Distribution Agreement

In presenting this thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for a degree from Emory University, I hereby grant to Emory University and its agents the non-exclusive license to archive, make accessible, and display my thesis in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter now, including display on the World Wide Web. I understand that I may select some access restrictions as part of the online submission of this thesis. I retain all ownership rights to the copyright of the thesis. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of this thesis.

Andrew W. Jones April 10, 2014

“The Carnival in the Maze”: Classical and Courtly Perspectives on Life and Love in Chaucer’s Dream Vision Poetry

By

Andrew W. Jones

James Morey

Adviser

Emory English Department

James Morey

Adviser

Sheila Cavanagh

Committee Member

Judy Raggi Moore

Committee Member

2014

“The Carnival in the Maze”: Classical and Courtly Perspectives on Life and Love in Chaucer’s Dream Vision Poetry

By

Andrew W. Jones

James Morey

Adviser

An abstract of
a thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Emory English Department

2014

Abstract

"The Carnival in the Maze":
Classical and Courtly Perspectives on Life and Love in
Chaucer's Dream Vision Poetry

By

Andrew W. Jones

In the decades preceding his magnum opus, *The Canterbury Tales*, Geoffrey Chaucer experimented with different forms of poetry while serving as a diplomat in the court of Edward III. Between 1368 and 1381, Chaucer wrote three poems in the style of the medieval dream vision: *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, and *Parliament of Fowls*. In each of the three poems, the dreamer comes from a place of anxiety concerning love. The dreamer then encounters a story from a well-known Roman author, which provokes subconscious meditation on love when the dreamer falls asleep. In this thesis, I connect the structural parallels existing between the poems to courtly and classical traditions, with the courtly perspective of *fin amors* reflecting "earthly love" (or corporeal love) and the classical perspectives of Stoicism and Neoplatonism reflecting "spiritual love" (or incorporeal love). The dichotomy that emerges between corporeal desire and incorporeal inclination appears irreconcilable in all three of the poems. However, upon analyzing the bathetic endings of the poems, only *Parliament of Fowls* approaches a remedy for confronting the mysterious realm of love. As such, I argue that *Parliament of Fowls* rests as the consummation of Chaucer's toils with love-based anxiety in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame*, both of which preceded *Parliament of Fowls*. Ultimately, I show how Chaucer expresses the futility of subscribing to established traditions and philosophies when seeking guidance in the "maze" of varying opinions on conduct in love.

“The Carnival in the Maze”: Classical and Courtly Perspectives on Life and Love in Chaucer’s Dream Vision Poetry

By

Andrew W. Jones

James Morey

Adviser

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Emory College of Arts and Sciences
of Emory University in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
Bachelor of Arts with Honors

Emory English Department

2014

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I want to thank my adviser, Professor James Morey, for his counsel, enthusiasm, and constant support over the course of the year, as well as for opening my world to Chaucer's poetry. I also want to thank Professor Sheila Cavanagh for helping me understand different methods of literary criticism and Professor Judy Raggi Moore for guiding me through Italian language and culture, both here and abroad. Finally, I want to thank my parents, my sister, and my friends for their interest in my project, their encouragement, and their love.

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Today, readers of Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) associate the poet with his corpus of larger, epic poems, like *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*, the latter of which Chaucer began in 1387.[1] In the 1350s and 1360s, Chaucer traveled throughout Europe, running diplomatic errands for the court of Edward III in countries such as France and Italy.[2] Between 1366-1370, Chaucer made four journeys abroad in four years.[3] During these periods of travel, Chaucer experimented with different forms of writing, and one of Chaucer's notable, experimental genres was dream vision poetry. He wrote three poems in this tradition between the late 1360s and the early 1380s that have grown in appeal following his death: *Book of the Duchess*, *House of Fame*, and *Parliament of Fowls* (completed circa 1380).[4] Critics agree that Chaucer wrote *Book of the Duchess* as an elegy to Blanche of Lancaster, the wife of John of Gaunt, who succumbed to the plague on September 12, 1368. John of Gaunt oversaw the throne in the wake of Edward's death in 1377 and sired King Henry IV, whose coronation was in 1399. Blanche was John's second wife; John's third wife, Katherine Swynford, was the sister of Chaucer's wife Philippa, making Chaucer and John brothers-in-law while John oversaw the English throne.[5] For this reason, *Book of the Duchess* offers a glimpse into the lives of England's elite during this time, making the poem historically significant. The date of the completion of

---

[1] Benson, Larry. *The Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. 3.
[2] Benson, *Riverside*, xviii
[3] Benson, *Riverside*, xix
[4] Lynch, Kathryn. *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. First Edition. New York: Norton & Company, 2007. 93. Print.
[5] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 3-4

House of Fame remains in question, although most scholars agree that *House of Fame* followed *Book of the Duchess* and preceded *Parliament of Fowls*.[6]

Each work is enigmatic, analogous to the nature of dreams. In fact, the fragmentary *House of Fame* appears unfinished altogether. However, the structural parallels between the three works are undeniable, as each poem focuses on a dreamer who is (1) anxious about some aspect of love and (2) lapses into reverie after mediating on a work from a well-known Roman author. In *Book of the Duchess*, the dreamer, who suffers from a "sicknesse… [of] eight yere" (36-37) that no physician can treat, reads the story of separated lovers Seys and Alcyone from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* before entering a dream in which he converses with the Man in Black, a bereaved knight. In *House of Fame*, the dreamer (aptly named Geffrey) falls asleep on December 10 after praying that "God turne us every dreme to goode" (1). Geffrey, who desires to find "tydings of Loves folk" (644-645), awakens in a temple of glass depicting the story of Aeneas and Dido from Virgil's *Aeneid*. From there, an eagle transports Geffrey across the sky to the House of Fame (or "Rumor"), which acts as a sort of clearinghouse for all the sounds of the world. In *Parliament of Fowls*, the dreamer, an inexperienced lover on St. Valentine's Day, reads Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis* (*The Dream of Scipio*) before falling asleep. The subject of the *Somnium Scipionis*, Scipio Africanus (the Roman general who defeated Hannibal at Carthage during the Second Punic War), appears to the dreamer, urging him to enter a garden of love in which a caucus of birds debates the nature of courtship and infatuation.

The three poems, thus, give three dilemmas in love (bereavement, rumor, and courtship) by way of three different Roman works (*Metamorphoses*, *Aeneid*, and *Somnium Scipionis*).

---

[6] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 93

These Roman works lie at moments of transition between the conscious and the subconscious in Chaucer's work that are of primary concern to my discussion.

Hugh of St. Victor, a Christian mystic and theologian of the twelfth century, wrote a groundbreaking work on the nature of reading called the *Didascalicon de studio legendi* (or, simply, the *Didascalicon*). In his work, Hugh outlines four distinct levels of Biblical exegesis: literal, allegorical, tropological, and anagogical. The literal level addresses the basic meaning of the text; the allegorical level concerns a latent, yet direct reference to the Church; the tropological level refers to an individual's or character's "spiritual constitution" after encountering the reading; lastly, the anagogical level references the afterlife, or a moralization of the text at hand for the purposes of preparing for salvation.[7] In the context of Chaucer's three poems, the flexible landscape of the dream allows the anxious dreamers to moralize their respective dilemmas from their readings in an abstract manner. Interestingly, then, Chaucer seems to utilize Hugh's method for Biblical exegesis for the purposes of meditating on pagan texts, reflecting Chaucer's "skillful manipulation of inherited traditions."[8]

Hugh's *Didascalicon* dovetails nicely with the ideas of the Roman thinker Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius, who lived in the fifth century. Macrobius wrote his *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* (or *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*) to accompany a translation of Cicero's original *Somnium Scipionis*. The Macrobian translation of Cicero's work is the most complete version existing today.[9] In his *Commentarii*, Macrobius describes five types of dreams: the *somnium* (or "enigmatic dream"), the *visio* (or "prophetic dream"), the *oraculum* (or "oracular dream"), the *epynion* (or "nightmare"), and the *phantasma* (apparition). Macrobius

---

[7] Robertson, D.W. *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962. 292. Print.
[8] Robertson, *Preface*, 280
[9] Lynch, Kathryn. *Dream Visions*, 265

labels the first three types of dreams as "reliable" and the latter two types of dreams as "unreliable." To Macrobius, a dream's reliability corresponds to its ability to predict, or point to, future events. "Unreliable" dreams, therefore, offer no prognostication; they are murky in meaning and inaccessible to the meditating mind. Specifically, citing Virgil as his source, Macrobius affirms that anxiety about love always precedes dreams of unreliability.[10] Chaucer's dreamers in the three poems profess their anxiety about their respective love dilemmas, and Chaucer clearly knew about the Macrobian categorization, as Scipio Africanus directly mentions the commentary to Chaucer's dreamer in *Parliament of Fowls*:

> 'Thou hast thee so wel borne
> In looking of myn old book to-torne,
> Of which Macrobie roughte nat a lyte' (109-111).

At once, then, Chaucer's dream vision structure draws from the combined ideas of Hugh and Macrobius, with each dreamer lapsing into an unreliable dream where he must engage the content of his reading on four different levels. In the first chapter of my thesis, I will attempt to prove that Chaucer pays homage to Macrobius and Hugh simultaneously, focusing primarily on unreliable dreams and the tropological and anagogical levels of meditation.

In any work of literature, structure and form impact thematic meaning, and for Chaucer this dynamic is no different. As I have previously mentioned, Chaucer's dreamers encounter situations based in love, yet what about these situations renders them "dilemmas" or "quandaries?" Different traditions, religions, and philosophies have attempted to assign specific precepts for conduct in love. A prevailing conflict remains in these various visions of love: to what extent does earthly love matter in the context of the universe? F.H. Whitman dubs earthly

---

[10] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 265-268 (From *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, trans. William Harris Stahl, 3.1—3.19).

love's counterpart "spiritual love."[11] The former exists in the transience of the mortal condition, while the other dwells in the unfathomable realm of eternity. Herein lies the conflict; love on earth is tangible while spiritual love (or, for the purposes of acknowledging Chaucer's Christian surroundings, "heavenly love") is not. If the glory of heaven does exist, then an individual must conduct himself on Earth with this ultimate destination in mind.

Chaucer presents both sides of this dichotomy in the three poems. Each dreamer comes from a position of anxiety about earthly love and must face his anxiety in the presence of a contrasting, spiritual view during his dream. In the second chapter of my thesis, I will show how Chaucer juxtaposes these contrasting perspectives, rooting earthly love in the courtly love tradition (or *fin amors*) and approaching heavenly love through a hybridization of Stoic and Neoplatonic philosophy. For *fin amors*, I will rely primarily on Andreas Capellanus's *De amore*, in which the twelfth-century French writer outlines a series of principles that establish earthly love as a realm of ultimate importance. In reference to the aforementioned "hybridization" of Greco-Roman Stoicism and Neoplatonism, I will look deeper into the poems' respective exegeses, authors, and subjects (Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Virgil's *Aeneid* and Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*), considering chiefly the notion that working for communal benefit is more virtuous than chasing passionate, physical self-discovery. According to D.W. Robertson:

> Stoics, Neoplatonists, and Neopthygoreans found their own doctrines in the myths of poets, assuming that the gods revealed their mysteries in an obscure way and that the discovery of the secrets thus concealed was a source of pleasure as well as of profit. The

[11] Whitman, F. H. "Exegesis and Chaucer's Dream Visions." *The Chaucer Review* 3.4 (1969): 237. Print.

> result of these efforts, however misguided they may have been, was to preserve the literature of the past and to give it contemporary relevance.[12]

Robertson's words buttress the notion that Chaucer put forth Greco-Roman philosophy to provide the spiritual perspective that love's "mysteries" are attainable and profitable, and that the answers lie within the "literature of the past." Exemplary courtly lovers according to the *fin amors* tradition do not engage in such rational reflection if such reflection interferes with their obligation as a lover.

These two mutually exclusive modes of looking at love bring to mind a final question: which mode is preferable? In the final chapter of my thesis, I will use deconstructionist literary theory to debunk the mutually exclusive opposition that Chaucer forms between earthly and heavenly love. In effect, I will argue that Chaucer eventually shows in the *Parliament of Fowls* that love defies categorization and varies broadly between individual experiences. To show this defiance of categorization, I will employ the deconstructionist principle of *aporia*, or mental impasse,[13] to show how neither pure earthly love nor pure heavenly love are decidedly correct modes of conduct.

