A STUDY OF STRUCTURE AND CONVENTIONS IN CHAUCER'S DREAM POEMS

Submitted to the

Department of English

Australian National University

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by

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January, 1964

647288

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In his early career Chaucer belonged to that 'company of singing somnambulists'[1] who extolled the joys and sorrows of love, the fickleness of Fortune, or the mysteries and wonder of God's love in poems disguised as dreams. The Book of the Duchess, the Parliament of Fowls, the House of Fame and the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women all reveal Chaucer's interest in dreams and the conventional devices which had grown around them. For the modern reader, both the content and function of the dreams are apt to evoke problems or objections. With a background of Freudian psychology, a reader might exaggerate the psychological significance of the dream content;[2] more seriously, the dream as the primary structural device of the poem might be dismissed summarily as merely conventional.[3] Some critics have skirted the issue of the dream's conventional use by emphasizing the educational value of the poems in the young poet's growth;[4] others, after locating the sources and analogues of Chaucer's dream poems, have attempted to elucidate them in terms of any one or more of their components, overlooking the importance of the dream as the guiding structural principle.[5] In only the narrowest way has the real significance of the dream device been realized by commentators, but the simple fact that the four poems have become known as 'love-visions' or 'dream poems' should point to its importance. The paradox of the dream as a waking-sleep[6] was recognized by Chaucer as well as Freud, and its exploitation in these poems reveals not only Chaucer's ability to handle a convention, but

also his insight -- it could be called psychological -- into the full nature of man, both conscious and unconscious.

Like most poets of ability, Chaucer transformed his conventions while following them. The dream poem was only one of several forms used by poets of the Middle Ages, and Chaucer has left us his approval of the form in his translation of the Roman de la Rose and his own poems which grew from this. But these forms were not invariable: their elements could be moulded to suit the new conditions and attitudes of poet and audience, or to allow for the exigencies of subject-matter and artistic presentation. For his Canterbury pilgrims, Chaucer turned sermons, fabliaux and lays into dramatic expressions of their personalities; for the narrators of his dream poems he made the system of courtly love a eulogy of perfect love, a matter for debate, or the object of an exaggerated and bizarre devotion. Like the authors of the Roman de la Rose, he transformed something old or 'conventional' into something new, 'For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,/Cometh al this new corn from yer to yere'.[7] He did so not only by injecting flashes of his own sympathy or ironic humour into his poems, but also by giving a twist of emphasis to his treatment of structure, a twist which added a new dimension to a borrowed design.

This study of the structure and content of the dream device should contribute to the resolution of some of the problems and misconceptions of Chaucer's dream poems. What, for example, is the exact nature and role of the narrator in the poem? Is he

merely a comic mask for the poet Chaucer? Does he sleep only that he may dream, and hence create another world and another level of reality beyond that of natural law and logic? Does he stand like Melville's Ishmael, the naive spectator of events, or like Conrad's Marlowe, the wise analyst or commentator? Like both of these, he provides a unity while fulfilling his role as a character.

For at least two of the poems, the question of Chaucer's ability to construct a unified poem has been raised. The thematic unity of the <u>Parliament of Fowls</u> has been found especially difficult to explain by those critics who regard the lively ornithological parliament as all-important and ignore its status as the result of the narrator's personality and waking-life experience. More damaging criticism, with wider assent among critics, has been brought against the organic unity of both the <u>Book of the Duchess</u> and the <u>Parliament of Fowls</u>. Geoffrey Tillotson's general appraisal of the dream framework is characteristic: 'it enclosed the poem and so gave it the unity of anything which is wrapped up in a parcel, or, more exactly, ribboned round with taffeta'.[8] The implication of the metaphor is obvious: the dream bears only a decorative relation to the content. We shall see, however, that the dream framework is more like the skin on the body, a living and functional tissue receptive to adornment. Briefly we may here indicate the general 'circular' shape of the framework in Chaucer's dream poems.

In the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls, for example, the poem begins with a commentary which describes how the narrator feels before he begins reading. He then falls asleep over his book and dreams. When he awakens, he feels impelled to record his dream. The first lines he writes describe how he feels at the moment of writing. Thus the initial lines of the poems apply first to the beginning of the narrator's experience and then to his thoughts as he reviews the whole experience in retrospect. The reader follows the narrator to the end of his experience and then returns with him to the beginning: the various parts of the narrator's experience are thus seen to be inter-related, to play one upon another, finally fusing into a significant meaning and experience. When this unifying process of the dream framework is recognized, the full effect of the Book of the Duchess as an elegy and the Parliament of Fowls as a debate poem will be appreciated.

The exact tone of any medieval poem is not easily established. The full resources of both historical and critical scholarship must be summoned, and even then it is not always possible to estimate accurately the elevation a word possessed in the fourteenth century, or the nuances of expression which, in oral poetry, were indicated by the poet's voice rather than by punctuation in the manuscript. One key to tone is, however, provided by a knowledge of the poetic conventions of the time. This enables the reader to notice subtle modifications in their

use and treatment. By relating Chaucer's treatment of, for example, the courtly eagles in the <u>Parliament of Fowls</u> to the usual treatment of courtly lovers the humourous tone of the passage is discovered.

Courtly love was commonly the subject of secular dream poems, as it is of Chaucer's. Chaucer, however, saw the system objectively, as one factor in a great world of contending values and standards, and so as a dramatic element. He was a great controversialist; debate and contention are frequent in his poetry, whether early or late. He would add one element to another to draw out their reaction, and he saw every part of his world -- its inhabitants and their ideas -- as potential elements with which to create tension. The dramatic effect of his poems upon his original audience must have been immense. That audience was a courtly one which understood courtly poetry and the code of courtly love. With one eye on this audience, assessing their reactions by what he knew to be their predispositions, Chaucer could, with calculated effect, epitomize romantic knighthood in an eagle, or deal a blow to the power of Cupid himself. The modern reader can never quite capture the vitality of this effect; but he can gain an approximation of it through study of the literary history behind Chaucer's dream poems. As Dorothy Everett has said,

> . . . However 'modern' Chaucer may often seem to be, he <u>is</u> separated from us by more than five centuries, and, if we are honest, we shall have to admit that there are many things in his writings that make little sense to us. What then are we to do with these things? We must either study them historically and try to see

> what they meant to their own age, and therefore probably to their author; or ignore them, and thereby run the risk of ignoring something vital to the work in which they are found.[9]

The dream poem contains conventions of content, method and structure. Its content includes the dream itself and courtly love material; its method is allegory. These three became joined in dream poems which developed a more or less set structure, influenced partly by the form of older religious dreams and partly by its newer application to the personal matter of courtly love.

The first element of dream poem convention to be discussed below is the dream. Between its earliest appearance in Western literature and Chaucer's day there accumulated a large body of theory concerning different kinds of dreams, their causes and significance. Chaucer was well acquainted with this theory: he makes direct comment on it not only in his dream poems, but in Troilus and Criseyde and the Nun's Priest's Tale, and his deeper knowledge of it is implicit in the insight and artistry with which he used it as a device of content and structure.

Secondly, allegory must be examined. Chaucer was not an allegorist like Langland was, using allegory as a natural and comprehensible means of expressing the 'continuum' of the physical-spiritual universe, as a technique arising inevitably from his concept of his subject. Chaucer's interest in social and philosophical systems lay in their effect upon the individual. His allegory too is connected with a particular character: it is the expression of a narrator's interior life

in his dream, or it is a method of characterizing a figure such as the Black Knight in the Book of the Duchess. In the first example the inherent symbolic nature of dreams is utilized, while the second is a manifestation of Chaucer's unusual perception of the nature of allegory. Recognizing the lifelessness of personifications as opposed to the warmth of human emotions, he could employ both to represent the knight's return to life and hope.

Courtly love is the third element. This is the name usually given to the complicated system of attitudes and behaviour that was codified in the twelfth century by Andreas Capellanus. But as we shall see, it grew out of matter which can be found in literature for centuries preceding its codification. The material was composed of associations between the subjects of love, nature, mythology, allegory and Christianity. Expression of these subjects and associations became fixed over the years until an abstract concept of the expression itself was distinguished from its particular content in any poem, although the content was seldom greatly varied. These fixed expressions, and their usual content, may be called the literary conventions of courtly love. The system of courtly love, on the other hand, was a conventional topic for secular dream poems, and its rules controlled the feelings and behaviour of dream poem characters. Chaucer employs both the system as subject matter, and the literary conventions of courtly love with the same versatility and

objective attitude that marks his use of allegory.

Finally, some examples of the framework in English dream poetry will be surveyed before Chaucer's poems themselves are examined. These provide the background against which Chaucer's position in English dream poetry as an innovator becomes evident. The secular dream poem tradition was headed by the thirteenth-century French poem, the Roman de la Rose, the model followed by Machaut, Froissart and Deschamps in France and by Chaucer in England. English dream poetry before Chaucer dealt almost exclusively with religious and moralizing subjects, but showed some influence of the poetic conventions established by the Roman. After Chaucer, writers like James I of Scotland and Lydgate in England attempted to follow Chaucer's example in dream poetry, but lacked both his control of the conventions and his freedom within them.

The division of dream poem convention into these elements is a somewhat arbitrary one; it will be evident all along that they are inter-related both before and after their combination in the dream poem. To correct this division, and to indicate the nature of Chaucer's immediate model, the following discussion of these elements will be related to the archetype of the courtly dream poem, the Roman de la Rose.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF THE CONVENTIONS

The Roman de la Rose

The secular dream poem was distinguished, from the time of its first appearance, by its concern with courtly love. The Roman de la Rose,[1] begun by Guillaume de Lorris about 1240, set out to tell the dream of a courtly lover who falls in love with a rose and must overcome numerous obstacles to win it. De Lorris' portion breaks off after some four thousand lines when the lover's reverses have only begun, and the remaining four-fifths of the poem is the work of Jean de Meun who, about forty years later, provided a great many more obstacles and trials for the lover as well as their final solution.

Almost the entire poem is devoted to the dream. In a few introductory lines the dreamer announces his belief in the fulfillment of dreams and his intention of proving their truth by relating a dream he had five years before; in even fewer lines at the end he restates his conviction and adds that they are fools who despise Love's rule.[2] His dream is didactic: it has taught him these principles, and his purpose in relating it is to inform others of them. He becomes Love's advocate as he takes up his position as narrator of the poem.

What he dreamed must, however, be interpreted: the setting,

characters and action all represent other things. He did not dream that he met a beautiful lady, was first encouraged and then repulsed by her and her guardians, but finally won her. He dreamed that he entered Mirth's walled garden from a Maytime meadow and there met the God of Love and his retinue, saw a rose reflected in the fountain of Narcissus, and fell in love with it when pierced by Love's arrows. He is aided in his struggle to pluck the rose by Love's advice and active support, both in person and through Venus, the Friend, Fair-Welcome, Pity and other barons, all of whom are opposed by such forces as Reason, Danger, Evil-Tongue, Shame, Fear and Jealousy. The dreamer-lover's mental, emotional and physical movement toward his goal is thus depicted through symbols (such as the rose) which stand for real people, and personifications or mythological figures (such as Reason, and the God of Love or Cupid) which represent abstract processes of mind and heart.

The dreamer's love story is provided with deities, commandments, reverses and rewards -- a whole mythology of courtly love. In his dream the lover commits himself to this as to a religion. He pledges himself the servant of the presiding deity, Love, and must be instructed by Love in the fulfilling of his service before he can know its meaning and win its prize. For almost seven hundred lines[3] the God of Love expounds the doctrine of the system and describes the joys and sorrows that inevitably result from following it. This initial

concentration on courtly love, expanded by de Meun, becomes a consideration of love in more general terms: love of and friendship with one's fellow man, married love with its emphasis on procreation, and love of God. These wider principles, advanced mainly in the pleas of Reason, Nature and the priest Genius, serve as a complement to the strict tenets of the courtly love religion. The lover is instructed by being told the theory of love and shown its application in succeeding scenes both pictorial and dramatic; his own role is that of the seeker of knowledge, and is otherwise passive. Didacticism is thus closely associated in the poem with the love religion: through divine influence the lover is instructed in his dream, and at the same time he is a vehicle through which the god's wishes are made known to all.

The allegorical dream and the religious-didactic purpose, characteristic of religious dream poems, were united in the Roman de la Rose with the subject of courtly love and with the conventional expressions of it. The Roman de la Rose took its place in thirteenth-century literature as a thesaurus, bringing together and codifying both the principles of courtly love and the arguments against it, as a repository of subject-matter for later love poets. But it provided as well a form in which the passion of love could be imaginatively set forth in decorative allegory, and elevated by adopting the formalities of the Christian religion and the literary device of divine inspiration through dreams.[4]

Dreams

From the times when God appeared to Moses and Joseph dreamed of sheaves, when Odysseus was shown the underworld and Er saw the future of souls in his death-like sleep, we have literary records of otherworldly experiences. These experiences are prophetic; the men who have them are visionaries. Excursions of spirits into the sensible world or of the soul into the world of spirits reveal a truth to the visionary whose experience is then passed along to others for their edification. The didactic purpose of literary records of such occurrences is implied in the Bible, or made explicit as in the Dream of the Rood;[1] it is present in those works that purport to truth as does the Dream of the Rood, and in those that are fictional such as Pearl.[2] Whether they are recorded as truth or fiction, these visionary experiences involve two opposite processes. The spirit of man is represented as being transported to another world as in Drihthelm's vision,[3] or inhabitants of another world enter man's world as in Biblical revelations and dreams such as Cædmon's.[4] Either way, the visionary experience is a touching of the two planes of existence with communication between them for the benefit of man.

When our earliest vision literature was written, gods walked the earth with men: Telemachus was harried into action by a most human and bustling Athene, and Joseph conversed with God without any explanations as to how this could be so. The

two worlds were one. But later the gods were viewed as less anthropomorphic, more mysterious and remote;[5] then some explanation was required to make possible their meeting with man. Christian belief in the spiritual kingdom admitted the possibility of visits between it and the microcosmic domain of man, and Christian literature abounds in records of these communications.[6] In medieval literature especially there are numerous accounts of visionary experiences, for by this time the Church had spread its teachings over most of Europe, and science held with and elaborated upon its theories regarding dreams and visions. God, and through Him the planets, caused men to dream those dreams which had any prophetic significance -- Macrobius, the physicians and astrologers, and St. Augustine agree.[7]

They agreed as well that there were other dreams, caused not by external influences but by physical and mental disturbances, to which no prophetic significance could be accorded. Instigated by afflictions of the person, these personal dreams revealed only their causes: bodily states such as hunger and satiety, or the anxieties and desires of the dreamer. In this sort of dream, Macrobius says, a man may be confronted by an enemy whom he tries to flee, he may be publically honoured or disgraced, he may win or lose his beloved -- love is always being attended by 'nightmares'.[8] His contemporary, Claudian, makes a similar statement which Chaucer translated and adapted about a thousand years later in the <u>Parliament of Fowls</u>.[9]

Medieval dream science emphasizes the cause as explanation of the dream, unlike modern psychology which works from the dream back into the dreamer's personality. The latter searches for bases deeply individual and subconscious, whereas the causes set out in medieval dream lore are more obvious and are applicable to people in general.[10]

While the prophetic dream is characterized by the presence of a deity or manifestations of one, a fictional deity such as the God of Love may make the fictional dream resemble the prophetic type. The personal dream caused by the passion of love may acquire elevation and significance by the association of its mythology of courtly love with the Christian religion. This has occurred in the Roman de la Rose where the dream is presided over by the pagan gods Cupid and Venus, their enemy spirits, and their retinue of personifications such as Beauty and Idleness. As in the true religious dream these figures are effectively presented in concrete terms by means of allegory.

Besides approximating the Christian religious dream in the matter of characters, the love dream in the Roman de la Rose resembles in plot and action the romance of chivalry, wherein a knight pursues a series of adventures and overcomes obstacles to win the beautiful and beloved lady. But when the world of romance, with its qualities of the fabulous, the mysterious, the remote and the ideal, occurs in a dream, it becomes a part of the experience of a realistic character, and

it acquires symbolic significance that must be interpreted. Monstrous figures such as Danger, Evil-Tongue, Shame and Fear, and a mysterious castle such as the one in which Fair-Welcome is imprisoned, take on a reality and a pertinacity in the Roman de la Rose which they lack in straight romance, for in the Roman de la Rose their relation to real life, through the dreamer, is representational; romance has become an allegory of life. Like the spirit characters noted above, the world of romance in this pseudo-prophetic dream involves the method of allegory.

Allegory

As Macrobius said concerning the use of fables or fictions, there is more than one way of telling the truth, and the way appropriate to philosophers is 'a decent and dignified conception of holy truths. . . presented beneath a modest veil of allegory'.[1] Whether it is a Bede describing the world of souls, or a de Lorris portraying a lover winning his lady, the truth that a poet conveys through a dream is effectively presented beneath the 'veil' of allegory.

In the simplest sort of dream, exemplified by Joseph's dream of the sheaves, the dream content is a set of symbols corresponding to realities.[2] Eleven sheaves bow down to a single sheaf, foretelling that Joseph's brothers will bow before him asking for grain. The dream contains sensibilia which correspond to concrete realities; its action indicates an event which is to occur in real life.

The dream worlds seen by Er and Drihthelm are of a different kind, corresponding to the world of the spirit rather than that of the body. Er sees Judges, the three sister Fates, an Interpretor, and souls.[3] These entities are speaking abstractions, just as the setting of paths and meadow has no described substance. Bede's record of the vision of Drihthelm[4] contains a dream world more clearly defined. Drihthelm's guide is a man in shining robes; the spirits inhabiting the regions of darkness have glowing eyes, flaming mouths and nostrils, and forceps in their hands; souls are recognizable as a clerk, a layman, a woman or companies of people. The dreamer passes a valley, a pit, a wall, a garden, which are characterized by light or darkness, height or depth, heat or cold, fragrance or stench. Here the world of the spirit is given body and substance; it is conveyed by appealing to the senses of touch, hearing, sight and smell. Er's vision leaves the reader with a sense of presences and a set of concepts, while Drihthelm's gives him the impression of having himself had an experience. Plato described an abstract process; Bede presented one in an effective allegory.

