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JOURNEY AS METAPHOR IN THE HOUSE OF FAME

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ABSTRACT

This thesis deals with the structure and meaning of The House of Fame. The poem is a simple one with meaning embodied through a series of repeated images and devices. The narrator is presented with the possibility of growth and understanding based upon the model set by the journey of Aeneas as presented early in the poem. The narrator's inability to grasp the meanings, implicit and explicit, indicate that his "journey" is a complete failure. The poem attempts to teach its readers that life itself is a "journey" from this world to the next and that one must strive to emulate the "journey" of Aeneas and not of the narrator "Geffrey".

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Although critics tend to categorize The House of Fame as one of the "minor" works in the Chaucerian canon, many pens have been put to paper in consideration of this elusive dream-vision. The result is a large body of critical writing, mostly in the form of articles, which follow the patterns set by the major studies on the poem. The major texts written thus far to explicate the poem are Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame, by W.O. Sypherd; Chaucer's Book of Fame, by J.A.W. Bennett; Chaucer's House of Fame, by Sheila Delany; and Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, by B.G. Koonce. A brief description of these texts should present a proper background for this thesis and lead quite aptly into my own study of Chaucer's The House of Fame.

One of the touchstones for critics of the poem is Sypherd's book. All of the major works dealing with The House of Fame make reference to Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame and thus the book deserves our attention. Sypherd's "studies" are the result of a doctoral thesis which was submitted in 1906. The book is a by-product of thought and work completed at this early time and as a result does not have the benefits of research, information, and methodology which more recent critical approaches to Chaucer studies provide. The work is dated and this is most clearly manifested

in its methodology. Sypherd searches for sources, precursors and analogues for the poem, and he concludes that The House of Fame is a "love-vision" defined in terms of various other continental "love-visions". We are, however, never clearly informed what a "love-vision" is. This somewhat amorphous term is then used to "explain" any areas of difficulty which Sypherd cannot decipher:

. . . the long recital of the story of Aeneas and Dido, as Chaucer finds it portrayed on the walls of the temple of Venus, is by no means a digression. It is justified for more than one reason. In a love-vision what could be more appropriate than the story of Aeneas and Dido? Moreover, would not his hearers be greatly interested and moved by this tale of unrequited love? 1

As we shall see, the inclusion of the Dido-Aeneas story by Chaucer serves a pointed and important purpose in the fabric of the poem and the web of its meaning. The explanation offered by Sypherd is as unsatisfactory as it is evasive.

Sypherd's method—the listing of sources without explanation of source or derivative—is the wellspring for another problem in discussion of a dream poem. The problem is literal reading. In dream poems objects and places described are intensified, charged with symbolic value and hidden meaning. Failure to interpret these symbols and discover the hidden meanings can result in little beyond connection-making:

The last significant element of Chaucer's temple is the material of which it is constructed. It

is "ymad of glas." . . . I have found no glass temples or palaces belonging to Venus. The nearest approach is the building of crystal. 2

The preceding quotation is not an isolated example. Later, Sypherd examines literary precedents for the twig house and points to the common features of the house of rumour and actual Celtic twig houses. (pp. 140-146). When the reader misses the symbolic value he cannot "cash-in" on the worth or sentence of the poem. The insensitive, literal reader is epitomized in The House of Fame by the narrator himself. Sypherd's literal reading and research is not unlike what we come to expect from "Geffrey".³ Over 150 pages of connection-making and source-finding lead Sypherd to an understanding of the "meaning" of the poem (amazingly condensed into two pages of his text) which rivals the literal explanations offered by the narrator of the poem. Sypherd considers the entire first book as "decorative or poetical" containing "no hidden meaning".⁴ He believes much the same thing for the entire second book: "we shall find here likewise no symbolic representation".⁵ According to Sypherd, Chaucer⁶ is concerned in the poem with "what lovers are doing". With all this in mind Sypherd's closing remarks on the purpose and sentence of the poem take on a new depth of meaning:

The persistence of the original purpose and consistency with which he carries out the expressed object of his journey, are shown, however, most strikingly, by his picture, at the end, of the house of tidings—the house in which he is finally satisfied, for here he

learns "wonder thinges" of "Love's folke"—a happy recompense for all his labours in their behalf. 7

If we take Sypherd at his word then the "persistence of the original purpose" would merely be Chaucer's continued description of "what lovers are doing". Furthermore, Sypherd would have us see the first two books as merely "decorative", the title as misleading and the house of tidings as an attractive and fulfilling place for all! In short, The House of Fame offers little beyond a bit of mild entertainment for the literal reader, and that entertainment is to be found only in the third book.

J.A.W. Bennett's book also suffers from this problem of literal reading and pointless connection-making. Bennett, like our narrator "Geffrey", is a victim of his own wide reading and the resultant academic showmanship:

It in no way follows that the comparison of the world to a pinpoint is mere rhetoric. Later references show that [Chaucer] was well aware of the many antecedents of the topos, and expected his readers to be so . . . The prestige of Macrobius, if nothing else, led a dozen later writers to take up the comparison or to adopt the motif of which it is part. Lucan's version of it in Pharsalia IX . . . for . . . Chaucer's immediate model there is the scene of Arcita's death in Il Filostrato the ultimate source is Lucan's. 8

A careful examination of Bennett's pyrotechnics, as demonstrated above, reveals an emptiness behind the show. Bennett, it is to be admitted, has a large amount of material at his fingertips and he notices many subtle allusions in The House of Fame to these works, but he does

not offer any evidence of an understanding of the meaning of these works. He offers even less indication that he has come to grips with meaning in The House of Fame. Bennett discusses a variant of the Dido-Aeneas story which depicts Dido as the heroine:

This is essentially the Aeneid as the Middle Ages (and Chaucer) saw it: a romance, with Dido as its heroine. 9

Bennett bases his conclusion on "Geffrey's" approval of Dido's position. It is clear that Bennett is mistaking the narrative persona for the authorial position. Chaucer is not "Geffrey" and neither the Middle Ages nor Chaucer would conceive of Dido as the heroine. Even a cursory consideration of medieval commentaries on the Aeneid would indicate to Bennett that Dido is perceived as a symbol of lust and carnality by the learned medieval reader.

Bennett continues to discuss Dido and Aeneas in terms of a connubium. He believes that since Dido allows Aeneas to do "al that wedding longeth to" and because she makes Aeneas "hir lyf, hir love, hir lust, hir lord", both are bound by an oath which bears a resemblance to common law bonds today. Both situations accept the rewards but not the responsibilities of lawful union. Bennett elaborates on his conception:

Chaucer's Dido is a hapless innocent trusting Aeneas's oath and 'goodly outside' (262-5). But Virgil mentions no oath: Chaucer infers it from the use of connubium which he would take as involving the plighting of troth

(hence he sees Aeneas as later failing to keep troth: 297). 10

The lines which Bennett cites as evidence that Chaucer favoured Dido's position are actually evidence for just the opposite case. Medieval man, and Chaucer is a medieval man, does not see lust as a favourable attribute. He fears that lust will totally overwhelm his reason and bind him in its service, thus condemning him to the torments depicted by Dante in the first two books of the Commedia. Clearly Bennett has read widely but not wisely.

Bennett's understanding of Chaucer's use of the idea of Fame is also flawed and misaligned. He believes that, in a roundabout way, Chaucer is praising earthly fame:

Fame shares some of the attributes of Fortune, while being superior inasmuch as it is in some respects (for some men?) immune to chance and change: some names engraved on this icy base do not melt away since they are 'conserved with the shade'(1160). 11

This misunderstanding derives from confusion of the idea of fame and love in Bennett's discussion of Dido which we examined earlier. These self-imposed blinders cause Bennett to misread a fairly important passage to which he alludes. These misreadings cause Bennett to conclude that The House of Fame is Chaucer's ars poetriae which is a defence of poets as the preservers of worldly fame:

By now the suggestion that the lastingness of such worldly fame depends . . . on poets or historians and their choice of themes and heroes, has been firmly implanted; and it is now

seen to sort with Chaucer's own preoccupation— notably in the frame-prologues to each book— with the ars poetriae. This is the still centre of the poem. 12

A careful and informed reading of the poem will provide the reader with enough information to see that The House of Fame is a poem concerned with the transitory nature of earthly fame (which is the kind provided by poets and historians). The poem is concerned with poetics. However, Chaucer is concerned mainly with poetic responsibility and an examination of the relationship between reader and poet (as well as the difficult problem of conveyance of meaning between one disparate age and another).

Sheila Delany also examines the "poetics" embodied in The House of Fame. Although her's is the best book of criticism examined thus far, it too fails to avoid some of the common problems evident in Bennett's and Sypherd's books. With her eminently modern sensibility Delany talks about Chaucer the poet in terms of "skeptical fideism", with her emphasis placed on the skeptical half of the formulation. Delany sees Chaucer as a kind of philosopher whose skepticism provides him with a peculiar neutrality which allows him to perceive of the world in terms of various tensions of opposites. Delany indicates that there is no bias in or resolution of the presentation of these opposites in Chaucer's writing:

. . . the tradition central to Chaucer's House of Fame is a critical and skeptical tradition, rooted in the awareness of coexistent contradictory truths and resulting in the suspension of final rational judgment. 13

Later, Delany applies this "tradition" to an explanation of the role of the Dido-Aeneas story and concludes that Chaucer makes no final judgment; that he wades into the countercurrents of the "dual traditions" of Ovid and Virgil all the while floating atop both currents in calm neutrality:

In the Temple of Venus, then, the Narrator encounters more than a well-known love story, for his experience there duplicates Chaucer's experience as a poet. Were Chaucer fully convinced that fiction is independent of historical truth, a dual tradition would pose no difficulty; it could simply be ignored in the creation of his own version of "truth". Were he persuaded that the older tradition must be true, he could dispense with Ovid. As it is Chaucer grants the validity of conflicting truths and confronts the problem with no way of deciding between them. 14

One has to doubt whether Ovid's "truth" is much different than Virgil's, but even granting a difference to conclude as Delany does that Chaucer merely presents the material is to ignore any kind of Medieval tradition. Delany's conception denies that Chaucer is subject to any bias or affected by his own age and its particular conceptions. In fact, as I will argue later, Chaucer is admitting to and illustrating this idea of personal bias throughout The House of Fame.

Delany, like Bennett and Sypherd, often ignores the fabric of the whole work in the examination of one thread. The most notable example is the whole of Chapter 6 in Delany's book. This chapter is devoted to an explication of the sources and meaning of the word "phantom". The idea

of this chapter is a case of reductio ad absurdum. One cannot justify devoting an entire chapter of a book to a discussion of a word which appears only twice in the entire first book of The House of Fame. The discussion, while interesting, does little to unveil any meaning within the poem.

While Delany is careful to distinguish between the real poet and the poet-narrator, she too falls into the trap of ignoring the Chaucerian persona. Throughout Chaucer's Book of Fame and its discussions on poetics, Delany is fascinated by the idea of the special nature of a dreamer who is also a poet. She fails to remember here that Chaucer underlines the fact that "Geffrey" is a bad poet (with appeal to his misreadings and writing about things of which he has only second hand knowledge) and thus the special nature, in its manifestations within the poem, is severely flawed at best.

In general, these books suffer from common problems evident here and in the many articles which these books and Chaucer's poem have spawned. All three books tend to confuse the poet with his persona and therein lose their focus on Chaucer's irony and subsequent meaning. All suffer from incomplete and limited vision. In all cases the lack of vision is self-imposed by the choice of methodology and selection of areas of focus. All therefore condemn themselves to the consideration of one area or idea and

do not concern themselves with elucidation of overall patterns of meaning or discussion of the work as a coherent whole. Finally, all three books are prone to discuss areas of critical difficulty as artistic flaws or offer evasive or inappropriate explanations for these problems. A case in point which is illustrated in our discussion of these books is the treatment given the Dido-Aeneas story by these critics. The story has a definite function as we shall see, but to read these critics one would conclude that it is either a flaw or a mere decoration. I am not saying that there is nothing of value within these books, there are usually traces of gold in a vein of crude ore, but these books have spawned a large amount of critical writing which suffers from the problems these works have in common.

B.G. Koonce's book, in its general approach, is the exception to the rule. It does not suffer from these looming and ever-present problems. Like Bennett and Sypherd, Koonce explores the "tradition"; the sources and analogues for sections of The House of Fame. However, Koonce uses this tradition as a framing device for a clever exegesis of the poem as a meaningful work of art. Koonce's book is a paradigm of good scholarship. Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame is an excellent starting point for anyone wishing to understand symbolism and meaning in The House of Fame. With the beacon of this book as a guide I shall wend my way through the poem yet, despite my admiration for this excellent book, I should make clear my reservations at the

outset. Koonce's study is flawed by its attempts to make the poem fit into the mold established for the Commedia. While there are Dantean echoes and influences, The House of Fame is not, as Lydgate said, "Dante in Inglishe". I believe that the rigid structure imposed by Koonce causes him to misread the tenor of the final book. It is my position that "Geffrey" does not progress; that the palace of Lady Fame is certainly not a parallel for the "Paradiso"; and that the emphasis on apocalyptic imagery in the final book is Koonce's, not Chaucer's. As I use Koonce's work specific areas of divergence will become clearly apparent.

In The House of Fame Chaucer paints a comic portrait of his dreamer-narrator "Geffrey". The possibilities for ironic statement and comedy that the use of a self-caricature as a foil presents are used by Chaucer to their fullest extent. Yet this device must have been adopted for a larger purpose than just the elicitation of laughter. It is my position that Chaucer uses his narrator to illustrate two main points. Primarily, as in much of his writing, Chaucer wants to indicate the futility of the pursuit of worldly vanities such as fame. Within this context lies the necessity of a realization that this life is but a journey or pilgrimage to the next. Man can escape from the confusions of the carnal world and mature within the world only by coming to grips with himself through knowledge of his innermost desires and motivations which lie hidden beneath the persona a man adopts. This is one purpose of

the narrative persona. One purpose of the Dido-Aeneas story in Book I is an invitation to look beneath the surface and discover a more important meaning. It is also one reason why the eagle constantly invites "Geffrey" to perceive his sentence and why the sentences of the eagle's illustrations are embodied in the realm of Lady Fame for "Geffrey" to perceive directly.

Chaucer is also using a self-caricature in order to give the reader some insights into the nature of the poet's craft. Chaucer uses the device to illustrate some of the problems a writer encounters and to demonstrate and admit the principle of bias, to indicate that writers, as human beings, have a narrow and personal vision which suffers from the limitations of preference, experience, tradition, motivation, time, and ultimately, later interpretations.

In the consideration of any problem, and works of art are usually problems, it is necessary to overcome our own modes of thinking in order to consider the simplest and most sensible pathway to the solution of the problem. The House of Fame, as a very old document, poses this problem to the latter-day reader-interpreter. We must dispense with our post-romantic viewpoint in order to have any hope of coming to grips with the poem. Unlike our age, the pursuit of worldly pleasures or honours was not the proper pursuit for a Christian in the Middle Ages. When we have accomplished this realignment of vision we

also have to conquer the impulse to find an extremely complex formula for meaning in The House of Fame. Following this impulse can only result in over-elaboration and warping of the poem to fit a structure that it never resembled. The House of Fame is a relatively simple poem with a couple of simple lessons to teach its readers. The structure is not elaborate. Like many medieval poems (including later Chaucerian ones) the structure consists of repetition of an idea in different settings in order to establish an idea in the listener or reader's mind.

With these things in mind it would be most fruitful to examine the narrator and his journey or pilgrimage from the temple of Venus to the house of rumour. Ideally, such a journey should be a progression from one level of awareness or enlightenment to a higher one. Careful examination of the narrator's responses and actions in a close reading of The House of Fame will bring to our attention a distinct lack of such a progression. Chaucer, through his foil "Geffrey's" insensitivity, (which is itself one device of repetition), is leading the reader on the "journey" to the higher level of understanding that the narrator cannot seem to grasp.

Our examination of The House of Fame is based on the assumption that Chaucer uses everything within the poem to convey some meaning. Any responsibility for a misreading or a lack of understanding lies with the reader, not with the work itself. The reading of this poem will

follow the tripartite division of the poem itself with one chapter devoted to an examination of each book of The House of Fame.

