Introduction

1. Compare Tzvetan Todorov's sense of the requirements for responsible genre criticism:

[A genre study] must constantly satisfy requirements of two orders: practical and theoretical, empirical and abstract. The genres we deduce from the theory must be verified by reference to the texts: if our deductions fail to correspond to any work, we are on a false trail. On the other hand, the genres which we encounter in literary history must be subject to the explanation of a coherent theory; otherwise we remain imprisoned by prejudices transmitted from century to century, and according to which (an imaginary example) there exists a genre such as comedy, which is in fact a pure illusion. The definition of genres will therefore be a continual oscillation between the description of phenomena and abstract theory.


4. See F. X. Newman, "Somnium: Medieval Theories of Dreaming and the Form of Vision Poetry" (Ph. D. diss., Princeton, 1963), 253-331, for a complete discussion of typical or frequent motifs in dream-poetry, including the naive dreamer, the book as a soporific, the locus amoenus, the river, and many others. It is impossible to quarrel with Newman's collection of such motifs, but, as I argue above, their presence needs to be shown to be necessary for the operation of the poem, or at least integral to its technique. For another discussion of the motif of the dreamer reading, see Sheila Delaney, *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 40.

5. This distinction is itself a good index to the eclectic diversity of the form. The talking birds of the Parlement of Foules seem to be descendents of earlier talking animals in the French love visions of the thirteenth century (and possibly as well of talking birds in folk literature and allegories of the "Owl and Nightengale" variety). The eagle of the Hous of Fame, however, is a comic Chaucerian version of Dante's eagle (and therefore derived ultimately from the iconography of the Apocalypse), all of which makes it unlikely that even this frequent or common motif is prescribed. All dream visions contain odd, and, in fairness, preternatural things, but the fact that the sources of these additions are so various and diverse—allegory, folk literature, eschatology, etc.—suggests that their inclusion in the poems is a device of dream-verbatim or "dream mimesis" rather than a conventional signpost of some sort.


9. See Ziegler's introduction, pp. xxxvi–xxxix, for the manuscript history.


11. Cf. Newman, pp. 326–31, on the dazed, naive dreamer, and how this allows the dream vision to depict truths freed from the personal credibility of this dreamer.


14. Boethius, 132; Green, 3.


20. Compare Charles Singleton:

The poet is deliberately leading the reader into double vision, to place him on what he had every right to assume would be the most familiar of scenes. There is this about that landscape at the beginning: we may not mark its whereabouts on any map. And, when we stand at the doorway of Hell and look back to where we were before, if we ask
ourselves where that was, we know that we may not exactly say. But that is not the important point. The point is that the scene was designed to locate us.


21. See Giuseppi Mazzotta, Dante: Poet of the Desert: History and Allegory in the Divine Comedy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 254, on the disjunction between the poet and the wayfarer: "The poet knows more than the pilgrim does," a disjunction which, we will see, differs from the "pseudo-eyewitness" narrative mode of the dream vision. See also Kevin Brownlee, Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), 12, on dedoublement in dream poetry, as distinct from the situation in Inferno I. For the Divine Comedy as a dream vision, see Newman, pp. 339-57.

Chapter One


3. Cf. Giuseppi Mazzotta:
The poem [the Commedia], it must be stressed, is neither the imitation of God's way of writing nor a prodigious crystal, an idolatrous self-referential construct; it occupies the ambiguous space between these two possibilities; and allegory, as I see it, dramatizes the choice with which the reader is confronted.


5. Gilgamesh, 66.


7. The Oresteia, p. 43, line 275.


11. Scriptural quotations are taken from the Biblia Sacra juxta Vulgatam Clementinam, ed. Alberto Colunga and Antonio Turrado (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, 1977) and will be cited in text. Translations are mine.

12. A survey of Church Fathers on this subject can be found in Morton Kelsey, God, Dreams, and Revelation: A Christian Interpretation of Dreams (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1968, rev. 1974), especially 130–44. Kelsey's treatment of medieval oneiromancy includes several useful quotations from Eastern thinkers such as Athanasius, Gregory of Nyassa, Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, and Synesius of Cyrene, as well as most of the Western Fathers mentioned in this present study.