It is the veil of allegory drawn over the afterlife of the soul that makes Bede's vision the more immediate. This veil is the clothing in which the immaterial comes forward to impress itself upon the senses, providing an intermediary step toward understanding, and delighting the imagination. When Pride appears flagrantly decked out in rich array, or when a

virgin appears as a rosebud, both the intellect and the interest of the reader are activated. By doing away with the veil a philosopher may risk being obscure, and the poet of love may find he has produced only psychology. Allegory is one of the methods which function according to Horace's dictum 'aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae'.[5] By the time of the Roman de la Rose the two uses had been joined. But in two fourth-century works these functions of allegory may be viewed more or less separately. Furthermore, these works indicate the effectiveness with which the allegorical method is able to represent emotions by means of action, character, and a decoratively evocative atmosphere.

Prudentius in the 'Psychomachia' illustrated by means of allegory the struggle between the forces of good and evil for possession of man's soul.[6] The conflict between these abstracts is presented as an epic battle between the vices and virtues, the latter emerging triumphant, but not without having met such interesting reversals as the near breaking of their ranks by insidious Dischord. The essential nature of good and evil is preserved despite the difficulty that active warfare is inimical to some of the virtues.[7] In fact, some of the more subtle qualities of the figures are brought to light by the parts they play in the action, so that the process of revelation is continuous throughout the allegory, leading up to virtue's inevitable victory. Sobriety, Good Works, Chastity, and Faith do outright battle, slinging weapons and words with equal

ferocity, while Patience, Humility and Peace are given roles less active. Patience's armour protects her from all of Anger's blows until he destroys himself; Humility is saved from Pride's attack when that vice falls into a trap she laid to ensnare her opponent, and Humility is only able to extinguish her enemy when inspired by Hope; Peace is present less as a character than as an atmosphere which, touching the warriors, makes them disarm. Concord too receives a blow but does not strike. Because the attributes of virtue and vice have been isolated and incorporated in personifications, then set in action, the nature of virtue and vice is more effectively illustrated than it is in narrative descriptions such as those found in sermon literature.[8] Besides, the drama of the battle implies the general point that virtue must be active against vice, which is ever encroaching upon it. In this allegory the emphasis is on action and character as a means of illustrating concepts.

The decorative allegory of Claudian, on the other hand, makes more of setting. Where Prudentius is concerned with teaching, Claudian wishes to delight. In the 'Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti'[9] Claudian eulogizes the wedding couple and the bride's parents; he fills out his compliments with a description of Cupid's visit to Venus, whom he finds enthroned in a green-gleaming palace of precious stones in a land where spring is eternal and all nature lives for love. Venus is persuaded to take action on behalf of the lovers. She appears

to Maria and her mother, speaks glowingly of the appropriateness of the match, and arraigns the bride to meet her husband. Venus' action represents the emotions experienced by Maria, and the lush sensual atmosphere of her realm along with the pageantry of her movements conveys with becoming distance the richness and fulfillment of the emperor's bridal. Through this allegorical use of mythology and its accompanying nature imagery Claudian has expressed the irresistibility of the love match; he has endowed it with the dignity and importance of an event worthy of the attention of the gods. The praise and celebration which are the purpose of the poem have been heightened.

The experiments in allegorical and dream poetry before the thirteenth century thus provided de Lorris and de Meun with many tools. To represent the realities of waking life, the romantic quest of a lover for his lady, symbols such as the rose and the duenna were at hand. The immaterial world of heart, mind and soul and the powers that govern them could be given bodies and set into action as the God of Love and his barons against Danger, Shame, Evil-Tongue and their colleagues, in a contest which would portray the nature of these characters as well as their essential mobility as processes. Their appearance and clothing, the flowers, birds and streams of their garden, the painted wall and the castle -- all the components of the rich setting of the dream world of love could function at the same time as parts of the revelation,

enriching the concepts of beauty and love and their dark enemies, and enhancing the quickening of the spirit and the sensuality. The presence of mythological deities could elevate the whole love experience to a position akin to religious experience. The events of external life (the courting and winning of the lady) and the mental and emotional processes connected with these events move together on one plane in the dream world of the Roman de la Rose , a world which has its own vivid reality.

Courtly Love

The Roman de la Rose and Chaucer's dream poems differ from religious dream poems chiefly in subject-matter. Many of their conventions, however, -- the spring garden, allegorical figures representing the powers of a religion, women in positions of prominence and influence, the prophetic-didactic intention -- were common to all dream poetry because they had become attached to the form. These features arose from the same matter as did the system of courtly love, which appeared in France in the twelfth century. The matter itself is much older than the system: in the Latin poetry of the Christian era, and even before, there are to be found associations between nature, love, Christianity, mythology and allegory, and these associations grew into both the conventional poetic devices and the system of courtly love. It is useful to distinguish between the courtly love material and the codified system so that when we speak of the early appearance of

courtly love matter it will not be mistaken as signifying an early appearance of the system. If the nature of the conventional poetic devices and the codified system is to be understood, the matter of courtly love must be investigated.

It is significant that what introduced the pagan gods to allegory in Claudian's epithalamium, and in those of Sidonius in the next century, was the consummation of love. The pagan landscape with its surviving characteristics from ancient fertility cults, and the tales of the legendary loves of the gods, were associated with nuptial celebrations, and they surrounded these celebrations with glamour and suggestiveness, dignity and importance.[1] As a religion, paganism was no longer a vital force; as a mythology it was at the mercy of the imaginative mind influenced by changed social and spiritual values. Well before Chaucer's day certain of the myths had been reworked into the religion of the courtly lover, paralleling the Christian religion. The process of adaptation had been selective, combining the exclusion of irrelevant and taboo material with a refocussing on Cupid and Venus as the central deities. Elements which became features of the courtly dream poem were incipient in the early epithalamium: nature symbolism, sensual imagery, and the emergence of Cupid and Venus as the presiding deities, with Venus as the controlling power.

The origins of correspondences between human moods and Nature are buried deep beyond recorded literature. Probably as a result of a simple pleasure-pain principle, comfort, and

therefore happiness, has always been associated with clement weather, plentiful and easily-procured food, and the known path. The literature of antiquity abounds in descriptions of delights such as Homer's of the Elysian Fields[2] and Mount Olympus[3] where there is neither snow nor rain nor wind, in contrast with the roaring rivers, fog, and deadly night of Hades.[4] The Old English <u>æthelast londa</u> is a good example of the equation of happiness with the best of nature: of the two catalogues near the beginning of the poem, one ennumerates the absent extremes of weather while the other lists the absent miseries of life.[5] Another part of this nature symbolism was the conception of life on earth as parallel to the natural cycle of birth-ripeness-death-rebirth: both the physical and spiritual aspects of love could be viewed as following a cycle similar to the seasonal one. As the worthiest of earthly pleasures, love was associated with those natural surroundings considered superlative at the time. In the <u>Roman de la Rose</u> and in Chaucer's dream poems the landscapes are formal; love quickens in enclosed gardens and placid meadows, amid decorously measured foliage and far from rampant beast and noxious plant. Nature and mood were sometimes placed in contrast. The joy of spring was used as a foil for a lover's unhappiness even before this became a vogue in medieval vernacular lyrics. In the Cambridge song 'Levis exsurgit Zephirus' the lover speaks of the warm sun, flowers, trees and nesting birds, while he '... pro tantis gaudiis/Tantis inflor suspiriis.'[6] The

other side of the happiness represented by the spring garden was the sorrowful heart, expressed as in the Old English Seafarer:

> Nap nihtscua, norþan sniwde,
> hrim hrusan bond; hægl feol on eorþan,
> corna caldast.[7]

The garden of love was characterized by a sensuality that went beyond the rejuvenation of nature. The theme of fecundity, with its attendant symbols, reached Christian literature through pagan and Hebrew writings; poets found in both sources an almost inexhaustible storehouse of erotic imagery. Christianity, founded upon love, made fervent though sublimated use of this imagery. The desire of creature for Creator was frequently expressed as in the Sixty-third Psalm: '. . . my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is.' Saint Peter Damian in the eleventh century used the passionate language of the Song of Songs to write of Christ as the bridegroom who calls in the night to his beloved, 'Cito surgens speri, dulcissima.'[8] Among the secular Cambridge songs is one, 'Jam, dulcis amice, venito', which echoes the Song of Songs in one stanza,[9] while elsewhere evoking the luxuriant atmosphere of ancient fertility rites: the lover offers food, wine and music amid the fragrance of flowers and herbs in a house draped with curtains and provided with couches -- just the sort of background we would expect to meet in a temple of Venus. The courtly poet, like Claudian, saw in mythology an indirect and periphrastic means of indicating the erotic

aspect of love.[10] In the Roman de la Rose de Meun follows up Genius' sermon on procreation with an allegorical portrayal of the lover's sexual union with his beloved. Venus draws her bow; along the sight she sees unfolding Pygmalion's desire for his statue; then she 'Le brandon plain de feu ardant/Tout empene lesse voler/Por ceus du chastel afoler.'[11] The lover's goal is reached in a flood of eroticism which establishes Venus as the controlling power of the courtly dream poem.[12]

The gods of the garden of love are Venus and her son, Cupid. Jupiter, though still nominal ruler of the heavens, is given few lines in courtly love poetry. The power of the old established patriarchy has been diminished: for all his power Cupid cannot over-rule his mother.[13] The attitude toward women was ambiguous in both classical and feudal society. On the one hand, the proper earthly object of man's love was considered to be man. This love of man for his equal was often the motivation for poetry as moving as any love song of the troubadours. Walafrid Strabo writes to a friend from whom he is separated and in thought is united with him in the radiance of moonlight;[14] only the gender of the pronouns marks this poem off from later romantic lyrics. Woman was an irrational, disturbing influence -- a quality she retained, in medieval literature, as the cause of the love malady. Like nature, woman must be controlled if man's affairs were to go well. Her function was to marry and bear sons, or to provide promiscuous pleasure. Her duty was subservience. In male-female relationships man played the part of conqueror, like Pluto in the

Rape of Proserpine. On the other hand, woman had never been easily ignored. She mothered her sons and ruled their early lives; occasionally she gained personal or even political power through necessity or manipulation. In feudal times the lady was second in command of the manor, and was duly regarded with respect. In 431 Mary was officially declared the Mother of God, an object of reverence. The ambiguous attitude toward women is well illustrated when Strabo's poem noted above is placed beside another he wrote to Judith, wife of Louis the Pious, which will be discussed below. The respectful regard, if not outright adoration, of women is an attitude that can be found occasionally in literature centuries before it became a convention of courtly love.

The seventh-century poetry of Fortunatus illustrates two of the elements that were to become part of courtly love poetry. A wandering poet, Fortunatus settled down in Poitiers in 597 when he met Radegunde, a noblewoman who had left her brutal husband, founded a convent, and devoted her life to Christian charity. Fortunatus loved the beauty of the convent's surroundings, the succulent fruits it produced, and the grace of its inhabitants; but he centred all his love in Radegunde. He loved her as a servant might his mistress, and as a man might adore a god; had it been possible, he would undoubtedly have loved her as a man loves a woman. He exalted her goodness and her beauty in two poems written on the occasions of her leaving for and returning from Easter retreat.[15] When she

went, like Mary 'heavy with God', he was with her in spirit yet he longed for her; the light had left his world. When she returned it was Easter twice for him, both his spring and his harvest:

> Colligo iam fruges placidos conpono maniplos:
> Quod solet Augustus mensis, Aprilis agit;
> Et licet in primis modo gemma et pampinus exit,
> Iam meus autumnus venit et uva simul.[16]

This is certainly not courtly love poetry, but it contains the combination of spiritual and sensual imagery, and the reverence for women, which were to become conventions of courtly love. Two centuries later, Strabo's poem to Judith shows how worship of the socially and spiritually superior woman was a part of courtly poetry when the element of love was not present at all. In humble tones, he combines praise and prayer for her, and uses terms equally appropriate to a hymn for the Virgin: 'pacis amatrix, lucis amica, quae bona cuncta/mente tueris. . . .'[17]

By the twelfth century nature symbolism, erotic imagery, pagan mythology and Christianity, and reverence for women had become firmly attached to the passion of love in the poetry of the troubadours of Provencal. The associations were becoming stable, but were not yet as conventional as they were to become after the Roman de la Rose. When, in this century, Andreas Capellanus wrote his De Arte Honeste Amandi[18] he not only systematized the feelings and behaviour of the lover, but told a vision tale in which many of the conventions of the later courtly dream poem are to be found together.

A chaplain at the court of that vigourous patron of courtly love, Marie of Champagne, Andreas based his work on Ovid's Ars Amatoria. Ovid would no doubt have been greatly amused. De Arte consists of a monotonous series of exemplary dialogues[19] between men and women of different or equal rank for the purpose of indicating how love may, with propriety, exist between them. Twice the tedium of this pursuit is relieved by narrative which allows the author to expound the commandments of love in a way that endows them with mystical or historical authority. The first of these narratives[20] takes the form of a visit to an other world which possesses several attributes similar to the Christian spiritual world.

The story may be one which was currently being told at the court of Marie.[21] It is retold by Andreas within the speech of a knight, as a parable to teach the lady he is wooing the fate of those who do not abide by the rules of love. The knight tells that one day he and some companions dismounted in the royal forest; then they went to mount again, the knight found that his horse had wandered away. Searching for it he became separated from his companions. He came upon a curious procession led by a man and composed of groups of women riding in three degrees of comfort and discomfort. One of the women explained to him that this was a procession of the dead led by the God of Love and headed for camp. The knight joined the group and saw, upon arrival at their destination, that the site was divided into three concentric circles, the inner one

heavenly, the outer hellish, and the middle a sort of purgatory. The three groups took up their positions each within a circle, the God sitting in the exact centre with his queen. At the suggestion of the woman he had been talking to, the knight approached the God of Love who told him twelve commandments. The knight interceded on behalf of the woman who had advised him, and the God granted her some relief from punishment. Then the knight left that world by crossing a band of water, with instructions to make known the commandments so that man might attain to salvation by obediently following them.

Andreas' representation of the afterlife of souls is much like Bede's story of the experience of Drihthelm. The knight's role is that of the vehicle through whom the warning is conveyed to other men. The deity appears in human form, as do the souls. Bliss and misery are represented in concrete form through idealized natural surroundings as opposed to extremes of moisture and heat. The deity, like Drihthelm's guide, makes explicit the rules of the religion, which, as the visionary can see, are enforced by a system of rewards and punishments. Andreas' tale goes further in having the visionary intercede like a saint on behalf of the woman who helped him, with the result that her punishment is modified. But whereas Bede's tale concerns the Christian religion, Andreas' subject is love. Here the didactic purpose, the allegorical representation, the nature symbolism, and the formalities of the Christian religion are employed to raise love to a level approaching its

prominence in the Roman de la Rose.

Not all writers, however, accepted courtly love without question. Reason, Nature and Genius are brought into the Roman de la Rose by de Meun as detractors of complete commitment to Cupid's religion; Chaucer's dreamer in the Parliament of Fowls, while recognizing the place of courtly love in Nature's scheme, nevertheless sees its deficiencies in the temple of Venus; Gower attempts a moralization of love by making Genius the priest and servant of Venus in Confessio Amantis. The literary parents of Nature and Genius are the figures in Alain de Lille's De Planctu Naturae,[22] a work roughly contemporary with Andreas' in the century preceding the Roman de la Rose. Alain's searching look at current practices of love places his De Planctu at the head of the tradition which questioned, opposed or modified courtly love. Alain cast his ideas in the form of a lover's dream, but only perfunctorily: in the final line we learn that this vision was 'fired by ecstasy, in sleep', and therefore is apparently a dream; during their dialogue Nature rebukes the dreamer for being more interested in Love's nature than in Nature's philosophy, so perhaps he is intended to be a lover. It is significant that those who wrote in this opposing tradition used the methods of the advocates of courtly love.

Lover or not, the dreamer is as grieved as Nature is at man's turning away from her laws concerning love, a waywardness that takes the forms of homosexuality, incest and adultery.

Nature explains that she has endowed man with both reason and sensuality that he may choose whether to be god-like or beast-like. It is his duty to choose reason, but the struggle of his compound nature makes sweeter the reward for virtue. There are two factors which govern man's approach to human love: the principle of moderation which is dictated by reason, and the laws of proper relationships decreed by Nature; within these limits man's love shall lead to the continuation of his kind on earth. It is the infringement of these rules which causes grief to Nature and leads her to enlist the priest Genius to excommunicate the offenders.

This is not all Alain has to say on the subject of love. Some of Nature's words reveal the deities of love from a point of view inimical to the theology of courtly love. According to Nature, Venus was once her obedient deputy, but, satiated with performing the same function repeatedly, she grew to love idleness which led her to adultery. In this work Venus is anything but a heroine. Before she became an apostate, she bore to her husband, Hymen, a son, Cupid, who supposedly inherited the virtues of his parents. But he must also have inherited some of his mother's questionable ways, for Nature gives a quite damning account of his effects upon man before she grants him his due. Although he is her kinsman, she must deal out to him, as she puts it, some 'slight blame' in case, through silence, she strangles truth. Yet Nature does not deny the 'honourableness' of the essential nature of love if it is

checked by moderation. Thus, while allowing dignity to the emotion of love itself, Alain's spokeswoman condemns the features of courtly love which are neither moderate nor marital; Nature presides over this work in the place of honour while Venus is an outcast.

