THE 'ENTENTE' OF THE NARRATOR: A POET SPEAKS TO HIS AUDIENCE IN CHAUCER'S VERSIONS OF THE DIDO AND AENEAS LEGEND

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Abstract
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This analysis reveals that the genius of Chaucer's created narrator lies in the degree to which "Geffrey" comes alive in the text as both a self-conscious poet and an active participant in the poem. It is this dual role within and without the text that differentiates Chaucer's Dido and Aeneas narrator from other fourteenth-century narrators. The study concludes that Chaucer appears to be moving away from older notions of the poet as giver of received knowledge towards a more modern view of the poet as one who makes personal experience and opinions part of the fabric of literature.

Keywords
Literature, English

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The "Entente" of the narrator: A poet speaks to his audience in Chaucer's versions of the Dido and Aeneas legend

Markot, Margaret Lindsey, Ph.D.

University of New Hampshire, 1987
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THE "ENTENTE" OF THE NARRATOR:
A POET SPEAKS TO HIS AUDIENCE
IN CHAUCER'S VERSIONS OF THE
DIDO AND AENEAS LEGEND

BY

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DISSERTATION

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in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
in
English

May, 1987
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May 8, 1987
To Bruce for believing.
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ABSTRACT

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by
Margaret Lindsey Markot
University of New Hampshire. May. 1987

In Book I of The House of Fame and in "The Legend of Dido" in The Legend of Good Women, Geoffrey Chaucer offers his versions of the classical love story of Dido and Aeneas. Each story is told through the voice of a well-developed narrator who regularly interrupts his narration to speak to an audience addressed in the poem. This study investigates the relationships between the narrator and his addressed audience and the narrator and his text. It further suggests ways in which Chaucer sought to explore the potential of the English poet through the creation of a poet/narrator who interjects a high degree of personal expression into his work.

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This analysis reveals that the genius of Chaucer's created narrator lies in the degree to which "Geffrey" comes alive in the text as both a self-conscious poet and an active participant in the poem. It is this dual role within and without the text that differentiates Chaucer’s
Dido and Aeneas narrator from other fourteenth-century narrators. The study concludes that Chaucer appears to be moving away from older notions of the poet as giver of received knowledge towards a more modern view of the poet as one who makes personal experience and opinions part of the fabric of literature.
INTRODUCTION

The aim of this study is to analyze the opinions and literary "entente" of the narrator, "Geffrey," as I see him revealed to the audience addressed in Book I of Chaucer's The House of Fame and in the Prologue and "Legend of Dido" in The Legend of Good Women. I will also try to analyze the ways this narrator's thoughts and personality might have influenced the audience's reception of the Dido legend presented in the two texts. In particular, I will look at the occasions in which I think the narrator tries to impress upon his listeners his ideas about love and literature.

This discussion will focus primarily on the narrator rather than on the audience because textual information is more readily available about the speaker. The narrator in both poems is the voice telling the story: the audience, while addressed, is silent. While I can deduce certain character traits from what the narrator says, the audience's response requires a degree of speculation. To support my ideas about listener response to the narrator, therefore, I will rely upon my own and others' literary interpretations in conjunction with certain known fourteenth-century patterns of thought. I will also look at the narrator's personality traits as they are revealed directly by "Geffrey" to the audience and, as they are made apparent, less directly by the way in which he tells the story of Dido and Aeneas.

Furthermore, I have chosen not to use external historical sources in order to identify an actual narrator or real persons in the audience, as some critics have done. Instead, I will look to the text to reveal the personality and goals of a fictionalized narrator. In this way I am able to examine the narrator as an independent character within the text, a character who is not the same "person" as the actual author. Because the speaker identifies himself as a man named "Geffrey," I will follow this cue and refer to the narrator as a male by that name, without making autobiographical cross-references to the poet, Geoffrey Chaucer.
Similarly, although I may describe audience members by occupations, such as clerics or court ladies, I do not intend to align them with actual parishes or duchies. Therefore, the audience in my view is one that takes its reality first from the narrator's own imagination and only secondarily from live counterparts in the fourteenth century.

The identity of the narrator in Chaucer's poems is debated regularly, although the problem is still not—and may never be—resolved. One of the principal questions in the narrator-poet debate has been whether the narrating poet is the composing poet. This question has absorbed the attention of critics throughout the last twenty years. In the past such discussion about the narrator has centered around Chaucer's Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde rather than the dream visions. Even critics who do concentrate on The Book of the Duchess, Parliament of Fowls, or The House of Fame generally view the narrator in those poems as an inarticulate forerunner of the more sophisticated narrator in The Canterbury Tales and Troilus and Criseyde.4

I view the narrator in Chaucer's Dido and Aeneas stories as a well-developed character, however, despite the early appearance of that material in the Chaucer canon. Admittedly, however, the many roles the narrator takes on in both The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women, (poet, translator, humorist, philosopher, and court critic, for example) make the sense of a single personality difficult to grasp at first. The narrator could acquire as many different characteristics as there are critics to isolate each role he plays. There is danger in isolating each role, however, as then the character named "Geffrey" disintegrates into a myriad of identities. In the early 1970s, Ann C. Watts complained that E. Talbot Donaldson's landmark article, despite its innovative discussion of Chaucer as pilgrim/fictional character, "spawned not only a school of entitled 'I's'" but gave birth to the term personae, a term that, in her view, is "now sickening jargon to most ears."5 I believe, nevertheless, the task of re-assemblying the narrator is an important one, although it has been made complicated
by the six hundred years separating Chaucer from today and by the misuse in literary criticism of psychological jargon to analyze a fictional character.