Kelsey is aware that these thinkers did not have an important influence on Western Christian thinking on dreams, but this fact actually suits his purposes well. His thesis, a correct one at least historically, is that Christianity's original acceptance of oneiromancy survived in the Eastern Church but was consciously suppressed by Neo-Aristotelean thinkers in the European Middle Ages.

On the notion of psychic openness, sleep in bono, as it emerges in Western mystical thought, see note 19 below.

13. The designation is probably old enough to be contemporary with the Gospels. Macrobius quotes Cicero as using the term: "phantasma, which Cicero, when the term was called for, called visum" (Commentarii in Somnia Scipionis, ed. Iacobus Willis [Leipzig: Teubner, 1963], 8, with my translation). For other Greek oneiromantic terms and their equivalents, see Kelsey, 80–86.

15. Mynors, 193, lines 554–70; tr. Mandelbaum, 100.

16. It is likely that this reading is light-years away from Vergil's intended meaning, but such is medieval studies. I suggest the reading in the spirit of Macrobius, taking cognizance of the specific language of the apparition and in an encyclopedic reading of *Aeneid* IV. If Mercury is a vision and "the image of Mercury . . . returned" a day-residue dream, their proximity in the text would have struck medieval commentators as an inescapable integumentum.


19. The apocalypse—see Kelsey on "αποκαλυψις," 85—was an important literary genre in Semitic, Old Testament writing, but it is not clear what influence these works had on the Christian apocalyptic tradition, which begins, of course, with St. John and Revelation. Two very useful studies of the Biblical and medieval apocalypse are Bernard McGinn, "Early Apocalypticism: the ongoing debate" (pp. 2–39) and Marjorie Reeves, "The development of apocalyptic thought: medieval attitudes," (pp. 40–72), both in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984). McGinn (p. 21) notes Revelation's departure from Semitic convention in explicitly identifying its author, who is usually anonymous or pseudonymous (in sharp distinction to the dream vision's carefully determined persona).

20. This is a very complicated notion, caught up in the infamous metaphorics of medieval mysticism. Spearing, in *The Gawain-Poet: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), considers the issue briefly with reference to *Pearl*, 107–17, and concludes that the Aristotelian notion of sleep as the time when the senses and conscious mind are quiescent could be applied literally to dream-apocalypses. To this end, Spearing cites Richard of St. Victor on the "sleep of the senses and passions" (p. 115). The bulk of mystical writing, however, tends to treat sleep as a metaphor for the aspirant's conscious self-abandonment from quotidian sensory stimuli, passions, and concerns. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, for example, calls such an abstinence "a cloud of forgetting":

> Just as the cloud of unknowing lies above you, between you and your God, so must you fashion a cloud of forgetting beneath you, between you and every created thing.

A close reading of "mystic" writers from Dante to San Juan de la Cruz will, by and large, bear out a persistent metaphorical sense of sleep as the state of revelatory readiness (sleep in bono), typically alongside a sense of sleep as a state of unmitigated sin (sleep in malo). For the case that metaphoric uses of the dream in Neo-Platonic thought constituted "figurative extensions of prior dream theories," see Newman, 64 and 158-85 (on the dream as metaphor in Hugh of St. Victor). This solid evidence notwithstanding, the safest course (I believe) is to reject any prescriptive, literalist interpretation of sleep in such texts and to recall the ubiquitous cautions against vain dreaming and credulousness in the mainstream writers of the period.