Here is something of the method of the allegorical dream poet; here is his subject, love; here is his assignment of the dominant role to a woman. But all of these attributes of his have been redirected into a serious Christian investigation into the ways of love leading to a moralizing conclusion. The influence of the De Planctu, along with that of works such as Andreas' celebrating the love religion, can be seen in the de Lorris and de Meun sections of the Roman de la Rose. De Lorris' codification of the commandments of love is also issued by the god himself, in rather more elaborate but essentially unchanged form.[23] The Nature-Genius episode in de Meun's continuation occupies nearly five thousand lines[24] or one quarter of the poem, and forms the basis of that author's philosophy of love as the instrument of perpetuation of the race. These two influences can also be seen in Chaucer's Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, and the Parliament of Fowls.

The Dream Poem Framework

The conventions examined above were brought together and firmly established in the Roman de la Rose. They appear there wholly within the dream, which is suspended between two passages

devoted to waking life, and composed of both present tense commentary on the dream experience and past tense description of waking life before and after the dream. The completed construction of the poem thus divides into three parts:[1] first, the introduction containing commentary by the speaker in the light of his dream experience (he believes that dreams come true) and description of how the dream occurred (when he was twenty he fell asleep one May night and dreamed he awakened on a spring morning); second, the dream, allegorically presented using the conventions of the spring garden setting and of mythoological figures and personifications acting out the philosophy and plot of the dream; third, the conclusion where the speaker describes how he was awakened by the movement of walking out of the garden with his rose, and comments on the truth of dreams and the power of Love.

The order of events in this framework permits a natural and plausible entry into and exit from the dream: the man falls asleep in bed, dreams it is morning, awakens by leaving the garden. The dream has greater authority for being based in waking life and linked to it by the night-morning sequence of entry into the dream, and by the double significance (one in each of the dream and real worlds) of the single action of exit. Thus the dream is successfully conveyed as the real experience of the dreamer.

We may assume that the dream in the <u>Roman de la Rose</u> was meant to resemble a religious dream brought about by the God

of Love, for there is no indication of personal factors in the waking life of the dreamer that might have caused it. The poem does forfeit a possible area of significance by presenting so little characterization of the dreamer in waking life. We are given almost no exterior personality against which to view the interior processes revealed in the dream. All the dream has explicitly meant to the dreamer is that, since he has won his lady, dreams must be true and Love must be powerful. He does not recognize any of the dream's more subtle implications; and because we know so little of him we cannot judge for ourselves what the implications may be.

Later dream poets, adapting the basic three-part structure of the Roman de la Rose, achieved varying degrees of success in relating the dream and real worlds; their success was often dependent upon their handling of entry and exit, and, if they were treating personal dreams, their provision of motivation and their characterization of the dreamer. Chaucer followed, in his major dream poems, the Roman de la Rose scheme for entry and exit, but he enlarged the introductory section of the framework to provide motivation for the personal dreams and more extensive characterizations of the dreamers. This was necessary because the dreams in the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls are only nominally under the control of 'divine' influence; they are really personal dreams. The English dream poets who followed Chaucer were, for the most part, less aware of the possibilities and difficulties inherent

in the dream poem structure; they had a less complete and detached concept of the total form.

Chaucer's poems signalled a new direction in the subject-matter of English dream poetry. Before Chaucer, the English dream poets drew their subjects from the religious and moralizing tradition: *Piers Plowman*, *Pearl*, *The Parlement of the Thre Ages* and *Wynnere and Wastoure* follow the basic framework of the *Roman de la Rose*, but their concern is not with courtly love. Even Chaucer's contemporary, Gower, moralizes the courtly material he uses.[2]

In religious dream poems more emphasis was placed on the allegorical dream itself than on the total framework. When the intention of a poem is to convey universal truths, like it is in *Piers Plowman*, this is effectively accomplished by means of the particularization of the allegorical method. A dreamer is truly only a vehicle for the revelation accorded by his god; he needs little if any characterization, and the dream needs no personal motivation. Unlike the personal dream, the meaning of which is important first to the dreamer and then in its wider application to people in general, the religious dream aims directly at universal application. This intention, along with the type of the dream, explains the construction of such poems as the *Dream of the Rood*, *Piers Plowman* and *Pearl*. It does not explain the structural deficiencies in the *Parlement of the Thre Ages* and the *Confessio Amantis*.

English dream poetry adopted the convention of the May

morning setting but, unlike de Lorris whose dreamer awoke to it, the English poets made it part of their pre-dream setting. The difficulties in which this involved them were chiefly two: they were faced with making an idealized natural scene become a part of real waking life, and with making plausible their dreamers' falling asleep outdoors rather than in bed. These problems are handled with varying degrees of success. In Piers Plowman[3] the narrator, garbed like a hermit or shepherd on his way into the world to witness marvels, lies down by the bank of a stream one May morning. Looking into the water and listening to its pleasant sound, he falls into a slumber and dreams. His senses have been overpowered by the sight and sound of the stream when he was weary. The Pearl-poet describes a man returning in August to the garden where he lost his pearl.[4] He is desolate with grief at his loss, despite the attempts of reason and Christ to comfort him. He lies down upon the flower-covered ground, and such fragrance rises to his head that he slips into a deep sleep which releases his soul from his body. Here again it is the influence of nature on man's senses which puts him to sleep, combined with the mental weariness of grief. In contrast to Piers and Pearl, the narrator of Wynnere and Wastoure tells that once while walking alone he lay down to sleep by a stream in a meadow, but because of the noise of the water and the chattering of the birds it was almost night before he could sleep.[5] This deliberate attempt to sleep in spite of nature has the vigour

of being ironically realistic. Another ingenious setting for sleep is given by the author of the Parlement of the Thre Ages.[6] The narrator goes out before dawn on a May morning to hunt, and hears the birds singing, as they would surely have been doing at that time. He notes only briefly the flowers and the bird and animal life around him, for his mind is much more occupied with his quarry. He goes into realistic detail, even technicalities, about the position of the two animals, his approach, his shot, his following and final cutting up of his prize. Quite understandably, he is then tired. The sun has come up and he is warmly drowzy; he sleeps. This elaborate preparation for the dream is accomplished in the most natural and logical manner, an effort which is unfortunately wasted upon and unrelated to the following dream. All four dream poems have attempted to explain how a man falls asleep in a garden-like environment. Although Langland and especially the Pearl-poet have set the tone for the dreams to come and have motivated sleep physically and psychically, the freshness of Wynnere and the naturalness of the Parlement are more striking.

Retrieving the narrators from sleep is a simpler process. The common device is sound which awakens the dreamer. In the Parlement a bugle awakens the hunter,[7] while in Piers it is Conscience's cry for Grace that brings the dreamer back to this world.[8] In the latter case, when Conscience sees the advance of the sins on man and decides to go in search of Piers, his cry for Grace is the cry of the dreamer himself and his

call to further action. In the Parlement the noise is simply an appropriate instrument, the horn; in Piers the cry is the cry of the whole poem. Similarly integrated with the dream is the awakening of the dreamer in Pearl: separated from his pearl by a stream, he can at last no longer endure his position and is about to fling himself into the water to reach her when this action awakens him. His action is a symbol of his frailty, as he himself recognizes: 'To that Prynces paye had I ay bente. . . to mo of his mysterys I hade ben dryven.'[9] As with the exit in the Roman de la Rose, the single action here has significance on both the literal and figurative levels.

Commentary by the dreamer when his dream is finished also receives various treatments. The dreamer in the Parlement simply repeats that his dream took place after hunting, and closes with a prayer,[10] which here resembles the artificial and stereotyped ending often found in romances such as Sir Orfeo and Havelock the Dane; it is not the natural conclusion that it is at the end of the Dream of the Rood. The dreamer in Piers says nothing when his dream is over; nothing more needs to be said after Conscience's stirring cry. The Pearl-poet, on the other hand, has his narrator review the substance and significance of his dream for himself and all Christians.[11] This is far less dramatic than the Piers ending, but it is not redundant: it underlines the didactic content of the dream while relating it to the life of the dreamer.

Two of the religious dreams have only slight, if any,

relation to the waking life of the dreamers. The dream world of the Parlement, consisting of a singularly undramatic debate of conventional moralizing between Youth, Middle Age and Elde and provided with no setting, affects the dreamer as little as it does the reader. It is so slightly related to the hunter's waking life that it could have been attached to any prelude that was handy. Here, despite the attention paid to the dreamer's waking life, no depth or clarity of the meaning of the dream results. The framework is broken in two: personal dream motivation prefaces a wholly religious dream. Gower's Confessio Amantis[12] illustrates another misuse of the dream poem form. The narrator, offering himself up as an example of man's lack of moderation in love and of the lack of correspondence between faithful service and rewards in love, walks out into a Maytime scene that he cannot appreciate because of his grief. His sorrow at being separated from his beloved causes him to fall prostrate on a grassy mound uttering prayers to Venus and Cupid with his dying gasps. When these deities appear before him, Venus is persuaded to help him. She accomplishes this by having him preached to by Genius for the remainder of this lengthy poem. Gower's courtly love introduction has sunk to the level of melodrama through its exaggeration, and is only artificially linked with the following exposition of the seven deadly sins on the pretext that this exposition is part of the lover's confession. This spurious association of the courtly and religious traditions results in a form

which is nothing more than a machine-like apparatus for conveying an unconvincing moral argument.

Piers and Pearl show that their authors conceived of the dream poem form chiefly as a literary device for lending the authority of divine revelation to a fictional dream. As in the Dream of the Rood the dreamers are less important than the messages they have received in their prophetic dreams. Piers presents a dreamer who, before the dream, is characterized as the type of a thinking, searching Christian. Within the dream the wanderer searching for marvels is further characterized by his asking for information and his attempts at formulating what he has learned. He functions as an intermediary between the dream world and the reader, and as a guide through the dream world: with him, we are led gradually from perception of piers as an honest ploughman to acceptance of him as a divine manifestation, in a cosmic setting of heaven, earth and hell. This dream world is as much larger than the earth as the visionary experience is greater than man's mundane perceptions; the intermediary and guide are essential. In Pearl the dreamer becomes partially a person before the dream, where he is portrayed as suffering a great loss. Then, against a dream background of crystal cliffs, blue-trunked trees with silver leaves, spice bushes and fragrant fruits, he sees his Pearl and learns from her the doctrine of salvation. His deep personal grief and love are left behind in the garden, superceded by spiritual concerns. But the shift from waking to dream

world here is barely perceptible. Allegory encloses both worlds. Within an allegory of loss and redemption the dream signifies a higher plane of perception, and the poem has a unity of thought and method that goes beyond the dream poem structure.

Chaucer's best treatment of entries and exits and closing commentary was no more effective than some of these. In the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls he succeeds in making them significant parts of the poem. He wrote no dream poem which equals the lyric fluidity of religious experience of Pearl. His achievement was of a different order: it involved taking a conventional structure and conventional devices and material and adapting them to express his own idea; and it lay in bringing an artificial form to life. None of his predecessors or contemporaries in England was attempting the same thing, hence there is little to be gained by extensive comparison of his poems with these. But in the English dream poems we have seen some of the problems of the form and how they were solved; further, we have seen that Chaucer's success in using dreams was not an isolated feat in England, except in its particular application.

CHAPTER II

THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN
THE HOUSE OF FAME

In Chaucer's hands the English dream poem took on a new character. Its subject-matter became courtly love, and the conventions attached to this new subject were adopted along with it. A new shape emerged as well: while the dream remained the climax of the poem, the pre-dream section became enlarged to accommodate the waking life motivation necessary to a personal dream such as we find in the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls. Inseparable from the motivation material was the growth of the narrator into a character, which achieved full effect in the Parliament of Fowls. The Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls are the two of Chaucer's dream poems that are complete in themselves as dream poems; they will therefore receive major emphasis in our discussion of Chaucer. Here, the Prologues to the Legend of Good Women, and the House of Fame will be examined as illustrative of Chaucer's treatment of the structure and conventions of the dream poem.

The Prologues to the Legend of Good Women[1]

The Prologues show Chaucer's relation to the dream poem tradition, and his own concept of the dream poem. The Legend of Good Women is not complete,[2] but the two versions of its Prologue are. They function as introductions to the legends,

and except for this relationship, the legends do not concern us here. Chaucer in this poem uses the dream as a literary device which provides his reason for writing the legends: in the courtly love terms which are their idiom, they are thereby given the authority of having been sanctioned by a divinity.[3]

In the courtly conceit of the religion of love[4] (which we have seen in an early appearance in Andreas Capellanus' fable[5]) the dream is parallel to the religious revelatory dream. It is sent by a deity for the purpose of informing or correcting a dreamer who is committed to his religion. In using this conceit, a major characteristic of the <u>Roman de la Rose</u>, Chaucer was conforming with one of the most traditional aspects of courtly poetry. Whereas in the <u>Book of the Duchess</u> and the <u>Parliament of Fowls</u> he made large adaptations to suit his purpose in each poem, here he takes over a conceit unchanged except for alterations that provide the satiric tone.

A comparison of the two prologues reveals Chaucer's concept of structural devices. The different positions of the May landscape in the two versions illustrate (in F) its usual placement before the dream, and (in G) Chaucer's habit of placing it within the dream. Thus in Chaucer's own work we are able to compare the different treatments and to see the lack of success of the former. The G Prologue illustrates Chaucer's treatment of courtly love conventions and his attitude toward courtly love as theme, an attitude which is expressed in the tone of the poem. Together the prologues show Chaucer's

detachment and experimentation in handling the courtly love content and in manipulating the dream poem form.

The initial commentary by the narrator is similar in both versions. The lines function as an introduction to both the whole poem and the Prologue. In G, for example, the narrator comments on the verity of reward and punishment: 'A thousand sythes have I herd men telle/That there is joye in hevene and peyne in helle', [6] and upon the necessity for accepting on the authority of books information that cannot be proved empirically:

> . . . there ne is non that dwelleth in this contre,
> That eyther hath in helle or hevene ybe,
> Ne may of it non other weyes witen,
> But as he hath herd seyd or founde it writen. (5-8)
>
> Wel oughte us thanne on olde bokes leve. (27)

He makes these remarks in the light of his dream experience which has caused him to accept the penance of retelling the lives of women who were martyrs to love. The first thirty-nine lines introduce the poem, his penance, and the story of how that penance came about, his dream. He then introduces the subject of his devotion, the daisy,

> . . . of alle floures flour,
> Fulfyld of vertu and of alle honour,
> And evere ylike fayr and fresh of hewe,
> As wel in wynter as in somer newe. (55-58)

As the latter two lines show, this is no ordinary flower, but a symbol for a lady. Outside of this introduction, the prologues differ considerably.

Prologue F resembles in structure other English revelatory poems we have examined in that the dreamer visits the

idealized garden before his dream rather than within it. Unlike most of these, however, no further setting is provided within the dream, so the action has no specified background. The dream in F begins after the description of the May landscape. It occupies nearly one hundred lines, and thus provides this prologue with the large amount of pre-dream material that is characteristic of the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls. In those two poems the pre-dream material is essential to the structure and meaning because it provides the waking life motivation for a personal dream,[7] but here it has no such function; and whereas in those poems it characterizes the dreamer so that his dream is the more meaningful to us, here the slight characterization is neither helpful nor necessary.

The narrator has made the general introductory statement that he loves to be out in the spring celebrating his love for the daisy.[8] Now he tells us that he did go out

> . . . er yet were day--
> And this was now the firste morwe of May--
> With dredful hert and glad devocioun,
> For to ben at the resureccioun
> Of this flour, whan that yt shulde unclose
> Agayn the sonne, that roos as red as rose. (107-12)

The scene is conventional: formal 'enbrouded' flowers of excellent fragrance, birds singing their memories of a difficult winter, the rejuvenation of nature demonstrated by mating birds:

> . . . hire bekes gonnen meete,
> Yeldyng honour and humble obeysaunces
> To love, and diden hire other observaunces
> That longeth onto love and to nature. (148-51)

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In this garden, he 'adoun ful softely . . . gan to synke' and remained there looking at the daisy, until

> Whan that the sonne out of the south gan weste,
> And that this flour gan close and goon to reste
> For derknesse of the nyght, the which she dredde,
> Hom to myn hous ful swiftly I me spedde. (197-200)

Then, asleep on his outdoor bed, he dreamed that the God of Love and his lady appeared to him.

The narrator is portrayed in this scene as a passionate courtly lover, in both the physical sense (brought out by phrases like 'gledly desir'[9] and by the 'close' and 'unclose' imagery applied to the flower), and in his ardent devotion. The latter quality is picked up in the dream in his fearful attitude before the God of Love, his 'drede of Loves wordes and his chere',[10] and in his present performance of his penance by writing the poem. The former quality is transferred into the dream only through the symbolism of the goddess and her green robes which represent the daisy and the fertility of the garden. The garden, then, appears to have little function other than that of decoration; it is courtly artifice, almost completely detached from figurative significance.

The pre-dream material in Prologue G is very much shorter. Between the general introduction described above and the beginning of the dream, there are fourteen lines in which the narrator states that he spent all one May day in a meadow looking at the daisy, then went home to bed and dreamed. There is no attempt made to motivate the dream in the narrator's waking life, and only a slight amount of characterization in his

introductory statements that he loves the daisy[12] and is going to tell several stories based on old books;[13] nor is either necessary to preface a revelation that is controlled by divine powers. The structure of this prologue, then, resembles that of most religious dream poems such as Piers Plowman: the dream itself is all-important, while the pre- and post-dream matter is negligible. The circular shape which Chaucer used with great effect in his major dream poems is evident here as well, though less pervasively. Here we do not get the impression that the narrator himself is controlling the telling of his experience, or that he has any significance beyond that of the conveyer of his experience. His narration simply serves as a suitable justification for the legends to follow. In short, the dream appears as a literary device employed to lend authority to a literary work.

Structurally, the G Prologue is the better because the garden, which is unnecessary in its position in F, is taken into the dream and made to contribute to the allegory. Although G has little pre-dream material, it exhibits Chaucer's custom of incorporating the garden in the dream and giving it figurative significance. Chaucer seems to have viewed the structure of the dream poem as variable, for he experimented with it here and rearranged the device of the garden so that in G a better integration is achieved.