Charles Muscatine wrote that *Parliament of Fowls* tempers the "flamboyance" of the *House of Fame* while broadening the scope of the *Book of the Duchess*, as the unfinished *House of Fame* seems to lack controlled organization and the elegiac *Book of the Duchess* loses power in light of its narrow overarching, biographic representation of Blanche.[14] To take Muscatine's ideas one step further, I plan to demonstrate that *Parliament of Fowls* conveys the *aporia* of love

---

[12] Robertson, *Preface*, 289
[13] Parker, Robert. *How to Intepret Literature*. 2nd. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 90. Print.
[14] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 307 (From *Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning*, Charles Muscatine, 1957)

in a clearer fashion than the two preceding poems and offers a measured remedy to progress beyond this frustratingly theoretical impasse. As such, the *Parliament of Fowls* rests as the structural and thematic consummation of the previous two poems. In Chapter 3, I will turn again to Hugh of St. Victor, who addresses an ancient philosophical concept called "the music of the spheres" which his predecessor, St. Augustine, also examines in his *De Musica*. As this thesis will discuss, the music of the spheres has resonance in both Greco-Roman philosophy as well as mystical Christianity, giving an optimistic approach to the maze of varying authorities with expressions of harmony and fideism.

I also wish to argue that humor becomes the chief element behind the overarching maturity of *Parliament of Fowls*. D.W. Robertson suggests that Chaucer's humor, which can have sharper edges than serious discourse, requires a degree of emotional detachment: the ability of Chaucer to satirize the "pettiness" of both he and his peers without losing complete faith in "the shortcomings of society."[15] I believe that the humorous elements of *Parliament of Fowls* (primarily bathos, or anticlimax) lack power in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame*. Indeed, both poems demonstrate a cynicism that renders a middle ground between subjective love and ideal love impossible.

The progression of this thesis can be summarized in three sentences. First, I will examine Macrobian dream theory in light of Hugh's *Didascalicon*, showing how the anxious dreamers of the three poems experience a clash between the tropological and anagogical levels of Hugh's exegetical method. Next, I will argue that Chaucer employs exegesis to introduce a dichotomy between *fin amors* and its metaphysical counterpart (the hybridization of Stoicism and Neoplatonism), with this dichotomy contributing to the dreamers' continued anxiety. Finally, I

[15] Robertson, *Preface*, 281

will contend that the notion of *aporia* helps shape bathetic endings to the visions, with the bathos in *Parliament of Fowls* reaching a level of optimism and fideism that *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* fail to convey.

CHAPTER 1: UNRELIABLE DREAMS AND MORAL MEDITATION

Section 1: The Gates of Horn and Ivory

In the introduction, I commented on the difference between reliable dreams and unreliable dreams in the Macrobian dream categorization. Before expounding upon Chaucer's meshing of this categorization with Hugh's method of Biblical exegesis, it is necessary to show how unreliable dreams functioned in the classical world. As I mentioned in the introduction, the *epynion* and the *phantasma* offer no insight into the unfolding of the future, primarily because they are enigmatic. Why, then, ought one contemplate a dream that lacks concrete information? In other words, why should a man take the time to reflect on a dream that has arisen purely to deceive him? These questions take root when Macrobius incorporates Virgil's ideas of "true" and "false" dreams at the end of his categorization in the *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*. According to Macrobius, unreliable dreams, whether of the *epynion* variety or the *phantasma* variety, follow feelings of anxiety or terror. Macrobius cites Virgil "as an authority for the unreliability of nightmares", and it is Virgil himself who declares that nightmares always follow love-based concerns.[16]

Virgil's ideas on true and false dreams come to a head in Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, when the mortal Aeneas journeys to the underworld with a Cumaean Sibyl (or prophetess). Aeneas and the Sibyl enter the underworld from the Italian mainland, where they proceed to encounter Aeneas's

[16] Lynch, Kathryn. *Dream Visions*, 266 (From *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, translated by William Harris Stahl, 3.6)

dead companions, including Palinurus (Aeneas's former helmsman) and Anchises (Aeneas's father). As Aeneas nears the end of his stay in the underworld, Virgil describes two possible ways for Aeneas to return to mortal terrain. The first is through the gate of horn and the second is through the gate of ivory:

> Sunt geminae Somni portae, quarum altera fertur
> cornea, qua veris facilis datur exitus umbris,
> altera candenti perfecta nitens elephanto,
> sed falsa ad caelum mittunt insomnia Manes. (VI.893-896)

Nicholas Horsfall translates the aforementioned passage as follows:

> There are twin gates of dreams, of which one is reported as being of
> horn, where true spirits are granted an easy passage, the other is former all
> gleaming of bright ivory, but the Manes send through it false dreams
> to the heavens.[17]

Here, Virgil proclaims that all dreams pass through "geminae Somni portae" ("twin portals of Sleep") of which one consists of "cornea" (horn) and the other consists of "elephanto" (ivory). Virgil's twin gates metaphorize the idea that the soul, when separated from the body during sleep, grapples with truth surrounding the initial reason for the dreamer's disturbance. This truth is not clearly perceptible, for the narrator must gaze at the truth through the "veil" provided by the type of dream. A dream that allows the soul to see the truth is said to be of horn, for this material, when reduced to its thinnest state, is transparent. Ivory, on the other hand, is impossible to see through, regardless of the density of the veil. Hence, an unreliable dream is said to be a

[17] Horsfall, Nicholas. *Virgil, Aeneid 6: A Commentary*. 1. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 60-61. Print.

portal of ivory, for the truth will always lie beyond an opaque veil.[18] In this light, a "false" dream is not a dream that provides "false" truth or delusive meditation; it is a dream where the truth is too incomprehensible to yield specific guidance or advice.

Hence, in viewing Chaucer's dream vision poems within the framework for unreliable dreams, one must acknowledge the Virgilian portals that contributed to the Macrobian categorization. To both Virgil and Macrobius, "false" or "unreliable" dreams do not generate answers, but meditating on these types of dreams serves as the proverbial "first step" towards recognizing the futility of subscribing to established truths or traditions. Hence, I will readdress the Virgilian gates in my discussion of Derrida and the concept of *aporia* in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

Section 2: Macrobius, Hugh of St. Victor, and Chaucer's Dream Vision Structure

The remainder of Chapter 1 will analyze all three texts at the dreamers' points of transition between wakefulness and dreaming. As I have previously indicated, I ultimately hope to define a common thematic energy that permeates the three poems, with *Parliament of Fowls* being the consummation of Chaucer's musings on earthly love and heavenly love. Before specifically addressing these musings, I must begin my discussion by outlining the structural parallels that each dream vision poem employs. Simply put, in all three poems, the dreamer falls asleep and engages the meaning of a classical, Roman text in light of the love-based anxiety they

[18] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 268 (From *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, translated by William Harris Stahl, 3.17)

demonstrated before the initiation of their vision. Identifying this trend in the texts is not the easiest of tasks. For example, in *Book of the Duchess*, Chaucer's unnamed dreamer drifts off after reading the story of Ceys and Alcyone from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, yet in *House of Fame*, Chaucer recounts the story of Dido and Aeneas from the *Aeneid* after Geffrey has fallen asleep.

For the purposes of our discussion, I will pinpoint these consistent, structural elements and connect each point of transition to Macrobian unreliable dreams and Hugh's exegetical method. In turn, I will show that Chaucer chooses this layout for his poem to highlight the moral nature of his dreamers' meditation on love. The influence of both Macrobius and Hugh on these points of transition will serve as the backbone to further discussion on Chaucer's thematic experimentation towards the end of the poems. The first parallel between the three poems concerns the dreamers' states of mind before Chaucer focuses the reader's attention on the exegetes.

Chapter 2a: Earthly Love

To start, it is necessary to isolate the moments where each poem either states or intimates that each dreamer comes from a place of anxiety about love. These moments occur before the dreamer enters his dream and, thus, at the beginning of each poem. To reiterate, in his commentary, Macrobius cites Virgil in explaining that unreliable or "false" dreams, whether

existing as a nightmare or apparition (*epynion* or *phantasma*), accompany "the passion of love."[19] Each dreamer's initial anxiety or fear fuels their later, exegetical meditation.

Book of the Duchess begins with the narrator being "Defaute of slep" (25). The narrator has been unable to sleep, and he helplessly holds an unshakable "hevynesse" (25) that has contributed to a loss of vigor and happiness. Chaucer withholds the exact reason for this "hevynesse." However, in the lines preceding the narrator's reading of the story of Seys and Alycone, Chaucer gives his readers a subtle clue as to nature of the man's sadness:

> I holde hit be a sicknesse
> That I have suffred this eight yeer;
> And yet my boote is never the ner,
> For there is phisicien but oon
> That may me hele; but that is don. (36-40)

Chaucer indicates that his narrator—a persona with autobiographical elements—has suffered some type of ailment for eight years that only one physician might be able to treat, but that that option is now "don." Naturally, Chaucer's inclusion of an eight-year sickness is striking. Assuming that eight years is not an arbitrary timeframe, one must accept that the man's plight had a specific, memorable starting point. If there is only "oon" physician who can help the man, and that option is "don," then one can further assume that the physician was either unattainable or deceased. Bereavement becomes the subject of the rest of the poem, starting with the narrator's decision to read the story of Seys and Alycone, in which King Seys dies, leaving Queen Alycone companionless. Moreover, during his dream, the narrator will encounter the Man in Black, who cannot cope with the loss of his beloved, Lady White. Hence, the dreamer himself

[19] Lynch, Dream Visions, 266

seems to be bereaved, making the singular physician his deceased significant other, who passed away eight years before. Though Chaucer does not expressly define his dreamer's love-based concern, he provides enough of a description that one can envisage the root of the concern. The love-based anxiety of the dreamer in *Book of the Duchess*, therefore, regards how one ought to handle bereavement.

The opening lines to *House of Fame*, as a part of the beginning proem, take the voice of a supplicant:

> God turn us every drem to goode!
> For hyt is wonder, be the roode,
> To my wyt, what causeth swevenes
> Eyther on morwes or on evenes,
> And why th'effect folweth of somme,
> And of somme hit shal never come (1-6)

The dreamer, Geffrey, prays to God to turn every drem "to goode." By beginning the poem in such a way, Chaucer shows that all dreams are not necessarily "goode." Like Macrobius, Chaucer clearly separates good dreams from bad dreams, with bad dreams having an "effect" (or realization of a prediction) that "shal never come."[20] Macrobius offers in his *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis* that the *epynion* and *phantasma* reveal nothing about the future. These first six lines again underscore the fact that Chaucer must have studied Macrobius and implemented the Roman's thoughts into his work.

The proem then addresses the ability of a lover's "impressiouns" (or emotions) to "Causeth [a man] avisiouns" (39-40). Shortly after, Geffrey himself describes a remarkable

[20] Benson, *Riverside*, 348

"avision" that came to him on "The tenth day now of Decembre" (63). As in *Book of the Duchess*, this strange inclusion of a specific timespan or date indicates that the concern of the dreamer has enough resonance to be assigned a commemorative date. In recognizing that Geffrey will enter begin his dream vision in "temple ymad of glas… of Venus redely" (120-130), the proem clearly puts Geffrey in a state of anxiety about women and dreams.[21] The specific aspect of love that Geffrey will encounter becomes apparent when Geffrey explores the story of Dido and Aeneas, and how "Fame" (or rumor) contributed to both the demise of their relationship and the death of Dido.

In *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer clearly explains the reasons for the dreamer's beginning anxiety. Unlike the narrator in *Book of the Duchess* and Geffrey in *House of Fame*, the dreamer in *Parliament of Fowls* communicates that his anxiety stems from lack of experience in love:

> The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
> Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge…
> Al this mene I by Love, that my felynge
> Astonyeth with his wonderful werkynge
> So sore, iwis that what I on hym thynke
> Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke.
> For al be that I knowe nat Love in dede (1-7)

The dreamer sees love as an intensive "craft" that requires a lifetime of practice. Furthermore, the "dredful joye" (2) of love is a double-edged sword—a state of being where one may "flete" or "synke" at any time. Yet, for all his summative statements, the dreamer goes onto express that his knowledge of love comes purely from "bokes" (10). The dreamer has played the role of

---

[21] (Note: Venus is Roman name for Aphrodite, the goddess of love in Greek mythology)

observer. Now, he agonizes over the prospect of entering the realm of love as an actor, subjecting himself to either ecstasy or agony at any point in time. For all of his immaturity in love, the dreamer in *Parliament of Fowls* seems to approach his anxiety in mature fashion. If love can be so devastating, why even immerse oneself in the mercurial realm of courtship? With the love-based concerns of the three poems identified, I turn now to the initiation of dream sequence in each of the poems, as well as to the art of reading.

Section 2b: Reading and Moralizing in the Realm of the Subconscious

"Aptitude gets practice from two things—reading and meditation… Order and method are what especially deserve attention in the matter of reading."

Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 3.7[22]

In his *Preface to Chaucer*, the eminent Chaucerian and meticulous scholar D.W. Robertson cites the four levels of Biblical exegesis that Hugh of St. Victor describes in the *Didascalicon*: the literal level, the allegorical level, the tropological level, and the anagogical level. The first two levels encourage a reader to consider both the past implications (literal level) and future implications (allegorical level) of a text. The last two levels prompt a reader to ponder both his

[22] Taylor, Jerome. *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961. 91. Print.

earthly constitution (tropological) and his spiritual self in preparation for the afterlife (anagogical).[23] Hugh's method enables readers to gain a holistic impression of a particular Bible verse in question. Naturally, one might envisage clashes occurring between the literal and allegorical levels and the tropological and the anagogical levels. Between the literal and allegorical levels there lies the fact that the author of this thesis, for example, has a different background than that of a man reading the Bible around 0 CE. As such, the meaning of a Biblical passage to readers of old may contrast with the meaning of the text to contemporary clergy members.

The last two levels show that an individual's longings on Earth may not fall within the parameters for eternal salvation. The tropological-anagogical clash is evident in the realm of love, where the pull of physical attraction and comfort clouds the judgment of a lover. In other words, the body's desires can defy spiritual inclinations. As we have established, Chaucer's dream vision poems deal with aspects of love that have uncertain modes of conduct. In his *Philobiblon*, which concerns the organization and preservation of books, Richard de Bury, an English writer and Catholic bishop who lived after Hugh but before Chaucer (1287-1345), uses the Latin verb infinitive verb *enucleare*—denoting "to enucleate" or "to explain in detail"—to depict a problem that has more than one correct answer. To Richard de Bury, *enucleare* suggests that a "thousand-fold" answers can be derived from one ethical question (the so-called "nucleus").[24] Therein lies the tension between the tropological and the anagogical, as earthly satisfaction or spiritual reason could both reflect moral courses of action, depending on the situation.

---

[23] Robertson, *Preface*, 292
[24] Robertson, *Preface*, 307-308

To a degree, each of Chaucer's dreamers encounter a clash between Hugh's tropological and anagogical levels of meditation while attempting to moralize what they have read. In this next section, I will show the moments in each poem where Chaucer's dreamers encounter the intersection of the earthly and the spiritual as their minds respond to the transition from wakefulness to sleep. These moments subscribe to the Macrobian categorization of unreliable dreams by reproducing the anxiety that each dreamer felt before falling asleep. In essence, each dreamer experiences frustration and fear in his subconscious when the answers to his questions regarding conduct in love are not readily apparent.

The dreamer in *Book of the Duchess* has difficulty falling asleep until he finishes reading the story of Seys and Alcyone from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. As we discussed in Chapter 2a, the dreamer, like Alcyone and the Man in Black, seems to be bereaved. After finishing the story, however, the dreamer's first thoughts are not directed at Alcyone but at the pagan god of sleep, Morpheus. In the story, Morpheus assumes the body of the drowned Seys, appearing to Alcyone in a dream and revealing the fate of the king. Alcyone dies "within the thridde morwe" (214) upon hearing the news, as she could not bear to continue living without Seys.

The dreamer wishes Morpheus would send him to sleep, wryly offering Morpheus "mo fees thus/Than ever he wan" (266-267). For the moment, the dreamer's physical yearning for sleep outweighs his desire to learn to cope with his "hevinesse" (25):

> I hadde unnethe that word y-sade
> Right thus as I have told it yow,
> That sodeynly, I niste how,
> Swich a lust anoon me tooke
> To slepe, that right upon my booke

I fil aslepe (270-275)

In accordance with his prayer, sleep comes to the dreamer swiftly. Chaucer indirectly credits Morpheus for the dreamer's sleep, as the dreamer falls asleep directly on his book. Interestingly, Chaucer likens the physical urge for sleep to "lust." Such a comparison makes sense, as depression often foments a lack of vigor and a strong desire for rest. Bereaved lovers are frozen in grief-filled inertia even though time and life press on. Herein lies the tropological stage of the dreamer's meditation on his reading—"lust" for sleep has made it impossible for the dreamer to determine a method for combatting bereavement in a wakeful state.

Morpheus leads the dreamer into his subconscious, making his later confrontation with the Man in Black (and, thus, the subject of bereavement) possible. At the beginning of the vision, the dreamer's vision takes the form of a Macrobian *phantasma*, which arises in the first stages of slumber: "[The *phantasma*] comes upon one… in the so-called 'first cloud of sleep.' In this drowsy condition [the dreamer] thinks he is still fully awake and imagines he sees specters rushing at him or wandering vaguely about."[25] Chaucer's dreamer encounters a host of "specters" in the first stages of his vision, including a flock of birds[26] and a hunting company of Octavian. The dreamer takes up with Octavian's company to hunt for a "hert," and the excursion eventually leads him to the Man in Black:

And as I lay thus, wonder loude

Me thoughte I herde an hunte blowe…

And al men speke of hunting

How they wolde slee the hert with strengthe (345-351)

---

[25] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 266 (From *Commentary on the Dream of Scipio*, translated by William Harris Stahl, 3.7)

[26] *Book of the Duchess*, lines 294-296

The word "hert" has two meanings meaning, with both "stag" and "heart" being possible interpretations. The figurative option—the "heart-hunt"—has resonance in medieval dream lore. The dreamer needs an answer to the grief in his heart, and his willingness to join Octavian's company signifies his imagination's compliance with addressing bereavement. Moreover, it is no coincidence that Octavian leads the hunting party, as Octavian became Augustus, Emperor of Rome, during the time Ovid wrote his *Metamorphoses*. The "heart-hunt" signifies the anagogical level of the dreamer's meditation on Ovid's story of Seys and Alcyone, for as the dreamer enters his unreliable dream, he makes the mental transition between inactive disengagement ("lust" for sleep) and active engagement ("heart-hunt"), setting up an imagined conversation with the Man in Black that will finally address the subject of bereavement directly.

In *House of Fame*, Geffrey enters his dream after waking up in "temple y-mad of glas… of Venus redely" (120-130). Unlike *Book of the Duchess*, where the dreamer reads the story of Seys and Alcyone before falling asleep, the exegete that Geffrey encounters (Virgil's *Aeneid*) occurs during the first stages of his dream. Moreover, the exegete appears to Geffrey as reflected images on the walls of the glass temple of Venus. Geffrey relays the overarching plot of Virgil's epic before he becomes exclusively fixed on the story of Dido and Aeneas from Book 4.[27] After crash-landing on the shores of North Africa in the wake of storm, Aeneas and his crew become the guests of Dido, Queen of Carthage. Shortly thereafter, Aeneas and Dido begin an affair. After sharing a night of passion in a cave during a rainstorm, Aeneas and Dido return to Carthage as lovers amid rumors of their inability to contain their lust and serve ably as rulers. Jupiter then sends the herald of the gods, Mercury, to remind Aeneas of his duty to found an empire on

[27] (Note: The *Aeneid* begins *in medias res* with Aeneas and his crew lost at sea. When he arrives at Libya, Aeneas recounts the fall of Troy to Dido's court, and the elegance of Aeneas's lament stirs Dido's initial passions. However, through Geffrey, Chaucer relays the *Aeneid* in a simplified, linear fashion, choosing not to employ Virgilian analepsis.)

Italian soil, prompting Aeneas to leave both Carthage and Dido. When she finds out that her lover has left her, Dido commits suicide, fueling a rift between Carthage and the future Roman Empire that would result in the Punic Wars.

Indeed, Aeneas's decision is difficult. By leaving, Aeneas honors his duty to his crew and the gods but dishonors his duty to Dido as a lover and companion. His dilemma demonstrates the clash between corporeal desire and spiritual ambition that defines the tropological and anagogical levels of Hugh's exegetical method. The particulars of Book 4 of the *Aeneid* will become more relevant when I analyze Aeneas's decision to leave from the perspective of opposing traditions in the second section.

So, Geffrey encounters both sides of the Aeneas-Dido dilemma in the opening stages of his dream after visualizing the story on the walls of the temple of glass. His meditation on the dream, however, lacks the tranquil nature of study, as his confusion concerning the correct course of action for Aeneas feeds his apprehension. When Geffrey exits the temple of glass, he finds himself in a desert:

Whan I out at the dores came,
I faste aboute me behelde;
Than saw I but a large felde,
As fer as that I mighte see…
For al the feld nas but of sonde
As small as man may see yet lye
In the desert of Libye…
"O Crist," thought I, "that art in blisse,
Fro fantom and illusioun

Me save!" (480-494).

Geffrey enters a sea of Libyan "sonde" before begging "Crist" for deliverance "Fro fantom and illusioun." His meditation has left him stranded in an immense, imagined desert with nowhere to turn for answers. In the next set of verses, an eagle swoops down and saves Geffrey in a manner reminiscent of *deus ex machina*, but his liberation only comes after he has experienced full-fledged fear resulting from an internal clash between the tropological and the anagogical. In essence, the exegete has prompted moral meditation (in line with Hugh's method) that, in turn, has inspired fear (akin to that of Macrobius's *epynion*).

In her book *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*, Sheila Delany explains that most medieval dream visions have loci like gardens or small, wooded areas.[28] The desert locus at which Geffrey finds himself functions in an entirely different way, generating feelings of forthcoming crisis. Chaucer chooses to undermine the typical *locus amoenus* of medieval dream visions, indicating that the Aeneas-Dido question at hand requires a certain spaciousness of thought that a lush, stimulating garden for lovers might otherwise suppress.[29] A typical, courtly *locus amoenus*, in other words, would not inspire the same sense of dread that Geffrey feels while facing the dizzying enormity of the desert.

Chaucer's use of the word "fantom" (phantom) bolsters the relationship between Geffrey's situation and the Macrobian *epynion*. Delany helps her readers understand the meaning of phantom by citing Augustine's *De Musica*: "to accept phantom as knowledge is the gravest error."[30] Augustine's statement stems from the notion that a phantom bears erroneous information that arouses irrational opinions and actions. Geffrey does not want to fall subject to

---

[28] Delany, Sheila. *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972. 58. Print.
[29] Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame*, 58
[30] Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame*, 62 (from the *De Musica* of Saint Augustine, 6. II. 32)

injurious revelation; thus far, his phantom, which F.N. Robinson defines as a dream "produced by the operation of demons upon the mind of the sleeper",[31] has inspired delusive meditation that has led Geffrey to a place of helplessness. Delany also takes care to point out that Chaucer's choice of a desert locus underscores a relationship between phantom and hallucination, which both arise to deceive a man seeking a specific desire.[32] Indeed, Geffrey seeks the ethical answer to the Aeneas-Dido dilemma as a dehydrated nomad might seek water from an oasis, even though both desires may be impossible to attain.

Michael St. John offers a slightly different interpretation on Chaucer's choice of locus, focusing specifically on why Chaucer describes a temple made of glass rather than some other material. Geffrey learns the story of Aeneas and Dido from reflected images upon the temple's glass walls, which relay the story through a rush of sudden images, mimicking how dreams hinder the mind's power to control a stream of images.[33] St. John does not hesitate to remind his readers that the process of glassmaking functions as mysteriously as the process of the imagination,[34] making a glass temple an appropriate place for Geffrey to seek deliverance from the place of false meditation to which his dream has traveled. Indeed, St. John cites Ruth Vose in comparing the fourteenth century glassmaker to an alchemist, both of whom conceal their methodology as a dream masks truth.[35] The ethical ambiguity of the Aeneas-Dido story, which Chaucer's glass imagery reinforces, functions alongside Chaucer's choice of locus, as the

---

[31] Robinson, F.N. *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933. 890. Print.
[32] Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame*, 60
[33] St. John, Michael. *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity*. 7. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000. 110. Print.
[34] St. John, *Chaucer's Dream Visions*, 112
[35] St. John, *Chaucer's Dream Visions*, 109 (From Ruth Vose, *Glass*, 28)

plethora of viable ways to approach this ambiguity are as innumerable as grains of sand in a desert.

The dreamers in *Book of the Duchess* and *Parliament of Fowls* explore their respective exegetes through words rather than images. St. John cites Margaret Bridges in reminding us that classical ecphrasis[36] puts more emphasis on self-reflectivity than the meaning of the story,[37] as Geffrey's isolation in the desert demonstrates. For the purposes of our discussion, however, the medium through which Geffrey learns the story does not change our fundamental concept, as Chaucer's reader does not view the *Aeneid* through ecphrasis like the poem's dreamer. Indeed, Geffrey's tropological and anagogical thoughts on a story (one he must have read at some point) lead him to a Virgilian portal of ivory, where an uncertainty regarding the Aeneas-Dido question becomes the terror of an *epynion*.

In a similar fashion, the occasion of Valentine's Day pushes the dreamer in *Parliament of Fowls* to a point of crisis that resembles the *epynion*. Inexperienced in the ways of courtship, the dreamer simultaneously fears and desires to face what he has only read about in books. After the dreamer reads the *Somnium Scipionis*, Scipio Africanus appears to his imagination. As I stated in the introduction, Chaucer directly mentions the commentary of Macrobius, inviting his readers to align the forthcoming vision with the Macrobian unreliable dream structure. The *Somnium Scipionis* addresses existence beyond the mortal form, as Africanus discusses the triviality of human conditions in the context of the afterlife's glory:

> And rightful folk shul gon, after they dye,
>
> To hevene; and shewede hym the Galaxye.