23. Visio Wettini, 13: "... most visions are recorded by someone other than the visionary."


Chapter Two


3. Dream science outside the West is much older. A. Leo Oppenheim has edited an extremely ancient Assyrian dream manual in "The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East, with a Translation of an Assyrian Dream Book," in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 46, no. 3 (1956); 179–373. By way of summary in the Introduction, Oppenheim reports that, even in this work, ... dream experiences were recorded on three clearly differentiated planes: dreams as revelations of the deity which may or may not require interpretation; dreams which reflect, symptomatically, the state of mind, the spiritual or bodily health of the dreamer, which are mentioned but never recorded; and thirdly, mantic dreams in which forthcoming events are prognosticated. (p. 184)


7. Ibid., 297.

8. Ibid., 297.


10. Ibid., 365.

11. Ibid., 377. For additional discussion, see Meier, "The Dream in Ancient Greece . . . ," Dodds, and Kelsey, especially 49–78; Kelsey's unsympathetic view of Aristotle is due, of course, to his bias in favor of the dream as a revelation.


14. Ibid., I, 412; I, 413.


19. Macrobiii, 9; Stahl, 88.

20. Macrobiii, 10; Stahl, 89.

21. Macrobiii, 10; Stahl, 84–85.

22. PL 40, col. 798; translation mine.


24. PL 40, cols. 591ff.

25. PL 34, col. 455; translation mine.

26. PL 34, col. 469; translation mine.


30. Liber de Modo Bene Vivendi, PL 184, col. 1301; translation mine. A quaint but powerful version of this notion, that belief in dreams is an occasion of sin, can be found in the writings of Richard Rolle:

The fyreste comandement es, "Thy Lorde God pou sall loue and til him anely pou sall serve." In this comandement es forboden all mawmartryse, all wytechcraye and charemyng, the wylke may do na remedy till any seknes of mane, woman, or beste, for by erre be snarrys of be develle by be whilke he afforces hym to dyssayve mane-
kynde. Alswa in his comandement es forbidden to gyffe trouthe till sorcereye or till dyvynynge by sternys, or by dremys, or by any swylke thynges.


34. See Newman, 135-41, who finds John of Salisbury’s suppression of the relevant dream confusing and contradictory; see also LeGoff, 204, who asserts that “with John of Salisbury, the dream took its place in a veritable semiology of knowledge.”

35. Polycratici 2, 97; tr. Dickinson, 84.


37. Ibid., 66; 65.


39. Ibid., 336.

40. PL 101, col. 1403; translation mine.

41. Macrobi, 11; tr. Stahl, 90.


43. Piers Plowman: The Prologue and Passus I-VII of the B Text as Found in
NOTES TO PAGES 79–95


45. Macrobius, 9; tr. Stahl, 88.

Chapter Three


4. See Colish, esp. 20, and Alford, esp. 737.


10. See Colish, especially 17.

11. PL 32, col. 686; tr. Ryan, 82; see Alford, 741, for thoughts on the medieval response to the "humble style" of Scripture.


15. Macrobius, 5; tr. Stahl, 83.
16. Macrobius, 6; tr. Stahl, 84.
17. Macrobius, 6; tr. Stahl, 85.
20. Dronke, 75; p. 49.
21. Cf. Demats, 21: "Mas le divin est aussi le sacré, et comme tel il s’offre aussi bien à la méditation de l’élite pensante qui en pénètre la vérité profonde, qu’à la vénération du vulgaire qui s’arrête aux images. La fable est, comme le mystère, une pédagogie divine, assez souple pour conduire les initiés, suivant leurs aptitudes, à la contemplation des essences ou à l’adoration des symboles." See also Wetherbee, Platonism and Poetry...especially 36–48 on the concept of the integumentum in Guillaume de Conche and Abelard.
22. PL 34, cols. 38–39; tr. Robertson, 37.
23. These notions are strikingly parallel to modern ones on, for example, the arbitrary motivation of the sign. For example, see Umberto Eco, Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 16 and elsewhere.
24. PL 34, col. 21; tr. Robertson, 11.
26. Lecoy, 1–2; Chaucer, 565.
27. Lecoy, 2; Chaucer, 565.
28. Lecoy, 2; Chaucer, 565.
31. Boehner, 42a; p. 42b.
32. Boehner, 44a; p. 44b.