With a different cast of characters the dream in Prologue G would look something like a Christian allegory of the soul,

exhorting the sinner to penance so that he might become once more like his God. There is a setting resembling the Christian paradise, a ritualistic approach to the deity, an offender trembling in confusion, and an allegorical exposition of the character of the deity in terms superficially similar to the Hebraic-Christian concept. As C.S. Lewis has pointed out regarding the parallels between the love religion and the Christian religion,

> The variations are not only between jest and earnest; for the love religion can become more serious without becoming reconciled to the real religion. Where it is not a parody of the Church it may be, in a sense, her rival -- a temporary escape, a truancy from the ardours of a religion that was believed into the delights of a religion that was merely imagined.... An extension of religion, an escape from religion, a rival religion -- Frauendienst may be any of these, or any combination of them. It may even be the open enemy of religion....[15]

In the G Prologue the love religion is presented as a separate religion, what Lewis would describe as a 'rival religion'. Its initial extreme elevation becomes recognized as mock-seriousness when the character of the deities is seen as satiric. The parody here is not of the Christian religion, but of the religion of love.[16]

In G the May landscape is included in the dream where it functions primarily as a symbol connoting the joy of a home with the divinity. Most visionary experiences, such as Drihthelm's, include some indication of the regions of both bliss and misery.[17] Here, although only the happy land of idealized spring is depicted, behind it lurks the threatening season of grief and hardship:

> Forgeten hadde the erthe his pore estat
> Of wynter, that hym naked made and mat, (113-
> And with his swerd of cold so sore hadde greved. 15)

The renewed fertility of spring is emphasized by the billing birds' song recalling the winter covetousness of the fowler, who

> . . . hem made awhaped
> In wynter, and distroyed hadde hire brod,
> In his dispit hem thoughte it dide hem good
> To synge of hym, and in here song despise
> The foule cherl that for his coveytyse
> Hadde hem betrayed with his sophistrye. (120-25)

The sterility of winter is an unhappy memory in this formal garden embroidered with flowers beneath trees rich in their new green.

The dreamer is in the garden to see the daisy, when suddenly a lark heralds the approaching deities, dramatically interrupting the ritualistic hymning of the birds, stilling them in anticipation of the god's entry:'"I se," quod she, "the myghty god of Love./Lo! yond he cometh! I se his wynges sprede."'[18] At the head of the procession is the god, leading his queen and followed by a throng of faithful women. Kneeling to the daisy, then dancing 'an esy pas' around the flower while they sing a balade of praise, the women re-establish the ritual. When the god and goddess have sat down, they arrange themselves in a circle, and silence follows.[19] In a Christian dream, divinities and souls appear personified, and so they do here: heaven can be conceived by a mortal only in earthly terms. Further to bring the realm of the spirit close to that of the body, ritual is employed in the earthly Church; in the God of

Love's realm it serves as the pageantry appropriately elevating the introduction of his person.

The court has been set up, bound by the circle of the faithful and centred upon the judge, while the dreamer stands 'as stille as any ston'[20] waiting to discover the meaning of the drama. Had it not been for the presence of the queen, he 'hadde be ded, withouten any defence,/For dred of Loves wordes and his chere.'[21] Sternly the god addresses him,[22] charging him with having written of unfaithful women. This long speech, and the queen's reply using examples of the feudal monarch's relationship with his liegemen,[23] imitates the tempering of Justice with Mercy according to the Christian principle. Like many a visionary, such as Alain de Lille and Boethius, the awed dreamer has not recognized his benefactress, though she has been named several times.[24]

In some respects the deities resemble the King and Queen of Heaven. The god's face is characterized by its brightness,[25] a quality Dante used to represent the essence of the Supreme Being.[26] Alceste wears a green gown and white crown,[27] the green of fertility in place of Mary's blue of peace, and the crown in place of a veil. But Love's clothes are 'Of silk, ybrouded ful of grene greves,/A garlond on his hed of rose-leves';[28] and neither his behavior nor the position of his queen protract the parallel. In fact, as their characters develop, it becomes evident that Chaucer is satirizing the deities of love. Goddard recognized this more than fifty years

ago:

> . . . through the foolish charge of heresy and other absurdities on Cupid's part, he [Chaucer] causes the God of Love to make an ineffable dunce of himself, places even the Queen of Love in a ridiculous light . . . .[29]

Goddard's statement of the case is rather too strong, and his identification of the dreamer with Chaucer is unwise.[30] Nevertheless, he has caught the spirit. The God of Love does not remain, as he was at his entrance, the dignified divinity of the Roman de la Rose. From his first words to the miscreant who, he declares, is less worthy to stand in his presence than a worm,[31] he emerges as an ill-tempered tyrant. He unconsciously indicates the precariousness of his rule as he claims that the dreamer's writings are able to turn people away from worshipping him, and he comes close to name-calling: 'Wel wot I therby thow begynnyst dote/As olde foles, whan here spiryt fayleth.'[32] His accusation becomes ranting; frequently he asks questions which he gives the dreamer no opportunity to answer, and ends with 'By seynt Venus. . . Thou shalt repente it, so that it shal be sene!'[33] evidently relishing the prospect of revenge. The queen's reply to this speech is for the most part a gentle admonition and pleading for the offender. But she deals a blow to the god's supposed omniscience and discretion by suggesting that he may have been listening to a false accuser,[34] and reminds him that the lion does not deign to take revenge upon a fly, as does a cur.[35] With its supreme deity likened to a dog -- and by his queen, in front of the whole court --

the kingdom of love has suffered a crippling loss of dignity.

The accused has stood, forgotten, while the judges decide upon their principles of action. The queen asks that the man be allowed to defend himself, as in a court,[36] and he is given a chance to speak. But whereas the Christian sinner would, at this point, have felt contrite and made confession, the dreamer excuses himself on the grounds that his intention was to show the faithless women as an example, to warn people 'fro falsnesse and fro vice.'[37] His non-recognition of his lady, whose identity is never in question right from her first appearance robed as a daisy, may be an exaggeration of the conventional confusion of the visionary, but if so, Chaucer has perhaps overdone his exaggeration, for the dreamer's slip is incredible.

From its elaborately mock-serious beginning, this allegory has developed into less subtle satire. The satire extends outside of the poem to make ridiculous the dreamer's present dedication of his life to writing legends at the whim of a folly-ridden god and his overbearing queen. The conventional courtly love allegory has been employed without adaptation of its form, but has been turned against itself by Chaucer's satirical tone. Woman is indeed the ruling power in this world, but with what satisfaction, when her consort and servant are reduced to such extremities?

The House of Fame

Little can be said regarding the structure and integration

of the House of Fame because it is unfinished, and we cannot establish exactly how much is missing.[1] Theories of unity such as Allen's, based on 'the poet's sustained interest in the nature and treatment of poetic material',[2] have been advanced, but while they may elucidate the subject-matter, their value in uncovering the theme of the poem is mainly speculative. We shall consider the poem here only from the point of view of Chaucer's treatment in it of dream poem conventions, and his departures from his own usual method of handling a dream poem. Here Chaucer shows a liberty in his use of conventions and tone which exceeds that found in his other dream poems, but his freedom is accompanied by a lack of control over the dream as a device.

The poem begins, as the Legend of Good Women does, with introductory material written in the present tense;[3] but contrary to Chaucer's usual method, when this general statement on dreams is done and the invocation made, the narrator says only that he went to bed one night in December and dreamed. There is none of the personal motivation for the dream that we find in Chaucer's major dream poems. Later, when the narrator has gone through the temple of Venus, a guide appears and states that he is the agent of a divinity sent to the dreamer for a specific purpose. The dream therefore must be intended to be a revelation, despite the fact that the guide is a loquacious eagle sent by Jove to give the dreamer love tidings and pleasure.

The humour in this contradiction is representative of the spirit that pervades the whole poem. It begins in the opening discussion with the narrator's denial of any knowledge of the causes, kinds, effects, and times of occurrence of dreams,[4] and his subsequent revelation that he possesses most of the answers possible to a medieval man.[5] He has certainly investigated the subject, though he 'of noon opinion/Nyl as now make mensyon.'[6] The humour continues, too: the qualification 'as now', which at first passes unnoticed at the beginning of the line, has its purpose, for he admits at the beginning of Book II that it was Thought 'that wrot al that I mette,/And in the tresorye hyt shette/Of my brayn. . . .'[7]

The tone thus established in the first lines of the poem is reinforced by the presence, in the formal rhetorical invocations at the beginning of each book, of material quite contrary to the conventional high seriousness of the form. In the first,[8] the narrator prays that Morpheus, th 'unmerie' god of sleep, may help him to tell his dream well, and then he calls upon God to grant favour to the dreamers among his listeners -- but he ends with what amounts to a curse on anyone who might 'mysdeme' his account:

> That every harm that any man
> Hath had, syth the world began,
> Befalle hym therof, or he sterve,
> And graunte he mote hit ful deserve,
> Lo, with such a conclusion
> As had of his avision
> Cresus, that was kyng of Lyde,
> That high upon a gebet dyde!. (99-106)

The Muses are mentioned along with Thought in the second

invocation,[9] but so is Venus who, having had something to do with Book I, is scarcely a guiding power behind the second book. Similarly, it is not until the third invocation that Apollo, god 'of science and of lyght',[10] is called upon, yet he appears to have been involved at least as much with Book II as Book III. Thus does the narrator relate his dream, with his muses 'hopping always behind' like Pandarus, and with the same comic effect.

Perhaps when a man is so unconventional as to dream in December instead of May, he cannot expect a truly courtly dream. Certainly, something is awry when the ornate and pictorial temple of Venus is set in the middle of a barren desert. From examining the story of Troy displayed on the walls of the temple, the dreamer steps outside and is chased by an eagle over the desert:

> . . . I a-roume was in the feld;
> And with hys grymme pawes stronge,
> Withyn hys sharpe nayles longe,
> Me, fleynge, in a swap he hente, (540-43)

The eagle carries off the dreamer, who is more dead than alive from the effects of the flight and his own fear, then yells 'Awak!' at him in tones only too familiar and close to home.[11] The setting shifts from the desert to the air, whence the dreamer sees first the terrain below flashing past,[12] then only the milky way and 'ayerish bestes'[13] as they mount to the houses of Fame and Rumour. A more fanciful departure from the usual temple and garden is scarcely imaginable.

The characters, too, share in this exodus from the world

of courtly love. Most important among them is the dreamer, whose clever humour we have already noticed in his introductory remarks and his invocations. Within the dream he is first confronted by the pictures on the wall of Venus' temple.[14] Swiftly he takes in the story of Aeneas depicted on the walls until he comes to the betrayal and death of Dido; then, suddenly, the picture comes alive in his mind, and for about seventy lines[15] he lives through her grief, speeches and all, concluding once more with her suicide. In his view, the key to her misery is her loss of reputation: where we might have expected her to exclaim 'O wikke Eneas!', instead she cries 'O wikke Fame!'[16] There is no explanation at all for this predisposition of the dreamer's mind; he had not, for example, been reading about Fame before falling asleep, a device which was a favorite of Chaucer's for motivating such an occurrence. The dreamer admits he has no authority for the way he sees and hears Dido.[17] Of his later feelings and behavior in the claws of the eagle he tells with the amusement and wit borne of viewing the experience in retrospect,[18] with only a little of the original emotion left to convey his dismay and bewilderment at his unusual and precarious position.[19] His dream personality is different from his waking personality, but only because he considers he had a foolish dream, and is making even more of his own absurdity. Within the dream the eagle calls him 'Geffrey',[20] indicating that Chaucer intended to be identified with the narrator. In two respects at least, this narrator is

unlike Chaucer's usual narrator: in his unmotivated characterizing of Dido, and in his identification with Chaucer. But he bears a resemblance to the narrators of the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls in the extent of his part in the poem, and to the latter poem in his superiority to the things that happen to him.

The eagle, as official guide in the dream, is next in importance to the narrator, but as a character he is more fully developed, and is even more amusing because of the contrast between what he is and what Jove's royal bird ought to be. His aggressive liveliness and almost compulsive tendency to talk at length on matters educational turn him into a burlesque of the conventional guide of the didactic dream:

> "A ha!" quod he, "lo, so I can
> Lewdly to a lewed man
> Speke, and shewe hym swyche skiles
> That he may shake hem be the biles,
> So palpable they shulden be, (865-69)

Fame is the only other character with a comparable part in the action. Except as a spectacle, however, she has nothing to do with the dreamer, unless there was meant to be some link between her and the dreamer's earlier conception of Dido's woe. In justification of her decisions as to whether or not to grant fame to the groups of supplicants before her, she can only say 'me lyst', yet she becomes as voluble as the Wife of Bath as she denies her favour to one undeserving group -- after having granted it to their equally undeserving fellows:

> "Fy on yow," quod she, "everychon!
> Ye masty swyn, ye idel wrechches,
> Ful of roten, slowe techches!" (1776-79)

Yet she does not become more than a personification, a manifestation of that inconstant whimsey that decides what shall be remembered, and how. She has little more personality than the trumpets Cler Laude and Sklaundre. As far as we can tell from the poem as it stands, the dream cannot be called allegorical. The characters are no more under the control of a divinity than of the poet; they are truly dream-like, released from the restraints of waking life, and delightful in their unmanageability -- but with small function in the poem.

The House of Fame is at the opposite pole from the conventional and poetically well-knit Prologue G, and compared with the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls it is defective despite its vitality and fancy. At least two judgments-- tentative, in view of the poem's incomplete state -- can be passed on it. The position of the dream within the poem is obscure: from the lack of waking life motivation and the appearance of a guide it seems that the dream was intended to resemble a revelation, yet the characterization of Dido can only be explained in terms of a personal dream. Moreover, the dream world itself, while utterly dream-like in its irrationality, lacks the control that should direct a poem. Had the exuberant tone and imagination of this poem been harnessed to Chaucer's usual highly-developed sense of form, the result might have been more exciting than the Parliament of Fowls. Now that we have seen Chaucer's penchant for manipulating the structure and tone of a dream poem, and his mobility within the conventions, we are ready to examine in detail his major dream poems.

CHAPTER III

THE BOOK OF THE DUCHESS

The Book of the Duchess has two structural principles, the thematic structure which is built upon the relationships between three contrasting portraits of grieving lovers, and the organic unity of the inherited dream poem structure as modified by Chaucer. The two are interdependent: the linear progression of sorrowing lovers is extended by the circular design that Chaucer gave his dream poems. The result is not merely a total of each portrait added to the one before, but a fusion of the three in which they play back and forth on each other, emerging as a consolation for the bereaved John of Gaunt, and as a dramatic expression of a problem of love and grief for the reader.

The structure of the Book of the Duchess has been severely criticized. In 1906 R.K. Root objected that the story of Ceyx and Alcyone has so little to do with the dream that its in- clusion 'constitutes a serious breach of artistic unity.'[1] More recently, Malone has called the 290 lines preceding the dream an 'excessive elaboration', artistically less successful than the four-line introductory section of the Dream of the Rood.[2] Criticisms such as these leave out of account both Chaucer's ability to make use of theme as an element of structure,

and his concept of the proportions of the dream poem, which differed from the main line of dream poem tradition in its increased emphasis on the material that leads up to the dream. We shall consider the structure of the Book of the Duchess by first answering Root and Malone, and then showing how Chaucer's manipulation of the dream poem framework into a full circular design permitted him to achieve layers of meaning that were not possible in poems such as the Dream of the Rood.

The thematic structure of the poem comprises the tales of three unhappy lovers: the narrator, Alcyone, and the Black Knight. The three stories are inter-related by parallels and contrasts between the conditions of the lovers. The narrator tells that he cannot sleep because his love for his lady is not returned. One night, when unable to sleep, he read a story that seemed to him 'a wonder thing': the story of Alcyone's sorrow, first because her husband is missing at sea, and then from being told in a dream that he is dead. Falling asleep over his book, the narrator dreams that he meets a man clothed in black who relates the story of his love for a lady and his grief at her death. The main character in each story is thus related to each of the others in his or her emotions of love and grief. This relationship has been concisely stated by Bronson:

> The poet knew better than to set out the accounts, seriatim, of three lorn males. Alcyone breaks the sequence without disturbing the mood. She and the dreamer are akin in their protracted love-longing, and she and the knight are at one in their grief.[3]

Recognition of this balancing of the lovers' emotional states, however, forms only part of the answer to Root's objection to the Alcyone episode. The tale is an integral part of the poem in two other respects as well. In the first palce, the tale plays a part in the causal scheme of the action, and in the second, it is essential to the psychology upon which the dream is based.

Each successive story of an unhappy lover is the result of what has preceded it. The narrator is lovesick and therefore sleepless, so he reads, and because of his state of mind, it is a tale of love-sorrow that appeals to him. The causal relationship between the narrator's sorrow and the tale is explicitly stated in the poem:

> So when I saw I might not slepe
> Til now late, this other night,
> Upon my bed I sat upright
> And bad oon reche me a book. (44-47)
>
> This bok ne spak but of such thinges,
> Of quenes lives, and of kinges,
> And many other thinges smale.
> Amonge al this I fond a tale
> That me thoughte a wonder thing. (57-61)

The dream is caused by the narrator's grief and by the effect of the Alcyone story upon him; but this relationship must be inferred. The narrator relates that he was pleased to have read the story of Alcyone because it introduced him to Juno and Morpheus, who brought about Alcyone's sleep and dream. When he had read this he said he would offer them wonderful gifts if they would save him from dying for lack of sleep. Then,

> I hadde unneth that word ysayd
> Ryght thus as I have told hyt yow,
> That sodeynly, I nyste how,
> Such a lust anoon me took
> To slepe, that ryght upon my book
> Y fil aslepe, and therwith even
> Me mette so ynly swete a sweven... (270-76)

His offer was made, he says, in game, 'For I ne knew never god but oon', yet it was partly serious as well -- he made his consciously humourous offer almost as an example of the extremity to which he was driven so that he might sleep. His figurative statement must be interpreted to establish the cause of his sleep and dream, for (with a smile) he says he 'nyste how' it happened. His sleep was, of course, the result of reading. His dream, governed by the same powers as Alcyone's, has information to reveal, as hers did. Moreover, the influence of these gods on his dream represents the influence of the whole tale.