---

[36] (Note: in the classical world, "ecphrasis" describes an artistic work that tells a story)
[37] St. John, Chaucer's Dream Visions, 78 (From "The picture in the text: ecphrasis as self-reflectivity in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls, Book of the Duchess, and House of Fame" by Margaret Bridges. *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Inquiry*. 5. (1989): 151-158.)

Thanne shewede he hym the lytel erthe that here is (55-57)

Africanus shows his descendant the enormity of the "Galaxye" alongside the comparatively diminutive "erthe." This so-called, cosmological "soul flight" grants an otherworldly perspective to the dreamer on this day dedicated to lovers.[38] The dreamer must now balances the tropological influence of Valentine's Day with the anagogical voice of Scipio Africanus, a task that will lead him to emotional paralysis in the early stages of his vision.

When he emerges into the landscape of his imagination, Africanus leads the dreamer to the outside of a walled garden. The gates to the garden bear two inscriptions. The first describes the fruits of love and the second describes its pitfalls. The latter of the two inscriptions, which warns the dreamer of "Disdayn and Daunger" (135),[39] causes the dreamer to stop and reconsider entry to this garden of emotional volatility:

These vers of gold and blak y-wryten were,
Of which I gan astoned to beholde,
For with that oon encresed ay my fere,
And with that other gan myn herte bolde.
That oon me hette, that other did me colde;
No wit had I, for errour for to chese
To entre or flee, or me to save or lese. (141-147)

Although the first inscription makes the dreamer's heart grow "bolde," the second increases his "fere." The dreamer has reached a terrifying stalemate between two opposed perspectives; he knows not whether entry will "save" him or hurt him. The dreamer's moral meditation on the

[38] Taylor, Paul Beckman. *Chaucer's Chain of Love*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996. 157. Print.
[39] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 100 (Note: Lynch defines "Daunger" as "traditional courtly standoffishness a lady shows her lover.")

Somnium Scipionis within the milieu of Valentine's Day has exacerbated the anxiety the dreamer initially felt before laspsing into slumber. Indeed, the dreamer in *Parliament of Fowls* shows no signs of entering the garden:

> Right as betwixen adamauntes two
>
> Of even might, a pece of iren set
>
> That hath no might to meve to ne fro" (148-150).

The dreamer is a piece of iron placed "betwixen" two magnets of "even might." These magnets represent the opposing influences of Valentine's Day and the *Somnium Scipionis*, with Valentine's Day representing the power of earthly love and the *Somnium Scipionis* representing the contrasting, otherworldly viewpoint. The fact that the dreamer imagines Africanus pushing him through the gates demonstrates the dreamer's need for guidance from an authority figure. The pressure of such authority forces the dreamer to confront the tropological-anagogical clash that Geffrey similarly must confront after the eagle deposits him outside the House of Fame. I will address the tendency for man to depend on established authorities before challenging the unknown towards the end of Chapter 2.

In essence, in all three dream vision poems, reading fuels a clash between the body and the spirit (in line with Hugh's method of exegetical meditation) that leads the dreamer to a place of anxiety, paralleling the nature of unreliable dreams in Macrobian dream theory. This poetic structure juxtaposes two perspectives on earthly love that are mutually exclusive. The traditions that drive each of these two perspectives will serve as the subjects of Chapter 2, with each providing ways to moralize the love dilemmas that the dream visions present. I will focus on how each tradition influences Chaucer's dreamers and begins to shape a unified, thematic message that stretches and matures over the course of a decade.

CHAPTER 2: TRADITIONS BEHIND EARTHLY LOVE AND HEAVENLY LOVE

Section 1: *Fin Amors* of Andreas Capellanus and "comun profit" of Africanus

In Chapter 1, I began to show how reading about love propels Chaucer's dreamers to waver between their physical desires and their spiritual ambitions. I assigned the terms "tropological" and "anagogical" to the dreamer's dilemmas to implement Hugh of St. Victor's exegetical method of moral meditation. But "tropological" and "anagogical" merely describe the dilemmas—they do not reveal the dilemmas' origins. In the tradition of *fin amors*, the French courtly attitude through which men pursue women, preoccupation and care for earthly love is paramount. Love is sacred and worth immersing oneself in, for better or for worse. To the tropological stage of exegetical meditation, *fin amors* brings the conviction that the body's desires are natural, excellent, and vital to understanding the human condition. In his *De amore*, the twelfth century French writer Andreas Capellanus wrote a list of rules that consummately outlines the *fin amors* tradition. These rules place the man in a position of subservience to a woman and support high ranges of emotion. He directs the rules at male lovers, describing ideal conduct around a lady in a plethora of situations. There are thirty-one rules in all; some of the ones most pertinent to the dream vision poems are listed below:

13. When made public, love rarely endures.
14. The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.

20. A man in love is always apprehensive.

23. He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.

29. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.[40]

Considering Macrobian influence on Chaucerian dream vision structure, rule twenty resonates resoundingly. As described in Chapter 2a, each of Chaucer's dreamers has concerns about some aspect of love. The influence of *fin amors* appears during the beginnings of each dream vision, supporting the earthly love perspective that Chaucer's dreamers consider.

To the anagogical stage of meditation, Chaucer calls upon a different perspective, which I will refer to as a hybridization of Stoic and Neoplatonist values, reminiscent of the classical period in which Ovid, Virgil, and Cicero were prolific. As the name suggests, the works of the Greek philosopher Plato heavily influenced Neoplatonism: a continuation of Platonic thinking stretching into the golden age of Rome. Plato's *Republic*, in fact, stands as a direct antecedent to Cicero's *De re publica*, in which the *Somnium Scipionis* originally appeared.[41] Thelma Degraff even asserts that Cicero "extolled" Plato, viewing him as a "supreme master of literary excellence."[42]

Indeed, the themes of the *Somnium Scipionis*, relayed through the voice of Scipio Africanus, reflect Neoplatonist ideals, as well as Stoic tenets that the two traditions share. The metaphysical standpoint intertwined in both philosophies encourages rational reflection on individual conduct, keeping the afterlife in mind all the while. Both philosophies see mortal life as preparation for glory after death and encourage conduct that is mindful of the general

---

[40] Capellanus, Andreas. *The Art of Courtly Love*. Trans. John Jay Parry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960. 184-186. Print.
[41] Degraff, Thelma. "Plato in Cicero." Classical Philology. 3.2 (1940): 146. Print.
[42] Degraff, "Plato", 147

wellbeing of others. To those who preached such tenets, preoccupation with love arouses the irrational emotions and actions that fuel self-absorption and social paralysis. In Stoic philosophy, the resolve to prevent irrational emotions from controlling one's thoughts is called *apatheia*.[43] The more virtuous man will not allow love-based concerns to impede his efforts to better both himself and the society within which he operates. I will refer to the aforementioned dynamic as "comun profit" (or "communal profit") because Scipio Africanus uses the same words when he speaks to Scipio the Younger in *Parliament of Fowls*. The notion of communal profit in each of the three dream visions stands in direct opposition to the principles of *fin amors* from the *De amore*.

As we move forward, I will identify the places in Chaucer's poems where *fin amors* and the hybridization of Stoic-Neoplatonic thought come into play. I will show how these two perspectives are irreconcilable by explaining how each tradition might view the other. Proving the irreconcilability of the two perspectives is instrumental to our discussion, as the beginning of Chapter 3 will illuminate each dreamer's impasse as an essential thematic element, appearing most clearly in *Parliament of Fowls*.

Because the concept of communal profit comes directly from the words of Africanus, I will address the juxtaposition of *fin amors* with Stoic-Neoplatonic values in *Parliament of Fowls* before showing how the same juxtaposition appears in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame*. In *Book of the Duchess*, these conflicting perspectives come into play when the dreamer stumbles upon the Man in Black during the "heart-hunt" of Octavian, sparking dialogue on what constitutes excessive grief. In *House of Fame*, we will again turn to Book 4 of Virgil's *Aeneid*,

---

[43] Colish, Marcia L. *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990. 44. Print.

focusing on the respective positions of Aeneas and Dido as Chaucer describes them in the text. Chaucer's assessments of the irrationality of love-based emotions will foment later discussion on the principle of *apatheia* in Section 2 of this chapter.

When the dreamer in *Parliament of Fowls* starts reading the *Somnium Scipionis*, he has already revealed his immaturity in the realm of love. His impressions of love stem from his reading about love, reaffirming that the dreamer has approached love as an observer and fears the "craft so long to lerne" (1). Indeed, from the first line, the rules of Capellanus have resonance—particularly, rule fourteen. Love requires more practice than a lifetime can provide, and Chaucer's dreamer is apprehensive to confront a task of such enormity. As Chaucer relays, the *Somnium Scipionis* marks an abrupt shift in subject matter. After Scipio Africanus shows Scipio the Younger the "litel erthe that here is/At regard of the hevenes quantite" (57-58), he explains entry to heaven to his descendant:

> And he seyde, "Know thysef first immortal,
> And look ay bestly thou werke and wise
> To comun profit, and thou shalt nat misse
> To comen swiftly to that place dere
> That ful of blisse is and of soules clere. (73-77).

Africanus asserts that working towards "comun profit" will expedite a man's entry to "that place dere/That ful of blisse is and of soules clere." The word "clere" implies that the souls of heaven are unsullied because they worked towards communal profit during their lifetimes. Before reading the *Somnium Scipionis*, the dreamer has not deliberated on his own contributions to communal profit. Rather, he has obsessed over his own place in the puzzle of earthly love. The contrast between the opening of the poem and the *Somnium Scipionis* exegete is stark. The

exegete urges the impressionable narrator to reconsider love as it relates to one's responsibilities to the rest of the world, a paradigm shift worthy of extensive mediation either in wakefulness or slumber.

Furthermore, as I mentioned in Chapter 2b, the dreamer imagines Africanus shoving him through the gates to the garden of love. Without Africanus, the dreamer may have remained outside the gates, paralyzed indefinitely. Such a scene stands as a modified example of the literary technique of *deus ex machina*, or, literally "god from a machine." The technique details a situation in which a divine presence untangles a problem that appears unsolvable. Because the figure of Scipio Africanus does not fully solve the dreamer's dilemma by pushing him through love's gates, the scene cannot fully exemplify *deus ex machina*. However, the similarities are close enough to warrant attention in both *Parliament of Fowls* as well as *House of Fame*, for the eagle saves Geffrey from indecision and brings him to the dilemma at hand in the House of Fame just as Africanus saves the dreamer from indecision by shoving him towards his dilemma in the garden of love.

In a relevant but less overt parallel, when the obtuse dreamer in *Book of the Duchess* finally understands the reason for the Man in Black's sadness, a bell suddenly tolls, and the dreamer awakens instantaneously in his bed:

> Right this me mette, as I yow telle
> That in the castel was a belle,
> As it had smyte houres twelve,
> Therwith I awoke myselve… (1321-1324)

As discussed in Chapter 2a of Book 1, the dreamer is likely bereaved himself. After listening to the Man in Black's account and gradually discovering his bereavement, the bell tolls almost

instantaneously. The bell calls the dreamer back to the reality of his own loss; now, however, the dreamer is equipped with the power of observing bereavement's debilitating effect on another man. Though there is no *deus* in this example, the sudden and timely nature of the tolling bell acts as a supernatural presence in and of itself, bringing the dreamer back into his own world of "hevynesse." The extent to which this modified literary technique of *deus ex machina* operates within the three poems will act as a central transition to my application of deconstructionist *aporia* in Chapter 3.

Section 1a: *Fin Amors* and Communal Profit in Book of the Duchess and House of Fame

In *Book of the Duchess*, the convergence of mortal emotion and rational foresight occurs when the dreamer stumbles upon an errant knight, whom Chaucer calls the "man in blak" (445). The dreamer finds the Man in Black after straying from Octavian's hunting party to follow a "whelp" (389). From the onset of the dreamer's conversation with the Man in Black, it is clear that the Man is bereaved: "Now that I see my lady bright/Which I have loved with al my might,/Is fro me deed and is agoon,/And thus in sorwe lefte me aloon" (477-480). For his part, the dreamer seems unable to comprehend these words, prompting the Man in Black to describe the history of his courtship of Lady "Whyte" (948) in full. The Man's story firmly defines his status as a lover operating within the *fin amors* tradition:

> Dredeles, I have ever yit
> Be tributary and yive rente

To Love hooly with goode entente,

And thurgh plesaunce become his thral

With good will, body, hert, and al…

And ful devoutly I preyde him to…

And worship to my lady dere (764-774).