O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,
In which that love up groweth with youre age,
Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
And of youre herte up casteth the visage
To thilke god that after his ymage
Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.

(Troilus and Criseyde)

CHAPTER II: HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK I

In the opening 110 lines of The House of Fame Chaucer introduces the major character, journeyer and narrator, "Geffrey". While this character may be assumed to represent the poet himself, we must be aware that as readers we cannot confuse the writer with his created characters:

Chaucer is actually creating for the poem a voice or persona. An important function of the proem, in fact, is to define the character of this speaker. It is too often assumed that the speaker is Chaucer; it is rather a self-caricature, and the prime elements of that caricature are bookishness and thickheaded naiveté . . . the portrait is of an earnest scholar, overied with scraps of knowledge but starved of comprehension. 15

In the course of this introduction Chaucer indicates, in a very subtle mannner, that our narrator is a somewhat confused, proud and misdirected individual. As so often happens in Chaucer's poetry, charity, the selfless and proper manifestation of love on earth, has been displaced in a major character (in this case the narrator) by cupidity or selfish love. St. Augustine delineates the medieval conception of these two branches of love:

I call "charity" the motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of God for His own sake, and the enjoyment of one's self and of one's neighbour for the sake of God; but "cupidity" is a motion of the soul toward the enjoyment of one's self, one's neighbour, or any corporal

thing for the sake of something other than
God. 16

The conception of the dualistic nature of love in the mortal world is important in literature of the middle ages as B.G. Koonce notes:

. . . in medieval poetry and mythography this contrast has been brought into accord with the Christian concept of two kinds of love, charity and cupidity. 17

Koonce goes on to indicate that this contrast between the two Venuses in medieval writing is an exact parallel to the two distinct and separate kinds of love we shall see embodied in various forms throughout The House of Fame. This dualistic conception must be kept in mind throughout the poem as it is one of the poem's major thrusts with the narrator continually demonstrating the latter of the two kinds of love.

The proem to the first book is a rather lengthy account of the different causes, orders and kinds of dreams:

Why ~~that~~ that is an avisioun
And this a revelacioun,
Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
And noght to every man lyche even;
Why this a fantome, why these oracles,
I not. 18

The narrator is apparently giving the reader an account of the grounds for his confusion concerning dreams. He seems to be admitting, with proper modesty, his uncertainty and ignorance. However, we must always look beyond the surface appearance in Chaucer's work. With hindsight we can see, throughout these opening lines, hints and traces of the narrator's pride which becomes clear and overt later on.

Note that "Geffrey", with perhaps an underlying current of self-importance, dares anyone to offer any explanation of dreams which he cannot give:

. . . but whoso of these miracles
 The causes knoweth bet than I,
 Devyne he; for I certeynly
 Ne kan hem noght, ne never thinke
 To besily my wyt to swinke,
 To knowe of hir signifiante
 The gendres, neyther the distaunce
 Of tymes of hem, ne the causes,
 Or why this more then that cause is. (12-20)

"Geffrey" even wishes the great clerks success in their attempts to explain these matters which he cannot understand, "Wel worthe, of this thing, grete clerkys"(53). Imagine the effect if the line is read with an appropriately ironic tone, a kind of --"Well good luck to you"--indicative of just the opposite sentiment. It is certainly not beyond the realm of possibility as this tone would not be out of character for a narrator who insists that no one has ever had a dream quite as wonderful as his:

For never, sith that I was born,
 Ne no man elles me beforne,
 Mette, I trowe stedfastly,
 So wonderful a dreame as I. (59-62)

Here Chaucer is using a rhetorical device to great effect. He has "Geffrey" using a standard, conventional device in an "up-so-down" fashion. The panegyric topos which is characterized by Curtius as an "outdoing" topos¹⁹ is a device in praise (usually highly exaggerated praise) of another person or his achievements. Here "Geffrey" praises his own dream more highly than the great dreams of the past. This kind of misplaced pride and self-importance is in

evidence elsewhere also. The narrator, in his discourse on dreams, talks about the causes of dreams and mentions, "That som man is to curious/ In studye" (29-30). Ironically we later learn that this is exactly what "Geffrey" is, he is overly curious in study. The statement "to curious" is meant as an indication of excess. In medieval literature excess is frequently used to indicate misdirected love and/or pride. Chaucer here makes "Geffrey" unknowingly and ironically bring himself into focus for subsequent judgment.

The narrator's pride is made even more explicit when, in a curse, he proclaims that those who "mysdemen" his dream should reach the same "conclusion/ As had of his avisioun/ Cresus, that was kyng of Lyde" (103-105). It is significant that the proem and the invocation (and thus the curse itself) are written after the dream and are not directly relative to the dream but only to the narrator's state of mind at the time of composition, after the dream-journey.

As Robinson indicates, Chaucer's source for the punishment named in his curse is the Romance of the Rose, in which Reason says of Croesus: "Unluckily relying on the dream,²⁰ He foolishly became puffed up with pride". This section of the Romance of the Rose shows Croesus acting in much the same manner as our narrator with regard to his dream. Neither man understands his dream, yet each feels that his dream has import and each proudly proclaims the importance and meaningfulness of his dream. The focus

in both instances is on pride, overtly so in Croesus' case, covertly and ironically so in "Geffrey's" case.

What is most interesting here is that while we have subtle glimpses of the narrator's vanity, his false humility amidst proclamations of confusion reverberate beyond the narrator's intended effect. Like Socrates, "Geffrey" wants to appear humble ²¹ while demonstrating great knowledge. Unlike Socrates, "Geffrey" really is confused. He really does not understand his dream or any other dream (in his confusion he does not really understand the sentence of Croesus' dream). Koonce also argues for the general pattern of confusion in the first book but makes the case that the narrator progresses after the first book:

. . . The source of ["Geffrey's"] confusion is his blind 'reverence' for Venus and her servants. Not until he leaves the temple and sees the desert . . . does he gain some insight into the sterility of Venus and her 'chirche'. (Koonce, p. 103)

The imagery in this section sets the narrator's confusion into high relief. The invocation to the "god of slepe" abounds in images of darkness, sterility and death:

But at my gynnynge, trusteth wel,
I wol make invocacion,
With special devocion,
Unto the god of slepe anoon,
That duelleth in a cave of stoon
Upon a strem that cometh fro Lete,
That is a flood of helle unswete,
Besyde a folk men clepeth Cymerie,
There slepeth ay this god unmerie
With his slepy thousand sones,
That alwey for to slepe hir wone is.
And to this god, that I of rede,

Prey I that he wol me spede
 My sweven for to telle aryght,
 Yf every drem stonde in his myght. (66-80)

The cave of stone is a symbol for death, as is sleep itself. The date of the dream, December 10, is suggestive of the darkness and sterility of winter.²² The reference to the land of the Cymmerians brings to mind darkness, blindness and ignorance.²³ The narrator has connected himself with these images by invoking them, thus I feel confident in the assumption that Chaucer wants us to see these images of blindness and darkness as reflectors of the state of "Geffrey's" being. In a discussion of the imagery of winter in medieval literature, Koonce says: ". . . coldness and dryness are indicative of the frigidity and sterility of the spirit and its captivity by sin" (Koonce, p. 69). This is an excellent summary statement of "Geffrey's" state as depicted by the symbolic structure of the first book.

We see "Geffrey" in an even clearer light when he states, "I am no bet in charyte" (108). Of course "Geffrey" is still referring to the hanging of Croesus but what is more relevant and germane here is the admission that he is not charitable. Charity is the cornerstone of Christian doctrine and Christian love:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of
 angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding
 brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand
 all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have
 all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and
 have not charity, I am nothing. 24

In rejecting charity "Geffrey" defines his position and

allows himself only cupidity.

Before we ever reach the dream "Geffrey" has, in a sense, defined himself. His subsequent actions and reactions in the dream-journey do nothing to dispel these preliminary indications.

"Geffrey" recapitulates that his excellent dream occurred on December 10, thus reaffirming the date and its associated ideas of darkness and confusion in our minds. The initial location of "Geffrey's" dream is a glass temple, which the narrator describes in all its ornate splendour:

. . . me mette I was
 Withyn a temple ymad of glas;
 In which ther were moo ymages
 Of gold, stondynge in sondry stages,
 And moo ryche tabernacles,
 And with perre moo pynacles,
 And moo curiouse portreytures,
 And queynte maner of figures
 Of olde werk , then I saugh ever. (119-127)

"Geffrey" is extremely impressed, in fact almost over-whelmed, by the appearance of the splendid temple. "Geffrey" is impressed by the appearance of a temple which is, as we shall see, the temple of the carnal Venus. This is an indication that the light of reason does not shine within "Geffrey". John the Scot could easily have written about "Geffrey" when he says:

. . . when . . . sensible material is imprinted on the corporeal sense, it seems to be beautiful and attractive, for it is taken from external creation, which is good. But the woman or the carnal sense is deceived and delighted. 25

We know that his carnal sense is "deceived and delighted"

because of his confusion regarding location as well as his concern with physical appearance: "I nyste never/ Wher that I was" (128-129). However, our narrator does recognize that it is the temple of Venus. What "Geffrey" does not realize is that this is the temple of the carnal Venus:

I sawgh anon-right hir figure
 Naked fletyng in a see.
 And also on hir hed, pardee,
 Hir rose garlond whit and red,
 And hir comb to kembe hyr hed,
 Hir dowves, and daun Cupido,
 Hir blynde sone, and Vulcano,
 That in his face was ful broun. (132-139)

As Koonce says with reference to this section:

Although Chaucer makes no attempt to distinguish between the two Venuses, his portrayal of the goddess is composed of a cluster of details traditionally identified with carnal Venus. 26

We know that it is the carnal Venus depicted here because of the nakedness and the emphasis on the physical, sensual description as well as the allusion to "blynde" Cupid and to Vulcan who traps Venus and Mars in an illicit, extra-marital love embrace. Berchorius glosses this type of description:

Venus is said to be floating in the sea because she wishes to be always immersed in delights She nourishes her pleasant doves, or the lecherous, with roses, which is to say that she loves flowers and courtly airs. She produces Cupid, or concupiscence of the flesh Moreover, this god is portrayed as being blind because when it affects someone he does not seem to be paying attention to anyone It is blind in yet another way, for through it men become blind too. For nothing is more blind than a man inflamed by love for another person or for another thing. 27

With these descriptions of the carnal Venus in mind

(especially the mythographic gloss above) "Geffrey's" confusion and oft-voiced uncertainty concerning his physical location can be seen as a further sign that the narrator is confused about the moral location of the Venus whom he serves. The dualistic nature of Venus should be reaffirmed and qualified at this point. Boccaccio says of the two Venuses:

The first one should be understood as the one through whom arises every honest and legitimate desire, like the desire to have a woman in order to have children, and other desires like this one . . . The second Venus is that one through whom every lascivious thing is desired, and who is commonly called the goddess of love. 28

Numerous clues are given to the reader which indicate more directly the illusory and evanescent nature of the type of love represented in the temple. The first is the structure itself. This temple is constructed of glass. Glass is an efficacious symbol of treacherousness, as Koonce effectively indicates:

. . . the brittleness and resplendence of glass are reminders of the false splendour and transience of worldly goods; for like glass, says Bersuire, these goods appear attractive and glorious but blind the eyes, and when they are destroyed they seldom can be restored. (Koonce, pp. 99-100)

Since the building described is a temple made of glass, one could speculate on another possibility not considered in Koonce's study. In I Cor. 3, 16 it says: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?". With this in mind, perhaps we can see the temple as a symbolic representation of "Geffrey's" own "temple". The transparent nature of the temple could then be an invitation to look within himself,

to search his heart and discover that his heart is idolizing a misdirected and selfish love rather than the selfless love of God. The idea that the narrator could be given a chance to view the condition of his heart prefigures the later opportunity afforded "Geffrey" by the high flight of the eagle. In both cases "Geffrey" is being given the opportunity to gain some self-knowledge. In order to be saved through penitence or contrition the sinner must first recognize the sins of the heart. Here we turn to the "Parson's Tale":

Contrition is the verray sorwe that a man receyveth in his herte for his synnes, with sad purpos to shryve hym, and to do penaunce, and neveremoore to do synne. (ll. 123-127)

W.O. Sypherd, however, argues that this glass temple lacks any allegorical or symbolic import at all:

As for the meaning, I fail to see in the temple any allegorical significance. I cannot conceive of Chaucer's deliberately representing here any part of his life's experience. Such a process would be entirely foreign to his nature and to his imaginative expression as we know it. 29

In fact, Sypherd believes that Chaucer here is merely imitating a convention:

What he does here is exactly what so many contemporary poets were doing. The description of a temple or palace was almost an essential part of the narrative poems of the French love-writers whom he knew. The idea was a part of his general knowledge. And he treats it precisely (saving his own personal impress) as any other poet of the time would have handled it. 30

Sypherd's commentary denigrates Chaucer as a Christian, a thinker and a creative artist. The House of Fame does not

qualify Chaucer as a "love-writer" in Sypherd's frame of reference. Furthermore, there is no direct source for the temple of glass and Sypherd himself admits this (see p. 81). There are traditions and Chaucer often makes use of them but he never blindly or pointlessly follows the doctrines or prescriptions of any "school" of writing. Sypherd offers no evidence for such claims and is far too general in his approach to a particular author. There is "allegorical significance" to the temple and it is exposed by Koonce with much room for others to elaborate on the allegory.

The story which "Geffrey" subsequently relates is from Virgil's Aeneid and is inscribed on a "table" of brass. Brass, like glass, is another symbolic manifestation of deception. Brass gives the appearance of, but is an imperfect image of the more perfect gold. Here again we turn to Koonce:

Whereas gold and silver denote . . . wisdom, the base metals are images of sin and imperfection Similarly, the contrast between the outward respectability of brass and its inward vileness is a . . . image of deceptive beauty. (Koonce, p. 105)

Once again we have an image of deficient reality lurking beneath the appearance of value and worth. "Geffrey" will not and, given the blinded state in which he exists, cannot see that the surface of the story bears some exploration for the reality or sentence beneath the literal level.

"Geffrey" is, as we later learn, a self-avowed follower and servant of the attractive goddess of love whose temple of glass and all its contents and associations

appear valuable yet are suggestive of deception, evanescence, emptiness and sterility. Chaucer has "Geffrey" ironically and comically point this out later when "Geffrey" says of Dido and Aeneas:

"Hyt is not al gold that glareth."
 For also browke I wel myn hed,
 Ther may be under godlyhed
 Kevered many a shrewed vice. (272-275)

"Geffrey" cannot distinguish brass from gold or reality from appearance in the dream just as he cannot separate the appearance of his humility from the reality of his baseless pride in the Proem.

"Geffrey's" confusion and insensitivity to anything beyond the surface level will, of course, be amplified in his relation of and responses to the story of Dido and Aeneas as it is inscribed on the brass "table".

The story begins with a description of Aeneas' escape from Troy. In the course of this escape Aeneas loses his wife and is later informed by her ghost that: ". . . he moste unto Italye,/ as was hys destyne, sauns faille" (187-188). Chaucer's foreshortening of the story in the Aeneid brings many of the relevant and pertinent ideas to the fore. In this case, the loss of his wife and the flight from Troy are emphasized. The flight is most important here as Koonce delineates:

More particularly, according to Bernard, [Italy] is the soul itself, with its attributes of immortality, rationality, knowledge, and virtue. Opposed to Italy is Troy, a symbol of the body wherein the spirit dwells and (ideally) rules. Aeneas' flight from Troy is the flight of the spirit from the desires of the flesh. (Koonce, p. 109)

Here we see the division of the two kinds of love discussed earlier embodied in symbolic form.

Aeneas, after much wandering, arrives in Libya where he meets Dido. Dido allows Aeneas all the liberties of her land. Most especially she "becam hys love, and let him doo/ Al that weddyng longeth too" (243-244), which serves to emphasize that they are not married. Their love was immoderate and of the order described by Capellanus as the "inordinate desire to receive passionately a furtive and hidden embrace".³¹ If they had chosen to marry then their love would have been legitimized and in the open thus eliminating the actions of fame (which is what causes Dido to take her life—fear of infamy).