The psychology upon which the interview between the dreamer and the Black Knight rests is based on the dreamer's waking life experience: his own love grief and his reading of Alcyone's. He is the direct connection between the two worlds. Yet not he, but the Black Knight, is the main character of the dream. The relationship between the waking and dream worlds of the poem therefore depends upon the relationship between the dreamer and the Black Knight. Bronson has suggested that 'The knight is the dreamer's surrogate.' He says:

> By a wonderful leap of psychological insight, and in strict accord with truth rediscovered in our own century, his private grief has been renounced by the Dreamer, to reappear externalized and projected upon

> the figure of the grieving knight. The modern analyst, indeed, would instantly recognize the therapeutic function of this dream as an effort of the psyche to resolve an intolerable emotional situation by repudiating it through this disguise.[4]

Had the poem been written in our own century this answer might be acceptable. As it is, the "wonderful leap of psychological insight' is Bronson's rather than Chaucer's. He cites no evidence to support his claim that Chaucer could have possessed such knowledge, and even his own statement, 'truth <u>rediscovered</u>' in our own century' (italics mine) suggests the anachronism: if this 'truth' is not otherwise in evidence until our century its appearance in the fourteenth century is most unlikely. Bronson's misconstruction is, however, only the result of excessive psychological interpretation. It is possible to explain the relationship between the dreamer and the Black Knight in psychological terms which Chaucer could have understood. Medieval dream science recognized that dreams are caused by mental impressions received in waking life,[5] such as the dreamer's reading about Alcyone. She was a woman with whom the dreamer could identify because of her sorrow, but whose sorrow had a different source. With this preying on his mind, the dreamer might well dream of the situation but with this difference: that it is recast from his own point of view, that of the male, and translated into terms with which he is familiar and which concern his own behaviour, the terms of courtly love. Alcyone's story when it is seen through the dreamer's eyes becomes the Black Knight's story.

Examination of the second structural principle, the organic unity of the dream framework, reveals how Chaucer's circular design contributes to the central meaning of the poem. No resolution is stated for the grief of any of the three lovers: Alcyone dies; the knight rides away; as the dreamer-poet writes, his use of the present tense indicates that his eight-year sorrow continues. But as he writes he has full knowledge of his whole experience; his account of its beginning is written in the light of its end, as we can see when he interrupts the Alcyone story to say that thinking of her grief made him 'fare the worse' all the next day.[6] By our narrator we are led past the chronological sequence of events back to the beginning of the poem to view the whole. Then the three stories become detached from time and place, able to interact in any combination and any order, for the whole experience is bound up in one moment in the present. For each of the dreamer, John of Gaunt, and the reader, this moment will have different qualities.

The dreamer has told the story of Alcyone only up to the point where she died of grief. He left his book at exactly the place where a man in his state would stop, before reading of her consolation: 'At last the gods had pity on them, and both were changed into birds. Their love endured . . . and their marriage vows were not dissolved when they acquired wings.'[7] Then, released from his own troubles, he listens to the man in black who, as he talks, comes alive again by

recalling the joy he experienced in the past, and is comforted by the fact that his love was a perfect love, deep and mutually fulfilling. Alcyone's consolation is the more definite, for it is well-known. The Black Knight's consolation is indicated in the vitality with which he tells of his lady and their love, and is symbolized by his being able to ride away at the end of his story, in contrast with his death-like state at the beginning. But the dreamer's sorrow remains unchanged; his one statement of it at the beginning of the poem covers his condition both before and after the experience. If there is any meaning in the experience for him, it must lie in some area other than his emotion of grief. To discover this area, we shall look again at the dream poem tradition.

The original purpose of the dream or vision, as we have seen, was didactic; the dreamer learned from it and made it known in order to teach others. This purpose is evident in the history of dreams and visions down to Chaucer's time and beyond. It is found in religious dreams such as Pearl and Piers Plowman and in courtly love poems such as the Roman de la Rose[8]; it is found a century after Chaucer in Hoccleve's Pastime of Pleasure. In the Book of the Duchess we have a courtly love dream in which the didactic purpose emerges from the contrast between the conditions of the characters. The dreamer is a courtly lover who suffers unrequited love. He faces two other lovers, both of whom suffer grief because of the death of their beloveds. The two positions had their

stereotypes in the system of courtly love, and their relative merits were frequently debated as a courtly pastime.[9] The dreamer is the only character in the poem who knows of the grief of the others as well as his own. He is faced by the question of which is the worse sorrow. But even if he should decide that the grief of death is worse, and that because his lady is still alive there may be some hope for him, he must not reveal his consolation, for his misery is a necessary part of his service to his lady. To the dreamer, then, his experience is an interesting intellectual exercise, one that does not affect his behaviour, but which, along with his sorrowing, is a part of his character as a courtly lover.

There is a consolation in the poem -- a resolution of grief for the lovers whose sorrow is caused by death. This consolation extends to include the real lover who stands behind those in the poem, John of Gaunt. The <u>Book of the Duchess</u> was presumably written as an elegy on the death of his wife,[10] and his situation is paralleled in that of the Black Knight. But whereas the man in black cannot be consoled by comparison of his plight with that of his interlocutor or with that of Alcyone, his living counterpart can be. The combination of the three lovers' tales offers him sympathy and hope. Like the Black Knight, John was loved and happy in his love; as a Christian he has solace in the thought of a final reunion after death like Alcyone found; like the dreamer he can see the whole question. By so throwing the light on each of these

facets of love and death, Chaucer gave his patron an elegy which was a single beautifully cut stone.

Carrying further the parallel of the man in black with John, it is sometimes considered that Chaucer is to be identified with the narrator. Critical opinion on this point ranges from Margaret Galway's claim that the dreamer's lovesickness represents Chaucer's feelings for Joan of Kent,[11] to Kreuzer's blunt denial of any identity between them.[12] If Chaucer read his poems in person, his audience could hardly avoid making some identification of him with his narrator who speaks in the first person. But since each of Chaucer's narrators has a different personality, it is improbable that his audience would have thought that the speaker was Chaucer himself. His personal part in each dream poem is that of an actor; his voice, the poet's voice, is beyond any single character in his poem. Now that the occasion of the poem is long past, it is only the poet's voice that need be considered. If the <u>Book of the Duchess</u> is a successful poem it will stand without the persons of either John or Chaucer. Structurally, both as an elegy and as an expression of a problem of courtly sentiment, it does this.

The world of the <u>Book of the Duchess</u> is primarily the world of courtly love. Chaucer has made very little of the possibilities that a dream world have to offer. There is almost nothing exclusively dreamlike about it except the appearance of the Emperor Octavian leading the hunt. Few of the

things which we have seen are so well dealt with in dreams -- the concrete representation of the powers controlling life as in Piers Plowman, or the unfolding of the heart in terms of a struggle to gain a rose as in the Roman de la Rose -- are here a part of the dream world. This is nothing like the world of mind and heart that Chaucer was to make of the dream world in the Parliament of Fowls. The content of this world is the content of courtly love poetry in general, which by its nature admitted lavish settings such as the idealized garden, stylized imagery such as the use of black and white, and exaggerated behaviour and elevated thought and speech such as the Black Knight's. The appearance of these within the dream does, however, give them a quality of credibility that they lack when presented as a part of waking life. Yet Chaucer was not aiming at realism. The effect of the poem depends upon a balance between the qualities inherent in courtly love convention -- distance, elevation, stylization -- and an undercurrent of humour and deep personal feeling. Chaucer drew the conventions he used from the corpus of courtly love poetry, and, allowing them to retain their conventional nature, made them at the same time belong to this poem alone.

The garden through which the dreamer walks, following a puppy, has all the attributes of the usual idealized setting as typified in the Roman de la Rose. 'As thogh the erthe envye wolde/To be gayer than the heven. . .', there were more flowers than stars above, and thick soft grass and neatly

spaced shade trees. Squirrels nibbled in the trees, and all around were harts, hinds, fawns, sorrels, bucks, does, and roe deer. The cold, the poverty, the sorrow of winter was forgotten in the waxing fertility of this paradisal garden. But it is here that the Black Knight mourns, in a winter, a Gethsemane of the spirit:

> Hit was gret wonder that Nature
> Myght suffre any creature
> To have such sorwe, and be not ded. (467-69)

His youth draped in black and his love dead, he throws a dark shadow over the greenery. This use of the garden in contrast with the mood of a lover was as conventional as the description itself. But Chaucer has made the garden an even more functional part of the poem by giving it figurative significance: just as the sorrow of winter has been left behind and spring reinstated, so will the Black Knight emerge into a renewal of the spirit. The hart that has been sought and lost is here in the garden, among its kind, just as the knight's heart is present all the time it is being searched for. The garden prefigures the knight's emotional condition.

Three courtly lovers dominate the poem. Each closely approximates the type of lover or lady recommended by the rules of the system of courtly love, yet each has, besides, something which makes him or her individual and memorable. In the lady we have perfection made personal because it is an idealization after death of a deep, unaffected love. In the dreamer there is the conventional courtly lover who can yet

stand back and watch himself playing his part. In the Black Knight we have an aristocrat whose courtliness is as natural to him as is his spontaneous emotion.

The lady who emerges from the Black Knight's story is the epitome of all courtly graces and qualities, even to her somewhat shadowy existence in the tale, which suggests her unapproachable superiority. Her virtues of appearance and character are reviewed by the knight in 'a free treatment' of the method of description prescribed by Geoffrey of Vinsauf,[13] while lying behind this formal portrait of her is a wealth of intimate memory which colours the portrait with personal emotion:

> But ever, me thoght, hir eyen seyde,
> 'Be God, my wrathe ys al foryive!' (876-77)
>
> For wher-so men had pleyd or waked,
> Me thoghte the felawsshyppe as naked
> Withouten hir, that sawgh I oones,
> As a corowne withoute stones. (977-80)

The repetition of 'me thoght' in these passages is characteristic of the whole subjective description: the lady is portrayed not as she was but as she seemed to her knight; this even the dreamer is quick to notice:

> Yow thoghte that she was the beste
> And to beholde the alderfayreste,
> Whoso had loked hir with your eyen. (1049-51)

Although the knight excitedly replies that 'alle that hir seyen/Seyde and sworen hyt was so', his case rests finally on his opinion: 'And eke to love hir I was holde/As for the fairest and the beste.' Speirs is right when he says the

lady 'is seen -- "Me thinketh I see hir ever mo" -- "I saw hir daunce. . ."',[14] but she is seen only by the knight. We are not 'presented with the impression of her immediate joyous presence', for she is dead and cannot be brought back in person, only as a memory that evokes emotion. It is for precisely this reason that the lady can be the most courtly of the lovers in Chaucer's dream poems, and the most successful of his seriously-drawn courtly lovers: she is perfect, as the living can never be, and her perfection in her lover's memory has its own truth and reality. In her function as object of the love and grief which dominate the poem, and as a tribute to Blanche, as well as in the evocation of her perfection, this lady is one of Chaucer's triumphs.

The dreamer is the next courtly lover we shall consider. The task is not an easy one, for his character and position in the poem have elicited from critics interpretations ranging from the view that he is consistently naive and childlike,[15] to the view that he is consistently mature and sophisticated,[16] and through an intermediate position in which he is seen as partly the one and partly the other.[17] The first of these positions does damage to the poem as an elegy, for carried to its logical conclusion it places a simple, bungling, or comic character in charge of the serious and elevated material that was to bring consolation to John of Gaunt. The third position is usually an attempt to reconcile the serious tone with such problems of the dreamer's behaviour as his shock at hearing for

the second time that the knight's lady is dead; these explanations out-do themselves in their ingenuity and leave the impression that the poem is a failure anyway if the answers are so subtle and far to seek. The second view, that the dreamer is a refined man who understands the terms of the artificial code of love as well as human nature, and who has a detachment that brings out his sense of humour, is a simpler explanation and one more in keeping with the serious purpose, aristocratic genre and elevated style of the poem. It is with this view in mind that the dreamer as a courtly lover should be examined.

Chaucer, as we have noticed, expanded the pre-dream material of his dream poems. One of the advantages he gained by doing this was the greater characterization of the dreamer as an individual to whom the dream might be related and its significance for him revealed. Throughout the pre-dream section of the Book of the Duchess the dreamer is progressivley discovered to be a courtly lover with a detached view of his role. His first words, in which he states that he is suffering the miseries of unrequited love, are impersonal and strictly conventional; there is nothing in the first forty-three lines that was not part of the formula for lovesickness. Not until he warms to his story of Alcyone do we get a positive impression of the actual emotional health that lies behind his sorrow. Then the situation of Juno's messenger going to wake up Morpheus catches his imagination, and he gives the action a vigour and humour which are foreign to the original:

> This messager com fleynge faste
> And cried, "O, 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 hye. (178-83)

After showing deep sympathy for Alcyone's plight through the tender words he gives her husband to speak, the dreamer exhibits even more clearly that side of his nature which is untouched by courtly emotion: he says he would pray to Juno and Morpheus and promise them all manner of bedroom finery in return for sleep. The contrast of this deliberate misplacement of the importance of the story with his previous remark that thinking of Alcyone's woe made him more miserable than ever the next day is evidence enough that his courtly behaviour is a specific role.

Within the dream his behaviour is entirely courtly until the Black Knight reveals his loss at the end. The dreamer is the gentleman who is interested in and knowledgeable about the hunt, and who greets the knight with impeccable courtesy. When he has overheard the knight complain that his lady is dead, the dreamer refers to it decorously as his 'sorowe'; he would regard these words as the exaggeration to be expected from a courtly lover. He replies to the knight's allegorical version of his loss with like indirection, for as a courtly lover he is at ease in this mode of expression. Although he keeps pressing for more and more of the story, in accordance with his expressed desire to help, he takes no heed of the Black Knight's repeated warning: 'I have lost more than thow

wenest'[18] -- the Black Knight early recognized the dreamer for what he was. All along the dreamer assumes the knight to be a courtly lover like himself, given to exaggeration and elevation of expression. But at last, when the knight declares 'She ys ded', the dreamer reacts with sincere shock and immediate sympathy like that he felt for Alcyone and expressed in her husband's words. Behind the courtly lover there is a man who is capable of basic human emotions as well as the formal reactions of the code of social behaviour. In his attitude to Alcyone's story he has shown his conscious detachment from the prescribed behaviour of the code, and at the end of the dream his unconscious reaction confirms that his courtly behaviour is an imposed social behaviour. He has been faced, in his dream, with sorrow not only of a kind different from his own, but also of a different quality. Yet as he writes of his experience he once more assumes his courtly role; he is the courtly poet that the narrative requires.

The Black Knight is a courtly lover of different calibre. His behaviour in the story he relates is typical of the gentleman living within the code of courtly love. As a youth he entered the service of love; first, he loved and was rejected by his lady, then won her, and now has lost her. His courtliness is exemplified by his description of what he suffered when his lady rejected him:

> And thus I lyved ful many a day,
> That trewely I hadde no ned
> Ferther than my beddes hed
> Never a day to seche sorwe. (1252-55)

The one alteration of the French system in his tale is his statement that they lived together in what is implied to be marital bliss:

> My lady yaf me al hooly
> The noble yifte of hir mercy,
> Savynge hir worship, by al weyes. (1269-71)
>
> She took me in hir governaunce. (1236)
>
> Al was us oon, withoute were.
> And thus we lyved ful many a yere. (1295-97)

But this is in accord with the non-adulterous English courtly tradition,[20] and it contributes to the poignancy of the knight's loss as well as emphasizes the fact of John's happy union. The Knight's manner of speaking itself shows him to be a courtly lover of higher order than the dreamer. His unconscious use of allegory to tell of his grief, and the formal and elevated style of his description of his lady are proof of his cultured, aristocratic nature; his complaints, while they lack both the artistry and the feeling of less formal passages like 'I sawgh hyr daunce so comlily',[21] are the customary expression of the courtly lover who was expected to be a love poet. The dreamer, with every opportunity to use this form to express his sorrow, does not use it. He shows that he understands these forms but he does not use them on his own initiative. The most significant difference between the knight and the dreamer is represented by their different expressions of sorrow: the dreamer's impersonal conventional account of his lovesickness resembles the knight's own expression of how he suffered when rejected by his lady[22] -- both are only courtly; but the knight's

expression of his present sorrow, while it employs the terms and forms of conventional courtly love poetry, is laden with memory and emotion, as we have seen in his portrait of his lady. The knight is thus both formal and courtly to a higher degree, and human to a deeper degree, than the dreamer.

The dream in the Book of the Duchess is not an allegorical dream such as we found in the Roman de la Rose. If it were, we should have seen a black-clothed knight, Sorrow, sitting down to play chess with Fortune; their moves on the board would have been a part of the action; Fortune would have carried off the Lady White; and the knight's subsequent emotions might have been conveyed through figures such as Despair, Love, and Memory and the action of a hunt to regain the lady. What we do have is the knight's figurative expression of his grief which amounts to a narrated allegory, and the imagery of a hunt and of the black knight and white lady. This imagery has an artificiality about it which is the more acceptable for being part of a dream, and which leaves an impression of allegory, for it makes the characters and action of the dream less realistic. The allegory in this poem is not only found in an unusual position in the Black Knight's speech, but performs the extraordinary function of helping to reveal the revitalization of this bereaved lover. In its imagery and allegory, this poem is a wide departure from dream poem tradition.