The Man gave himself fully to the "servage" (769) of Love and, consequently, the "worship" of his lady. Such dedication required his "good will, body, hert, and al." As a youthful lover, the Man embodies rule fourteen from *De amore*, committing not only his mental faculties to Lady White, but also his physical energy. The Man's later portrayal of Lady White initially rebuffing his advances only adds to the parallel between the Man's courtship and Capellanus's emphasis on "difficulty of attainment" within *fin amors*.

The relationship between the Man in Black's courtship and *fin amors* is even clearer when considering the Man's physical reaction to Lady White's death. The dreamer observes the toll that bereavement has inflicted upon the Man's body before he begins speaking with the emotionally wounded knight:

The blood was fled, for pure dred,

Doun to his hert to make him warm…

For it is membre principal

Of the body. And that made al

His hewe change and wexe grene

And pale, for ther no blood is sene

In no maner lime of his. (490-500)

Here, Chaucer describes a particular physiology of swooning that hails from the school of Galen, a prominent Greek physician who lived during the Roman Empire from 129 to 200 CE.[44] The aching "hert" needs more blood to keep "warm" in its time of need, depriving the rest of the body of blood in the process.[45] As such, a swooning lover like the Man in Black will develop a "hewe…wexe grene/And pale." These lines suggest that sorrow has deprived the Man's body of strength. In other words, a sick lover, such as the Man, will deny nourishment by allowing his obsession with his lady to consume his body. Rule twenty-three from Capellanus addresses this dynamic, explaining that vexed lovers will reject food and sleep, the staples of nourishment. In essence, Chaucer paints a vivid picture of the Man in Black that aligns perfectly with a courtly lover in the *fin amors* tradition.

So, a reader can identify the Man in Black as an ideal courtly lover in both his approach to courtship and his incurable misery in Lady White's absence. However, Chaucer takes care to demonstrate how the Man in Black's current approach to bereavement is flawed. To do so, Chaucer explores the negative repercussions of melancholy-induced idleness, through the voice of the Man himself:

> My wit is foly, my day is night
>
> My love is hate, my slepe waking,
>
> My mirthe and melese is fasting,
>
> My countenance is nicete,
>
> And al abawed wherso I be,
>
> My pees, in pleding and in werre. (610-615)

[44] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 18
[45] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 18

Lady White's death has flipped the Man's world, turning wit to "foly," love to "hate," and sleep to "waking." This series of oxymoronic descriptions includes the Man's "countenance" (self-possession), which has turned to "nicete" (silliness).[46] In devoting his life to love for Lady White, the Man has lived a life concerned with the earthly desires of his heart. In the aftermath of her death, the Man begins to see his self-absorption as impractical, for he continues in futility to devote his life to Lady White despite her physical absence. This prolonged devotion is made manifest by the Man's idle wandering in Octavian's forest. His grief has rendered him a useless member of human race.

The Greek concept of *acedia* best encapsulates the Man in Black's situation. The Greeks viewed *acedia* as a lack of care for the rest of the world. The term developed over the Common Era until the time of the Christian mystics, among whom Hugh of St. Victor flourished. In fact, Hugh wrote out his own definition of *acedia*, which firmly confines the state to the realm of sin. Hugh's definition reads as follows: "*ex confusione mentis nata tristitia, sive taedium et amaritido animi immoderate*."[47] The Latin translates to "a sadness born of confusion of the mind, or weariness and immoderate bitterness of the soul."[48] Interestingly, looking specifically at the word *immoderata* (or "immoderate"), Hugh's definition implores comparison with another definition from Capellanus. In defining *passio*, or a certain inborn suffering derived from excessive meditation upon love, Capellanus encourages *immoderata cogitatio*, or "immoderate cogitation," in all phases of love's lifespan.[49] Regarding dreams, *immoderata cogitatio* suggests

---

[46] Lynch, *Dream Visions*, 20
[47] Sadlek, Gregory. *Idleness Working: The Discourse of Love's Labor from Ovid Through Chaucer and Gower*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004. 172. Print. (From Hugh of St. Victor, *Summa de sacramentis fidei, Patrologiae cursus completes, Sive bibliotheca universalis*, ed. J.P. Migne)
[48] Sadlek, *Idleness*, 172
[49] Robertson, *Preface*, 85

the persistence of waking anxiety in the subconscious dreamscape, as we discussed at length in Chapter 1. Clearly, *immoderata* has markedly different connotations for Hugh and Capellanus. I will return to *passio* in Chapter 3 when discussing Chaucer's remedy for approaching the contrasting perspectives he presents in three poems, especially with regard to *Parliament of Fowls*.

The Man has lost the vigor to contribute to his surroundings; he wanders idly in his grief without regard for the wellbeing of his fellow countrymen. The remedy to the vice of *acedia*, therefore, is the courage to resume work, the occupation of which will distract a grieving man from his all-consuming depression. Looking at *acedia* as sin, one can visualize a similitude between *acedia* and the idea of communal profit. In the eyes of Scipio Africanus the Stoic, the Man in Black has allowed grief from love to steer him away from virtuous pursuits, or preparation for life beyond this Earth. This view stands in direct opposition to *fin amors*, which places the Man among traditional courtly lovers who ought to demonstrate the strength of their love with excessive grief if their significant lover has perished.

In *House of Fame*, *fin amors* and Stoic-Neoplatonic ideals emerge simultaneously as Chaucer considers the Aeneas-Dido question through his Geffrey persona. As discussed in Section 2b of Chapter 1, the Virgilian dilemma leads Geffrey to a place of hopelessness, which Chaucer metaphorically depicts as an endless desert. Before Geffrey realizes the futility of finding an indisputable answer to the situation, Chaucer summarizes the story of Aeneas and Dido, as well as the entire *Aeneid* in broad strokes. In this summary, a reader can envision the opposing perspectives of earthly love and heavenly love, with Dido encompassing the former perspective and Aeneas the latter.

After explaining how Aeneas and Dido spent a night of passion in a cave, conducting "al that wedding longeth to" (244), Chaucer describes how women often fall for men appearing outwardly fair before they are able to assess these men's internal aspirations. Then, Chaucer comes to Dido's defense:

> But let us speke of Eneas,
> How he betrayed hir, allas,
> And lefte hir ful unkindely.
> So whan she saw al utterly
> That he wolde hir of trouthe faile,
> And wende fro hir to Itaile,
> She gan to wringe hir hondes two. (293-299)

As one seeking Dido's affection, Aeneas made a pledge of devotion through which he attained a night of passion. Chaucer implies that Dido submitted to sexual relations before marrying Aeneas because she anticipated matrimony. Aeneas soiled the sanctity of earthly love by initiating sexual relations and then "unkindely" betraying the trust he solicited from Dido. Hence, Aeneas breaks rule twenty-nine from Capellanus when he dismisses his love-struck mistress from his mind, choosing instead to continue his journey to "Italie."

Of course, rumor characterizes the love dilemma afoot in the *House of Fame*, and for her part, Dido understands as a courtly lover that the public demonstration of her illicit affair contributed to the relationship's demise, as the upcoming passage will demonstrate. Rule thirteen from Capellanus says that love made public "rarely endures." In presenting her love for her recent guest to the citizens of Carthage, Dido permitted Fame to take control. Rumors spread of

the Carthaginian queen's night of passion, and how such a demonstration of affection could affect her ability to lead. Dido bemoans Fame's hold on the citizens of Carthage:

For thurgh yow is my name lorn
And alle myn actes red and songe
Over all this lond, on every tonge.
O wikke Fame, for ther nis
Nothing so swift, lo, as she is! (346-350)

"Fame" has cast Dido's "actes" in a negative light, as her "name" is now "lorn."[50] Fame worked swiftly, traveling "all this lond" and reaching "every tonge," Rumor and reputation bolstered Fame as she ran rampant, encouraging a myriad of different interpretations and leaving Carthage's citizens to judge their queen from half-truths. Dido must now bear the gravity of both her waning public appeal and her diminishing heart, which proves to be a task so demanding that she chooses to end her life. Dido laments the volatile Fame, showing that she comprehends the negative repercussions that rumor inflicts upon love. Later in the poem, Chaucer depicts the actual House of Fame standing on pillars of "yse" (1130), or ice, which reinforces the volatile nature of such hearsay.

Chaucer also defends Aeneas's decision to leave Dido in favor of seeking Italy. In doing so, however, Chaucer does not deny Aeneas's betrayal. Rather, he acknowledges that Aeneas had to consider objectives of celestial importance that made his betrayal a necessary evil:

But to ecusen Eneas
Fulliche of al his great trespass,
The book seyth, Mercurie, sauns faile,

[50] Lynch, Dream Visions, 51 (Note: Lynch asserts that Chaucer's use of "my name lorn" means "my reputation lost.")

Bad him go into Italie

And leve Affrikes regioun

And Dido and her faire toun. (427-432)

Mercury appears to Aeneas and reminds him of his divine obligation to found Rome and the Roman Empire. By remaining at Dido's side, Aeneas would choose his body's desires over the security of his crew, comprised of men who have dutifully sailed on the storm-swept Mediterranean for their Trojan captain. One of Aeneas's crew has already perished in allying with Aeneas: his former helmsman, Palinurus. Moreover, a decision from Aeneas to stay at Carthage would halt the continuation of the Trojan line, the descendants of which are fated to found and strengthen the Roman Empire. Therefore, the implications of ignoring this destiny would negatively impact both Aeneas's proximate company and his progenies for generations to come.

This is not to say Virgil lacks pathos for characters like Dido. Mark Edwards speaks to the Stoic principle of following Fate without allowing Fate's instability to arouse emotional angst in his article "The Expression of Stoic Ideas in the '*Aeneid*.'" The fates of individuals do not always coalesce under the banner of a higher Fate. Edwards writes, "some individuals must be sacrificed to the ultimate common good… that [Virgil] feels the pathos of human suffering more strongly than the essential beneficence of the world order for humanity, and the result is more pathos than triumph in his hymn to Rome."[51] Edward's analysis suggests that even Fate is an imperfect concept that leaves loose ends in its pursuit of the "ultimate common good." Ultimately, the *Aeneid* chronicles the "triumph" of Rome, but hardship aplenty lines this path to triumph. Aeneas established the groundwork for the glory of Rome, but his success comes at the

[51] Edwards, Mark. "The Expression of Stoic Ideas in the 'Aeneid'". *Phoenix*. 14.3 (1960): 156. Print.

price of sadness. In Book 6 of the *Aeneid*, before Aeneas exits through the portal of ivory, he sees the ghost of Dido (among other ghosts) in the underworld. Aeneas impassionedly apologizes to the queen, and in response, Dido turns away, causing Aeneas to stand abjectly amid his pitiful tears. Edward's argument demonstrates that Stoic philosophy is not completely devoid of emotion in the *Aeneid*, even though its fatalist perspective remains a constant presence.

Section 2: *Apatheia* versus *Passio* from a Structuralist Standpoint

Indeed, Virgilian *apatheia* acknowledges the omnipresence of natural, irrational emotions in situations of love. However, traditional Greek *apatheia* dating back to the origins of Stoicism takes a far more rigid stance. The Cyprian philosopher Zeno of Citium, one of Stoicism's earliest proponents, repeatedly insisted upon the importance of *apatheia*. William Charles Korfmacher summarizes Zeno's position on passions other than the pursuit of communal profit In his article "Stoic Apatheia and Seneca's *De Clementia*": "To Zeno, passion was irrational and an unnatural movement of the soul, while the ideal wise man was himself passionless; only the fool felt pity."[52] As one of the first to expound upon *apatheia*, Zeno makes manifest his belief in the uselessness of passion to the Stoic sage. Passion in love, grief, or pity pushes the soul to deviate from its natural course, rendering such passion worthy of utter eradication. Transliteration of *apatheia* to English gives the word "apathy," but *apatheia* to Zeno signified something more: freedom from the shackles of debilitating emotion.

[52] Korfmacher, William. "Stoic Apatheia and Seneca's De Clementia." Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 77. (1946): 46. Print.

The concept of *apatheia* according to Zeno retained its rudimentary meaning while relinquishing some of its severity as the Roman Empire continued to prosper in the times of Scipio Africanus and his adopted grandson, Scipio the Younger (or Scipio Aemilianus Africanus Minor).[53] Africanus certainly lived in accordance with the principle from a political perspective. As noted earlier, Scipio Africanus defeated Hannibal at Zama (modern-day Libya) during the Second Punic War; he returned to Rome a hero, and the Roman citizenry immediately offered Africanus the possibility of assuming control of the empire. In response, Africanus turned down the dictatorship, preferring instead to live a quiet, rustic life in the country. In the wake of military glory, Africanus denied the passion of pride, viewing his accomplishments on the battlefield as virtuous duty rather than singlehanded clout.