Aeneas, for his part, willingly submits to the pleasures of a carnal, sensual existence in "Auffrike's regioun" until he realizes his higher duty and continues on his journey to Italy. This is a common and standard interpretation of the story in the Middle Ages.³² Chaucer's audience would, in all likelihood, be familiar with this moralized interpretation of the Dido-Aeneas story and would thus recognize a proper and an improper response to the story. As we noted, Aeneas must go on to Italy. The story demonstrates that it is "hys destinee, sauns faille" (188). "Geffrey", being caught up in the false emotions elicited by the story on the brass "table", fails to see the sentence of the story. Furthermore, his reaction to the story betrays the subjugation of his reason to his emotion. "Geffrey" sees

Aeneas' pursuit of his higher destiny as a betrayal: "he to hir a traytour was" (267). He forgets the statement at line 188 but later mentions, with an unacceptable vagueness after a long harangue on "reccheles" men (ll. 361-426), that Aeneas has to go on:

But to excusen Eneas
 Fullyche of al his grete trespas,
 The book seyth Mercurie, sauns fayle,
 Bad hym goo into Itayle,
 And leve Auffrikes regioun,
 And Dido and hir faire toun. (427-432)

The relative weight or length of this speech in comparison to the speech on "reccheles" men indicates "Geffrey's" bias. He looks upon the brass as if it were gold; he sees the literal level as the sentence of the story. "Geffrey's" inability to understand and his continued lack of growth are evidenced by his inability to assimilate the lessons in the Dido-Aeneas story. The proof that such is the case lies in "Geffrey's" statement of what he sees as the true sentence of story:

Therefore be no wyght so nyce,
 To take a love oonly for chere,
 Or speche, or for frendly manere,
 For this shal every woman fynde,
 That som man, of his pure kynde,
 Wol shewen outward the fayreste,
 Tyl he have caught that what him leste;
 And thanne wol he causes fynde,
 And swere how that she ys unkynde,
 Or fals, or privy, or double was. (276-285)

This interjection is a judgement by the narrator and indicates that he does not see the sentence of the Dido-Aeneas story and does not, as we shall discover, in any way relate Aeneas' journey with his own. We must remember that "Geffrey" has hindsight in these interjections

yet he still, in the narrative present, describes the past with no sign of understanding.

Dido's actions and responses are quite relevant for they at once define her and juxtapose her (as an embodiment of the carnal Venus) to the higher cause Aeneas must seek and in the process explicitly introduce the subject of fame. Dido, as we have already noted, allows Aeneas into her bed, neglects her duty to her country as ruler and begins the idolatrous worship of an earthly object in the person of Aeneas:

. . . shee
 Made of hym shortly at oo word
 Hyr lyf, hir love, hir lust, hir lord,
 And dide hym al the reverence. (256-259)

At this point Dido is literally and figuratively a servant of carnal love worshipping the object of her desire. As a ruler or a woman Dido cannot be seen as a good or exemplary figure. However, today's critics, like "Geffrey", sympathize with Dido and look as inept as "Geffrey" does because they too fail to see the sentence of the story:

For of course Dido's name was not "Iorn". In the increasing romanticism of the age, she had become even more sympathetic than Vergil had made her . . . she lives in Fame as a saint of Cupid. If such rejected lovers are tragic, they win their place in the House of Fame through Love's perserverance and through the sympathy and deep insight of the poet. 33

Dido is hardly a "saint" by anyone's definition and The House of Fame, as well as many other works of the time, speaks against the "perserverance" of the kind of love represented by Dido. The poet is not being sympathetic to

Dido, he is judging her actions and what they represent. Simmons misses the sentence because in the "increasing romanticism" of our age we cannot judge those who follow the carnal Venus without judging ourselves. The sentence of the story is clear and a judgment is indicated (note that the literal meaning of sententia is "to judge"). Dido is judged and is judged harshly.

When Dido's object of worship deserts her, Dido responds with bitterness, intense hate and a plethora of accusations:

34

"Allas!" quod she, "what me ys woo!
 Allas! is every man thus trewe,
 That every yer wolde have a newe,
 Yf hit so longe tyme dure,
 Or elles three, peraventure?
 As thus: of oon he wolde have fame
 In magnyfyng of hys name;
 Another for frendshippe, seyth he;
 And yet ther shal the thridde be
 That shal be take for delyt,
 Loo, or for symguler profit." (300-310)

In the midst of these accusations the scorned lover is making some interesting and relevant commentary on the nature of love and the condition of our narrator. One very subtle strain which runs throughout this and earlier sections (see especially ll. 269-270) is the idea that Dido's love for Aeneas is based upon his appearance and not on any knowledge of Aeneas or his character which Dido might have obtained. The parallels with "Geffrey" and his reactions to the appearance of things should begin to be obvious. What is also germane to our discussion is the introduction of fame: ". . . of oon he wolde have fame/ In magnyfyng of hys name" (305-306). Obviously Dido feels that somehow

Love and fame are irrevocably tied together. In her realm of experience this is quite true. Many followers of the carnal Venus find out that this fame can be of the negative variety. The negative aspect of fame is Dido's main concern before she kills herself:

"O, welawey that I was born!
 For thorgh yow is my name lorn,
 And alle myn actes red and songe
 Over al thys lond, on every tonge.
 O wikke Fame! for ther nys
 Nothign so swift, lo, as she is!
 O, soth ys, every thing ys wyst,
 Though hit be kevered with the myst. (345-352)

Dido feels that she is the victim of Fame because her name is ruined. In fact, her concern for earthly fame causes her to take her own life. B.F. Huppé's discussion of the role of Fortune is quite illuminating here. In discussing Boethius Huppé notes: "A man . . . becomes a victim of Fate only in wishing for the gifts of Fortune, rather than the spiritual gifts which alone bring happiness, and are above Fortune".³⁵ As Dido has placed her trust in earthly pleasures rather than fulfilling her duties she is, in a sense, playing Fortune's game and is therefore at the mercy of a fickle goddess (the picture Chaucer later gives of Fame is reminiscent of Fortune —utterly random and fickle).

We noted previously that, as a follower of the carnal Venus, Dido has surrendered to the desires of the flesh. When this surrender occurs the collapse of the reason is inevitable. The collapse of the reason is manifested first in Dido's rejection of her duty in pursuit of carnal

pleasure, second, in her concern for earthly fame and ultimately in the most extreme and irrational act of all: the negation of her own life. Her suicide also indicates a concern for earthly success—Dido being more concerned with her earthly reputation than her immortal soul which will be condemned to damnation. The concern for fame itself is but another example of cupidity or love of self (and will serve as a backdrop and exemplum for "Geffrey" later). In her concern for herself Dido is rendered incapable of comprehending anything beyond herself and thus cannot see the higher cause Aeneas must pursue.

"Geffrey" is also blind to the duty Aeneas must fulfill. He is blinded by the sympathy he feels for Dido and thus cannot see her as an exemplum of the reward which awaits those who follow the carnal Venus and seek or care for earthly fame. Koonce also notices "Geffrey's" confusion at this point but his thrust is much different:

Chaucer's confusion stems not so much from his sympathy for Dido . . . as from the fact that his absorption in her grief makes him forget the higher love exemplified by Aeneas. (Koonce, p. 115)

There is no evidence to suggest that "Geffrey" ever understood the sentence of Aeneas' journey in order to "forget" it. Koonce here is equating Chaucer too closely with his narrator. It is more consistent that Chaucer would establish and maintain a narrator who cannot perceive beyond the literal level in order for the rest of the poem to maintain its unity. In fact, the major thrust of this paper is to

demonstrate that just such a consistency is evident in the narrator throughout all three books of The House of Fame.

"Geffrey" gives only lip-service to Aeneas' destiny. "Geffrey" cannot see that by listening to Mercury, Aeneas leaves the controlling influence of carnality as represented by Dido and her palace in "Auffrikes regioun". Koonce delineates the symbolic role of Mercury in this regard:

[Mercury] is the remorseful conscience which rouses the spirit from slumber, calling it back to deeds of glory and causing it to break the bonds of evil delight and spurn all flattery and tears deflecting it from its divine goal. In these terms, Mercury's warning marks the beginning of the spirit's recovery from sloth. (Koonce, p. 121)

This "recovery" or movement is affirmed symbolically by Aeneas' marriage with Lavina. By mentioning this marriage Chaucer has provided "Geffrey" with a viable and reasonable alternative to the carnal Venus. Aeneas progresses from the bonds of service of the Venus represented by Dido to the service of the celestial Venus who watches over him now: "For Jupiter took of hym care/ At the prayer of Venus" (464-465). In a discussion of the Aeneid John of Salisbury notes a progression of this kind:

. . . reason, personified by Mercury, persuades that happiness is not ordained for forbidden love and teaches that . . . another way must be travelled by those who wish to attain the fond embraces of Lavinia and the destined kingdom of Italy as a sort of citadel of beatitude. 36

Lavina symbolizes the alternative available to man, order in a disordered, confused world in constant flux; order and direction of passion through reason in a state of marriage. In A Preface to Chaucer D.W. Robertson Jr. makes the case

that marriage symbolizes the conquest of sensuality by reason.³⁷ Although this case is specifically relevant to the Knight's Tale, it can be applied successfully in this instance as well.

The journey which Aeneas takes (both literally and figuratively) can thus be seen as a kind of ideal which the narrator-journeyer, or pilgrims in a larger framework, might seek to emulate. Charles Tisdale notices Chaucer's point here also. Tisdale argues:

Chaucer's genius allowed him to see Aeneas as a prototype of medieval man. Aeneas is a voyager. He is lost in via from the old city and its great promise. On such a journey there are, naturally, tremendous temptations to take the byways rather than the main thoroughfare . . . In his life we see all life as a journey of conflict between individual desire and the common weal. 38

In The House of Fame the journey of Aeneas is the ideal which we are being invited to compare the narrator against. There are numerous hints and parallels with Aeneas which emerge in the opening book. As we have already indicated, "Geffrey" is a servant of the carnal Venus. In a manner of speaking, like Aeneas "Geffrey" is "hir sone" (165). Both wanderers are lost and end up in the temple of the carnal Venus —one in his dream, the other metaphorically speaking. Both are in "Auffrike's regioun". Even the setting draws the reader's attention to comparison of Aeneas and "Geffrey". Tisdale makes this point lucidly:

The narrator has seen on a palace frieze the story of Aeneas and the Trojan quest just as Aeneas had seen the representation of the destruction of Troy in Dido's temple at his

entrance . . . in Book I. This setting, together with the landscape around the palace, should immediately indicate to the reader that the dreamer himself is re-enacting a crucial scene in Virgil's epic. 39

Finally, both leave Venus' temple, Aeneas of his own will, "Geffrey" because he is carried away by the eagle. When we carefully compare Aeneas' journey, as discussed earlier, with the journey of the narrator and his actions therein, we shall see that the narrator's journey is set in counterpoint to Aeneas' journey; that "Geffrey" never really goes beyond the temple of Venus. Like Dido he serves Venus. Blinded by the appearance of mundane things and concerned with his earthly fame he too condemns the actions of Aeneas without ever comprehending them. In many ways "Geffrey" can be compared favourably with Dido and contrasted with Aeneas.

"Geffrey" reacts with insensitivity and confusion to all that has occurred in the story and temple to this point. When we would expect a word on the meaning of the story or dream our narrator says:

When I had seen al this syghte
 In this noble temple thus,
 "A, Lord!" thoughte I, "that madest us,
 Yet sawgh I never such noblesse
 Of ymages, ne such richesse,
 As I saugh graven in this chirche;
 But not wot I whoo did hem wirche,
 Ne where I am, ne in what contree. (468-475)

"Geffrey's" concern is, in keeping with the pattern already established, with the physical appearance; the things of the temple. He stresses here again that he is impressed by these

works. What is most noteworthy however is that he does not seek to discover the sentence or meaning of the works but rather wants to discover "whoo did hem wirche". It is always enough, as we shall see demonstrated time and time again, for this narrator to know of the work and who crafted it. Understanding is not important for "Geffrey", authority is enough. Thus when he quotes a proverb it points right back at him with a savage irony: "he that fully knoweth th'erbe/ May saufly leye hyt to his ye" (290-291). Another proverb is appropriate comment: "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing".

Some critics believe that when "Geffrey" wants to know "whoo did hem wirche" he is seeking the meaning of the story. Witness Laurence Eldredge's remark on this section of The House of Fame:

It seems to me that we do the narrator an injustice if we dismiss his reaction at this point as merely dense. I think what he is doing here physically represents a mental attempt to discover something about the story. He seems to be asking whose version of the story this is (whoo did hem wirche) and how he can discover the context that will give meaning to the love affair (where I am). 40

Eldredge strains the context considerably. "Geffrey" is talking about the workings in the interior of the temple, not specifically about the story itself when he asks "whoo did hem wirche". There is no indication of any other available "version of the story". Also, "hem" means "them" and does not refer to the story directly. Finally, I fail to understand how a query about his location would indicate that "Geffrey" is seeking a "context that will give meaning

to the love affair". Rather, his uncertainty about physical location remains what it is earlier in the first book, an indication of confusion vis à vis moral location. The pattern of narrative confusion has been established and is not broken here. Chaucer emphasizes "Geffrey's" confusion time and time again, "But not wot I . . . where I am, ne in what contree". With the constant refrain of confusion and uncertainty ringing in our heads even the insensitive reader would have to perceive that "Geffrey" has learned nothing within his dream thus far.

The pattern established, Chaucer gives a further indication of "Geffrey's" confusion and his reliance on authority when "Geffrey" reacts to the problem of where he is:

But now wol I goo out and see,
 Ryght at the wicket, yf y kan
 See owhere any stiryng man,
 That may telle where I am. (476-479)

"Geffrey" cannot decipher where he is or what he has seen and thus he searches for an authority to explain these things to him. When he goes out the doors the setting itself answers that question.

The description of the desert "Geffrey" discovers outside the temple is interesting and informative as a metaphor for the state of "Geffrey's" mind and spirit and also, as noted earlier, as an affirmation that the narrator is to be compared with the ideal set by Aeneas. The desert is described in terms which would strike fear into the heart of the narrator who needs sources and authorities:

Then sawgh I but a large feid,
 As fer as that I myghte see,
 Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,
 Or bush, or grass, or eryd lond;
 For al the feid nas but of sond
 As smal as man may se yet lye
 In the desert of Lybye. (482-488)

This may be extending the metaphor a bit too far, but it is possible to see the temple as not only situated in the desert, but constructed from the sterile land. Fine sand ("sond/ As smal as man may se") is the base for the making of glass which is the material used to construct the temple. If we follow this to its conclusion the sand, a symbol of sterility and nothingness, is the source material for building the temple; an example of building something out of nothing. The god that "Geffrey" serves is a sterile one who constructs a beautiful temple based on nothing.

"Geffrey" is terrified when he finds that he has none to guide him in this wasteland, "no maner creature/
 That ys yformed be Nature/ Ne sawgh I, me to rede or
 wisse" (489-491). "Geffrey" responds with an appeal to Christ:

"O Crist!" thoughte I, "that art in blysse,
 Fro fantome and illusion
 Me save!" and with devocion
 Myn eyen to the hevене I caste. (492-495)

We note, however, that his cry is occasioned, not by a lesson learned as Koonce, Tisdale and others suggest, but by a situation which "Geffrey" cannot comprehend, the wasteland. He cannot and does not realize that this is the state of the love which he serves. "Geffrey" sees the

wasteland as a "fantome and illusion", not as a reality metaphorically embodied.

The fact that he has not progressed is evident in the action provoked by the appeal itself. "Geffrey's" response to the immediate visitation of the eagle is not one of thanks or amazement at the answer to his cry in the wilderness. Instead, as we would expect from the pattern developed in this book, "Geffrey" is overwhelmed by the visual appearance of the golden bird:

. . . faste be the sonne, as hye
 As kenne myghte I with myn ye,
 Me thoughte I sawgh an egle sore,
 But that hit semed moche more
 Then I had any egle seyn.
 But this as sooth as deth, certeyn,
 Hyt was of gold, and shon so bryghte
 That never sawe men such a syghte,
 But yf the heven had ywonne
 Al newe of gold another sonne;
 So shone the egles fethers bryghte,
 And somewhat dounward gan hyt lyghte. (497-508)

The constant reference to colour and the emphasis on eyes and sight in this passage demonstrate that "Geffrey" is still unaware of anything beyond the surface level or the realm of sense. He is overwhelmed by the physical appearance and cannot "see" beyond that level. This is most evident in his inability to grasp the significance of the appearance of the eagle.