The dream is framed in the metaphor of the hunt.[23] The dreamer, having awakened on a sunny spring morning, hears the

blast of a horn and men speaking of their hunt: how they had wished to chase the hart and kill it but at length it had plunged into a thicket. The dreamer joins the chase; the track is followed until the hart gets away by a ruse and the dogs fall on the wrong scent. The dreamer finds the Black Knight in a park full of deer, and, by way of opening conversation, informs the knight that the sport is over; the hart cannot be found. Yet the hart is there with them in the park. The Black Knight's mind is not on the hunt. After he has told of his loss, there begins a search through memory to retrieve his heart. Like a hunted animal, the Black Knight has been driven to extremity:

> Hys sorwful hert gan faste faynte,
> And his spirites wexen dede;
> The blood was fled for pure drede
> Doun to hys herte, to make him warm. (488-91)

But once he begins to tell of his love and his lady, who, he says, was his 'lyves leche' while alive, he begins to revive and finally tells that their hearts were one:

> Oure hertes wern so evene a payre. . .
> For sothe, ylyche they suffred thoo
> Oo blysse, and eke oo sorwe bothe. (1289-93)

Then he must admit again that she is dead,

> And with that word ryght anoon
> They gan to strake forth; al was doon
> For that tyme, the hert-huntyng. (1311-13)

Nothing is said as to whether the hart has been found; but the Black Knight's heart has been rediscovered. He is able to mount and ride home, made whole through recalling his happy love. His lady is still the physician of his heart,

the 'membre principal' of the body; she lives within his heart and, as she did when alive, raises him 'as fro deth to lyve'. The metaphor is not sustained throughout the knight's story: the physical hunt and the search within are only tied together at the beginning and the end. The hunt has more connection with the courtly setting and action than with the knight's introspection, and this is unfortunate, for it could have made more firm the link between the knight's long story and the rest of the dream.

The Black Knight and his Lady White are presented through a play of light and dark imagery which escapes being trite because of its appropriateness to the exaggeration and elevation of the courtly love idiom. It lends them the added dimension of abstract characters and so a dignity and distance becoming to a courtly love poem and especially to an elegy. Through its connotations this imagery delineates the extremes of their past and present positions as well as their future relationship. The lady's name was White; 'She was bothe faire and bryght;/ She hadde not hir name wrong.'[24] Both in body and in character her description supports this: she had golden hair, white skin, and a general beauty which was superior to that of anyone by so much as the sun's light surmounts that of the stars and planets;[25] her happy nature was like a bright torch from which every man might take light without diminishing it;[26] her love of goodness protected her, for 'No wyght myghte do hir noo shame,/She loved so wel hir owne name.'[27] In short,

she was the perfect courtly lady, a superior being who, by implication, was far above her servant-knight. His idealization of her and his stress on her virtue give her a quality of purity which suggests the present blessedness of her soul in heaven. With her death all her lover's light has turned to darkness, a state represented by his black clothing. Yet he says '. . . be hyt never so derk/Me thynketh I se hir ever mo'[28] and in this line she begins to approach the position of Dante's Beatrice. Thus the Lady White in her perfection, and the Black Knight in his sorrow and black clothing, appear in the dream not only in the personal way that has been noted in our discussions of them as courtly lovers, but also as figures which give some suggestion of allegorical personifications.

In the Black Knight's total speech of some seven hundred lines there is a progression from the extensive use of figurative language in the first hundred and fifty lines, to a reduction of this in the next hundred and sixty lines, and finally, almost none in the last four hundred. This progression runs parallel to the knight's resurgence of vitality, which progresses from his fainting state when first seen to his riding away at the end of his story.

He claims at first that no man can help him in his extremity; he describes his desire for and enmity against Death, then announces,

> For whoso seeth me first on morwe
> May seyn he hath met with sorwe,
> For y am sorwe, and sorwe ys y. (595-97)

He is utterly convincing. At that moment he is less a person than Sorrow itself, bereft of all personal attributes except this one, a figure like the vices and virtues we have seen in Prudentius, and parent of Sackville's 'piteous wight, whom woe had all forwaste.'[29] He follows this with a feverish diatribe of Fortune, 'the false thef!' then reveals that 'with hir false draughtes dyvers/She staal on me, and tok my fers' in a game of chess they played. He wishes he might have played a better game, but knows it is a vain wish, for few can outplay Fortune. His mood is quieter, as he says, that had he been God, and all-powerful, he would have made the same move that Fortune did, for 'she took the beste.' Then, in almost the same fainting condition in which he began, he ends this part of his speech:

> Allas! than am I overcome!
> For that ys doon ys not to come.
> I have more sorowe than Tantale. (707-09)

When he has been roused to continue by the dreamer, he employs the idiom of courtly love, but in the succeeding hundred and sixty lines still mentions personifications (Love, Youth, Fortune, Nature) six times, while in the remaining four hundred lines only one occurs.

The gradual reduction of figurative language in the Black Knight's speech may be taken as an index of his state of mind. It is psychologically sound that he might at first require the aid of an indirect method when talking to a stranger, then relinquish it as he became more at ease and warmed to his

story. To some extent his figurative language may also be a means of avoiding the plain fact of death, for although he has already admitted his lady's death in his opening complaint, the complaint itself if a conventional mode of expression which puts the fact in a formal setting quite unlike the bare statement at the end of the story.[30] The language of courtly love which the knight employs after his first hundred and fifty lines is, like the complaint, a formalized means of expression that serves to remove its matter from intimate contact with both speaker and listener. While it is not as great a removal as the allegorical terms the knight uses at first, it has the same effect to a lesser degree. Through employing these methods the knight presents himself as a form empty of content: first, he is almost a figure in an allegory, a sombre, impersonal figure in black, his mood and colour designating his whole being; secondly, he is the type of the courtly lover exhibiting prescribed behaviour and feelings. This is the extreme of the effect we have seen produced by the black and white imagery in the poem. But, as we have also seen, he cannot entirely conceal the man beneath, even in the condition he is in during his first speech:

> For there mys planete in firmament,
> Ne in ayr ne in erthe noon element,
> That they ne yive me a yifte echone
> Of wepynge whan I am allone. (693-96)

It has been said of Chaucer that 'allegory was really foreign to his genius, and he had to work slowly out of it to find the more natural expression of his later years.'[31]

Chaucer's later expression was more 'natural', and this was appropriate to the realism he later aimed at conveying; it would not have done for the Book of the Duchess. His indirect and artificial expression in this poem, while it does not include what could strictly be called allegory, is essential to the poem's particular kind of reality, a reality which is not realism. The figurative, at first almost allegorical, representation of the knight is used with immense effect and ingenuity to bring out his changing state of mind. This expression has as great an effect upon the poem as an elegy. Like Claudian's use of allegory in his 'Epithalamium', the indirect expression here elevates and dignifies a message to the author's superior. At the same time, it distances and thus softens the truth. Balanced with the personal emotion beneath it, it enables the fulfillment of the elegy's requirements -- praise for the dead and hope for the living.

CHAPTER IV

THE PARLIAMENT OF FOWLS

The search for an interpretation of the Parliament of Fowls that will account for each part of its structure has given rise to a number of theories which, by their number and lack of agreement, suggest that a satisfactory interpretation is yet to be advanced. Some have advocated that the poem be viewed as a topical allegory: a compliment upon the occasion of a royal betrothal,[1] or a satire on a social class.[2] These theories usually place all the emphasis upon the latter half of the poem which contains the bird parliament, and are often unable to give a satisfactory explanation of the presence in the structure of such elements as the résumé of the Somnium Scipionis. Others have constructed theories which are attempts to explain the poem as a unit.[3] One of these, Lumiansky, suggests as theme an attempt to reconcile true and false felicity, but misinterprets the tone of the poem as wholly serious.[4] Efforts like his are, however, justified by their purpose of accounting for the whole poem. Everett concluded, after showing the care with which the most minute detail of the poem is handled, that 'in the composition of such a poem nothing is likely to be unconsidered. On the contrary, one would expect everything to be planned and carefully co-ordinated.'[5] This

is what we do find if we consider the whole poem in terms of opposition and contention: not only do the commonly-recognized debates of the birds, devices of <u>contentio</u>, and paradoxes of subject-matter characterize the poem as a debate poem, but the structure and the ultimate meaning it supports have as their essence the principle of opposition.

To begin, we must consider the style of the poem as a guide to the tone and to the character of the narrator. Everett states that 'the whole manner and arrangement of the expression depends on the teaching of the so-called "rhetorical manuals", or . . . "Arts of Poetry."[6] Formality and elevation are predominant. Everett has analysed in detail the rhetoric in the first part of the poem[7] but here we need only select examples of a more general nature. The first two stanzas begin the poem with stately figures of <u>contentio</u> to express the conventional matter of the paradoxes of Love. In the third stanza, the rhetoric continues but the tone is more conversational: compare the personal statement in stanza one:

> . . . my felynge
> Astonyeth with his wonderful werkynge
> So sore, iwis, that whan I on hym thynke,
> Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke. (4-7)

with the personal statement in stanza three:

> But wherfore that I speke al this? Nat yoore
> Agon, it happede me for to beholde
> Upon a bok, was write with lettres olde. (17-19)

The narrator then returns to the business at hand, and summarizes his reading in a lucid abstract expressed in dignified style. The solemn tone of this summary continues:

> The day gan faylen, and the derke nyght,
> That reveth bestes from here besyness,
> Berafte me my bok for lak of lyght,
> And to my bed I gan me for to dresse. (85-88)

Here we have the narrator's first open smile at his own pomposity: he speaks of going to bed in as high-flown a manner as he does of going to heaven. Yet as the stanza ends he is serious again for a moment, for he is troubled by another paradox: 'For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,/And ek I nadde that thyng that I wolde.'[8] In the next stanza, too, he uses indirect manner to describe the simple process of going to sleep, and dreaming 'that Scipio hym say byfore that tyde,/ Was come. . .' and we learn with the same rush of amazement that he must have felt, '. . . and stod right at my beddes syde.'[9] Still the description of the dream is delayed by his inclusion of the conventional catalogue of the causes of dreams, and the formal invocation to Venus. Then he is led to the gates of his dream world, where, in tones reminiscent of Dante (on whom the message in black is modelled) he is again confronted with a paradox.[10] These and the two stanzas that follow possess the same stateliness that we noticed at the beginning of the poem. But, laden with <u>contentio</u> and elevated simile:

> Right as, betwixen adamauntes two
> Of evene myght, a pece of yran set
> Ne hath no myght to meve to ne fro --
> For what that oon may hale, that other let--
> Ferde I, that nyste whether me was bet
> To entre or leve. . . (148-53)

they end with a thump of realism: '. . . til Affrycan, my gide,/

Me hente, and shof in at the gates wide,' Africanus has undergone a dream-like metamorphosis. Not only does he 'shof' the dreamer, but he tells him he is 'dul'. Difficult as it is to establish with accuracy the elevation of these words as they were used in Chaucer's time, there are enough examples of their use to indicate that they are probably lower now than they were; yet the contexts in which they are found show that here they contrast with the surrounding elevated tone.[11] The simile used by Africanus, too, of a man judging a wrestling match, contrasts with the simile of the magnet. The effect of these contradictions and the others noted above is humour; the general high and serious tone is modified; the narrator has a sense of fun at his own expense, at his own seriousness after reading and at his dreaming of this odd appearance of Africanus. We have been prepared for both the matter and tone of the rest of the poem -- an important subject, but not to be taken too seriously.

The narrator himself is our guide through the poem. We must accept it as his creation, as he says it is -- and it is an admirable achievement. Chaucer did not wait for the Canterbury Tales to characterize a narrator by his story-telling. The style is the narrator's and the tone he creates through his style might equally well describe his personality: he can be mock-serious as well as serious; he perceives the incongruity of Africanus' appearance in his dream because he is well-informed and perceptive, and he finds it amusing. His

is a less hearty humour than that of the narrator in the House of Fame, and it relies less on concealment of contradictions. His serious side is reflected in what he tells us of his thoughts and actions. He is a reader and a thinker:'Of usage -- what for lust and what for lore -- /On bokes rede I ofte. . ..'[12] From his old books he gains new 'science'. When puzzled by the paradoxes of Love, of which he learns in books, he turns to books for his answers; and, whether by accident or deliberation, he looked on this occasion in the philosophical Somnium Scipionis. Far from being 'slightly bewildered. . . , sympathetic and well-intentioned, but never quite understanding what is going on',[13] he is a man with an inquiring mind, who seeks solutions where he finds his problems. The detachment with which we are made to regard the subject-matter of the poem springs not from our viewing it through the eyes of an uncomprehending dreamer, but from our identification with this humourously thoughtful narrator. He is just the sort of man one might expect would be chosen to receive a revelation and make known what he has learned: a philosopher-poet.

The dream in the Parliament of Fowls is, superficially, of the revelatory type like those in the Legend of Good Women and the House of Fame, but it is also personal like the one in the Book of the Duchess. In the Book of the Duchess the dream was the result of the emotional state of the dreamer, and was only nominally under the control of the gods, Juno and Morpheus. Because of its solely personal cause it could

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have no prophetic significance, according to medieval dream science.[14] In the Parliament of Fowls there are indications that the dream is meant to resemble the revelation, despite the lowered tone and style of the introductory passage describing Africanus. First, as in the House of Fame, a guide is sent to lead the narrator into the dream world. He is an advocate of the moral and responsible life as a means of entry into an afterworld of eternal bliss; he resembles the authoritative agent of a divinity such as the guide in Drihthelm's vision,[15] except for his behaviour at the gates. Secondly, and again like the House of Fame, the guide states a specific purpose in showing this world to the narrator: to give him material for a poem as a reward for his search for knowledge. Moreover, in writing the poem as he does, the poet is fulfilling his charge, and in a manner only partly humourous. On the other hand, Africanus disappears as soon as he has introduced the narrator to the garden, and with him goes the 'divine' influence on the dream. But it is not true that with 'the old Stoic' 'all the influence of the reading disappears.'[16] The personal element in the dream is the force that dominates its nature. To a strictly prophetic dream, long introductory matter is usually superfluous, as we have noted with regard to Prologue F.[17] In the Parliament of Fowls the narrator has been characterized by both his method of narration and his description of his thoughts and actions. He was perplexed by paradoxes of Love; he read the Somnium; he

went to bed troubled, for the information he found was not what he had been looking for. He knows that a man's waking life preoccupations influence his dreams, for he has catalogued the causes of dreams. So when Africanus appears and leads him to the gates he may be amused at the spectacle of 'the old Stoic' at Cupid's gates instead of Heaven's, but he should not be surprised. The paradox that troubled him in the beginning is simply being repeated. Here, the characterization of the narrator and the personal motivation of the dream are essential to the structure as causes of the dream, but their relationship goes deeper than this: they begin the process of thought which culminates in the dream, and from which the whole poem derives its structure.

We begin our study of the structure of the Parliament of Fowls with the end of the poem. Stillwell, identifying the narrator with Chaucer, explains his continuing to read in hope of having another dream by saying that he 'is a naive fellow, and fails to understand what sort of riches he has happened upon in the Somnium and in the dream which the book has provoked.'[18] We have already seen that the narrator is not naive. How, then, are we to explain this lack of a solution? Is there a meaning in the dream that the narrator has not recognized, or is there none at all? And if there is none, can that be explained as poetically satisfactory? The problem has been given several answers. Perhaps since the eagles do not mate while the other birds do, Chaucer was pointing out the unsatis-

factory nature of courtly love[19] -- but this leaves out of account his sympathetic treatment of the eagles. Or it may be that the poem is essentially a demande d'amour and there is nothing to be decided[20] -- but for a goose and a cuckkoo to take part in that courtly game would render the poem absurd, and its serious tone could not be explained. Or perhaps Chaucer was attempting to reconcile the writing of love poetry in the light of religious teaching, and failed, and so went on reading[21] -- but is this likely to be the point of a courtly and humourous poem? It is evident that a great deal depends on the tone in this poem. Now that we have seen the tone to be serious and humourous, we shall find that a more credible answer than these lies in the courtly love system, and in the structure of the poem.

Brewer has suggested that the major division of the poem is at the beginning of the dream, with the material on either side bearing the relationship of thesis to antithesis.[22] There are two objections to this concept of structure. First, it contributes to theories like the one mentioned above, in which the poem is interpreted as an unsuccessful attempt at a reconciliation; that is, it breaks the poem in half and reinforces the lack of solution at the end. Secondly, and more seriously, it disregards the facts as reported by the text. According to the dream psychology stated in stanza fifteen, the dream must actually have been caused by elements in the dreamer's waking life, the paradoxes of Love and the Somnium.

Moreover, both of these elements do appear in the dream in the form of Africanus and the garden of love. Far from being opposed to the dreamer's waking life, the dream includes it. It cannot be an antithesis, for an antithesis does not include a thesis. The thesis and antithesis are present in the narrator's original subject of inquiry and the material he found instead of an answer; these are the two subjects that are opposed, and their opposition is underlined everywhere in the first part of the poem by the figure of contentio. The dream is a synthesis. The structure of the poem follows the logical three-part[23] progression of thought from thesis to antithesis to synthesis, a process appropriate to the narrator's thoughtful character.

The first two parts of the logical progression of the structure, the thesis and antithesis, the narrator brings into explicit opposition when he says that after reading all day, '. . . bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,/And ek I nadde that thyng that I wolde.'[24] He has just previously revealed what it was that he 'hadde': Scipio's dream in which Africanus shows him a view of the world as part of an ordered universe where there is punishment for wrong and reward for virtue, and where a leader is obligated to work toward the general good in order to gain immortality. This is good reading for a philosopher, though perhaps not when his mind is occupied with thoughts of love. Its emphasis is on the macrocosm and on the spirit rather than the body. Muscatine says that the

résumé of the Somnium 'constitutes the chief variance from conventional love-vision material. . . and the chief critical difficulty.'[25] But when it is seen as a causal factor in the subject-matter of the dream, as the chief source of the indications for a revelatory dream and so a contributor to tone, and as the antithesis to the original problem and so possessing the middle and essential position in this three-part structure, the difficulty disappears. The departure from conventional courtly tradition here is representative of the spirit of the whole poem.