Scipio the Younger continued his grandfather's legacy in overseeing Carthage's final demise during the Third Punic War. While gazing upon the crumbling city and its newly salted fields, Scipio the Younger wept, lamenting the fate of this once powerful entity that had previously prospered for seven hundred years.[54] In carrying out his orders as commander of Rome's forces, Scipio put duty before emotion, as Africanus did a generation before by turning down the dictatorship. Yet, Scipio's display of emotion marks a transition point in the role of *apatheia*; expression of emotion is acceptable if mankind continues to pursue the pragmatic notion of communal profit. Scipio the Younger himself created a circle of likeminded peers in the wake of the Third Punic War, which scholars today refer to as the Scipionic Circle:

> Thus the *coterie* of Roman intellectuals and enlightened Greeks grouper about Scipio proved the effective means of transplanting modified Stoicism from Greece to Italy, and

[53] Korfmacher, "Stoic Apatheia and Seneca's De Clementia", 50
[54] Scullard, H.H. "Carthage." *Greece & Rome*. 2.3 (1955): 106. Print.

> of laying the foundations of that sure grasp upon Roman thought that Stoicism was to enjoy for many centuries (50).[55]

Through interaction with Africanus and his own militaristic endeavors in North Africa, Scipio the Younger humanized *apatheia* without forfeiting Zeno's ultimate point in promoting virtue above love, grief, and pity. In exploring the *Somnium Scipionis* in *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer offers this developed form of *apatheia*, which does not entirely preclude human emotion but continues to assert emotion's subservience to higher ideals like duty and honor: the fundamental prerequisites to preparation for the afterlife.

Naturally, *fin amors* does not include *apatheia*, as a lover's duties involve full immersion in the body's natural passions. In other words, human emotion in love and grief outweigh the promotion of external affairs, such as communal profit. In this sense, *apatheia* promotes the irreconcilability of popular Roman philosophy with the Christian feudal tradition of *fin amors*, in which a man has obligations to his woman, his lord, and his God. The equivalent pulls of the two opposing traditions on the dreamer's psyche in each of the three poems create mental quandaries that seem unsolvable.

In looking at Chaucer's poetry through a structuralist lens, mankind constructs the world through language rather than discovering language through exploration of the world, rendering reality a human creation.[56] *Fin amors* and Stoic-Neoplatonic hybridization are two languages of love, developing independently of one another to offer authority and direction. Chaucer's dreamers are impressionable, but their encounters with both "languages" simultaneously send mixed messages. In structuralist vocabulary, different approaches to the same quandary that are

---

[55] Korfmacher, "Stoic Apatheia and Seneca's De Clementia", 50
[56] Parker, *How to Interpret Literature*, 46

mutually exclusive are part of a so-called "binary opposition."[57] A much broader example of a binary would be the opposition of "good" and "evil." Mankind understands "good" as the absence of "evil," and vice versa. This distinction aids general understanding of the concepts of "good" and "evil," as the terms are easy to fathom when viewed through contrast. As Chaucer understood them, the structures of *fin amors* and Stoic-Neoplatonic hybridization constitute what a twentieth-century, structuralist literary critic would call binary opposites in all facets of love, including bereavement, rumor, and courtship.

Chaucer's dreamers hesitate to address the quandaries of love for fear of losing themselves in the complexity of the puzzle. They are stranded between two pillars of authority, and they do not know which pillar they should gravitate towards. Recall from earlier in Chapter 2 that Chaucer plays with a modified version of *deus ex machina* in the three dream visions with the introductions of a bell tower, an eagle, and Scipio Africanus in *Book of the Duchess, House of Fame*, and *Parliament of Fowls*, respectively. Commenting on the excellence of poetic artistry, Horace, the Roman poet and contemporary of Ovid, once wrote in his *Ars Poetica* that *deus ex machina* should be avoided in literature unless an existing quandary is so tangled that it needs untangling.[58] Again, Chaucer's incorporation of divine aid to the minds of his dreamers does not perfectly align to the dynamic of *deus ex machina*, because the bell, the eagle, and Scipio Africanus do not resolve the dreamers' dilemmas. However, they do drive the dreamers towards confronting what they otherwise would have resignedly discarded as insufferable. Chaucer's modified *deus ex machina* tactic in each of the three poems allows the dreamers to

[57] Parker, *How to Interpret Literature*, 41
[58] Minnis, A.J. *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. 205. Print.

dwell in the middle of the binary opposition between earthly love (*fin amors*) and heavenly love (Stoic-Neoplatonic hybridization).

Returning again to Macrobian dream theory, which stands as one of the primary sources of medieval dream theory in general, Chaucer's dream vision structure allows his dreamers to envisage their problem in an abstract, flexible dreamscape. As such, interplay between the physical and the metaphysical is possible. In his book Dreaming in the Middle Ages, Stephen Kruger addresses the notion that dreams grant their dreamers the elasticity to balance earthly impulses with heavenly, anagogical rationale in their subconscious, which he calls the "middleness" of dreams: "[Dreams] are able to navigate that middle realm where connections between the corporeal and the incorporeal are forged, where the relationship between the ideal and the physical is defined. Dreams can thus explore a wide range of human and universal experiences" (34).[59] In this light, Chaucer's modified *deus ex machina* technique, which forces the dreamers to confront their quandaries, simultaneously "forges" a connection between the "corporeal and incorporeal." Equipped with two opposing perspectives on conduct in love, the dreamers must find points between the two pillars where both their bodies and minds are equally satisfied.

The extent to which a dreamer should gravitate towards either earthly love or heavenly love comprises the next overarching question of this thesis. Individual experiences in love plot a myriad of points on this figurative, linear plane standing between *fin amors* and Roman philosophy, or the "corporeal and incorporeal," respectively. In Chapter 2b, I mentioned Richard de Bury and his use of the Latin infinitive verb *enucleare*. As part of his *Philobiblon*, Richard de Bury expresses that a thousand-fold answers can be extracted from one nucleus, or ethical

[59] Minnis, *Oxford Guides To Chaucer*, 45 (From Stephen Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 52)

question. The answers themselves are representative of individual, human confrontations; thus, with regard to the love dilemmas in Chaucer's dream visions, *enucleare* implies that there are innumerable solutions to these dilemmas, and they are all reliant on individual experience. The anxiety-ridden dreamers in the poems reach the height of their apprehension when they realize that they will not be able to depend on either *fin amors* or Neoplatonic-Stoic values for firm, absolute guidance.

In following the middle path between earthly love and heavenly love, structuralist criticism of Chaucer's work loses power, purely because both the dreamer and the reader can no longer understand love through the stark contrast of two literary authorities. The multiplicity of experience in love becomes the new lens through which the reader must visualize love's quandaries. *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* both touch upon this multiplicity in demonstrating the difficulty of choosing one particular literary authority. However, neither poem offers a remedy to the dreamer's anxiety and fear. *Parliament of Fowls* deviates in thematic significance from its predecessors, as the scene in the garden of love provides a mental strategy for overcoming the mystery of love without subscribing to any one traditional authority.

In 1967, Jacques Derrida, a French grammatologist, wrote a groundbreaking book (*On Grammatology*) that would become the base of deconstruction (or post-structuralism), a mode of literary criticism that refutes the teachings of structuralism.[60] One of deconstruction's primary tenets is the concept of *aporia*, or "undecidable impasse."[61] When a text has the ability to identify with more than one set of traditions, a wise reader will reach *aporia*, understanding that multiplicity foments a celebration of self-expression. I will address *aporia* more deeply in the

[60] Parker, *How to Interpret Literature*, 80
[61] Parker, *How to Interpret Literature*, 81

final chapter of my thesis before showing how Chaucer's approach to *aporia* in *Parliament of Fowls* reveals a maturity of thought that *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* lack.

CHAPTER 3: THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES

Section 1: The "Fideistic Transcendence of Doubt"

"The writings of philosophers, like a whitewashed wall of clay, boast an attractive surface all shining with eloquence; but if sometimes they hold forth to us the semblance of truth, nevertheless, by mixing falsehoods with it, they conceal the clay of error, as it were, under an over-spread coat of color."

Hugh of St. Victor, *Didascalicon*, 4.1[62]

As I mentioned in the last lines of Chapter 2, *aporia* in deconstructionist theory contains a multiplicity of interpretation among readers as they analyze a certain text from different perspectives. In this sense, moralizing a text on a subject such as love has the ability to spawn interpretation stretching *ad infinitum*. As a principal tenet of deconstruction, *aporia* defies organization; therefore, deconstruction as a whole is difficult to encapsulate. Derrida himself had trouble succinctly defining deconstruction, deferring shamelessly to brazen ambiguity when

[62] Taylor, *Didascalicon*, 102 (Note: Hugh quotes Matt 23:27 directly in using the description "whitewashed." Matt 23:27 accuses scribes of being like whitewashed tombs, which are outwardly beautiful and inwardly unclean, containing the rotting flesh and bones of corpses.) Hugh would have realized the implications of such a powerful, biblical verse, which supports the notion that written tradition can appear attractive but contain falsehoods.)

asked for an explanation. In one of his more famous answers, Derrida replies, "What is deconstruction? Nothing, of course."[63] Derrida's sardonic response demonstrates the elusiveness of his own concepts to any meditating mind. With respect to reading specifically, analyzing a text produces different interpretations among various readers. When one of these readers writes another book, his book will be similarly interpreted. The mysteries of life, as documented in books, will continue to foster a myriad of interpretations that will be revisited, rewritten, and reestablished perpetually.[64] In this sense, because Derrida's ideas have provoked a vast array of reactions, deconstruction is susceptible to its own deconstructive method.

Accepting such an expression of infinite multiplicity is no small task. In the introduction to her own translation of *On Grammatology*, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, a proponent of deconstruction, describes the difficulty of submitting to the concept of *aporia*: "The fall into the abyss… inspires us with as much pleasure as fear. We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom."[65] Deconstruction is as alluring as it is terrifying; the prospect of "never hitting" upon a correct answer or interpretation inspires continued contemplation as much as it creates doubt. The *aporia* existing between *fin amors* and Stoic-Neoplatonic values in the realm of love has the same effect on Chaucer's dreamers, as both fear and wonder strike the dreamers during their mental, moral impasses. Reaching the aporetic state of contemplation on conduct of love, thus, is equivalent to falling into the "abyss" of love's multiplicity.

As explained in Chapter 1, Chaucer blends Biblical exegetical method with medieval dream vision style. In Chapter 2, I showed how Chaucer depicts *fin amors*, a tradition with Christian influence, alongside classical, pagan philosophies. In having his dreamers reach states

---

[63] Rolfe, Gary. "Deconstruction in a nutshell." Nursing Philosophy. 5. (2004): 274. Print.
[64] Rolfe, "Deconstruction in a nutshell", 274
[65] Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. Translator's preface. In: Of Grammatology (ed. Jacques Derrida). The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD. ix-lxxxvii. Print.

of mind akin to *aporia*, Chaucer circuitously shows that even Christianity—in terms of its written history via the Bible—does not contain indisputable truths. Chaucer's strategy is bold for a writer operating within the Christian court of England in the fourteenth century. Such a court would condemn sentiments against Christianity's authority as blasphemous, yet Chaucer continues to give weight to the perspectives of Christianity's Greek and Roman predecessors, such as Zeno and Scipio Africanus, in his poetry.

However, despite the differences between both traditions, Greco-Roman philosophy certainly influenced Christianity, as exemplified by the development of the term *acedia* from Section 1a of Chapter 2. In particular, Neoplatonism influenced the Christian mystics, including Hugh of St. Victor and his primary influence, St. Augustine.[66] In his *De Musica*, St. Augustine recalls a Neoplatonic concept called "the music of the spheres" that Hugh of St. Victor later expounds upon in his *Didascalicon*. Chaucer references the music of the spheres in *Parliament of Fowls*, making it possible for the reader to link pagan philosophy to Christian thought. I will explain how Chaucer's presentation of such a synthesis displays an upward trajectory of thematic expression when compared to *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* at the end of the chapter.

With the Chaucerian personas of the three dream visions having reached these aporetic scenarios, they must now decide whether they will proceed with their contemplation pessimistically or optimistically. In the abyss of multiplicity that is conduct in love, aligning with one tradition necessitates denying essential truths in other traditions. The maze of simultaneously interlocking and disconnecting traditions could dishearten an individual seeking guidance in his own love pursuits. Recalling Section 1 of Chapter 1, the Virgilian conceptualization of a gate of

[66] Robertson, *Preface*, 117

ivory, which describes the opaqueness of unreliable dreams, similarly demonstrates that some questions regarding life will remain unanswered no matter how hard a man toils for a solution.