Book I introduces and characterizes "Geffrey". In the process several lessons become available which he fails to assimilate and thus a pattern of confusion and ignorance in the narrator is established. At the end of the first

book the narrator should be in a position to progress to the higher levels of understanding and knowledge. He has the exemplum of Dido and Aeneas to refer to exemplifying the rewards of carnality and spirituality; suicide and Lavina; Libya and Italy; cupidity and charity. If "Geffrey" really is to grow, the turning point should become evident soon (if not already) and the process of growth should be illustrated in Book II. However, the patterns established in this first book are to continue throughout the entire work and will be used as devices to portray its meaning.

CHAPTER III: HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK II

In Book I our narrator is characterized and placed in a situation which affords him the possibility of a genuine learning experience. The lessons made available are not in the form of direct data but rather are clothed in the symbols and allegories, parables and images which are the tools of those who practice the poetic trade. Assuredly this should be the perfect medium for "Geffrey" the poet. It is clear, however, that "Geffrey" is not a good poet and this is evident since he misses the thrust of these lessons because of his confusion and his earthbound nature.

In view of his inability to grasp implicit or hidden meaning as demonstrated in Book I, it becomes apparent that "Geffrey" is in need of some explicit teaching. Obviously "Geffrey", as a servant and follower of the carnal Venus, could not see beyond the literal level of Virgil's sententious tale of Dido and Aeneas. Furthermore, he is still confused regarding his physical location. This confusion is quite enlightening for the reader as it is a device employed by Chaucer. "Geffrey's" confusion regarding his physical location is indicative of his confusion regarding the moral location of Venus. We note also "Geffrey's" concern with the physical appearance of things. This concern is a further

manifestation of the spiritual state which prevents "Geffrey" from uncovering the sentence of the Dido-Aeneas story. With the above in mind, there can be little doubt at this point about "Geffrey's" spiritual condition.

There are however many opinions and doubts concerning "Geffrey's" subsequent position or state. B.G. Koonce, whose study is a touchstone for this paper and whose work is clearly the sanest and most consistent book written thus far on The House of Fame, sees the end of Book I and all of Book II as an unfolding process of spiritual growth and education for the narrator. The vast majority of critics have reached a similar conclusion with somewhat similar premises. A good example is D. Bevington who sees a somewhat hesitant "Geffrey" being forced to see "real exper-⁴¹ience" by the eagle in Book II. Koonce argues this position on the basis of evidence of what he sees as a consistent parallel between the narrator in The House of Fame and the narrator in Dante's Commedia. It will be our aim to show that "Geffrey" does not progress in Book II by demonstrating that Chaucer maintains a unity of thought and purpose in Book II which corresponds with that in Book I. Again, this is accomplished through his narrator, whose confusion and inability to see beyond the surface exposes the futility of worldly pursuits and the necessity for self-evaluation as a starting point for spiritual growth.

The proem to Book II yields some further information about "Geffrey" and any progression that he may have undergone.

The narrator affirms, as he did in Book I, the meaningfulness and greatness of his particular dream:

For now at erste shul ye here
 So sely an avisyon,
 That Isaye, ne Scipion,
 Ne kyng Nabugodonosor,
 Pharoo, Turnus, ne Elcanor,
 Ne mette: such a drem as this! (512-517)

Once again our narrator, "Geffrey", distanced from the dream in time, is puffed up with pride at his great and sententious dream. Also, as in Book I, he affirms his connection with the carnal Venus by invoking her: "Now fair blissfull, O Cipris,/ So be my favour at this tyme" (518-519). Koonce too notes the invocation and declares via footnote that the invocation must be ironic:

. . . Chaucer calls Venus "Cipris" only when he is referring to the wanton Venus. If so, the irony seems clear, since the central image in the eagle's discourse in Book II is the power of love ("kyndely enclynyng") that prompts every object to seek its "kyndely stede". (Koonce, p.140)

Koonce does not, however, consider that this call to Venus may in fact be just one further indication that "Geffrey" is still entangled in the chains of Venus; that he really has not progressed at all. I believe that the latter position is enhanced by the narrator's call to all the authoritative sources in the course of the Proem. "Geffrey" compares his dream favourably with Isaiah, Scipio, Daniel, Genesis, and Virgil. As if that is not enough, he then summons Venus, "Parnasso" or "contemplation" and finally appeals to "thought". The reader has to wonder why a good, meaningful

dream in which the narrator/dreamer learned and progressed needs such a comprehensive framework of authority in order to be told "aryght"? I would submit that the narrator is confused, that he is not near the threshold of understanding his dream either as the person relating the dream at a later date or as the person in the midst of experiencing the dream. Therefore, "Geffrey" invokes all these authorities in order to give the appearance of knowledge and authority as well as to place his dream in a tradition of meaningful dreams. He is, in a sense, covering the traces of his own ignorance with a smokescreen of authority. The dream is indeed a sententious one but its sentence is something which "Geffrey" has not discovered.

"Geffrey" realizes the power of "Thought", he knows that it "wrot al that I mette", but "thought" is something which "Geffrey" cannot invoke at will as it is "hyt shette" in the "tresorye" of his "brayn" (524-525). What we must remember is, as we have noted, that "Geffrey's" reason or "thought" has been overwhelmed and turned "up-so-down". This is the condition of all servants of the carnal Venus. The dream then is not sui generis; it is not a product of his own mind. We can speculate that the dream, like the eagle in the dream, is sent as a message and/or warning from a more divine source.

In the expanded description of the eagle we see that "Geffrey" still does not wonder about the symbolic meaning or sentence of the eagle's arrival. Instead, as usual, "Geffrey"

concentrates on the bird's appearance:

This egle, of which I have yow told,
That shon with fethres as of gold,
Which that so hye gan to sore,
I gan beholde more and more,
To se the beaute and the wonder. (529-533)

and

And with hys grymme pawes stronge,
Withyn hys sharpe nayles longe. (541-542)

"Geffrey's" inability to see beyond the literal level or the appearance of things is repeated here as yet another example of Chaucer's pattern of repetition reaffirming the narrator's confusion and distinct lack of progression.

"Geffrey" is then picked up and whisked away by the lightning-like eagle. "Geffrey" responds, characteristically enough, with fear at his "sours" or upward flight:

How high, I can not telle yow,
For I cam up, y nyste how.
For so astonyed and asweved
Was every vertu in my heved,
What with his sours and with my drede,
That al my felynge gan to dede;
For-whi hit was to gret affray. (547-553)

"Geffrey" all but faints away when he is picked up by the bird. He loses his "vertu" and is lying limp and fearful in the claws of the eagle he himself invokes at the end of Book I.

The reactions and statements forwarded thus far in the second book all point to the continuation of the state depicted in Book I. "Geffrey's" confusion is evident in his attempts to affirm the greatness of his dream by comparison with other great sententious dreams—if he understood his dream all that would be unnecessary. The lack of progression

is evidenced in his fascination with the visual aspects of the eagle rather than the symbolic. Again we see patterns of behaviour repeated.

The eagle then begins his attempt to educate "Geffrey" by vociferously ordering him to wake up. The golden bird then chastises "Geffrey" for his cowardly reaction. In his reaction, "Geffrey" shows an absence of Fortitude which is one of the four cardinal Virtues:

Thus I longe in hys clawes lay,
Til at the laste he to me spak
In mannes vois, and seyde, "Awak!
And be not agast so, for shame!" (554-557)

Koonce cleverly indicates that the eagle's order to "Geffrey" is analagous to the order of Christ for men to arise from their spiritual slumber:

. . . this "goodly" voice, awakening him from slumber, is the same voice with which Christ and the apostles admonish men to awaken from their sleep and follow the path of salvation: "Rise, thou that sleepeth." (Koonce, p. 143)

Koonce then compares "Geffrey" with Boethius who is "rebuked" by Lady Philosophy for the same sort of fearful reaction. However, although Chaucer is undoubtedly intending these echoes, he does so for ironic and humourous effect, to outline the totally "earthbound" nature of the narrator.

The idea or image of the "earthbound" narrator is reinforced and enlarged when the eagle comically speaks about carrying the man who, as the narrator says earlier, the eagle swept away as "lyghtly as I were a larke". (546). The eagle, however, does not find "Geffrey" particularly easy

to carry:

And thoo gan he me to disporte,
 And with wordes to comforte,
 And sayde twyes, "Seynte Marye!
 Thou art noyous for to carye." (571-574)

The physical heaviness is an obvious enough referent to the spiritual heaviness of the narrator. "Geffrey" is still centred on the things of this world and thus his spirit, due to its heaviness or connections with the things of the world is earthbound. In fact, the eagle doubly affirms "Geffrey's" heaviness (and thus his earthbound nature) by mentioning it "twyes". In addition, the eagle points to what we discovered in the first book: "Geffrey's" confusion and insensitivity. The eagle mentions that this flight is meant to teach "Geffrey": "this caas that betyd the,/ Is for thy lore and for thy prow" (578-579). "Geffrey" responds to the eagle's reassurance, "Let see! darst thou yet loke now?/ Be ful assured boldly,/ I am thy frend" (580-583), with yet another indication of his spiritual heaviness and a revelation of his innermost desires:

"O God!" thoughte I, "that madest kynde,
 Shal I noon other weyes dye?
 Wher Joves wol me stellyfye,
 Or what thing may this sygnifye?
 I neyther am Ennok, ne Elye,
 Ne Romulus, ne Ganymede,
 That was ybore up, as men rede,
 To hevене with daun Jupiter
 And mad the goddys botiller. " (584-592)

Despite assurances from Jove's messenger, "Geffrey" shows his lack of faith and his spiritual heaviness in the very act of considering that he is going to die in the course of

this upward flight. What is even more enlightening regarding "Geffrey's" state is his demonstration that he is concerned with earthly fame. At this point we can begin to see that "Geffrey's" heart yearns for earthly fame. In the act of thinking that he is going to be "stellified" "Geffrey" has indicated to us that he has proceeded from "suggestion" to "delightful thought" or from "sight" to the beginnings of "immoderate thought".⁴³ The idea that "Geffrey" has made this movement is implicit in the first book where "Geffrey" is reminded by Dido's speech of the functions of "love" as it exists on the carnal level. (see ll. 300-310). Dido intones that "love" is always for the enrichment of the pursuant (charity, however, is a selfless love which is not practiced for the enrichment of the practitioner); that "love" is for "frendshippe", "delyt or synguler profit" or for "fame/ In magnyfyinge of hys name". As we know that "Geffrey" is a servant of this particular kind of "love", let us examine how "Geffrey" might fit into Dido's scheme as delineated in Book I.

We later discover that "Geffrey" has no experience of love for "delyt", for while he does his best to "preyse [Cupid's] art" he himself "haddest never part" (627-628). It becomes clear then that "Geffrey's" motive in serving love is not this sort of "delyt". What about "frendshippe" then? The eagle makes it apparent that "Geffrey's" "devocion" has done nothing more than make him into a hermit:

For when thy labour doon al ys,
And hast mad alle thy rekenynges,

In stede of reste and newe thynges,
 Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon;
 And, also domb as any stoon,
 Thou sittest at another book
 Tyl fully daswed ys thy look,
 And lyvest thus as an heremyte. (652-659)

Cut off from the experience of people and life around him "Geffrey" is indeed "too curious/ In studye, or melancoiyous" (29-30). Thus it is logical to assume that his motive here is not "frenshippe". The only motive left then is fame. Fame is certainly not the best or the least harmful motive available. Koonce discusses this motive: "Fame . . . typifies the idolatry by which men substitute God's gifts for God himself as objects of worship" (Koonce, p. 91). To seek earthly fame is to seek a transitory and meaningless state of affairs. Boccaccio describes vividly what men such as "Geffrey" are pursuing:

Thus they blow up a huge cloud of popular reputation, and thereby so strut with vanity that, when they walk abroad, they want to have everybody's finger pointing them out, to overhear people saying that they are great masters of their subjects, and see how the grand folk rise to meet them. 44

"Geffrey" does not admit to himself that fame and all its trappings is the true motivation behind all his labour. He is satisfied with the appearance of humility and selflessness he gives.

All this could help us to discover why "Geffrey" is being taken to the house of Fame—to learn the true nature of the "love" he serves and thereby learn something of himself and the motives of his heart:

No matter how much good any man does in this world,

it is of no profit to him in attaining the rewards of eternal blessedness unless he is prompted by love. For the same reason, no matter how much I may strive to serve the King of Love by my deeds and works, unless these proceed from the affection of the heart and are derived from the impulse of love, they cannot profit me toward obtaining the rewards of love. 45

The love "Geffrey" demonstrates is a selfish love and until "Geffrey" can discover his true motivations he can never attain "eternal blessedness". The purpose of the flight then is not really as a reward but rather as a lesson; a chance to learn about himself. If one can learn to recognize the realities of the heart then one is at the starting point of the path to salvation. "Geffrey's" dream is meant to reveal the realities of his heart to him. Like Nebuchadnezzar, (with whom "Geffrey" compares his own dream), "Geffrey" is given a dream which needs interpretation. Daniel's response to the revelation of the dream is very applicable to "Geffrey":

. . . there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known . . . what shall be in the latter days . . . thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed . . . and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass . . . this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart. 46

Nebuchadnezzar does not recognize the "thoughts" of his heart until he is driven out from his kingdom. Then he recognizes his pride and loss of reason consequently humbling his heart to God. "Geffrey", like Nebuchadnezzar, has not realized the "thoughts" of his heart. "Geffrey" still is "bound . . . by desire for self-satisfaction through things that may be

seen or touched." His heart still seeks earthly fame even if his mind fails to recognize it.

The eagle underlines this continuing lack of growth and understanding in "Geffrey" by treating him as if he were a little boy. The eagle does so by ironically dealing with "Geffrey" on his own terms. For example, he deals with "Geffrey's" statement on stellification by saying, as if to a little boy, "I dar wel put the out of doute/ To make of the as yet a sterre" (588-589). In an attempt to educate the narrator and show him the error of what he does, the eagle, in an extremely sarcastic tone, describes "Geffrey's" way of life to him and indicates why Jove has sent his messenger to "Geffrey":

. . . [Jove] hath of the routhe,
That thou so longe trewely
Hast served so ententyfly
Hys blynde nevew Cupido,
And faire Venus also,
Withoute guerdon ever yit. (614-619)

We notice that Jove has pity or "routhe", not praise or admiration for "Geffrey" and the passage reinforces the blindness imagery and its connection with "Geffrey" which we encountered earlier in discussion of Book I.

"Geffrey's" services to "love" have been in the field of writing and composing. He, in a sense, sings the praises of Venus:

And never-the-lesse hast set thy wit—
Although that in thy hed ful lyte is—
To make bookys, songes, dytees,
In ryme, or elles in cadence,
As thou best canst, in reverence
Of Love, and of hys servantes eke. (620-625)

The humour in this passage is most certainly self-evident as the eagle mocks "Geffrey's" lack of "wit", but we begin to see another topic emerging. A digression at this point will help to place what has gone before and what is to come into a somewhat clearer perspective. "Geffrey" is, we are given to understand, something of a poet or writer. Many critics have made the leap mentioned earlier and said that "Geffrey" is Chaucer and some have then gone further and indicated that The House of Fame is a poem about Chaucer's theory of art⁴⁹ or an expanded version of a "Complaint to His Purse" with the artist making a plea for money.⁵⁰ There is no explicit poetic here but rather an indication of several problems which exist for any writer and most especially a "domb" one such as Chaucer's narrator "Geffrey".