**Chapter Four**

1. Among much that has been written on the dreamer figure in the dream vision, Spearing’s comment puts the problem of the ambivalence of the dreamer best:

   ... the dream-framework inevitably brings the poet into his poem, not merely as the reteller of a story which has its origin elsewhere, but as the person who experiences the whole substance of the poem.

   (*Medieval Dream-Poetry* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976], 5). Spearing goes on to note that this appearance has ambiguous effects, allowing the poet both to call attention to himself and to disappear from his text. This perception of unmitigated ambiguity is a function of Spearing’s large claim that the form itself is ambiguous, either "the product of divine inspiration or ... the expression of a merely human mood or fantasy" (p. 5).


3. Viktor Shklovsky, "Tristram Shandy Sterna: Stilistitchesky kommentary," in *Stern i teoriya romana* (Petrograd, 1921); tr. as "Stern’s Tristram Shandy: Stylistic Commentary" by Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, eds., *Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1965), esp. 57:

   The idea of plot is too often confused with the description of events—what I propose provisionally to call the story. The story is, in fact, only material for plot formulation. The plot of *Eugene Onegin* is, therefore, not the romance of the hero with Tatyana, but the fashioning of the subject of this story as produced by the introduction of disrupting digressions.

   Such a distinction works quite nicely for the dream vision, the plot of which, ultimately, is similarly the fashioning of a subject—the dreamer—a figure which will become both subject and object in the final analysis.

NOTES TO PAGES 122–43

5. Lecoy, 1, 45; Chaucer, 579.
6. Lecoy, 1, 47; Chaucer, 579.
7. John Fleming makes this point—the irrelevance of the well's sentence as interpreted by Amant—quite forcefully: The glossator's perspective on the well "has much in common with that which sees Othello as a warning that ladies should look after their linen." The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 96.
8. Lecoy, 1, 47; Chaucer, 579.
9. Compare Sheila Delay: The dream vision form "... involved the reader more intimately than straightforward narrative, for the reader becomes both the interpreter of the dream and the judge of its truth," Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 38. In fact, as I show below, the involvement of the reader is more intimate and complex than even this quotation suggests, since the status of the dream (and hence of the dreamer) are yet two more separate but interdependent interpretive problems for the reader.
14. Compare Kirk:

In places this method succeeds in transmitting to the reader the vivid immediacy and almost intolerable pressure of actual dreams, in which we are taken possession of by something we can recognize as our own experience but stripped of the controls and modulations consciousness can always impose on empathy. In such states, complete empathy and total strangeness coexist. [Dream Thought, p. 181]

Chapter Five

2. This is a fairly radical departure from the critical tradition on the Book of the

3. Throughout this discussion and that of the *Hous of Fame*, I will consistently refer to the Chaucerian dreamer-narrator and dreamer-character as "Geffrey" when there is no reason to distinguish between character and narrator. I will use "Chaucer" consistently to refer to the poet.


5. "Routhe" or "reuthe" is, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, a word with a decidedly Anglo-Saxon flavor. The *OED*’s earliest entries for the word are in the twelfth century, but the root of "routhe," probably Old English "reccan" ("to care") is much older. There is, of course, no hard evidence that Chaucer deliberately chose "routhe" over the newer, French "pitee" to emphasize plainness or rusticity, but, given the overall French flavor of the Book of the Duchess, the word does jar.


8. Charles Muscatine (in *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1957]) sees this double thrust of the conventionality of the poem:

The style of the *Book of the Duchess*, then, shows two concurrent movements in the light of the French tradition: one toward a func-
tional use of courtly convention, the other toward a realism that sug-
ggests comic disenchantment. (p. 107)


10. Mother Angela Carson, O. S. U., in “Easing the 'Hert' in The Book of the
Duchess,” Chaucer Review 1 (1966): 156–66 sees the story of Ceyx and Alcion as
told “matter-of-factly and at a quick tempo” with “the impression of indifference
rather than compassion on the part of the narrator” (p. 157).