In commenting on the *House of Fame*, Sheila Delany postulates that clear understanding of the world paradoxically stems from expression of doubt in what she calls the "fideistic transcendence of doubt."[67] Delany uses this phrase to describe the scene in which Geffrey looks down on the mortal world from the eagle's talons in his flight across the sky. In Greek mythology, the eagle symbolizes Zeus, king of the gods. In Roman tradition, Jupiter is the name for Zeus, and it is Jupiter who keeps Aeneas pointed towards his destiny to found Rome in Virgil's *Aeneid*. The eagle's abduction of Geffrey functions as a sort of philosophical rapture, saving Geffrey from the *aporia* of the desert. In effect, Geffrey must have faith in the furtive workings of the universe to "transcend" the doubt that has plagued him throughout his dream. As I will show in Section 2 of this chapter, although Geffrey's flight is a momentary "transcendence of doubt," the end of the poem quells any semblance of optimism that may have been intimated previously. Delany's fideistic transcendence of doubt, however, does characterize the end to *Parliament of Fowls*, establishing a fundamental, thematic difference between *Parliament of Fowls* and the poems that preceded it, as Sections 3 and 4 of this chapter will address.

The Chaucerian personas in all three poems admit their inability to solve love's dilemmas, which is why they turn to the various exegetes for direction. When these exegetes fail to assist, the responsibility of interpreting and moralizing the dilemmas transfers to the reader. While describing the medieval love vision form, A.J. Minnis asserts in the *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems* that "strategic profession of inadequacy actually valorizes a dream

[67] Delany, *Chaucer's House of Fame*, 84

poem,"[68] as such a profession removes the author from a position of authority, giving readers the ability to assess their individual reactions to the text at hand. Through his dreamers, Chaucer conveys his own doubts, and in doing so, calls a halt to the search for certain authority. In admitting his own doubts through his personas, Chaucer deflects authority away from his own work, positioning himself as a mere storyteller rather than a commentator. Chaucer uses this tactic throughout his corpus of later work; in the prologue to the *Miller's Tale*, for example, Chaucer apologizes in advance for the bawdiness of the upcoming fabliaux: "Blameth nat me if ye chese amys" (3181).[69] Chaucer knew that his works, like the writings of Ovid, Virgil, and Cicero, would be viewed as literary tradition in the future, so he preemptively defended against such a development, while skillfully destabilizing the way in which readers view literary authority in the process.

So, Delany's fideistic transcendence of doubt urges a lighthearted mindset in the face of an aporetic scenario. In *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame*, this lighthearted mindset is nonexistent. Much like his modified use of *deus ex machina*, which aids the dreamers in avoiding their respective, aporetic states of mind, Chaucer also employs the literary tactic of bathos, or anticlimax, in each of the three dream vision poems. Bathos can operate as an agent of humor by replacing readers' idealistic expectations with expressions of unexceptional reality. Chaucer's use of bathos to end the three poems is fitting, as each vision explores a dilemma in love that does not yield any pronouncement of some climactic truth, even though the reader was probably waiting for an answer while reading the texts. Neat endings to the poems would not only disrupt the fragmentary nature of the dreamers' visions but would also put Chaucer in the position of authority he adamantly wished to avoid.

---

[68] Minnis, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer*, 49
[69] Benson, *Riverside*, 67

I will outline Chaucer's utilization of bathos in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* before showing how bathos in *Parliament of Fowls* profoundly differs. This disparity in bathos between *Parliament of Fowls* and the other two poems lies within Chaucer's tone. The negative tone of bathos in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* casts each poem in a cynical light, preventing both the dreamer and the reader from reaching a fideistic transcendence of doubt. On the other hand, humorous bathos and the Neoplatonic notion of the music of the spheres intertwine in *Parliament of Fowls* to present an alternative way of handling the *aporia* of love.

Section 2: Bathos in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame*

As previously shown in Section 2b of Chapter 1, the dreamer in *Book of the Duchess* marvels at the power of Morpheus to induce sleep, and he desires Morpheus to visit him. In the Seys and Alcyone tale from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Morpheus comes to Alycone disguised as the ghost of Seys, prompting Alycone to commit suicide by jumping off a cliff. Consequently, the gods take pity on Alycone and Seys and decide to transform them into birds that will fly the seas forever. The god of the wind, Aeolus, grants the couple and their descendants "seven peaceful days in the winter season" where the waves are still and the winds are calm, giving the birds time to mate and raise their young.[70] The ending metamorphosis to this otherwise melancholy tale grants the reader some solace. However, in Chaucer's retelling of the story, he

[70] Heinemann, William. *Ovid: Metamorphoses*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916. 173. Print.

withholds the ending metamorphosis, as the dreamer focuses on the power of Morpheus before he too succumbs to sleep. So, the story ends abruptly with Alcyone's death:

> "Allas!" quod she for sorwe,
> And deyde within the thridde morwe.
> But what she seyde more in that swowe
> I may nat telle yow as nowe;
> It were too longe for to dwelle;
> My first matere I wil yow telle
> Wherfore I have told this thinge
> Of Alycone and Seys the kinge. (213-220)

The Chaucer persona steers the conversation back to his reason for telling the story rather than revealing the story's ending. Death is the end for both Seys and Alcyone in *Book of the Duchess*; there is no redeeming metamorphosis for the dreamer to consider before he enters his vision. The absence of a metamorphosis seems to be a deliberate, authorial choice, as the Man in Black must also face the fact that Lady White has left his side forever. Hence, the parallel between Chaucer's amended retelling of the Seys and Alcyone tale and the Man in Black's lament lends a uniformity of theme to the vision.

Assuming the reader is familiar with the Seys and Alcyone tale before reading *Book of the Duchess*, the absence of the metamorphosis contributes to the poem's overall sense of bathos. The reader expects Seys and Alcyone to become twin birds; in omitting this part of this story, Chaucer forfeits the climax of the story, enshrouding the forthcoming vision in earthly transience. This transience continues to inform the mood of the vision when the Man in Black frankly divulges the cause of his sorrow at the end of the poem:

"Allas, sir, how? What may that be?"

"She is deed." "Nay!" "Yis by my trouthe."

"Is that your los? By god it is routhe." (1308-1310)

The voice of the dreamer in the last verse of the above passage agrees that the Man's "los" is "routhe" or a "cause for pity." Shortly after, the bell tolls, calling the dreamer suddenly back to reality. Chaucer has his poem end as it begun, refusing to entertain the prospect of life after death by continuing the bathos of the Seys and Alcyone story. The poem ends in hopelessness and offers no fragments of philosophical solace for the bereaved characters.

In *House of Fame*, bathos comes into play when Geffrey realizes that his search for love tidings in Lady Fame's titular abode was in vain. As stated in the introduction, Geffrey, inexperienced in the ways of love, seeks "tydings of Loves folk" (644-645) before he enters his dream vision. After his *aporia* in the desert and his flight across the sky in the talons of an eagle, Geffrey finally arrives at the House of Fame, where he hopes these "tydings" reside. Like Geffrey, the reader is not privy to the House's inner workings. For all of his naïve hopefulness, Geffrey's initial reactions to the House are anticlimactic:

Upon these walles of beryle,

That shoon ful lighter than a glas

And made wel more than it was

To semen every thing ywis

As kinde thing of Fames is (1288-1292)

Even before he meets the duplicitous Lady Fame, Geffrey believes that the House's decorations "shoon ful lighter" to make the ambience "wel more than it was." The glimmer of "beryl walles" creates a false impression of grandeur, mirroring how Fame can make trivial information worthy

of notice. Geffrey's unease is palpable, and his negative reactions to the House of Fame only grow in the aftermath of his encounter with Lady Fame.

While reflecting on his time in the House of Fame, Geffrey readdresses his expectations prior to his visit and explains how his experience vastly differed. Geffrey knows that the eagle brought him to the House of Fame to discover love tidings, yet in the wake of his encounter with Lady Fame, Geffrey can barely remember the reason he journeyed to the House:

> Quod I, "That wol I tellen thee,
> The cause why I stonde here:
> Somme newe tydinges for to lere,
> Somme newe thynges, I noot what,
> Tydinges, other this or that,
> Of love or wiche thinges glade. (1884-1889)

Geffrey recalls that he was searching for "newe tydings for to lere" but, now, he "noot what" exactly. Geffrey appears rattled by the time he has spent in House. The tidings he sought are not present, and the sounds he hears instead are disorderly and unhelpful.

When Geffrey first steps out of the House of Fame, he sees another house in a valley. Geffrey goes as far to say that this place, where Fame sends her lies to disseminate, exceeds the work of Daedalus in its intricate and chaotic layout:

> Tho saw I stonde in a valeye,
> Under the castel faste by,
> An house, that Domus Dedaly
> That Laborintus cleped is
> Nas made so wonderliche ywis,

Ne half so queynteliche y-wrought. (1918-1924)

This new house, resting within the same complex on Fame's abode, is made of "twigges" (1936) whirling in constant motion. The house of twigs reminds Geffrey of the mythical Labyrinth that Daedalus constructed to contain the fierce Minotaur, a monstrous cross between a man and a bull, on the Greek island of Crete. Geffrey even asserts that the Labyrinth reflected merely "half" of the ingenuity that went into the design of the house of twigs. The image of the Labyrinth reintroduces the state of *aporia* that Geffrey reached in the desert. The complex containing both the House of Fame and the house of twigs has done nothing to quell Geffrey's anxiety about love. Bathetically, Geffrey gathers nothing new about love tidings, realizing that Fame truly is beast of greater might than the Minotaur. The sounds traveling throughout the setting are meaningless fragments of sound that Fame chooses to promote or discard on a whim, regardless of whether these sounds are fact or fiction.[71] Geffrey leaves the area more confused and more distraught than when he first entered, defying his own expectations and that of the reader.

As stated in the introduction, most critics agree that *House of Fame* is unfinished. Interestingly, though, after Geffrey leaves the House of Fame, he stumbles upon "…a man,/Which that I nevene nat ne can,/But he semed for to be/A man of great auctoritee…" (2155-2158). In light of Chaucer's concern with viewing literary works as authorities, the last lines of the *House of Fame* have a particular resonance. Just before Geffrey names the authority, the poem ends, leaving readers puzzled. Because Chaucer emphasizes the question of literary authority throughout the dream vision, ending with an unnamed "auctoritee" is bathetic in and of itself. Describing the ending as bathetic, however, requires unsubstantiated speculation.

[71] Minnis, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer*, 220-221

So, as in *Book of the Duchess*, *aporia* in *House of Fame* induces bathos that leads to despair regarding love at the end of the poem. As this chapter will later discuss, *Parliament of Fowls* breaks from this dynamic, instilling a different mood upon its ending that stems from the same bathetic tactic seen in both *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame*. Before discussing the bathos in *Parliament of Fowls*, I will show how music provides a mental remedy for the tension existing between earthly desires and spiritual inclinations. This remedy will serve as the foundation for the elevated bathos that comes to characterize the ending to *Parliament of Fowls*.

Section 3: *Passio*, Augustine's Three Levels of Music, and Hugh's Compromise

As outlined previously, Chaucer uses the conventions of *fin amors* to establish what structuralist literary theory would call a binary opposition between earthly love and heavenly love in each of the three poems. Andreas Capellanus, the principal writer discussed in reference to this courtly love tradition, opens his *De amore* with a definition of "what love is": "Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace."[72] Here, Capellanus correlates meditation, love, and beauty. Meditating on the beauty of a female leads to "certain inborn suffering," which Robertson equates with *passio* in his *Preface to Chaucer*.[73] In addition,

[72] Capellanus, *The Art of Courtly Love*, 28
[73] Robertson, *Preface*, 84

Robertson identifies this extensive meditation on love and beauty as *immoderata cogitatio*, as I mentioned in Section 1a of Chapter 2.

For example, Ovid's Pygmalion in Book 10 of the *Metamorphoses* exemplifies this threefold method of *immoderata cogitatio* that includes sight of the woman, meditation on her beauty, and hopeless infatuation. Pygmalion falls in love with his statue of a woman that becomes real after he prays "immoderately" to Venus. As Pygmalion, the statue, and Venus are the only characters in this Ovidian tale, Pygmalion's statue could have come to life only in Pygmalion's imagination. However, regardless of whether the statue is alive or not, Pygmalion, like the courtly lover who Capellanus describes, must meditate on the beauty of his female desire in order to fully engage *passio*.