The problems which confront a writer are various and innumerable. This particular narrator is an example of some problems which writers and readers alike often share. "Geffrey" writes, "in reverence/ Of Love", yet he knows nothing of Love personally. We hear the voice of authority, the man who praises the virtues of love yet we see a man who cannot even recognize the kind of love he serves. "Geffrey's" sources are not grounded in personal understanding, nor are they in any way experiential or empirical. As the eagle addresses "Geffrey":

. . . thou hast no tydynges
 Of Loves folk yf they be glade,
 Ne of noght elles that God made;
 And noght oonly fro fer contree
 That ther no tydyng cometh to thee,

But of thy verray neyghbores,
 That duellen almost at thy dores,
 Thou herist neyther that ne this. (644-651)

Instead, "Geffrey's" sources for his "knowledge" of love are other authorities. He quotes and names them often. We hear about Cicero, Ovid, Virgil, Dante, and others any number of times. However, the appeal to "authority" poses a few prickly problems for both the writer and the reader. "Geffrey" graphically demonstrates the major problem of anyone (writer or reader) who insists upon being at the mercy of the remnants of time past. Texts or "olde books" such as the Aeneid are themselves the representations of mortal men. These texts are the records of these men and demonstrate the particular biases of these men. Ann C. Watt also pursues this line of argument saying:

Chaucer is not dealing here with traditional vs. historical truth; much less is he arguing for a characteristic veracity of poets; he rather shows that books, our only key to the past, are arbitrarily related to the truth of the past . . . It is simply the picture of one sort of human hap by an author intensely interested in human avenues to the truth, but convinced, as a religious man must be, that human ways to the truth are either relativistic or circular. 51

If as a reader, modern or medieval, one fails to perceive these biases one overestimates the work. If one fails to grasp the sentence of the work, and that, as we have seen, is one of "Geffrey's" problems, then one underestimates and misrepresents the work. "Geffrey" does not grasp the sentence of the Aeneid or any of the other works he alludes to either in a pagan or a Christian framework and there is not such a wide disparity between the two. St. Augustine

points this out:

The Egyptians had not only idols and grave burdens which the people of Israel detested and avoided, so also they had vases and ornaments of gold and silver and clothing which the Israelites took with them . . . as if to put them to better use . . . the Egyptians unwittingly supplied them with the things which they themselves did not use well. In the same way all the teachings of the pagans contain not only simulated and superstitious imaginings . . . but also liberal disciplines more suited to the uses of truth, and some useful precepts concerning morals. 52

"Geffrey" cannot see these "useful precepts" in his blind literal readings; he cannot see what the pagan writer represents in Aeneas: the answer to a duty beyond the flesh. Nor can "Geffrey" grasp the moralized Christian sentence:

. . . [Italy] is the soul itself, with its attributes of immortality, rationality, knowledge and virtue. Opposed to Italy is Troy, a symbol of the body wherein the spirit dwells and (ideally) rules. Aeneas' flight from Troy is the flight of the spirit from the desires of the flesh. (Koonce, p.109)

Ideally, experience (and the experience of love would not have to be a direct one, one can see error in the world around him) in the world would allow one to see the sentence of these books but through "Geffrey" we see the possible results when this is not the case. "Geffrey's" works are written in a state of confusion and ignorance and are mirrors of this confused state. Because of the capricious nature of fame (which we will later see personified in Lady Fame) the inept poet/narrator's works could themselves become the source for further confusion. The eagle later points this out to "Geffrey" in one of his illustration/lectures. He indicates that one single point can cause a great stir at

all points around it. A section of this speech by the eagle on the subject of air is most directly relevant inasmuch as speech or writing is, in a sense, just so much air:

As I have of the watir preved,
 That every cercle causeth other.
 Ryght so of ayr, my leve brother;
 Everych ayr other stereth
 More and more, and speche up bereth,
 Or voys, or noyse, or word, or soun,
 Ay through multiplicacioun. (814-820)

"Geffrey" is, after all, building his works on a base of shifting sand like the desert in Book I. To create as "Geffrey" does is a kind of idolatry, an idolatry based on the worship of a false and ephemeral goddess. The image of the temple of Venus in the desert takes on even clearer dimensions at this point. The sterility of Venus as indicated by the desert setting becomes an icon for the sterility of writing which has an improper motivation and is grounded in ignorance.

The eagle continues "Geffrey's" lesson by indicating that their destination is the "House of Fame" where "Geffrey" will hear some "tydynges" of "Love's folkes". These "tydynges" will be both "sothe sawes and lesynges" as we would expect of earthly love. The ensuing description of "love's folke" is anything but flattering:

Mo discordes, moo jelousies,
 Mo murmures, and moo novelries,
 And moo dissymulacions,
 And feyned reparacions;
 And moo berdys in two houres
 Withoute rasour or sisoures
 Ymad, then greynes be of sondes;
 And eke moo holdynges in hondes,

And also moo renove launces
 Of olde forleten aqueyntaunces;
 Mo love-dayes and acordes
 Then on instruments be cordes;
 And eke of loves moo eschaunges
 Then ever comes in graunges. (685-698)

The lesson here is obvious. One cannot trust in mundane love as the defining characteristic of this love is its lack of stability. It shifts like the sands of Libya and causes disorder and confusion. The eagle makes it clear that "Geffrey" does not "see" when he indicates that he wants "Geffrey" to look beyond the surface or literal level. He wants "Geffrey's" attention, his "advertence/ To understonde [the eagle's] sentence" (709-710). In order for "Geffrey" to understand the sentence of what the eagle relates he must first come to some sort of realization based on self-knowledge. "Geffrey" would then realize the true basis of his actions and in the process would see the transitory and evanescent nature of earthly pursuits and misdirected love. In the process of realization the eagle's sentence would need no explanation.

In order to facilitate "Geffrey's" self-knowledge he is literally given a "bird's-eye view" of many things including his own state of being as represented by his fellow man. "Geffrey" is given the view of the highest-flying, sharpest-sighted bird of all and still he does not exhibit any signs of progression or awareness. As the eagle notes:

. . . any thing that hevye be,
 As stoon, or led, or thyng of wighte,
 And bere hyt never so hye on highte,
 Lat goo thyn hand, hit falleth down. (738-741)

Remembering the earlier indications of "Geffrey's" weight

and our discussion of his spiritual heaviness, this can easily be seen as a reference to "Geffrey"; an attempt to show "Geffrey" his figurative obesity. That such a thing would be mentioned here continues the pattern of repetition established in Book I with constant reference being made to "Geffrey's" confusion and earthbound nature.

The eagle gives "Geffrey" yet another indication of the narrator's inability to grasp the sentence of a story such as he is about to hear from the eagle:

. . . every soun mot to hyt pace,
 Or what so cometh from any tonge,
 Be hyt rouned, red, or songe,
 Or spoke in suerte or in drede,
 Certyn, hyt moste thider nede. (720-724)

One notices that the eagle makes reference to the areas in which "Geffrey" endeavours. "Geffrey" makes "bookys, songes, dytees"(622) which would be "rouned, red, or songe". One also notices that the sentence here given directly is available to "Geffrey" in the Dido-Aeneas story. Dido's lament with reference to her fame proves that nothing can be hidden from the goddess Fame in this story. In Dido's case her rejection of duty and her pursuit of illicit love ensure her infamy. Everything does reach the ears of Fame, whether it be the "up-so-down" goddess Fame who deals in the arena of mortal fame or the true God who is the judge of immortal fame. Of course man should be more concerned with his immortal state than his earthly one. This is part and parcel of the lesson "Geffrey" must learn. Still "Geffrey" makes no connection either with the earlier less direct lesson or, more to the

point, to himself despite the references to his areas of action.

Generally, critics have concluded that "Geffrey's" guide and teacher is a complex and elusive figure. Much has been written about the eagle and his speeches to "Geffrey" resulting in the over-elaboration of a relatively straightforward character. The eagle is a symbol of authority and keenness of vision—a juxtaposition which should serve to clarify our view of "Geffrey's" "authority" and vision. The eagle's gold feathers are an indication of the veracity of what the eagle is to say. This stands in juxtaposition to the brass "table" whose tale of the anguish of lovers seduces "Geffrey". In short, the eagle is not used by Chaucer to indicate astronomical movement into "Aquila" as Leyerle⁵³ suggests, nor is he being used as an example of medieval rhetoric or the trivium in action as Wilson so often concludes⁵⁴ or as any other complicated, intricate mechanism that has been suggested. The eagle is a real authority who attempts to teach "Geffrey" about himself and the authorities that "Geffrey" emulates.

The eagle tries to teach "Geffrey" by appealing to examples and ideas that "Geffrey" would be familiar with. The eagle shows how a heavy thing will "falleth down" if taken out of its "kyndely stede" (230).⁵⁵ The eagle makes these appeals in the hope that "Geffrey" will see beyond their superficial dimension into their deeper and more personal ramifications. After his speech on the proper place of all things

the eagle makes an appeal to some authorities who "Geffrey" would know and respect:

Loo, this sentence ys knowen kouth
 Of every philosophres mouth,
 As Aristotle and daun Platon,
 And other clerkys oon. (757-760)

But then the eagle launches into a seemingly unconnected monologue on sound and speech:

"Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,
 And every speche that ys spoken,
 Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,
 In his substaunce ys but air;
 For as flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke,
 Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke . . .
 As soun that cometh of pipe or harpe.
 For whan a pipe is blowen sharpe,
 The air is twyst with violence
 And rent; loo, thys ys my sentence;
 Eke, whan men harpe-strynges smyte,
 Whether hyt be moche or lyte,
 Loo, with the stroke the ayr tobreketh;
 And ryght so breketh it when men speketh. (765-780)

This is an attack on the injudicious use of mundane authorities such as Aristotle and Plato. Words really are nothing but "eyr ybroken"⁵⁶ unless they are supported by proper actions, motivation and, in the final analysis, interpretation. Words, whether they be unattractive, harsh sounding and brash like the notes of a pipe which is "blowen sharpe" or the beautiful and attractive sounds of a harp, really amount to the same thing and will arrive at the same place--"Fame's Hous".
 Again, the eagle appeals to "experience"⁵⁷ to explain the mushrooming effect one voice or one authority can have. He does so by the example of a stone cast into the water whose point of entry causes ripples which extend to all points beyond the original (789-806). The eagle applies this aquatic principle

to air in order to show "Geffrey" that earthly authority is based upon the unstable, shifting principles of a world in constant flux. He also indicates that speech too seeks its "propre mansyoun" and that all speech (and writing by implication) moves there:

That kyndely the mansioun
 Of every speche, of every soun,
 Be hyt eyther foul or fair,
 Hath hys kynde place in ayr.
 And syn that every thyng that is
 Out of hys kynde place, ywys,
 Moveth thidder for to goo,
 Yif hyt aweye be therfroo,
 As I have before preved the,
 Hyt seweth, every soun, parde,
 Moveth kyndely to pace
 Al up into his kyndely place. (831-843)

Chaucer here indicates a kind of inversion of God's higher order. Every word which is spoken, "Moveth up on high to pace/ Kyndely to Fame's place". We have already indicated that every word and every thought is perceived by God. By showing "Geffrey" that every word uttered reaches the house of Fame the eagle indicates, through a pale, "up-so-down" order, the higher order which is the final destination of all words, thoughts and, most importantly, souls.

"Geffrey" receives more information to indicate the futility of the mundane fame he seeks when the eagle takes him higher up in the air. "Geffrey" seems to understand and bear out the eagle's point when he says that he was:

. . . flownen fro the ground so hye
 That al the world, as to myn ye,
 No more semed than a prikke. (905-907)

It is true that the world and all its pleasures, rewards and

glory are no more "than a prikke" in comparison to the eternal glory beyond. This is exactly what the eagle is trying to teach "Geffrey". However, we have to notice that "Geffrey" is talking about how the world "semed" to his eye. Once again Chaucer's use of repetition comes to the fore. "Geffrey" is talking about the appearance not the higher reality; about the literal and superficial, not the allegorical and sententious.

The eagle, patient teacher that he is, continues by showing "Geffrey" the results of the kind of pride "Geffrey" has exhibited. The eagle again makes reference to examples which "Geffrey" would have some access to. He indicates that "Geffrey" is flying higher than either Alexander or Scipio and higher than

. . . the wrechche Dedalus,
 Ne his child, nyce Ykarus,
 That fleigh so highe that the hete
 Hys wynges malt, and he fel wete
 In myd the see, and ther he dreynthe. (919-923)

Koonce remarks on the allusion to Alexander and Scipio and says:

The flights of Scipio and Alexander . . . both emphasize the symbolism of Chaucer's flight. All three . . . illustrate the process by which the mind rises above the world and perceives its vanity. (Koonce, p. 162)

While this statement may be true of Scipio and Alexander, the evidence we have examined thus far does not support this contention in "Geffrey's" case. "Geffrey" is being given the opportunity for the perception indicated but he cannot encompass it.

The allusion to Icarus is an example of pride because Icarus, despite warnings from his father, flew too close to the sun. One must make the connection between "Geffrey" and Icarus just as one is invited to see the parallel between "Geffrey" and Phaeton who:

. . . wolde lede
 Algate hys fader carte, and gye.
 The carte-hors gonne wel espye
 That he koude no governaunce,
 And gonne for to lepe and launce,
 And beren hym now up, now down,
 . . . And he, for ferde, loste hys wyt
 Of that, and let the reynes gon
 Of his hors; and they anoon
 Gonne up to moute and doun descende,
 Til bothe the eyr and the erthe brende. (942-954)

Like Phaeton, "Geffrey" has taken hold of the reins of something which he does not understand and therefore cannot control. "Geffrey's" pride in writing and his hope for fame therein are akin to Phaeton's abortive and destructive flight. The eagle drives the point home when he says:

Loo, ys it not a gret myschaunce
 To lete a fool han governaunce
 Of thing that he can not demeyne? (957-959)

The question is a rhetorical one and although it is in reference to Phaeton it is obvious where the other edge is biting. "Geffrey", typically, does not see that these examples are directed at him and his actions. In fact, ironically he approves of these stories as "soth for to seyne". "Geffrey's" replies are intended to be humorous insofar as they demonstrate insensitivity to the sentences of the stories but they also reveal a lack of self-awareness.

As he soars higher "Geffrey" once again indicates

that all which has gone before has done little to make

"Geffrey" more aware:

"O God!" quod y, "that made Adam,
 Moche ys thy myght and thy noblesse!"
 And thoo thoughte y upon Boece,
 That writ, "A thought may flee so hye,
 Wyth fetheres of Philosophie,
 To passen everych element;
 And whan he hath so fer ywent,
 Than may be seen, behynde hys bak,
 Cloude." (970-978)

Koonce believes that his section is an indication of "Geffrey's" turnabout; that "Geffrey" has come to the threshold of understanding:

As an indication of Chaucer's attitude at this point, the appeal to God "that made Adam" is an affirmation of the power of grace that opens up to faith and reason a path by which the spirit might transcend the burden of Adam's sin . . . Chaucer, it would seem, has reached the stage of contemplation necessary for understanding the tidings promised him by the eagle. (Koonce, p. 167)

We must point out, however, that "Geffrey's" realization of God's power is based upon a sensory experience of what "Geffrey" had just passed through: "Cloudes, mystes, and tempestes, / Snowes, hayles, reynes, wyndes" (966-967). In a word, "Geffrey" is impressed by the weather. This hardly qualifies as a demonstration of higher understanding. Furthermore, in his quotation of Boethius "Geffrey" omits what is probably the key phrase and certainly what is most germane to "Geffrey's" "affirmation" of God's power and grace. We turn here to Boethius:

My wings are swift, able to soar beyond the heavens. The quick mind which wears them scorns the hateful earth and climbs above the globe of the immense sky, leaving the clouds below. 59

We see that "Geffrey" has omitted that the mind which is clothed in the feathers of philosophy "scorns the hateful earth".⁵⁹ Is this not what the eagle has been trying to induce "Geffrey" to do? Is this not a large part of the sentence of the Dido-Aeneas story?