11. Compare Muscatine:

To “thilke Morpheus” he [Geffrey] makes a comically literal offer of a
featherbed, then throws into the bargain an array of bedroom finery
that would do credit to a mercer’s apprentice; for sleep he will pay
Juno too. Here are the makings of him who rimed the tale of Sir
Thopas. (p. 104)

This may overstate it a bit—the bed comes from Machaut—but Muscatine is correct
that Geffrey thoroughly botches the detail with tastelessness and a bourgeois nose
for the price tag.

12. R. A. Shoaf in “Stalking the Sorrowful H(e)art,” (p. 316), sees the whelp as
an image of the penitent’s conscience, which chases the fox (sins) into its den (the
heart of the penitent). On this point he cites Le Livre de Seyntz Medecines of Henry
de Gourmont, father of Blanche of Lancaster. If this association is intended, then
the whelp is clearly more than a transitional device, though finally these penitential
associations do not argue against this present reading. If the Book of the Duchess is
about communication and communion, then the whelp, in bringing together Geffrey
and the Black Knight, represents the wordless will to sympathy.

13. In conventional expectations, see Muscatine, especially 98-101; Alfred
David (in The Strumpet Muse: Art and Morals in Chaucer’s Poetry [Bloomington:
Indiana University Press, 1976]): “[In the Book of the Duchess] . . . the audience
is prepared to hear an allegory of love” (p. 18); and W. H. French (in “The Man in
Black’s Lyric,” JEGP, 56 [1957]): “He [Geffrey] is a confirmed lover on the most
approved courtly model . . . ” (p. 236).

14. For another view, see John M. Steadman, “Chaucer’s ‘Whelp’: A Symbol of
Marital Fidelity,” Notes and Queries, 1 (1956): 374–75.

15. For the various views on the reaction to the lament, see note 4 to the Intro-
duction above; Robertson (Companion to Chaucer Studies), especially 333–34;
A. C. Spearing, Medieval Dream-Poetry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1976), esp. 66–68; and Muscatine, who describes the narrator’s “. . . kinship
with the Man in Black—they are both disappointed lovers,—but his characteriza-
tion is such that we cannot take his affairs so seriously” (p. 103).
16. French, p. 241:

Himself a person out of the pages of Ovid, Guillaume de Lorris, Machaut, Froissart and the rest, he supposed he saw before him another of the same breed.

17. Compare Nolan:

As the argument of the Duchess proceeds, we come to understand that this plea for common sense (lines 16–21) points to the poem’s most serious themes. We will learn that the poetry of feeling and the platitudes of bookish, high-toned consolation cannot fully encompass or assuage personal grief. One is faced, finally, with the undecorated statement of fact, “She is ded.” [“The Art of Expropriation,” p. 213]

18. Compare Gardner:

Ironically, his [Geffrey’s] art is as obscure as the Knight’s allegory of Fortune. Though we understand his unhappiness in love, just as the narrator understands the Knight’s grief when he first overhears him lamenting in the woods, Chaucer’s narrator has failed to make the necessary open statement, relinquishing art for self-surrender. [“Style as Meaning,” p. 170]

19. For useful summaries of the origins of the formal and doctrinal controversies concerning Pearl, see Rene Wellek, “The Pearl: An Interpretation of the Middle English Poem,” Studies in English by Members of the English Seminar of Charles University (1933), rpt. in Sir Gawain and Pearl: Critical Essays, ed. Robert J. Blanch (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971), 3–10, and A. C. Spearing, The Gawain-Poet: A Critical Study (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 129, note 1. In brief, the earliest students of the poem, notably ten Brink, Gollancz, and Osgood, saw it as an elegy satisfying the father’s wish to know that his little daughter is in Heaven. Reacting to this view (which grew to encourage excessive biographical speculation), a group of critics including Carleton Brown (“The Author of Pearl Considered in Light of His Theological Opinions,” PMLA, 19 [1904]) and Sister Mary Madeleva (Pearl: A Study in Spiritual Dryness [New York: Appleton, 1925]) began to treat the poem as allegorical, doctrinal, apocalyptic, or otherwise homiletic. Most contemporary analyses of Pearl must by rights be considered broadly “allegorical,” though I single out the discussions of Spearing and Blenker below.