In his *De Musica*, St. Augustine discusses how beauty controls both creation and creation's subsequent processes. Robertson generalizes Augustine's principle, stating, "Temporal harmonies of the created world are reflections of the 'immutable equality of Heaven.'"[74] So-called "cycles" of earthly matters synchronize with the cycles of celestial matters. Robertson specifically identifies Augustine's principle as a Christian interpretation of the pagan concept of the "music of the spheres." In this concept, the beauty of existence lies in the harmonization of three types of music: *musica mundana*, *musica humana*, and *musica instrumentalis*.[75] Augustine pays tribute to Boethius, another early Christian, who originally outlined these types of music in his *De institutione musica*. *Musica mundana*, or "worldly music", describes the music governing the elements of the Earth, including the seasons. *Musica mundana* also signifies the movement of the planets and the stars; for this reason, *musica mundana* bears the alternate name of *musica*

---

[74] Robertson, *Preface*, 117
[75] Chamberlain, David. "The Music of the Spheres and Chaucer's "Parlement of Foules"." *Chaucer Review*. 5.1 (1970): 32-56. Print.

universalis, or "universal music."[76] *Musica humana*, or "human music," signifies the music existing between the human body and the human spirit. *Musica instrumentalis* denotes instrumental music. As both Boethius and Augustine propose, the three types of music coalesce to form a harmony, with each type representing a different octave. However, this harmony is imperceptible to mankind, as the human vantage point is too low to fully envisage how each part fits together to form the harmony of earthly matters and the mysterious realm of the planets and stars.[77]

In *Parliament of Fowls*, as Chaucer's dreamer reads the *Somnium Scipionis*, Chaucer pays homage to the "music of the spheres" through Scipio Africanus:

> And after shewed he him the nyne speres,
> And after that the melodye herde he
> That cometh of thilke speres thryes three,
> That welle is of musyk and melodye
> In this world here, and cause of armonye. (59-63)

This passage shows that Chaucer clearly knew about music's place in the medieval tradition. This harmonious interplay existing between mankind and the universe contrasts with Capellanus's concept of beauty, which solely occupies a singular being of the opposite sex. Thus, upon a cursory glance, Chaucer seems to establish a stark, irreconcilable disparity between these two perceptions of beauty, just as he did with the traditions of *fin amors* and Stoic-Neoplatonic hybridization. Yet, in returning to the *Didascalicon*, Hugh of St. Victor provides a philosophical way to achieve a compromise.

---

[76] Robertson, *Preface*, 121
[77] Robertson, *Preface*, 121

Hugh takes Augustine's ideas further. After reiterating that music exists between the body and spirit, with the body reflecting Earth and the spirit reflecting Heaven, Hugh expresses that music is the study of the individual proportions that make up a perception of a harmonious whole.[78] Music that is ideal, therefore, satisfies both the flesh and the spirit. The spirit may have more lasting consequences in terms of the afterlife, but the body must be nourished for the spirit to remain intact. So, the body must be nourished in ideal love, making courtship in earthly love a road by which the body may attain this nourishment.

Thus, Hugh recognizes that earthly nourishment is a prerequisite for spiritual ascendency. The beauty of Heaven—the Christian equivalent of the universe—necessitates a reflection on earthly love. The study of earthly love, therefore, helps humans strive to understand the greater beauty of the spirit and the universality of existence. In referencing Stephen Kruger's concept of the "middleness" of dreams from Section 2 of Chapter 2, Hugh's renovated vision of music subverts the dichotomy that Chaucer deliberately establishes at the beginning of the poem, making a mystical connection "between the ideal and the physical" possible.[79] The degree to which a human needs this nourishment of the body varies from individual to individual, but all must learn to find ample nourishment so that the spirit continually points towards the overarching harmony of the universe.

As the final section of Chapter 3 and this thesis will examine, music continues to influence Chaucer's thoughts in *Parliament of Fowls*, playing an extensive role in the poem's bathetic conclusion. Music comes to characterize Chaucer's expression of a "fideistic transcendence of doubt" that *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* lack in their own endings.

---

[78] Robertson, *Preface*, 122
[79] Minnis, *Oxford Guides To Chaucer*, 45 (From Stephen Kruger, *Dreaming in the Middle Ages*, 52)

In effect, Chaucer trumps the terror of unreliable dreams and mental impasses, evolving beyond the comparatively bleak outlooks that *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* put forth.

Section 4: Music and Bathos in Parliament of Fowls

After entering the garden of love and visiting the temple of brass, the *Parliament* dreamer stumbles upon the caucus of birds, over which Nature "the vicaire of the'almighty Lorde" (379) presides. Nature introduces three tercels, or male eagles, seeking the affections of a singular formel, or female eagle. The dreamer watches as each of the three suitors attempts to persuade the formel. Before the formel voices her decision, however, the various types of other birds lend their own opinions to the matter at hand. The result is a cacophonic crescendo of birdcalls pressuring the formel to make her decision rapidly:

> The noyse of foules for to been delivered
> So loude rong, "Have doon and let us wende!"
> That wel wended I the wode had al to-shivered…
> The goos, the doke, and the cukkow also
> So cryden, 'Kek, kek!' 'Kukkow!' 'Quek, quek!' hye
> That thurgh myn eres the noyse wente tho. (491-500)

The amalgamation of birdcalls brings a "noyse" that rings so loudly that the surrounding forest seems to shake. The collection of opinions concerning which mate the formel should take enters the dreamer's "eres" as a singular, displeasing sound, lacking in melody and harmony.

Subsequently, representatives of the different birds give their own opinions on how the formel ought to proceed. The persona of Nature allows birds such as the "cukkow" (505), the "water foules" (554), and the "turtle [dove]" (577) to explain their own beliefs before she commands the caucus to acquiesce and the formel to speak.

Even after the outpouring of emotion from the birds in attendance, the formel desires "unto this yeer be doon" (647) to make her final decision. This postponement prompts the host of birds to sing "a roundel" honoring Nature:

> But first were chosen foules for to singe,
>
> As yeer by yere was alwey hir usaunce
>
> To singe a roundel at hir departing
>
> To do Nature honour and plesaunce. (673-676).

When Nature grants the formel the power to decide her own fate, the birds burst into harmonious song rather than discordant clamor. As typical of the roundel, a lyric poem that originated in France, the birds' song has a refrain;[80] the subject of this refrain welcomes "somer" (680) and waves off the "long nightes blake" (682) of winter. The roundel is composed of thirteen lines, and it repeats the refrain (in a rhyme scheme of abb) three times. In the midst of her own aporetic situation, the formel does not heed the disparate views of the caucus, choosing instead to defer her a decision for a year. This delay is equivalent to handling her love-based concern on a personal level. The numerous species of birds attempting to influence the formel represent the distinctness of the human opinion on conduct in courtship, and the formel pays no heed to such perspectives.

---

[80] Benson, *Riverside*, 394

Hence, although the formel's indecision is bathetic, her willingness to face the unknown realm of love without following the codes of established perspectives demonstrates a faith in Nature, the elements, and the music of the spheres that the dreamers in *Book of the Duchess* and *House of Fame* fail to espouse. From her mortal vantage point, the formel knows not how she ought to decide, but in choosing to defer her decision for a year, she transcends the maze of varying opinions from the parliament. The formel's decision, the roundel of the birds, and the changing of seasons, thus, represent Augustine's three types of music, as the birds' literal music (*musica instrumentalis*) celebrates the formel's desire for deferral (*musica humana*) that reflects her personal approach to nourishment amid the myriad of other approaches to love (*musica universalis*).

In showing how the formel's indecision leads to song and celebration, Chaucer demonstrates that laughter and Delany's fideistic transcendence of doubt are intimately intertwined. His use of bathos defeats the anxiety that the dreamer displayed before the gates to the garden of love instead of prolonging its continuity from dreamscape to reality. Through this ending scene, Chaucer combines the two traditions from Chapter 2 to show how neither literary authority may dictate the correct course of action for the formel. Only the formel knows how she must proceed, and in defying the influence of her squabbling peers, she trusts her individual instincts and secures Nature's consent, even though her decision technically represents a lack of resolution.

CONCLUSION

Over the progression of a decade, from the commencement of *Book of the Duchess* to the completion of *Parliament of Fowls*, Chaucer's dream vision structure, with roots in Macrobian dream theory and Hugh's exegetical method, increasingly approached the completion of a bridge across the chasm lying between traditions of earthly love and heavenly love. Unlike *Book of Duchess* and *House of Fame*, where this structure yields thematic pessimism concerning the labor of love, *Parliament of Fowls* encourages a willingness to confront love on one's own terms instead of following the precepts of established traditions like *fin amors* and Stoic-Neoplatonic philosophy. This expression of individuality would be present in a deconstructionist critique of Chaucer's work. In essence, then, truth in love becomes the acknowledgement that there is no truth in love, and such a sentiment has the power to overwhelm unless viewed as an agent of subjectivity and freedom.

Chaucer's detached humor through bathos in *Parliament of Fowls* makes light of an aspect of life that will always be irrational. Chaucer's exploration of love does not cease after the completion of *Parliament of Fowls* in 1381, as both *Troilus and Criseyde* and various parts of *The Canterbury Tales* similarly engage difficult questions in love. Robertson identifies Chaucer as a *tenerorum lusor amorum*, or "teaser of tender loves," akin to Ovid.[81] Though Ovid enjoyed literary success during his lifetime, Emperor Augustus banished him in 8 C.E. for reasons Ovid cited as *carmen et error*, or "song and error."[82] For the remainder of his life, Ovid endured cold winters in Tomis, known now as the Romanian city of Costanza, lying on the westernmost coast

[81] Robertson, *Preface*, 280
[82] Gahan, John. "Ovid: The Poet in Winter." Classical Journal. 73.3 (1978): 198-202. Print.

of the Black Sea.[83] Like Chaucer, Ovid experimented with sensitive political and ethical subjects, and most historians believe that Ovid earned his harsh punishment when some unidentified *error* in one of his works insulted or offended Augustus. Chaucer, too, was capable of promoting beliefs that powerful men in the fourteenth century—like John of Gaunt—would have regarded as treasonous or blasphemous. Part of Chaucer's genius lay in his ability to ask difficult questions without directly defying Christian doctrine, allowing Chaucer to continue his investigation of pagan principles and mythological allegory throughout his literary career instead of suffering harsh penalty, like Ovid.

In describing the abrupt end to the purportedly unfinished *House of Fame*, A.J. Minnis uses the phrase "a carnival held in the midst of the maze" to describe how Chaucer rejects the notion of a "univocal discourse" in favor of a "plurality of meanings."[84] The ending to the *House of Fame*, however, inspires a resigned kind of laughter within the carnival. Chaucer's formel in *Parliament of Fowls* charts a different course through the *aporia* of love rooted in optimism rather than cynicism, and, as a result, the poem adopts a higher register of fideism in the face of love's mysteries on earth.

---

[83] Gahan, "Ovid", 198
[84] Minnis, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer*, 226

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Benson, Larry. *The Riverside Chaucer*. 3rd. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987. Print.

2. Bridges, Margaret. “The picture in the text: ecphrasis as self-reflectivity in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls, Book of the Duchess, and House of Fame.” *Word and Image: A Journal of Verbal/Visual Inquiry*. 5. (1989): 151-158. Print.

3. Capellanus, Andreas. *The Art of Courtly Love*. Trans. John Jay Parry. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960. Print.

4. Chamberlain, David. "The Music of the Spheres and Chaucer's "Parlement of Foules"." *Chaucer Review*. 5.1 (1970): 32-56. Print.

5. Colish, Marcia L. *The Stoic Tradition from Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages: Stoicism in Classical Latin Literature*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1990. 44. Print.

6. Degraff, Thelma. "Plato in Cicero." Classical Philology. 3.2 (1940): 146-147. Print.

7. Delany, Sheila. *Chaucer's House of Fame: The Poetics of Skeptical Fideism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972. 58. Print.

8. Edwards, Mark. “The Expression of Stoic Ideas in the ‘Aeneid’”. *Phoenix*. 14.3 (1960): 151-165. Print.

9. Heinemann, William. *Ovid: Metamorphoses*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1916. 173. Print.

10. Horsfall, Nicholas. *Virgil, Aeneid 6: A Commentary*. 1. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 60-61. Print.

11. Korfmacher, William. "Stoic Apatheia and Seneca's De Clementia." Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association. (1946): Print.

12. Lynch, Kathryn. *Dream Visions and Other Poems*. First Edition. New York: Norton & Company, 2007. Print.

13. Minnis, A.J. *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Shorter Poems*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995. Print.

14. Parker, Robert. *How to Intepret Literature*. 2nd. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Print.

15. Robertson, D.W. *A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives*. Princeton:

Princeton University Press, 1962. Print.

16. Robinson, F.N. *The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1933. Print.

17. Rolfe, Gary. "Deconstruction in a nutshell." Nursing Philosophy. 5. (2004): 274. Print.

18. Sadlek, Gregory. *Idleness Working: The Discourse of Love's Labor from Ovid Through Chaucer and Gower*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2004. 172. Print.

19. Scullard, H.H. "Carthage." *Greece & Rome*. 2.3 (1955): 106. Print.

20. Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. Translator's preface. In: Of Grammatology (ed. Jacques Derrida). The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, MD. ix-lxxxvii. Print.

21. St. John, Michael. *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity*. 7. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000. Print.

22. Taylor, Jerome. *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1961. 91. Print.

23. Taylor, Paul Beckman. *Chaucer's Chain of Love*. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996. Print.

24. Whitman, F. H. "Exegesis and Chaucer's Dream Visions." *The Chaucer Review* 3.4 (1969): 229-238. Print.