To further substantiate my claim that "Geffrey" still has not progressed we need only turn to the section immediately following the reference to Boethius:

Thoo gan y wexen in a were,
And seyde, "Y wot wel y am here;
But wher in body or in gost
I not, ywys; but God, thou wost!" (979-982)

The Pauline echoes here have been pointed out often but few have recognized this section as a parody which is a further indication of the narrator's confusion: "gan y wexen in a were". Pride is also apparent in comparing himself with the man mentioned in II Cor. 12: 2-4 who was "caught up into paradise and heard secret words which it is not granted to man to utter". "Geffrey" is hardly the same as this man and to compare himself (even implicitly) is an act of ungrounded pride. "Geffrey's" ascent to the house of Fame is hardly the same thing as being "caught up into paradise". Ann C. Watt notices this parody and illustrates the pride exhibited in this section:

Chaucer's parody of so famous a verse as 2 Cor. 12. 2 implies the Pauline dilemma at heights less lofty than the third heaven: it is not expedient, doubtless, for "Geffrey" to glory; nevertheless he was snatched up to —the House of Fame. 60

The eagle rebukes "Geffrey's" exhibition of his

earthbound nature by crying out "Lat be . . . thy fantasye" (992) and by subsequently trying to teach "Geffrey" about the stars. "Geffrey" replies that he is "to old" (995) to learn about the stars in such a direct manner. The eagle then points out that "Geffrey" often refers to the stars, as he often refers to authorities, in ignorance of their meaning: "For though thou have hem ofte on honde,/ Yet nostow not wher that they stonde" (1009-1010). In fact, "Geffrey's" refusal of this knowledge is itself based upon another appeal to authority. "Geffrey" says that he does not need first hand knowledge because he has read the writers who have written about "this matere". We see that "Geffrey" is one writer who has strained the art-life relationship to its ultimate limit. For "Geffrey" art imitates art and even life imitates art. "Geffrey" feels no need for experience or knowledge as long as he has an authority to whom he can turn.

"Geffrey's" final defence of his refusal to look up at the stars and learn is a notion that the stars might hurt his eyesight:

And eke they shynen here so bryghte,
Hyt shulde shenden al my syghte
To loke on hem. (1015-1017)

Ironically "Geffrey" is correct but on a different level than he intends. For him to see the stars and learn would disrupt his present mode of perception or "sight" but it would result in a clearer vision, not an injury. The eagle wisely and humourously replies "that may wel be" (1017).

At this juncture the eagle indicates that they are

arriving at their destination and points out the rumbling sound which "Geffrey" perceives with a fear reminiscent of the fear exhibited at the end of Book I. The eagle reassures "Geffrey" and sets him down. "Geffrey" reaffirms that he has not really listened to or understood the eagle when he questions the eagle about the noise:

For the love of God, telle me—
 In sooth, that wil I of the lere—
 Yf thys noyse that I here
 Be, as I have herd the tellen,
 Of folk that doun in erthe duellen,
 And cometh here in the same wyse
 As I the herde or this devyse;
 And that there lives body nys
 In al that hous that yonder ys,
 That maketh al this loude fare. (1056-1065)

The eagle has already told "Geffrey" all these things during their flight to the house of Fame. The eagle reacts to the question comically with a prayer for help or guidance to deal with "Geffrey's" stupidity, "Noo . . . by Seynte Clare,/ And also wis God rede me!" (1066-1067). The eagle then explains to "Geffrey" that, when the speech arrives at the house of Fame, it resembles so exactly the speaker

And hath so verray hys lyknesse
 That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse
 That it the same body be,
 Man or woman, he or she. (1079-1082)

Here the eagle gives "Geffrey" one last indication that he needs to reconsider and evaluate his works and deeds as they have arrived at the house of Fame in his own "lyknesse". "Geffrey's" "lyknesse" arrives at this point in his dream. We may infer that "Geffrey" is to learn in life about himself by seeing his likeness or "speche" arriving at the destination

he desires most in his heart: the realm of Fame.

Again, as at the end of Book I, we have "Geffrey" in a position where he should be arriving at a higher level of comprehension as a result of the combined lessons received in the temple of Venus and from the eagle. However, also as at the end of Book I, "Geffrey" gives no indication of progression or even the smallest glimmer of understanding. The instances where the narrator interjects with comments on the dream, thus placing himself in the narrative present, are evidence that he does not learn from the dream; that the ignorance is not merely manifested in the dream but in the life he leads following the dream.

CHAPTER IV: THE HOUSE OF FAME, BOOK III

The invocation to Book III of The House of Fame is seen by B.G. Koonce as "the culmination of ["Geffrey's"] spiritual education" (Koonce, p. 180). However, if we have been correct thus far then the possibility exists that this invocation is but another example of Chaucerian irony. Koonce discusses the opening of the third book as a paraphrastic version of Dante's invocation to the "paradiso" and explains the positive symbolic associations of Apollo and the laurel in a discussion of Book III as the one examining "higher subject matter" (Koonce, p. 181) than the previous two books. But it seems as if Koonce is uncomfortable with his position as he respects the possibility that he might be falling prey to Chaucer's irony. To circumvent this possibility Koonce suggests that the irony is only superficial:

In the "Paradiso" this stage of contemplation is figured in Beatrice, who, like Apollo, signifies sapientia or divine revelation, as distinguished from Virgil, a symbol of scientia or the natural light of reason. Chaucer's eagle, it would seem, combines these two functions as his association with Beatrice and the sun at the end of Book I suggests. However, this association, along with the appeal to Apollo, is ironic on the surface. (Koonce, pp. 180-181)

Koonce notices the presence of the irony but, rather than following the irony to a simple, logical conclusion, he takes great pains to evade the reality of the irony while making the "lytel laste bok" into a Chaucerian revision of the "Paradiso".

It is more reasonable to conclude that if the last book is the "very worldly paradise of Fame" (Koonce, p. 131), then "Geffrey" stands to gain this insight from experiences there. In his heart, "Geffrey" desires fame, he worships the idea as if the attainment of earthly fame would be a kind of paradise on earth. The experiences he is to have in the realm of Lady Fame should teach "Geffrey" the true nature of his goal and place all the lessons he has failed to comprehend and assimilate thus far in high relief for "Geffrey". The book does not contain any "higher subject matter", in fact it is really a restatement of earlier, subtler lessons, the last in a series of lessons which become more and more obvious thus requiring less and less interpretation to discover their sentence.

"Geffrey's" reactions to the Palace of Fame are indicative of his continuous state of confusion and his lack of enlightenment. Again "Geffrey" notices the physical impressiveness of the place: ". . . I gan to thys place aproche,/ That stood upon so hygh a roche,/ Hier stant ther non in Spayne" (1115-1117), but fails to make any moral connection. It is also illuminating to consider what "Geffrey" wants to know about this place. Typically, as one would expect from an earthbound soul, "Geffrey" wants to know more about its sensory aspects:

. . . I ententyf was to see,
 And for to powren wonder lowe,
 Yf I koude any weyes knowe
 What maner stoon this roche was.
 For hyt was lyk alum de glas,
 But that hyt shoon ful more clere;
 But of what congeled matere
 Hyt was, I nyste redely. (1120-1127)

Those who search for indications of spiritual growth or realization ignore these reactions which are echoic of the earlier books. These reactions point to "Geffrey's" statement when he discovers that the foundation for this building is ice:

A roche of yse, and not of stel.
 Thoughte I, "By seynt Thomas of Kent!
 This were a feble fundament
 To bilden on a place hye,
 He ought him lytel glorifye
 That hereon bilt, God so me save!" (1130-1135)

One must ask if this is much different than his reaction to the sand back in Book I? If "Geffrey" really understands the import of the idea of a "feble fundament" would he not make some connctions with the earlier foundation of Venus's temple? Would he desire continuation of his search for "love tydynges"? It becomes clear that "Geffrey" does not realize the ramifications or the meaning of much of what he says. Like so many other butts of Chaucer's irony "Geffrey" is the vehicle of humorous, unknowing and therefore ironic statement. The humour lies in the naiveté of the character and his inability to see that what he says and in effect points directly back at him and often condemns him. In fact, his subsequent statements prove that he does not understand the deeper meaning of what he says. "Geffrey" notices that the names of many people who were formerly famous have melted away from their positions of prominence symbolized by the inscription of their names in the "feble fundament" of the ice:

They were almost ofthowed so
 That of the lettres oon or two
 Was molte away of every name,
 So unfamous was woxe hir fame.
 But men seyn, "What may ever laste?" (1143-1147)

"Geffrey" then sees that other names are still embedded in the ice on the other side:

For on that other syde I say
 Of this hil, that northward lay,
 How hit was writen ful of names
 Of flokes that hadden grete fames
 Of olde tyme, and yet they were
 As fressh as men had writen hem here
 The selve day ryght, or that houre
 That I upon hem gan to poure. (1151-1158)

One notes the veracity of the statement of line 1147 and could almost believe that "Geffrey" is finally comprehending some of what has been made available to him in the dream thus far. However, "Geffrey" overrules such a possibility when he tries to explain this symbolic section with a very earthbound empirical explanation:

But wel I wiste what yt made;
 Hyt was conserved with the shade
 Of a castel that stood on high—
 Al this writyng that I sigh—
 And stood eke on so cold a place
 That hete myghte hit not deface. (1159-1164)

Surely these are not the responses of a man who has gained a true "insight into the transitoriness of Fame's abode" (Koonce, p. 194). Koonce illuminates the possible symbolic dimensions the mountain of ice could have in a defence of "Geffrey's" new found position of understanding. Koonce indicates the symbolic connotations of the south versus the north wind which "spreads all evil" and is the home of Satan and all cupidity (see Koonce, pp. 190-194). Koonce,

in such an excellent explication, gives more evidence for our position with regard to "Geffrey". Koonce explains the opposing sides of the mountain of ice with an appeal to Boethius:

For as Philosophy reminds Boethius, the unequal distribution of fame and other temporal goods is to be attributed not to the willful play of time, chance, or fortune but to God, who dispenses all earthly awards with a just intent. As Augustine says, the seeming confusion of such awards is part of the divine plan for man's salvation. In allowing some names to prosper and others to be forgotten, God teaches the vanity of trusting worldly goods. If many who deserve fame seem to die unremembered, their reward will come in heaven where they will receive eternal fame. Conversely, if others appear to achieve a lasting fame on earth, it is often a false, deceptive fame with which God allows Satan to tempt men and thereby test their virtue.

(Koonce, pp. 190-191)

One has to admit the astuteness of the observation and this is the point Chaucer most likely is making. Obviously, though, "Geffrey" does not perceive the point as he attempts to explain the differing degrees of fame with an explanation based on a literal and physical knowledge; he does not attribute the "distribution of fame" to God or his "just intent". To underline further his point Chaucer lets "Geffrey" speak of the castle, again in terms of its appearance:

... . al the men that ben on lyve
 Ne han the kunnyng to describe
 The beaute of that ylke place,
 Ne coude casten no compace
 Swich another for to make,
 That myght of beaute ben hys make,
 Ne so wonderlych ywrought;
 That hit astonyeth yit my thought,
 And maketh al my wyt to swynke,
 On this castel to bethynke,
 So that the grete craft, beaute,
 The cast, the curiosite
 Ne kan I not to yow devyse;
 My wit ne may me not suffise. (1167-1130)

We note the similarity of tone, response and even choice of descriptive words between this and earlier sections of the House of Fame. We see a continuation of the pattern of repetition established as an organizational and meaningful device. "Geffrey" follows the description with a rather lengthy account of the "many subtil compassinges,/ Babewynnes and pynacles,/ Ymageries and tabernacles: of the castle. Again we have evidence of "Geffrey's" continued concern with the physical appearance of things which is a further exemplification of "Geffrey's" lack of understanding or insight.

"Geffrey" describes the assortment of jesters, musicians, magicians, witches and the like who reside here and perform in praise of Fame. The allusory pattern and the meaning of this section (ll. 1195-1280) is explained with extraordinary care and lucidity by Koonce (pp. 196-206) and thus warrants little if any comment other than Koonce's own. I must, however, reaffirm that the symbolic associations which Koonce draws can make a very convincing case that "Geffrey" does not progress. We note, though, that Koonce makes reference to his case by stating at numerous points that most of these symbols can be interpreted in two equal but antithetical ways.⁶¹

Thus, "Geffrey" passes through the gate on his "ryght hond" and notes again the impressive physical appearance of the palace and its gate,

Which that so wel croven was
That never such another nas;
And yit it was be aventure
Iwrought, as often as be cure.
Hyt nedeth nocht yow more to tellen,
To make yow to longe duellen,

Of this yates florissinges,
 Ne of compasses, ne of kervynges,
 Ne how they hatte in masoneries,
 As corbetz, ful of ymageries.
 But, Lord! so fair yt was to shewe,
 For hit was al with gold behewe. (1295-1306)

"Geffrey's" responses to the brass and graven images in the temple of Venus come to mind. Of course, like the temple of Venus, the outward resplendence of the house of Fame covers the vileness of its inner reality. Chaucer drives this point home by having "Geffrey" speak of the entourage which surrounds and sings all the praises of rich men:

Thoo atte last aspyed y
 That pursevantes and heraudes,
 That crien ryche folkes laudes,
 Hyt weren alle; and every man
 Of hem, as y yow tellen can,
 Had on him throwen a vesture
 Which that men clepe a cote-armure,
 Embrowdd wonderliche ryche,
 Although they nere noht ylyche.
 But noht nyl I, so mote y thryve,
 Ben aboute to dyscryve
 Alle these armes that ther weren,
 That they thus on her cotes beren,
 For hyt to me were impossible;
 Men myghte make of hem a bible
 Twenty foot thykke, as y trowe. (1320-1335)

"Geffrey" is too overwhelmed by the appearance to notice the excess or "larges" which these "ryche folkes" exhibit in Fame's house. It is also made quite clear that these excesses and delight in earthly fame are universal and symptomatic of earthbound insofar as they are not practiced solely by the English (see ll. 1336-1340).

The catalogue of excess continues with a description of the walls, floor, and roof of the palace of Fame which is

"plated half a foote thikke/ Of gold" (1345-1346). As Koonce indicates, the splendour of the gold as well as the gems present on the walls of Fame's palace are indicative of blindness and confusion. Koonce says the gold

blears men's sight and distorts the truth
until it seems more than it is. Such is the
ironic setting for the dreamer of fame that
begins. (Koonce, p. 206)

However, Koonce omits any consideration of "Geffrey's" comment on the excessive use of gold on all the faces of the interior of the palace of Fame. "Geffrey", in speaking of the gold "half a foote thikke", says that it "nas nothyng wikke" (1346). If "Geffrey" had indeed progressed in either the dream or thereafter, he surely would have some intimation of the "ironic" and "wikke" nature of the "setting".

"Geffrey's" continued ignorance and lack of growth are substantiated further in his responses to the "femynyne creature", the goddess Fame. The description given by "Geffrey" indicates that he is again overwhelmed by the wondrous appearance of Fame. He describes her position, her size, her eyes, hair, ears, tongue, and feet, never once giving any indication that he understands what these features of her appearance might indicate about the goddess or the thing she rules. "Geffrey" notes the continuous changeability of Fame:

Me thoughte that she was so lyte
That the lengthe of a cubite
Was lengere than she semed be.
But thus sone, in a whyle, she
Hir tho so wonderliche streighte
That with hir fet she erthe reighte,
And with hir hed she touched hevене,
Ther as shynen sterres sevene. (1369-1376)

yet "Geffrey" gives no commentary other than to indicate how wonderfully "streighte" Fame is when she reaches her taller heights. In fact, "Geffrey's" hyperbolic comment after his description of the appearance of Fame adds more ammunition to the arsenal of evidence indicating a total lack of understanding on his part:

But Lord! the perry and the richesse
I saugh sitting on this godesse!
And, Lord! the hevenysssh melodye
Of songes, ful of armonye,
I herde aboute her trone ysonge,
That al the paleys-walles ronge! (1393-1398)

The "hevenysssh melodye" which surrounds Fame is hardly useful or sententious music especially in the light of the description of the shifting nature of Fame just given by "Geffrey" and the earlier description given by the eagle. Since "Geffrey" thinks the songs truly "hevenysssh" and "ful of armonye" one cannot help but conclude that "Geffrey" is deluded by the music; that he is still earthbound and cannot see that the music of Fame's court

denotes the outward, sensuous appeal of art,
not its "sentence" and whose sweet "flateries"
destroy the fruytes of resoun" and hold men's
hearts "in usage". (Koonce, p. 213)

Koonce, however, fails to connect his own insightful explanatory statement with "Geffrey's" statement. This simple connection indicates "Geffrey's" confused spiritual and mental state, especially in the light of Koonce's gloss. "Geffrey" is overwhelmed by the music of Fame and like "Calliope/ and hir eighte sustren" (1400-1401), "Geffrey" sings the praises of Fame. He cannot grasp the meaning of what he

has already seen and heard thus far, and as a result says that he finds Fame to be a goddess of "nobley, honour and rychesse" (1416). At this point we understand the falsity of this "nobley, honour and rychesse", however, there is no indication that "Geffrey" is even approaching a similar level of understanding as Koonce suggests.