26. See Johnson, *The Gawain Poet*, 188-89, on the special appropriateness of this rag line.

27. See Wellek, "The *Pearl* . . . ;" and D. W. Robertson, Jr., 'The 'Heresy' of *Pearl*: The *Pearl* as Symbol," *MLN* 65 (1950): 152-62, rpt. in Conley, 291-96, which illustrate the complexity of the poem's response to the Bradwardinians.

28. The point of the *Visio*, in fact, seems to be the irrational and gratuitous "mede" of salvation and the challenge this concept presents to the human mind; even in his attack on the strumpet Lady Meed in Passus Four, the strait-laced character Conscience seems compelled to admit that there is most certainly a sense of meed in bono: God's meed of salvation. See Russell, "Lady Meed, Pardons, and the *Piers Plowman Visio* ."


30. I use the term "oracular" here in its technical sense in medieval oneiromancy. Spearing, in *The Gawain-Poet*, 145-52, discusses this context, noting the poignance of the inverted parent-child relationship.

31. *The Cloud of Unknowing and the Book of Privy Counselling*, ed. William Johnston, S. J. (Garden City: Doubleday Image, 1973), 60. For another suggestion on mystical connotations in *Pearl*, see Spearing, *The Gawain-Poet*, especially 107-17; Spearing cites Richard of St. Victor on sleep as a metaphor for the true contemplative's spiritual openness to divine visitation (p. 115). The conventional frame narrative of the apocalypse, however, regularly insists that the visionary is not asleep, not even in a "sleep of the senses and passions."

32. *The Cloud of Unknowing*, 52. Contemporary "Cloud mysticism," called "centering prayer," still emphasizes this emptying of the mind of even excellent thoughts and images. Basil Pennington, O. S. C. O., a teacher of centering prayer, tells the story of an old Trappist who sought him out troubled after reading injunctions against thoughts and images in prayer. "Does this mean," he asked, "that I should struggle against ecstatic visions of Jesus?" Father Basil answered yes. The anecdote is relevant because, under the rubric of the dream vision that I am suggesting, both the dream and the poem are thrilling impediments to true spirit-
ual communion. If I am correct about Pearl's deconstruction of the discourse of eschatology, then the final lesson of the poem is to cast it away.


34. Delany, 3, 34–35.


36. The fullest account of the Proem to the House of Fame is in B.G. Koonce's Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame . . . , 45–56. Koonce explicates the Proem very carefully, providing patristic analogues for Chaucer's statements about the variety of causes for dreams, showing, not surprisingly, that there are solid Scriptural and scientific bases—auctores—for all of Chaucer's contradictory theories about dreams. This scholarship is undercut, it seems to me, by Koonce's implicit trust in Geffrey's identification of this particular dream as an avisioun and by just what this identification might mean.

Koonce is equally unclear on precisely what the status of a feigned or fictive visio or somnium coeleste or what have you might be; real visiones are prophetic, certainly, but feigned ones, Koonce says, require interpretation (pp. 5–6). This does not speak to the status of the content of the dream but addresses only its allegorical form. If, as Koonce claims, the House of Fame is a fictive visio or somnium, then its contents are somehow fictively prophetic, a category rather inscrutable in either medieval or modern terms. In any case, even stipulating that Geffrey identifies this dream as an avisioun tells us nothing really, for the statement is made rather backhandedly in a Proem that displays, at best, random oneiric knowledge—including six terms for Macrobius' five varieties—and prays twice that everything will turn out all right.

Delany's discussion of the Proem (pp. 36–44) is fittingly more diffuse and ambivalent than Koonce's: she claims (as Spearing does in Medieval Dream-Poetry, p. 75) that the Proem is an ironic deviation from traditional truth topoi, which complicates rather than settling questions of authenticity.

37. Compare Delany: The House of Fame takes us to what, for the poet, is the heart of pluralism: the tradition itself. Not incoherency but incongruity is the...
characteristic of the *House of Fame*: indeed it is its subject, because incongruity is the essence of Fame. (p. 35)

38. See Larry Sklute, *Virtue of Necessity: Inconclusiveness and Narrative Form in Chaucer's Poetry* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1984), 138, on "saugh I grave."