The subject of the narrator's original search is never made explicit, but it is revealed through a series of clues which arouse interest in his search through the first half of the poem, which might otherwise have fallen well below the level of interest of the dream. Our lack of certain knowledge about the process corresponds to the narrator's own, and our desire for discovery matches his. The first two stanzas of the poem deal with the subject of love, and we therefore assume that the poem will have something to do with that subject; then there is a complete break in subject, corresponding to the shift of tone noted above, in the third stanza, where the narration of events in chronological order begins. As we are taken back to the day of the narrator's experience and move with him through the events of that day, we notice that there is no direct mention of love until Africanus assures him in his dream that the warning on the gates does not apply to him

but to Love's servants.[26] Yet the initial two stanzas have the effect of directing our attention to the suggestions that will reveal the subject of his search. In his summary of Scipio's dream he specifies that 'likerous folk' along with 'brekers of the lawe' 'shul whirle aboute th'erthe alwey in peyne',[27] whereas Cicero in the original designated this fate generally to those who value the body above the soul.[28] Then, the narrator interrupts the beginning of the dream while he examines the causes of dreams, and we see that the stanza is a translation of Claudian, with the lovers plucked out of their original place in the middle of the account and placed at the end, the climax, of the stanza.[29] Finally, in the next stanza, he invokes the planet Venus who 'madest me this sweven for to mete.' The information has been deliberately withheld by the narrator who is controlling this report, and the suggestions, with the exception of the one within the abstract of the book, are in the present tense, and are just as deliberately inserted-- another indication of the subtlety of the narrator. By the time he arrives at the gates to the garden of love, we know what the subject of his search was; and like him, we are then faced with the whole experience in concrete rather than abstract terms.

The synthesis is the dream world. This world, to which Africanus introduces the dreamer, is both like and unlike the view he accorded Scipio. It is Scipio's dream applied to the world of love. This dream world is the microcosm corresponding

to the macrocosm Scipio saw; here, as there, one's behavior results in either bliss or woe; here, too, there is an ordered structure; the observer, here a poet, is required to gain his immortality by his service to the inhabitants of the world he sees. This is not the universe, but it is the whole world of love: proper behavior within it is dictated by rules for each class of its society, and happiness results from following the rules. The poet, not the political leader, is spokesman for this world, for the poet is the recognized advocate of love.[30] But Scipio's dream is applied to the world of love by the narrator's mind: the dream is his own, caused by his thoughts and attitudes to love as well as his reading activities. These unite in the dream which follows the same logical process as the narrator's total experience. The three scenes form another thesis-antithesis-synthesis. This process, although it does not seem an especially dreamlike one because of its essential rationality, is accomplished by means of thought associations and emotional reactions, and so is adapted to fit the dream world. Africanus is gone; once inside the garden the dreamer is alone in a world of his mind.

The allegory of the dream world is truly an allegory of the mind. As in the Roman de la Rose the allegory portrays the emotions and thoughts of the dreamer. But further, the allegory represents the mind itself: its structure is a structure of thought. Unlike the dreamers in Chaucer's other dream poems, this dreamer takes no part as a person in the

action of the dream; he cannot, for its content is a projection of his mind and its movement is his association of ideas and emotional responses. He proceeds through this world observing in concrete form his ideas, hopes and fears. The scenes he creates for himself comprise the terms he would be familiar with as a reader of love literature and philosophy--Venus and Nature, for example -- just as Drihthelm's vision of the abodes of the damned and the blessed appeared to him in familiar Christian terms.[31] The allegory opens out in a three-part process from the gates. First, the dreamer's senses are filled with the garden.[32] But the garden is like the garden of love, and it suggests the usual figures to be found there. The sensuality of the first scene becomes less whole as it is channelled along erotic lines along into the temple scene.[33] Nightmare-like, the figures of this scene are only statuary; their potential evil becomes more and more apparent to the dreamer as he dwells on the idea, and he sees them as inert, artificial stereotypes. An emotional reaction against this scene prompts him to turn back from the dark temple to the open sunlight of the garden. The third scene[34] resumes the wholeness of nature and is characterized by animation instead of inertia. The original garden becomes full of the positive factors corresponding to the negative ones he has left behind, yet the negative ones are represented too, in changed form. His imagination is fired by the awakening implications of the first two scenes. The birds that at first

merely sang on the boughs spring into character; their original soft harmony, in contrast to the sighs of the temple, becomes orderly debate, then cacophony, and finally euphony, as it culminates in the chorus that awakens the dreamer. Thus we have an allegorical representation of the dreamer's mind, peopled by the figures of his experience as influenced by his attitudes, and bound together by an intricate web of symbolism which expresses these attitudes. The transitions between scenes are accomplished by contrasts of mainly sensory imagery: open-enclosed, light-dark, action-inertia, and especially sound images appear in interwoven series, drawn toward a climax that incorporates and transcends as it succeeds the previous scenes. From his passive absorption of the messages on the gates, the dreamer is quickened into active thought, and the allegory gains in extent and in pace throughout the whole unified process. Just as the poem does not divide at the beginning of the dream into two parts, neither does the dream divide at the beginning of the Nature episode.[35] The garden and temple scenes, rather than having 'somewhat less relationship to what follows than one would like',[36] first oppose each other in a thesis-antithesis relationship, then join as causes of the final scene; they are incorporated in it, and, as we shall see, resolved in it. We shall now examine this process in detail.

Perception of the garden and of its implications is the whole dream; the dreamer's reactions to it bring forth the

setting, the figures and the action within it. As he steps inside the gates, the dreamer's mind projects the garden usual to a courtly dream poem. He has first the general impression of lush greenery,[37] succeeded by an impression of extent which is demonstrated by his ennumeration of the many trees he sees. Then, focussing on smaller details, he notices the vari-coloured flowers and even the red fins and silver scales of fish in the stream:

> And colde welle-stremes, nothyng dede,
> That swymmen ful of smale fishes lighte,
> With fynnes rede and skales sylver bryghte. (187-89)

His eyes thus dazzled with colour, he is next attracted by sound: 'On every bow the bryddes herde I synge',[38] and, noting the presence of deer, rabbits and squirrels, he hears the music swell, stringed instruments blending with a breeze that rustles the leaves, 'Accordaunt to the foules song alofte.'[39] Finally, he feels the temperate air, and knows this is that paradise wherein exists neither hot nor cold, sickness, nor old age nor night,[40] 'there grene and lusty May shal evere endure'[41] as the gate promised. The succession of these impressions, from general to particular, from sight to sound to feeling, represents in plausible psychological order his total response to sensory stimulation, and the temporary erasure of the dilemma in his mind. He gives himself up to his reaction; but not for long. Thought re-asserts itself as he connects this place with the courtly paradise. Here the garden functions as the setting for the dream, but takes part in the

action of the allegory, too: each of its components appears as a thought of the dreamer while he constructs the ideal world of love described in gold letters on the gate.

But this garden, he knows, is also the usual garden of courtly love poetry. Where are its inhabitants? He sees them: 'under a tre, besyde a welle, I say/Cupide, oure lord . . . ' and his daughter, Wille, tempering his arrows.[42] His knowledge of the other side of love as described by the letters of black takes possession of his mind. He surveys the figures of the world of courtly love: Plesaunce, Aray, Lust, Curteysie, Craft -- 'disfigurat was she' -- Delyt, Gentilesse, 'Beute withouten any atyr', Youthe, then

> Foolhardynesse, Flaterye, and Desyr,
> Messagerye, and Meede, and other thre --
> Here names shul not here be told for me. (227-29)

Interspersed with the more benign characters are, at first, a few that represent his suspicions, then the last group suddenly dominates the whole assembly for him. The accumulation of their formidable number reflects his growing impression of evil; these surely cannot be the personifications that Malone says are 'for decorative purposes only'.[43] Continuing this line of thought, the dreamer then sees the temple. In front of it are dancing women, hundreds of pairs of doves, Peace and Patience as guards, and the followers of Byheste and Art.[44] Within is darkness, relieved only by hot jealous sighs fanning the altar, and by the light around Venus. The bestial Priapus stands there, 'In swich aray as whan the asse hym shente/With

cri by nighte, and with hys sceptre in honde.'[45] In a secret corner lies Venus, seductively draped and attended by Richesse, Ceres, and Bacus. On the walls are broken bows of maidens who wasted their time in the service of chastity, and pictures of those who died for love. The whole scene is characterized by inertia: some of the figures do not move at all, while those who do only repeat the movements that have always been their lot, 'amyddes lay Cypride,/To whom on knees two yonge folk ther cryde/To ben here helpe. . ..'[46] Thus does the dreamer's mind review all the stories he has read of love, and, marking them with his own attitudes, project their features into this garden. The resultant unleashing of eroticism and frustration of desire finally make him turn away, like Dante from the Inferno, back to his original green garden, 'mynselven to solace.'[47]

De Lorris' fanciful world combined an idealized natural world with the epitome of human beauty and conduct, according to the standard of thirteenth-century France. For our English narrator, a century later, this standard seems questionable, at least as the single standard. Although composed of conventional elements, the garden he saw as he began to dream is less formal even than the one in the <u>Book of the Duchess</u>: here there is no mention of evenly-spaced trees, and the trees mentioned are useful ones as well as symbolic ones: 'the saylyng fyr' is there along with the 'victor palm'.[48] Now, as he returns to this garden, he sees it as the realm of Nature. Muscatine has asked, 'If Chaucer had. . . visualized ending his poem with a

parliament of birds, would he have been content with the passing description of birds in verses 190-192?' The answer is yes, for what the dreamer sees the second time is an elaboration of his first view brought about by his intervening experience. The birds which at first sat on the bow and sang 'with voys of aungel. . . besyede hem here bryddes forth to brynge',[50] now appear to him to be the creatures of Nature, assembled under her to choose their mates as she has decreed. They are his creation in reaction to the static artificiality he has just seen, a creation formed from his first view of the garden, and so a synthesis of the two.

At first, birdsong had filled the air, but now not the air alone:

> . . .erthe, and eyr, and tre, and every lake
> So ful was, that unethe was there space
> For me to stonde, so ful was al the place. (313-15)

His eye moves over their ranks and, as he previously expressed the extent of the garden in his enumeration of the trees, so he now enumerates the birds,[51] filling indeed all the space he sees. Nature sets out the rules of choice, then the birds come to life. Three tercels all desire the 'hand' of Nature's finest work, the formel eagle. All four develop character as their debate proceeds. Until nightfall they contend; then, suddenly, the lower classes break in, and a feverish melée of words destroys the orderliness. Until now the dreamer has been occupied in thinking of courtly lovers, but now the other birds lay claim to his attention. How do they feel about the

business of love? Ideas crowd into his mind and are expressed in the persons of the goose, cuckoo, duck, and turtledove. What can possibly be the solution? The formel must choose. But she does not want to serve Venus just yet -- may she have another year of freedom? The dreamer's imagination is runaway; his ideas tumble in one after another, the speed of the action increasing as his excitement mounts. Nature grants the formel's wish; the suitors are to remain loyal; the other birds choose their mates. Joy and love-making fill the air. A choir is chosen and sings in honour of Nature -- and the dream is over.

The last scene, the climax,of the dream, is itself divisible into three parts similar to the larger triads we have examined: the debate of the courtly lovers, the debate of the lower fowl, and the resolution. The whole scene takes place in the realm of Nature. Venus, hidden in dark recesses, approachable only through ease and excess, unbending to her supplicants, has been left behind; her realm, where men are led 'to the sorweful were/There as the fisch in prysoun is al drye'[52] has been superceded, and by implication the realm of Nature yeilds satisfaction and harmony, as represented in the final chorus. Nature is vicar of the Lord, creator of eagle and goose alike.[53] She accepts all points of view, in fact, decreed their differences and made a place for each.[54] Her blessing goes to all her creatures,[55] whose habits in love differ just as do their preferences for worms or seed, air or water. Nature is the true deity of Chaucer's dream poems in their variety,

just as she is present behind the fulness of the Canterbury Tales.

The debate of the courtly birds, like the Knight's Tale, includes in its cast a reluctant damsel wooed by lovers of different kinds. Less full a picture than that of Palamon, Arcite and Emily, that of the courtly birds is a wittier miniature. The modest formel, who like Emily has no wish to serve Venus, is typical of the desirable but undesiring woman; the suggestion of a blush over her feathers is unforgettable.[56] Her first and third lovers are also mainly conventional, representing the extremes of knighthood and servility. The second, however, is more of a departure from convention.[57] His vehemence punctuated by an oath, he discounts the first eagle's suit and claims to love her more -- or just as much (he's not sure); anyway, he's loved her longer (if quantity compensates for quality in courtly love!) Like the first speaker, he offers his life should he fail her in any way -- such as by 'jangling'. He will serve her as well as his wit allows. The dubious value of his promise caps his speech. In thirteen lines Chaucer has drawn a caricature as amusing as any Congreve managed in a whole play.

The courtly debate having lasted all day, it provokes open rebellion from the lower fowl, whose attitudes toward this exhibition of courtly love are as directly amusing as the second eagle's speech was indirectly.[58] The goose advises that the losers ought to find other formels; the cuckoo says they

can all go single as long as he gets his mate; with whole-hearted pragmatism the duck cannot see why a man would love at all without getting results; the turtledove blushes for their stupidity and asserts that he would be true to a mate until he died -- rather more than was required of him, by the code. The falcon, sparrowhawk and merlin answer the squabbling lower birds with contemptuous wit, scorn, or caustic curses. The humour in the whole scene is untouched by irony; it is far from satiric. Each bird is simply himself, and the poet's sympathy for each of them is evident: the formel is Nature's finest work; the goose or duck is no more to be laughed at than the second eagle. Theories of satire in this scene are difficult to support in view of the tone. Chaucer's satire was not as open and healthy as this. In modified form, as in the Legend of Good Women, it is covert;[59] in full force, as in the Summoner's Tale it is grim, and cruel. The drama of the birds resembles a comedy of manners extended to cover all classes of society. Like the Owl and the Nightingale, this scene and the rest of the poem has its humour and its seriousness: what *is* the answer to the birds' debate?

The end of this scene has been viewed from nearly every possible angle. One point is generally agreed upon: the lower birds get their mates, and that is a resolution for them. But what of the courtly eagles? Everett's statement is typical: '. . . the aristocratic birds are left without satisfaction, while the lower birds, who know only Nature's rule, are happily

united.'[60] The poem was probably read before a courtly audience, perhaps on St. Valentine's Day.[61] It is unlikely, if these suppositions are so, that the poem was meant to be an attack on the social system to which the court gave at least nominal support; but the system's defects and limitations could be exposed in a spirit of good humour, especially when it was veiled beneath the allegory of these birds and their problems. Yet a place for courtly love must be found along with places for the attitudes of the lower birds, for Nature created them all and decreed their differences. Satisfaction is implicit in Nature's realm, in comparison with Venus'. The final chorus of harmony is sung by a chosen choir,[62] with no indication that the eagles are excluded. The resolution for the eagles, like their behaviour, is the result of their social standing and their commitment to the courtly code. When the three tercels are left to wait out the year because of a formel who wishes to continue being served, they are following their code. If they mated or consummated their love in a 'marriage' as do the other birds, their love, according to this code, would be at an end. Only by continuing to serve and be served can they continue to love, just as the lower birds must mate to express their love. Whether this is wrong, or just amusing, is left to personal judgment. The poet gives no help; he merely describes the way of the world of love.

This scene, as well as concluding the dream, concludes the poem. The larger question remains: what is the resolution

for the poem? It has been suggested that the poem is a <u>demande d'amour</u>,[63] or that it follows a folk tale which is a problem or hoax story,[64] and therefore no resolution should be expected. The conclusion is indecisive, but to justify this by saying that the poem is of the <u>demande</u> type is not sufficient: a poetically satisfying conclusion is required whatever its sources and analogues. The conclusion here can be explained in terms of the structure of the poem, which in turn rests upon the character of the narrator. The narrator is something of a philosopher whose mental processes dictate both the matter and the action of the poem, and its expression and structure. He is the chosen spokesman for the world of love, the poet-visionary whose duty it is to reveal the world he was granted a view of in a poem. This is the literary device which Chaucer chose to inform the poem. The narrator's character creates the structure and supports the sophistication of the conclusion. His dream has been the result of, and combination of, his waking life experience -- a synthesis. But a synthesis frequently becomes yet another thesis, the basis for another progression of thought. And so, he says,

> I hope, ywis, to rede so som day
> That I shal mete som thyng for to fare
> The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare. (697-99)

His experience, and ours, has yielded not answers, but a basis from which thought may grow. This is the way of the world of love; the answer is not simple -- perhaps there is no final answer. But we are to go on reading, and thinking about it.

Notes to Introduction, pp. 1-8

1. G.K. Chesterton, Chaucer (London, 1932), p. 125.

2. See below, pp. 61-2.

3. Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer (Baltimore, 1951). At the beginning of his discussion of each of the poems Malone mentions that they are love-visions, but does not elaborate.

4. John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker (London, 1951). See espei-ally pp. 36-40.

5. For example, see Haldeen Braddy, 'Chaucer and Graunson: The Valentine Tradition', PMLA, LIV, 1939, pp. 359-68. He supports the allegorists by concluding that it was the practice of both poets to refer to human affairs.

6. The dream would have great appeal for an age that thrived on paradox.

7. Parliament of Fowls, ll. 22-23, in F.N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Cambridge, 1957). Robinson's edition will be used throughout this study unless noted otherwise.

8. Geoffrey Tillotson, 'Dreams in English Literature', London Mercury, XXVII, 1933, p. 517.

9. Dorothy Everett, Essays in Middle English Literature (Oxford, 1955), p. 98.

Notes to Chapter I, pp. 9-40

A. The Roman de la Rose

1. Guillaume de Lorris et Jean de Meung, Le Roman de la Rose, ed. Francisque-Michel (Paris, 1864), 2 vols. See also the English translation by F.S. Ellis, The Romance of the Rose (London, 1900), 3 vols.