"Geffrey's" level of comprehension is indicated by his responses to the pillars which house the famous writers of time past:

Tho saugh I stonde on eyther syde,
 Streight down to the dores wide,
 Fro the dees, many a peler
 Of metal that shoon not ful cler;
 But that they nere of no rychesse,
 Yet they were mad for gret noblesse,
 And in hem hy and gret sentence;
 And folk of digne reverence,
 Of which I wil yow telle fonde,
 Upon the piler saugh I stonde. (1419-1428)

In the light of the other references to materials in earlier sections of the poem we are, of course, struck by the reference to the construction of these pillars. The pillars are made of "metal that shoon not ful cler". Many critics have noted this statement in conjunction with the other uses of metal as metaphor in The House of Fame. Koonce, for one, delineates the meaning of base metals for us in his explanation of the brass "table" in the temple of Venus. Koonce reiterates this explanation in a direct comment on l. 1422:

Implicit in Fame's pillars of metal, "that shoon not ful cler" is the contrast, already noted, between the "pure" metals, gold and silver, and the "base" metals, such as iron, lead, tin, brass and copper. . . . The base metals . . . signify the degradation of nature and of human nature in particular as a consequence

of Adam's sin, that is the life of man in a state of cupidity . . . Gold and silver, on the other hand, denote aspects of charity. (Koonce, p. 217)

Koonce later goes on to explain how Augustine "provides the necessary norm" (p. 219) for evaluation of the "sentence" of these writers who wrote before the New Law and thus cannot "shine with the wisdom of gold and the eloquence of silver" (Koonce, p. 218). Although one cannot argue with Koonce's interpretation of the line, one can certainly question "Geffrey's" comment. "Geffrey" does not note the symbolic importance of the metal but comments on the lack of value in these pillars, "they nere of no rychesse". "Geffrey" then indicates that even though these pillars are not very valuable they were "mad for gret noblesse,/ And in hem hy and gret sentence;/ And folk of digne reverence".

One might be tempted, as Koonce is, to read these comments of "Geffrey's" as indicators that he understands the worth of these famous men. However, when we look to see what evidence "Geffrey" produces for the "noblesse" and "sentence" of these writers, we find that these writers have initiated or perpetuated the fame of earthly deeds done by worldly people. Joseph is worthy in "Geffrey's" eyes because he "bar on hys shuldres hye/ The fame up of the Jewerye" (1435-1436); Statius because he "bar of Thebes up the fame/ Upon his shuldres, and the name/ Also of cruel Achilles" (1461-1463); Homer since he "was besy for to bere up Troye./ So hevy therof was the fame" (1472-1473); Virgil because he bore "up a longe while/ The fame of Pius Eneas" and so on.

Koonce illustrates Chaucer's subtlety and cleverness in an explanation of the symbolic use of the different metals and their suitability to each of the individual writers involved. Koonce does not notice or explain "Geffrey's" criterion for the greatness of these writers. Koonce also does not illustrate "Geffrey's" insensitivity and confusion as illustrated in "Geffrey's" own description of these pillars and the response he gives to his own description:

The halle was al ful, ywys,
Of hem that writen olde gestes,
As ben on trees rokes nestes;
But hit a ful confus matere
Weremalle the gestes for to here,
That they of write, or how they highte. (1514-1519)

In essence, "Geffrey" admits to what we discovered earlier. He is indeed confused by these "olde gestes"; to him it is a "ful confus matere" to consider these stories because "Geffrey" cannot comprehend them on a sententious level. He therefor cannot distinguish the true basis of the fame accorded each of these writers, nor can he understand that these writers of "hy and gret sentence" (1425) must be examined beneath the surface for the kernel of meaning buried there. The "gret sentence" of any writer cannot lie in his accordance of great fame to an earthly character, situation or action. Here too we have a further illustration of our continuing discussion of the task of the writer—to understand his position vis à vis "olde gestes" and their fabricators and to infuse his own "gestes" with a proper and real meaning or sentence.

It is amidst this scenario of the skewed judgements about fame and famous writers whose fame itself, in a sense, shines "not ful cler" that our perplexed and confused narrator witnesses Fame's "justice" in action. We must again remember that "Geffrey's" asides or comments are often in the narrative present and thus reveal his state of mind and his thought after the dream. Just such a comment prefaces the description of the individual groups of supplicants:

But thus I seye yow, trewely,
 What her cause was, y nyste.
 For of this folk ful wel y wiste,
 They hadde good fame ech deserved
 Although they were dyversely served;
 Ryght as her suster, dame Fortune,
 Ys wont to serven in comune. (1542-1548)

The later descriptions of the supplicants does not support "Geffrey's" contention that they all deserved good fame. For example, how can "wrechches" and "theves" (1777) be deemed worthy of "good fame"? Even if we take "Geffrey" at his word, does this not make Fame's judgements all the more fickle? "Geffrey" notes the fickleness and even mentions the relation to Fortune, but he does not make a direct or conclusive connection, even with the advantage of hindsight. "Geffrey" is, as we shall see, provided with another exemplum within the framework of the supplications but, as in the earlier cases of Aeneas and the eagle, he fails to perceive the meaning embodied therein.

The description of the supplicants is then presented and they are, as noted

. . . of sondry regions,
 Of allieskynnes condicions
 That dwelle in erthe under the mone,
 Pore and ryche. (1529-1532)

Each group of this diverse sublunary contingent is in the house of Fame to argue for the right to fame. "Geffrey" explains that Fame metes out her rewards through her minion Eolus who blows the trumpet "Sklaundre" if bad fame is rewarded and "Laude" if good. "Geffrey" takes great care to describe the emissions from these two horns. We note that "Geffrey" again misses the point of one of his earlier lessons. He is again impressed by the mighty sights and sounds of these harbingers of good and bad fame. However, he should remember the eagle's sententious speech in Book II:

Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,
 And every speche that ys spoken,
 Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,
 In his substaunce ys but air;
 For as flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke,
 Ryght soo soun ys air ybroke.
 But this may be in many wyse,
 Of which I wil the twoo devyse,
 As soun that cometh of pipe or harpe.
 For whan a pipe is blowen sharpe,
 The air ys twyst with violence
 And rent; loo, thys ys my sentence. (765-776)

So too are these proclamations of Fame. Though they seem very important and powerful they also are "noght but eyr ybroken".

Fame, true to her nature, deals variously with equally "guiltless" people who are served with capricious judgement. Later, Fame even grants good fame to a group of self-proclaimed "yde1" or slothful people. In short, Lady Fame delivers "no justice"(1820) and, as Chaucer subtly and ironically underlines, no real fame is available from Lady Fame: "'I werne yow hit,' quod she anon;/ 'Ye gete of me good fame non,/ Be God!' " (1559-1561). The only real and "good" or lasting

fame, as Koonce indicates, is heavenly fame. If we remember this a meaningful pun becomes apparent in this quotation. To paraphrase, it is true that you will get no good fame by God from Lady Fame. This is exactly the point and lesson "Geffrey" is supposed to learn: seek heavenly fame not earthly fame. To seek earthly fame is to seek nothing at all.

To clarify further the above point, "Geffrey" is presented with yet another positive exemplum in the group of supplicants. This group says:

We han don wel with al our myght,
 But we ne kepen have no fame.
 Hyde our werkes and our name,
 For Goddys love; for certes we
 Han certeyn doon hyt for bounte,
 And for no maner other thing. (1694-1699)

This group has done their work for "bounte" and not for any other reason. This is the proper motivation for man. The group does not play Fame's game, and is therefor not subject to the capricious judgements of Fame. This is the first and only instance where neither "Sklaundre" nor "Laude" is sounded. This is also the first time Lady Fame has not gone on and on pontificating and passing out her sentences of good or bad fame. Instead she is reduced to, "I graunte yow alle your askyng/ . . . let your werkes be ded" (1700-1701). Fame has no control over these people.

"Geffrey" is dumbfounded by this action and obviously does not understand the import of this group. "Geffrey's" response to the exemplum provided is bewilderment: "y clew myn hed" (1702). In order to provide a clearer perspective

"Geffrey" is then exposed to another group which apparently desire and deserve the same fate. "Geffrey" introduces us to this group by saying that he

. . . saugh anoon the fifte route
 That to this lady gunne loute,
 And down on knes anoon to falle;
 And to hir thoo besoughten alle
 To hide her goode werkes ek;
 And seyden they yeven noght a lek
 For fame ne for such renoun;
 For they for contemplacioun
 And Goddes love hadde ywrought,
 Ne of fame wolde they nought. (1703-1712)

Fame's response to this request is to have their fame spread throughout the world. Careful consideration of this speech in comparison with the fourth company's remarks reveals some major and enlightening differences. The "fifte route" like the other groups, supplicate themselves to Fame. They "down on knes anoon to falle", whereas the fourth "companye" do no such thing, they "gunne stonden in a rewe" (1692). The former position indicates that the fifth group is placing itself in a position of subservience to Fame and therefore under her judgement. The fourth group, however, does not kneel to fame, they are indeed "wonder fewe" (1691). The fifth group should serve to show "Geffrey" to himself as he really is. They, like "Geffrey", protest that they do not wish any fame or rewards but they worship the idea secretly and thus serve the fickle goddess. In this vein, after "Geffrey" catalogues Fame's judgements on four more groups, he is accosted by some mysterious stranger at his back who asks: "Frend, what is thy name?/ Artow come hider to han

fame?" (1871-1872). "Geffrey's" reaction in view of the fifth group is not surprising. He denies his participation in the pursuit to "han fame" and states much the same case as the fifth group:

"Nay, for sothe, frend," quod y;
 "I cam noght hyder, graunt mercy,
 For no such cause, by my hed!
 Sufficeth me, as I were ded,
 That no wight have my name in honde.
 I wot myself best how y stonde;
 For what I drye, or what I thynke,
 I wil myselfen al hyt drynke,
 Certyn, for the more part,
 As fer forth as I kan myn art." (1873-1882)

The reaction can and has been interpreted as a kind of sudden though not unexpected enlightenment for "Geffrey". However, Chaucer skillfully indicates just the opposite state of affairs. "Geffrey" says that he comes there "for no such cause, by my hed". Ironically, what he says is quite true. His "hed" has no knowledge of "Geffrey's" being there to "han fame"—a reaffirmation of "Geffrey's" lack of self-knowledge or understanding we examined earlier. The lines which follow reinforce this by underlining "Geffrey's" belief that he does understand himself. When "Geffrey" voices a desire for anonymity (1877) he is essentially making the same request as the fifth group but not the fourth. The expressed desire for anonymity is not based upon humility, faith and confidence in works done for "goddys love" or "bounte". "Geffrey's" reaction is based upon a false and overestimated understanding of himself and his art:

I wot myself best how y stonde;
 For what I drye, or what I thynke,

I wil myselven al hyt drynke,
 Certeyn, for the more part,
 As fer forth as I kan myn art.

We were witness to ample demonstration of "Geffrey's" capacity for self-knowledge and evaluation. We also have seen how well "Geffrey" understands his "art", writing. Witness his explanations of and reactions to other writings referred to in the earlier sections of The House of Fame as well as his demonstrated knowledge and experience of the subject in which he claims authority--love.

"Geffrey" goes on to explain to his examiner why he has come to the house of Fame:

The cause why y stonde here:
 Somme newe tydynges for to lere,
 Somme newe thinges, y not what,
 Tydynges, other this or that,
 Of love, or suche thynges glade,
 For certeynly, he that me made
 To comen hyder seyde me,
 Y shulde bothe here and se,
 In this place, wonder thynges;
 But these be no suche tydynges
 As I mene of. (1885-1895)

The speech is further proof that "Geffrey" has not reached a stage of real understanding or significant progression. He is still searching for love "tydynges" despite all the lessons and "tydynges" he has been exposed to thus far. He has no conception of the nature of the "love" he still serves and therefor does not see that all which has preceded has been "tydynges" of the love he serves. Indeed he is brought to the house of Fame to "bothe here and se,/ In this place, wonder thynges", and he is exposed to the true nature of fame and the futility of vain, earthly pursuits. However,

"Geffrey" has not absorbed these lessons: "But these be no suche tydynges/ As I mene of". Even his "friend" is forced into a rather surprised statement of disbelief: "Noo?" he says.

To reinforce "Geffrey's" earthbound nature Chaucer exposes "Geffrey's" pride again in his response to the stranger's exclamation:

. . . "Noo, parde!
 For wel y wiste ever yit,
 Sith that first y hadde wit,
 That somme folk han desired fame
 Diversly, and loos, and name. (1896-1900)

Our reading experience has not led us to believe that "Geffrey" has a very thorough comprehension of people and their desire for fame. In fact, "Geffrey's" version of the sentence provided by the Dido-Aeneas story indicates that he does not understand at all. Furthermore, the fact that he says "somme folk" indicates that he misses the entire point. It is he who has been seeking fame, not "somme folk". "Geffrey's" insensitivity causes him to blur the focus after it has been sharply defined. "Geffrey" has learned the external trappings of fame, her dwelling, her appearance, and the like:

But certeynly, y nyste how
 Ne where that Fame duelled, er now,
 And eke of her descripcioun,
 Ne also her condicioun,
 Ne the ordre of her dom,
 Unto the tyme y hidder com. (1901-1906)

Clearly "Geffrey" has failed to comprehend the sentence provided by the fourth group. He still sees and is concerned

with the goddess Fame, never coming to grips with the interior; never realizing that Fame, like Fortune, only has power when you play her game, when you seek her dubious rewards.

Koonce suggests that the stranger who greets "Geffrey" is Chaucer's representation of Satan as evidenced by his position at "Geffrey's" back and his leading questions. This suggestion is acceptable on Koonce's argued grounds but also makes some degree of sense within the framework of this paper. If "Geffrey" cannot grasp the "tydynges" of love he has been presented with thus far what then will he understand? The (to use Koonce's term) "satanic" figure gives us a clue which points to the answer. He asks "Gefffrey":

Whych than be, loo, these tydynges
That thou now [thus] hider brynges,
That thou hast herd? (1907-1909)

Both modern editors, F.N. Robinson and A.C. Baugh, point to the use of "brynges" while other editors change the word to provide a "more appropriate meaning" as Baugh notes. ⁶³ To answer our earlier question, "Geffrey" will understand exactly the kind of "tydynges" he himself would bring. In fact, "Geffrey" is about to join a group of rumourers where he will find the kind of "tydynges" which he himself "brynges" and "hast herd" (We must remember the eagle's lecture that the form of the man brings the words he speaks or writes to the house of Fame). These lines need no emendation, they are sensible at the present juncture and make even more sense at the end of the poem.

The "satanic" figure then proceeds to answer his own question:

But now no fors, for wel y se
 What thou desirest for to here.
 Come forth and stond no lenger here,
 And y wil theee, withouten drede,
 In such another place lede,
 Ther thou shalt here many oon. (1910-1915)

Indeed such a figure would and does see exactly what "Geffrey" desires to hear. This is the reason he leads "Geffrey" to the whirling house of rumour where such tidings abound.

"Geffrey's" focus when he arrives is again on the appearance; the substance not the essence of the place. The description which ensues delineating the "rounynges" and "jangles" indicates that the house of rumour is, symbolically⁶⁴ at least, a representation of earth and/or earthly affairs:

And over alle the houses angles
 Ys ful of rounynges and of jangles
 Of werres, of pes, of mariages,
 Of reste, of labour, of viages,
 Of abood, of deeth, of lyf,
 Of love, of hate, acord, of stryf,
 Of loos, of lore, and of wynnynges,
 Of hele, of seknesse, of bildynges,
 Of faire wyndes, and of tempestes,
 Of qwalm of folk, and eke of bestes;
 Of dyvers transmutacions
 Of estats, and eke of regions;
 Of trust, of drede, of jelousye,
 Of wit, of wynnynge, of folye;
 Of plente, and of gret famyne,
 Of chepe, of derthe, and of ruyne;
 Of good or mys governement,
 Of fyr, and of dyvers accident. (1959-1976)

This is surely a catalogue of the fortunes and actions of mankind on earth. To reinforce further the image Chaucer gives "Geffrey" these words:

Syker be ye, hit nas not lyte,
 For hyt was sixty myle of lengthe.