39. Compare Boitani, who nicely captures the peculiarly participatory nature of the Dido episode:

Thus Dido's words and the laments resound, not in space, but in the mind, in an absolute physical silence. They echo in thought, which can then digress and extend to famous cases of betrayed heroines: Chaucer drops the formula 'saugh I grave' precisely at the beginning of the Dido episode, picking it up again as soon as the latter is finished. In silence the *Aeneid* is recreated and lives on the walls, inscribed by the poet's pity, external and intimate at the same time.

*Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1984), 10.

As a maker himself, Geffrey is implicated or involved in the implicit attack on authority and tradition in the Dido episode. See also Jesse Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), especially 184, on deciding between Vergil's and Ovid's Dido.

40. Compare Delany: [In attempting to face the conflicting senses of the historical Dido,] "... Chaucer grants the validity of conflicting truths and confronts the problem with no way of deciding between them" (p. 57). I would agree that conflicting claims and their as yet unassailable authority are the themes of this poem, but I question Delany's sense that *deciding between them* is the ultimate issue or that the poem counsels acquiescence to double truth. If the *Hous of Fame* is Chaucer's "art poetical" as many have claimed, then it would be more consonant with that sense of the poem to hope that Geffrey and the reader might come to decide beyond rather than between conflicting authorial claims. I agree, in fact, with Donald Howard (in *The Idea of the Canterbury Tales* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978], 330-32) that the pluralism which emerges in the *Hous of Fame*, both here and especially at its conclusion, make it a fitting introduction or preamble to the *Canterbury Tales*, in which pluralism is an organizing principle as well as a theme.


42. Compare Robert B. Burlin:

The dreamer-narrator listens in a literal-minded way; he sees and describes without comment, reads and transcribes without engaged
response. He may occasionally be moved to pity and terror, but never for long or with sustained seriousness. He resides innocently upon the surface of his experiences, shaping and containing them by his presence, but rarely interpreting or generalizing the powerful sensations forced upon him. The dreamer's reactions are arrested at the first stage of perception, the Thomist experimentum; he stands before a brave new world not of his making, though nominally his by virtue of the dream fiction.


43. Compare Boitani:

Chaucer's Fame, suspended between heaven, earth and sea, between life and death, does not stand at the end of time, but in a prehistorical, eternal present. She creates history by determining who and what will survive in the memory of men, and with which connotations. Her 'dom,' her a-moral judgement, is not history, but historiography.

_(Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame, p. 172)_

44. Boitani (Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame) cites _Inferno IV_, line 113 as an analogue (p. 83).

45. Compare Boitani (Chaucer and the Imaginary World of Fame):

When the man of great authority appears in the poem's last line, we are back at square one. The _auctoritates_ with whom Geffrey has identified himself and into whom he has refused to incarcerate himself—Virgil, Ovid, Dante—rise again. Chaucer, as the last line's derivation from _Inferno IV_ testifies, is about to enter another Castle of Limbo. The _House of Fame_, like a short story by Borges, would repeat itself forever. (p. 208)

and Gellrich (The Idea of the Book in the Middle Ages):

The "man of gret auctorite" must be anonymous. To search for his name is to go in the wrong direction. Chaucer has led in the last line of the poem to the origin that myths always lead to: they are anonymous. (p. 198)

**Epilogue**


2. _The Temple of Glass_ in _John Lydgate: Poems_, ed. John Norton Smith, Clare-


3. As evidence of this improbable thesis, consider that there are no witches or warlocks in Chaucer's poetry and at most one ghost—depending on how one interprets Dido in the *Hous of Fame*. Now consider Shakespeare. The reason for this is certainly not that the Middle Ages was a more rational period than the Renaissance: I suspect the reason devolves to Macrobius once more—only respectable, decent, and plausible fictions were available to poets and rhetors in the mainstream medieval tradition.