2. Le Roman de la Rose, ll. 1-80 and 22750-end.

3. Ibid., ll. 2087-2778.

4. John B. Stearns, in Studies of the Dream as a Technical Device in Latin Epic and Drama (Lancaster Press, 1927), points out that poets often used the dream to provide their works with the authority of having been sanctioned by a divinity.

B. Dreams

1. The Dream of the Rood, ed. Bruce Dickins and Alan S.C. Ross

(London, 1954), ll. 85-86.

2. Pearl, ed. E.V. Gordon (London, 1958).

3. 'Drihthelm's Vision' in Bede, A History of the English Church and People, trans. Leo Sherley-Price (Edinburgh, 1960), Bk. V, ch. 12.

4. 'Caedmon's Dream', ibid., Bk. IV, ch. 24.

5. Cf. E.M.W. Tillyard, The English Epic and Its Background (London, 1954), pp. 134-35.

6. See Howard Rollin Patch, The Other World (Cambridge, Mass., 1950), ch. IV.

7. Walter Clyde Curry, in ch. VIII of Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences (London, 1960), gives a valuable summary of medieval dream theory.

8. Macrobius, Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. William Harris Stahl (New York, 1952), Bk. I, ch. III, sec. 3-6.

9. Claudian, 'Panegyricus de sexto consulatu Honorii Augusti', in Claudian, ed. and trans. Maurice Platnauer (London, 1956), vol. II, p. 70, Praefatio ll. 1-10. Geoffrey Chaucer, The Parlement of Foulys, ed. D.S. Brewer (London and Edinburgh, 1962), ll. 99-105.

10. Among the causes mentioned in Curry, loc. cit., are hunger, satiety, poor digestion, reaction to heat or cold, imagination, memory, anger, fear, joy.

C. Allegory

1. Macrobius, op. cit., Bk. I, ch. II, sec. 11.

2. The Bible, Gen. 37, 7.

3. Plato, The Republic of Plato, trans. Francis MacDonald Cornford (London, 1948), XL, x.613e-end.

4. Bede, op. cit., Bk. V, ch. 12.

5. Horace, 'Ars Poetica' in Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica, ed. and trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (London, 1955), l. 333.

6. Prudentius, 'Psychomachia', in Prudentius, ed. and trans. H.J. Thomson (London, 1949), p. 274ff.

7. C.S. Lewis, in The Allegory of Love (New York, 1958), charges

that 'fighting is an activity that is not proper to most of the virtues' (p. 69) and that the image of the battle is less artful than the image of the journey for illustrating good and evil (p. 68). The first objection is successfully overcome by Prudentius. The second is not valid: the journey illustrates something different from the principle of conflict illustrated by the battle, but one cannot say that one has greater intrinsic value than the other.

8. Even in Chaucer's sermon, The Parson's Tale, where forceful diction and imagery are used to describe a character like Pride (ll. 416-443), the effect is less because we are told what to feel rather than made to feel it, and because of the excessive length of the description produced by interpolation of direct moralizing statement. See Robinson, p. 229 ff.

9. Claudian, 'Epithalamium de nuptiis Honorii Augusti', op. cit., vol. I, p. 240ff.

D. Courtly Love

1. See above, pp. 18-9.

2. Homer, The Odyssey, trans. E.V. Rieu (Edinburgh, 1955), Bk. IV, p. 79.

3. Ibid., Bk. VI, p. 103.

4. Ibid., Bk. XI, pp. 171-188.

5. The Phoenix, in Sweet's Anglo-Saxon Reader, ed. C.T. Onions (London, 1954), p. 139ff. See ll. 14-20 and 50-59.

6. Medieval Latin Lyrics, ed. and trans. Helen Waddell (London, 1962), p. 168, ll. 15-16.

7. The Seafarer, ed. I.L. Gordon (London, 1960), ll. 31-33.

8. 'Quis est hic qui pulsat ad ostium', in The Penguin Book of Latin Verse, ed. and trans. Frederick Brittain (London, 1962), p. 181-82, l. 5.

9. Ibid,, pp. 171-73, stanza 8.

10. Cf. J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (New York, 1954), p. 112.

11. Le Roman de la Rose, ll. 22248-50.

12. The Pygmalion passage so overwhelmed the English translator, Ellis, that he did not render it. He explains his mutilation of the end of the poem by saying that '. . . the story of Pygmalion and the image. . . is mixed with a symbolism which certainly could not be put into English without giveing reasonable offence. . ..' Ellis, op. cit., vol. III, p. xii.

13. Le Roman de la Rose, ll. 11514-17

14. 'Cum splendor lunae fulgescat ab aethere purae', in Waddell, op. cit., p. 128.

15. 'Mens fecunda deo, Radegundis, vita sororum', and 'Unde mihi rediit radianti lumine vultus?', in Philip Schuyler Allen, The Romanesque Lyric (Chapel Hill, 1928), p. 337.

16. Ibid., 'Unde mihi...', ll. 7-10.

17. 'omnia qui solus rerum secreta tuetur', in F.J.E. Raby, A History of Christian-Latin Poetry (London, 1953), p. 184.

18. Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. John Jay Parry (New York, 1959).

19. The dialogue or debate became a convention frequently found in courtly love poetry. See, for example, Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls, and W.A. Neilson, Origins and Sources of The Court of Love (Cambridge, Mass., 1899). A related device is the question-and-answer process found in Alain de Lille's De Planctu Naturae, discussed below, pp. 29ff. and also in the Roman de la Rose, Piers Plowman and Dante's Divine Comedy.

20. Capellanus, op. cit., pp. 74-83.

21. John Jay Parry, The Art of Courtly Love, p. 76n.

22. Alain de Lille, The Complaint of Nature, trans. Douglas M. Moffat (New York, 1908).

23. Le Roman de la Rose, ll. 2093-2777.

24. Ibid., ll. 16827-21628.

E. The Dream Poem Framework

1. Ibid., ll. 1-88, 89-22747, 22748-end.

2. Two other English poems which are similar are Thomas of Erceldoune and Thomas Usk's Testament of Love. The latter is comparable with Andreas' De Planctu but is a vision,

not a dream, and is in prose; the former is a description of a mortal's visit to fairyland, an other world of a different kind from that of a dream. Neither will be considered here.

3. William Langland, The Vision of William Concerning Piers the Plowman, ed. W.W. Skeat (Oxford, 1886), 2 vols., Text B, Prologue ll 1-10.

4. Pearl, ll. 1-60.

5. Wynnere and Wastoure in The Age of Chaucer, ed. Boris Ford (London, 1955), ll. 31-44.

6. The Parlement of the Thre Ages, ed. M.Y. Offord (London, 1959), E.E.T.S. no. 246, Thornton MS, ll. 1-103.

7. Ibid., l. 656.

8. Langland, op. cit., Text B, Passus XX, l. 384.

9. Pearl, ll. 1189-94.

10. The Parlement of the Thre Ages, ll. 656-end.

11. Pearl, ll. 1189-end.

12. John Gower, Confessio Amantis, ed. Henry Morley (London, 1889).

Notes to Chapter II, pp. 41-57

A. Prologue to the Legend of Good Women

1. The Book of the Duchess was probably written soon after the death of Blanche of Lancaster in September, 1369 (see Robinson, p. 773). The dates of the other three dream poems are disputed: see Robinson, pp. 779, 791 and 839. The chronology of the dream poems is not important to this study, as no theory of development in Chaucer's use of the form is being advanced.

2. The ninth legend breaks off without being finished.

3. See Stearns, op. cit.

4. Cf. W.G. Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower (Gloucester, Mass., 1959), pp. 208-32.

5. See above, pp. 26 ff.

6. Ll. G1-2.

7. The dream in the Parliament of Fowls is largely a personal dream but it exhibits as well some of the characteristics of a revelatory dream. See below, p.

8. Ll. F45-50.

9. L. F105.

10. L. F280.

11. Ll. F214-25.

12. Ll. G41-43.

13. Ll. G85-89.

14. W.W. Skeat thought that G was the earlier version of the Prologue (see Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, Oxford, 1899, vol. III, pp. xxiff.). Later, arguments were advanced for G's being the revision: see especially J.L. Lowes, PMLA, XIX, 593ff and XX, 749ff. The more competent handling of the dream poem form in G supports the latter view.

15. C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York, 1958), pp. 21-22.

16. Cf. D.D. Griffith, 'An Interpretation of Chaucer's Legend of Good Women', in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (New York, 1959), pp. 396-404. Griffith claims that 'Chaucer changed his attitude toward this religion of Cupid and omitted from the G Prologue the most noticeable analogues to Christian worship', especially with the intention 'of canceling the presentation of himself as a votary of Cupid.' (p. 397) It is doubtful that all of the changes Griffith points out were made on ideological grounds, especially when the religion of Cupid was being satirized anyway.

17. See above, p.16.

18. Ll. G142-43.

19. Ll. G232-33.

20. L. G236.

21. Ll. G182-83.

22. Ll. G241ff.

24. Ll. G179, 422, and in the balade refrain.

25. Ll. G163-64.

26. Dante, The Divine Comedy, Paradiso, Canto XXVIII, in The Portable Dante, ed. Paolo Milano (New York, 1959), pp. 512-522.

27. L. G174.

28. Ll. G159-60.

29. Harold C. Goddard, 'Chaucer's Legend of Good Women', JEGP, VII, 1908, pp. 100-101. See also J.L. Lowes, 'Is Chaucer's Legend of Good Women a Travesty?', JEGP, VIII, 1909, pp. 513-69. Lowes successfully refutes many of the details of Goddard's argument, but offers no case against the principle of satire in the poem.

30. The four dreamers are entirely different, Chaucer's creations.

31. Ll. G241-44.

32. Ll. G261-62.

33. Ll. G313-16.

34. L. G338.

35. Ll. G381-82.

36. Ll. G386-94.

37. Ll. G452-64.

B. The House of Fame

1. W.O. Sypherd, 'The Completeness of Chaucer's Hous of Fame', MLN, XXX, 1915, pp. 65-68.

2. R.J. Allen, 'A Recurring Motif in Chaucer's Hous of Fame', JEGP, 1956, pp. 393-94. Allen also reviews previous attempts at discovering a unity in the poem.

3. Ll. 1-110.

4. Ll. 1-20.

5. Ll. 21-52.

6. Ll. 55-56.

7. Ll. 523-25.

8. Ll.65-108.

9. Ll. 518-28.

10. L. 1091.

11. Ll. 560-62.

12. Ll. 896-903.

13. Ll. 935-69.

14. Ll. 120-479.

15. Ll. 315ff.

16. L. 349.

17. Ll. 313-14.

18. For example, ll. 584-92.

19. For example, ll. 549-53.

20. L. 729.

Notes to Chapter III, pp. 58-81.

1. R.K. Root, The Poetry of Chaucer (Gloucester, Mass., 1934), p. 61.

2. Malone, op. cit., p. 28.

3. Bertrand H. Bronson, 'The Book of the Duchess Re-Opened', PMLA, LXVII, 1952, p. 869.

4. Ibid., p. 871.

5. See above, p. 13f.

6. Ll. 96-100.

7. Ovid, The Metamorphoses of Ovid, trans. Mary M. Innes (London, 1955), p. 289.

8. Alan M.F. Gunn, in The Mirror of Love (Texas, 1952), says 'The educative process. . . is. . . in large part a matter of formal instruction. The giving of this instruction is the function of the discourses of Amors

in Guillaume's portion and those of Raison, Amis, Richece, La Vieille, Nature, and Genius in Jean de Meun's.' (p.283)

9. See the discussion of the demande d'amour in Brewer, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

10. See Robinson, op. cit., p. 773.

11. Margaret Galway, 'Chaucer's Hopeless Love', MLN, LX, pp. 431-39.

12. James R. Kreuzer, 'The Dreamer in the Book of the Duchess', PMLA, LXVI, 1951, p. 547.

13. J.W.H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase (London, 1952), p. 104.

14. Speirs, op. cit., p. 42.

15. John Livingston Lowes, Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford, 1944), p. 100; Howard Rollin Patch, On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge, Mass., 1939), p. 33.

16. Bronson, op. cit., pp.863-881; Kreuzer, op. cit., pp. 543-47.

17. George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry (Cambridge, Mass., 1951), pp. 48-53, 70; John Lawlor, 'The Pattern of Consolation in The Book of the Duchess', Speculum, XXXI, 1956, 626-48. As seen by Earle Birney ('The Beginnings of Chaucer's Irony', PMLA, LIV, 1939, p. 646) the dreamer's lapses from courtly behaviour have calculated 'mildly ludicrous effect'; this is so, but it is an effect calculated by the dreamer, not at him.

18. Ll. 744 and 1138.

19. Ll. 1309-10.

20. For evidence regarding the use of marriage in courtly love literature, see Lawlor, op. cit., pp. 626-31.

21. Ll. 848ff.

22. Compare ll. 1-29 and 1245-57.

23. See Helge Kökeritz, 'Rhetorical Word-Play in Chaucer', PMLA, LXIX, 1954, p. 951, where the 'probable play on hart and heart' is noted. Images of the hunt were frequently used to describe courtly love: see the Roman de la Rose 1449-54, and the parallels between the three days of hunting and courting in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Book III.

24. Ll. 948-51.

25. Ll. 821-26.

26. Ll. 963-65.

27. Ll. 1017-18.

28. Ll. 912-13.

29. Thomas Sackville, 'The Induction to the _Mirror for Magistrates_', in _The Golden Hind_, ed. Roy Lamson and Hallett Smith (New York, 1942), pp. 152-166, l. 74.

30. See the discussion of the complaint in Skeat, _Chaucer_, _op. cit_., vol. I, p. 61.

31. Robinson, _op. cit_., p. 267.

Notes to Chapter IV, pp. 82-105.

1. O.F. Emerson, 'The Suitors in Chaucer's Parlement of Foules', _MP_, VIII, 1910-11, pp. 45-62; Haldeen Braddy, '_The Parlement of Foules_: A New Proposal', _PMLA_, XLVI, 1931, pp. 1007-19.

2. Edith Rickert, 'A New Interpretation of the _Parlement of Foules_', _MP_, XVIII, 1920-21, pp. 1-29, interprets the satire as being against the lower classes, while David Patrick, 'The Satire in Chaucer's _Parlement of Foules_', _PQ_, IX, 1930, pp. 61-65, claims the satire is against the upper classes.

3. Bertrand H. Bronson, 'In Appreciation of Chaucer's _Parlement of Foules_', _University of California Publications in English_, III, 1935, pp. 193-224; Gardiner Stillwell, 'Unity and Comedy in Chaucer's "Parlement of Foules"', _JEGP_, XLIX, 1950, pp. 470-495.

4. R.M. Lumiansky, 'Chaucer's _Parlement of Foules_: A Philosophical Interpretation', _RES_, XXIV, 1948, pp. 81-89.

5. Everett, _op. cit_., p. 106.

6. _Ibid_., p. 104.

7. _Ibid_., pp. 103-106.

8. Ll. 90-91.

9. Ll. 97-98.

10. Ll. 127-40.

11. See the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

12. Ll. 15-16.

13. Everett, *op. cit*., p. 111; Charles A. Owen, Jr., 'The Role of the Narrator in the "Parlement of Foules"', *College English*, XIV, 1953, p. 265.

14. See above, p. 13.

15. See above, p. 16.

16. Owen, *loc. cit*.

17. See above, p. 45

18. Stillwell, *op. cit*., p. 478.

19. Everett, *op. cit*., p. 112-13; Owen, *op. cit*., p. 266.

20. Bronson, 'In Appreciation', *op. cit*., p. 203.

21. Lumiansky, *op. cit*., p. 88.

22. Brewer, *op. cit*., p. 47.

23. Cf. R.W. Frank, Jr., 'Structure and Meaning in the *Parlement of Foules*', *PMLA*, LXXI, 1956, pp. 530-39. The three parts that Frank sees in the poem are first, the moral prelude, secondly, the garden scene, and thirdly, the parliament scene.

24. Ll. 90-91.

25. Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1957), p. 115.

26. L. 159.

27. Ll. 78-80.

28. Macrobius, *op. cit*., p. 77.

29. See Brewer, *op. cit*., p. 103.

30. See J.F. Rowbotham, *Troubadours and Courts of Love* (New York, 1895).

31. See above, p. 16.

32. Ll. 172-210.

33. Ll. 211-97.

34. Ll. 298-694.

35. Brewer, op. cit., p. 47.

36. Muscatine, op. cit., p. 116.

37. Ll. 173-75.

38. L. 190.

39. L. 203.

40. Cf. the description in the Phoenix, above, p.

41. L. 130.

42. Ll. 211ff.

43. Malone, op. cit., p. 65.

44. Ll. 230-45.

45. Ll. 255-56.

46. Ll. 277-79.

47. L. 297.

48. Ll. 176-82.

49. Muscatine, loc. cit.

50. Ll. 191-92.

51. Ll. 330-64.

52. Ll. 138-39.

53. Ll. 379-80.

54. L. 320.

55. Ll. 659-69.

56. Ll. 442-45.

57. Ll. 449ff.

58. L. 491-616.

59. See above, p. 47ff.

60. Everett, loc. cit.; Owen, loc. cit.

61. St. Valentine's Day is mentioned four times: ll. 309, 322, 386 and 683.

62. L. 673.

63. Bronson, loc. cit.

64. William Edward Farnham, 'The Sources of Chaucer's Parlement of Foules', PMLA, XXXII, 1917, 492-518.

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CE	College English
JEGP	Journal of English and Germanic Philology
LM	London Mercury
MLN	Modern Language Notes
MP	Modern Philology
PMLA	Publications of the Modern Language Association
PQ	Philological Quarterly
RES	Review of English Studies
Spec.	Speculum
UCPE	University of California Publications in English

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