as servant of appearance is maintained throughout Chaucer's works, I believe, in the persona of narrator as advocate of authority, a vehicle by which Chaucer achieves some of his finest comedy. Pandarus, of course, is cut from the same bolt: a comic expert in the theory but not the practice of love. But Pandarus and the narrator are no greater examples of the folly of such total dedication to authority than the pedantic eagle of the House of Fame. As lovely Alisoun of the Miller's Tale is kin to the Wife of Bath, older, fatter, but with the same "likerous ye" (MT, 3244), so is the eagle brother to Pandarus. Where Pandarus's

expertise is limited to matters of love, the eagle is less modest: no subject from astrology to Geffrey's character, from physics to mythology is beyond his scope. He is authority personified. And like Pandarus and the narrator, he is exuberantly comic in his pedantry. By such comedy, Chaucer juxtaposes authority with experience; and authority, no matter how impressive-sounding, is seen as appearance, an imitation of and substitute for reality.

Fame's house is the world. And the world is filled with those whose vision is flawed, who scramble desperately for the renown which they think will make them matter, which will prove that their small fearful mortality has meaning. That desperation is epitomized by the eighth and ninth companies who seek disrepute, the greatest infamy, to escape the terrible knowledge of their own unimportance. Their error, of course, is clear, but it is an error which men of all ages share. Man is small, his life a speck, scarcely noticeable in the sea of human time or memory. In his rejection of the faith he professes, he struggles to avoid the abyss he sees before him, death and eternal oblivion. And, rejecting, he seeks in appearance the illusion of immortality.

The man in black had to face the fact of White's death and, more difficult, he had to accept his own human inability to change that fact or deny it. There was for him or the Pearl poet or for us no easy escape, only reconciliation through the acknowledgment of God's will and human limitation. Only with the acceptance of this reality, the understanding that we are mortal, that happiness remembered eases the pain which is part of life, can he or we find peace. The folk who crowd Fame's hall cannot accept this reality and

are lost. Man cannot escape or deny his mortality through empty pursuit of earthly greatness. Only by accepting life and the reality of God's will can he embrace his own humanity. The man in black, by implication, did find such acceptance and the strength to continue which is its reward. The press of folk who surged about Fame's bar did not.

Chaucer is, above all, I believe, a poet of reality. This was true in the Book of the Duchess and it is true in the House of Fame. In these poems as well as in the Canterbury Tales, he focuses the sharp beam of his irony on men who mistake the tinsel of appearance for the light of reality. In the Canterbury Tales, the juxtaposition of appearance and reality is most diversely and subtly presented through the portraits of the pilgrims and the contents of their stories. We see their frailties and disguises and strengths and follies through the lens of Chaucer's moral vision; and perhaps, if we are lucky or honest, we see ourselves more clearly as well. The Prioress's vanities are exposed gently, as well as the Clerk's inexperience, the Merchant's prurience, and the Knight's idealism. The hypocrisy of the Pardoner and the Summoner, as they prey upon their fellows in the name of God, is the subject of Chaucer's strongest condemnation. That this hypocrisy is described in humorous terms does not conceal their fraud. And in the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame, Chaucer's earliest long poems, the humor does not conceal the folly of man who denies his own humanity, worships his own inventions, and mistakes amor and earthly renown and excess for love and virtue and reason.

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