Al was the tymber of no strengthe,
 Yet hit is founded to endure
 Whil that hit lyst of Aventure,
 That is the moder of tydynges,
 As the see of welles and sprynges;
 And hyt was shapen lyk a cage. (1978-1985)

The whirling of the place would suggest a dizziness and loss of perception and perspective for its inhabitants. Further, this house is "shapen lyk a cage", indicating that those within are prisoners of the world which they inhabit. The imagery here is certainly consistent with our argument and ideas stated thus far. "Geffrey" too, is a prisoner of the world he inhabits and definitely demonstrates the dizziness and loss of perception that the whirling house would induce.

We see that before he ever enters the whirling house of rumour "Geffrey", by his own admission, has not learned anything "yit". In response to the sight of the house "Geffrey" says to his guardian eagle:

. . . Y preye the
 That thou a while abide me,
 For Goddis love, and lete me seen
 What wondres in this place been;
 For yit, paraunter, y may lere
 Som good thereon, or sumwhat here
 That leef me were, or that y wente. (1993-1999)

"Geffrey" has not learned in the temple of Venus; he has not learned from the eagle; he has not learned from the court of Lady Fame. One would have to admit that "Geffrey's" journey in the symbolic sense is an utter failure, especially when it is compared to the exemplum of Aeneas' journey. In order to reaffirm "Geffrey's" failure the eagle once again mentions the narrator's "hevynesse" (2011), talks about "Geffrey's"

unlucky dealings with "fortune" (2016) and indicates that "Geffrey" still needs to be taught "aryght" (2024). The eagle then lifts "Geffrey" into the place where one never can "gynne/ To come into hyt, out of doute/ So faste hit whirleth" (2004-2006). In short, the world as it is represented here indicates that man is confused and without proper direction. The statement reflects on "Geffrey" directly as he willfully enters (and thus accepts) the whirling house. The acceptance itself is further indication that he has learned nothing, that he is chained to the pursuit of worldly things.

Within, "Geffrey" is confronted with a place where "fals and soth compounded"(2018). The result of this fusion is a "tydyng". The house of rumour is a place where all information is second or third hand:

Whan oon had herd a thing, ywis,
 He com forth ryght to another wight,
 And gan hym tellen anon-tyght
 The same that to him was told,
 Or hyt a forlong way was old,
 But gan somewhat for to eche
 To this tydyng in this speche
 More than hit ever was. (2060-2067)

These "tydynges" spread and grow like the circles produced by a pebble thrown in water. They start from a single point and build to giant proportions: "From a sparke spronge amys,/ Til al a citee brent up ys" (2079-2080). The point remains the same as that made earlier by the eagle. One source can have a great effect on all around it. "Geffrey" is now amongst all types of liars, fabricators, exaggerators and the like.

We can see that finally he is with his own; he is in his "propre mansyoun". "Geffrey" too fabricates—he writes of "love", something which he has no direct knowledge or experience of. We know that "Geffrey" has not progressed when he notices and comments on the lies and "tydynges" yet still searches for some "love-tydynges" despite the nature of information in the house of rumour. "Geffrey", in his continued "devocion" to and conception of "love", makes himself blind.

With the movement to the house of rumour we have returned full circle to the image of the whirling cage, the image of worldliness. The image of the enclosed world of confusion is where "Geffrey" finds exactly what the "satanic" figure indicated "Geffrey" was seeking: "I herde a grete noyse withalle/ In a corner of the halle,/ Ther men of love-tydynges tolde" (2141-2143). Given "Geffrey's" level of understanding, his conception of "love" and his oft-mentioned "hevynesse" it is not surprising that the "love-tydynges" which "Geffrey" seeks are found in the house of rumour. These "tydynges" are here because they too are not first hand. Thus they can easily be equated with "Geffrey's" own writings which are based on misunderstood second hand information.

With these things in mind the "satanic" figure's earlier "mistake" takes on clearer lines of definition in the light of the final lines:

Atte laste y saugh a man,
 Which that y [nevene] nat ne kan;
 But he semed for to be
 A man of gret auctorite. (2155-2158)

"Geffrey" is shown directly in both settings that all of one's actions and intentions reach ears and eyes beyond the earthly realm. In the fourth group "Geffrey" is shown that man's concern should be with his intention; that works should be performed for "Goddys love" not to "han fame".

The poem comes full circle in the final book and gives us yet another "man of gret auctorite" who is but another figure such as "Geffrey" in the whirling representation of the world. Sadly, "Geffrey" does not progress in spite of all the lessons he is offered throughout the poem and the journey. He cannot emulate the journey of Aeneas as "Geffrey" is too earthbound. "Geffrey" has reached his "propre mansyoun" in the whirling house of rumour.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion let us reiterate some of the main ideas gleaned from our closer reading of The House of Fame. Chaucer's poem is, as demonstrated, a unified work of art both in thought and structure. Book I of this dream-vision introduces what seem to be diverse and discordant elements: the narrator, a glass temple, a brass "table" on which is engraved a version of the story of Dido and Aeneas and all set in the landscape of a desert wasteland. Generally speaking, critics have tended to assume that these elements are merely decorative or are the flaws of a young Chaucer who has not yet found his bearings as a writer. It is here, however, where the lessons of the poem have their foundation. The Dido-Aeneas story introduces the futility in carnal pursuits and at once demonstrates "Geffrey's" insensitivity via his reactions to this story. Aeneas is here established as the ideal journeyer or pilgrim who chooses the proper love—charity—represented by Italy and Lavina rather than the carnal, selfish love represented by Dido and Troy. "Geffrey" by way of contrast states directly "I am no bet in charyte" (108), thus establishing the dichotomy and setting the tone for the rest of the poem.

In Book I we also are introduced to "Geffrey's" pride, confusion and inability to see beyond the appearance or surface

level. This is brought to bear subtly in the opening sections of the poem but more overtly with the imagery of glass and brass, both symbols of sterility, falsity, deception and treacherousness. "Geffrey" does not see the deficient reality lurking behind these materials which give a false appearance of value. His confusion with regard to appearance is amplified by "Geffrey's" physical dislocation (and he is always confused about his physical location). Here we find one of the purposes of the image of the desert; to indicate the dislocation and the sterility of the love he serves. "Geffrey's" confusion thus becomes a keynote and establishes a pattern of repetition continued throughout the poem as a method of indicating the narrator's level of awareness of himself through his awareness of the things and ideas confronting him.

The connection between the first and second books is the appearance of the eagle. Here again we are exposed to the narrator's concern with physical appearance rather than sentence. The eagle is established as a figure of authority who attempts to show "Geffrey", in a more direct fashion, some of the implicit lessons which he fails to perceive in the first book. The eagle chastises and rebukes "Geffrey" for his "heaviness", his fear, his ignorance, and his inability to see the eagle's "sentence". In this second book we also have a reference to "Geffrey's" motivations for writing. It becomes apparent that the narrator writes to "han fame". Here lies the true motivation of his heart. "Geffrey" does not realize that this is his true motivation but it becomes

clear in our examination. Another thrust of the poem becomes clear: the only pathway to salvation is to recognize the realities of one's heart and act to correct the transgressions of the heart.

The eagle attempts to forward "Geffrey's" education with examples taken from experience. He shows the narrator that one single thing or point can affect all things around it, that all things seek their "propre mansyoun", and that nothing can escape the ears of powers beyond the human realm. In all cases the eagle is pointing directly at "Geffrey" but our narrator, true to the pattern established, continues to display ignorance and confusion. The eagle's speech on sound indicates once again the futility of seeking fame through words unsupported by proper motivation, action and interpretation. In conjunction with the speech on water the eagle indicates the writer's position and responsibilities. Herein lies the Chaucerian "ars poetriae" on which many critics have said the poem is predicated: admission of bias and limitation and concern with the poet's responsibilities to endow works with a meaningful and lasting sentence. This is yet another important thrust of The House of Fame.

The eagle takes "Geffrey" to the house of Fame where the narrator's continued confusion and insensitivity demonstrate that he is still physically and spiritually heavy or earthbound. This is reaffirmed by his reaction to the outward appearance of the palace of Fame and the people therein. It is in the "lytel laste book" where all the lessons of the

previous two books are most expressly shown or stated. The stories and lessons referring to the transitory and unstable nature of earthly pursuits are embodied in Lady Fame and her dubious judgements and distinctly drawn to our attention with the reference to and parallel with Fortune.

With the supplicants to Lady Fame "Geffrey" is given yet another positive exemplum in the fourth group and with the entire entourage the distinction between the two kinds of love, as delineated in Book I, is made apparent. All groups except the fourth seek the carnal half of the twofold Venus. Again, in the court of Lady Fame "Geffrey's" confusion is continued and exemplified in his concern with appearances of value and worth.

"Geffrey's" inability to comprehend the palace of Fame results in his displacement to his "propre mansyoun"—the house of rumour. The whirling, unstable "cage" is where "Geffrey" is shown what he is and does (again his confusion and inability to "see" is the dominant mode): like the people in this house he spreads information of which he has no first hand knowledge. In the "cage" "Geffrey" also sees the figure which has given critics through the ages great difficulty, the "man of gret auctorite". The man is a mirror image of "Geffrey" as we are introduced to him in the early sections of the poem. This is where the poem comes full circle. Here is another point affecting all around it, another "authority" in a scenario of rumour mongers.

"Geffrey" then does not approach a duplication or.

emulation of the journey of Aeneas. He does not progress. Rather, he remains at the same level of awareness of himself and his pursuits, the same "mansyoun" he begins in even if it is imaged differently here. Thus the poem turns solipsistically back upon itself and is completed thematically if not formally. "Geffrey's" failed "journey" thus becomes an example of what men do and seek in the world when they should strive to emulate the journey or pilgrimage exemplified by Aeneas.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ W.O. Sypherd, Studies in Chaucer's House of Fame, (New York, 1965), p. 42.
- ² Ibid., pp. 85-86.
- ³ The Middle English spelling will be maintained throughout to refer to the authorial persona and will be marked by quotation marked by quotation marks.
- ⁴ Sypherd, op. cit., p. 171.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 171.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 171.
- ⁷ Ibid., p. 172.
- ⁸ J.A.W. Bennett, Chaucer's Book of Fame, (Oxford, 1968), pp. 82-83.
- ⁹ Ibid., p. 34.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 35.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p. 105.
- ¹² Ibid., p. 143.
- ¹³ S. Delany, Chaucer's House of Fame, (Chicago, 1972), p. 1.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 57
- ¹⁵ D.M. Bevington, "The Obtuse Narrator in Chaucer's House of Fame", Speculum, 36 (1961), 290.
- ¹⁶ St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D.W. Robertson Jr. (Indianapolis, 1958), p. 88.
- ¹⁷ B.G. Koonce, Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame, (Princeton, 1966), p. 90. All subsequent quotations from this text are from this edition and will be marked by "Koonce" and the page number in parentheses following quotation.
- ¹⁸ G. Chaucer, The House of Fame in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston, 1957), ll. 7-12. All subsequent quotations from this text are from this edition and will be noted by line number in parentheses following quotation.
- ¹⁹ E. Curtius, European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages, trans. W. Trask, (Princeton, 1953), See pp. 162-163.
- ²⁰ G. de Lorris and J. de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, trans. H.W. Robbins, (New York, 1962), p. 135.
- ²¹ See the section on "humility of mouth" in the "Parson's Tale" beginning at l. 480.
- ²² Leyerle and Bevington offer a more elaborate but less satisfactory astrological explanation for the date which would explain that the winter solstice begins at this date.

I can see no reason to conclude that the solstice would occur on this date when it traditionally occurs on the twelfth day of that month. For a summation of the Bevington-Leyerle position see Leyerle's "Chaucer's Windy Eagle" University of Toronto Quarterly, 40 (1971), 249.

²³See Koonce, p. 56.

²⁴I Cor. 13, 1-2.

²⁵John the Scot, in The Literature of Medieval England, ed. D.W. Robertson Jr., (New York, 1970), p. 102. All subsequent quotations translated by D.W. Robertson Jr. unless otherwise noted.

²⁶Koonce, p. 92. Koonce gives a full and detailed account of the symbols and the "cluster of details" on pp. 92-95.

²⁷Petrus Berchorius, in The Literature of Medieval England, pp. 288-289.

²⁸Ibid., p. 289. For a further discussion of the nature of Venus see R. Hollander, Boccaccio's Two Venuses, (New York, 1977), p. 40 and p. 159.

²⁹Sypherd, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 48-49.

³¹Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. J.J. Parry (New York, 1969), p. 100.

³²See Koonce, pp. 112-113.

³³J.L. Simmons, "The Place of the Poet in Chaucer's House of Fame", Modern Language Quarterly, 27 (1966), 129.

³⁴Troilus too is noted for crying "allas" when reduced to inaction by the arrows of Cupid. One of a number of examples can be found in Troilus and Criseyde, Book II l. 1348.

³⁵B.F. Huppé, A Reading of the Canterbury Tales, (Albany, 1967), pp. 62-64.

³⁶John of Salisbury, in The Literature of Medieval England, trans. J.B. Pike, p. 270.

³⁷D.W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer, (Princeton, 1962), pp. 264-265. See also Hollander, op. cit., p. 159.

³⁸C. Tisdale, "The House of Fame: Virgilian Reason and Boethian Wisdom", Comparative Literature, 25 (1973), 253.

³⁹Ibid., 254.

⁴⁰L. Eldredge, "Chaucer's House of Fame and the Via Moderna", Neophilologische Mitteilungen, 5 (1970), 111.

⁴¹Bevington, op. cit., 294.

⁴²Figuratively, obesity is a traditional symbol of the soul chained to the things of the world.

- ⁴³See D.W. Robertson Jr., A Preface to Chaucer, p. 477.
- ⁴⁴G. Boccaccio, in The Literature of Medieval England, trans. C. Osgood, p. 276.
- ⁴⁵Capellanus, op. cit., p. 91.
- ⁴⁶Daniel 2, 28-30.
- ⁴⁷It makes the connection between "Geffrey" and this king more definite and is interesting to note that at least part of "Geffrey's" description of the eagle is a reference to a section of Daniel 4, 33.
- ⁴⁸D. W. Robertson Jr., The Literature of Medieval England, p. 4.
- ⁴⁹Bennett, among others, makes this case. See Bennett, op. cit., pp. 52-59.
- ⁵⁰Simmons, op. cit., 131.
- ⁵¹Ann C. Watt, "Amor Gloriam in Chaucer's House of Fame", The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 4 (1973), 98-99.
- ⁵²St. Augustine, op. cit., p. 75.
- ⁵³In his article "Chaucer's Windy Eagle", University of Toronto Quarterly, 10 (1971).
- ⁵⁴In a number of articles of which "The Eagle's Speech in Chaucer's House of Fame", Quarterly Journal of Speech, 50 (1964), is the best example.
- ⁵⁵The reference here is, of course, to "Geffrey's" weight.
- ⁵⁶Leyerle indicates that this is also a joke on flatulence. This would tend to support the attack on mundane authority.
- ⁵⁷Eldredge argues that the eagle is attempting to convince a skeptical "Geffrey" to believe in experiential reality. It is more likely that the bird's appeal is much like Christ's parables: a story, in the realm of the listener's comprehension, which embodies some truth or sentence indirectly.
- ⁵⁸Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. R. Green, (Indianapolis, 1972), p. 76.
- ⁵⁹In Chaucer's own translation of this section of Boethius he quotes, "it despiseth the hateful erthes".
- ⁶⁰Watt, op. cit., 106-107.
- ⁶¹See Koonce, p. 205.
- ⁶²See Koonce, pp. 215-225.
- ⁶³A.C. Baugh in his edition of Chaucer's Major Poetry, (New York, 1963), p. 56.
- ⁶⁴S. Delany makes a similar case in her article "Chaucer and Ovide Moralise", Comparative Literature, (1968), 258-259

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