Study of the effects of oral delivery and rhetoric on late-medieval literature has contributed to making the issue of the narrator's character central to Chaucer scholarship. This dramatic approach to Chaucer's works has helped scholars to view the narrator as a single speaker with whom the audience interacts. As a prerequisite to such a discussion, critics have had to establish a logical relationship between Chaucer and his narrator. I will address this issue of the speaker's personality and his relationship to both Geoffrey Chaucer and the audience in the following pages.

Another important area of debate in the study of the narrator has concerned the competency of the narrating poet. Can "Geffrey's" judgment be trusted? Such a question bears directly on the analysis of the narrator's personality. Regardless of their attitudes towards the distance between Chaucer and his persona, critics, for the most part, characterize the speaker as naïve or obtuse. Only a few critics, such as Michael D. Cherniss, have described the narrator as a fairly trustworthy reporter. I would suggest, in addition, that he is not an unsophisticated storyteller. I will try to describe below a narrator who knows a good deal about literature and the effect his words will have upon his listeners.

In my view, the first step towards establishing a personality for the narrator is to distinguish between Chaucer the man and Geffrey the narrator. Granted, the name "Geffrey" is used to describe both man and narrator in The House of Fame; I believe, however, that separation of the speaker from the actual writer is important to an analysis of the dramatic elements involved in a public reading of either The House of Fame or The Legend of Good Women. Furthermore, accurate historical information about Chaucer the man is so scarce that transferral of attributes from the real poet to the literary figure becomes an unsupportable guessing game. I prefer to think of the narrator as an actor playing a part devised by the
author and doing certain work directed by that author. To equate author and actor not only destroys the dramatic fabric of the work but denies the power of the created narrator.

Beryl Rowland has recently emphasized the importance of rhetoric and rhetorical devices in the performance of Chaucer's poetry. While my general approach to the narrator parallels hers, my conclusions are quite different. Rowland points out that theatrical techniques used in a public reading, such as the device of *pronuntiatio* (changes in tone of voice), were important to the delivery of poetry yet could also have rendered the concept of an autonomous persona unnecessary. I would argue, nevertheless, that the greater the emphasis on Chaucer's personal, oral delivery of his poetry, the more logical it is to separate the narrator and poet. When studying an epoch in which the actor's or rhetorician's skills overlapped with the poet's, a situation that makes performance an important dimension of the presentation of the text, it is not wise to assume the performing poet was to be a depiction of the actual poet. When the poet deliberately creates a character (or characters) whose personality(ies) can be "put on" or "taken off" (through the use of tone of voice, gesture, or any other device), the created character should not be ignored. Equating character and writer presumes the writer had no artistic reasons for "making" a narrator in the first place.

Separating actor from author is not to deny, however, that the writer may have characteristics similar to the speaker's. In *The House of Fame*, the eagle calls the narrator "Geoffrey" and makes fun of his bookish, tax-collector characteristics:

For when thy labour doon al ys,
And hast maed alle thy rekenynges.
In stede of reste and newe thynges,
Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon;
And, also domb as any stoon,
Thou sittest at another book.
Tyl fully daswed ys thy look,
And lyvest thus as an heremyte,
Although thy abstynence ys lyte.... (HF 652-60) \(^{12}\)

In The Legend of Good Women, the God of Love berates the narrator for his unsympathetic
treatment of women, citing works known to have been written by Geoffrey Chaucer: "Thou
hast translated Romance of the Rose" (Prol. 329); "And of Creseyde thou hast seyd as the
lyste" (Prol. 332). And Alceste, in defending the dreamer to the God of Love, attributes
four other texts composed by Chaucer to the narrator:

He made the book that hight the Hous of Fame,
And eke the Deeth of Blauncche the Duchesse,
And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,
And al the love of Palamon and Arcite.... (Prol. 417-20)

Chaucer may have combined these particular narrator/author quirks and attributes, however, to
enliven the presentation of his poems. The frontispiece of The Troilus and Criseyde, showing
Chaucer reading his work to an audience, depicts just such an occurrence.\(^ {13}\) Writer and
speaker obviously share the same body—the perfect situation in which the audience could have
enjoyed perceiving first hand the differences, as well as the similarities, between writer and
speaker. Thus Chaucer could play jokes on himself or his colleagues, using his created
narrator as a foil.\(^ {14}\)

The separation of the artist and his creation also rescues the reader of Chaucer from
the near-impossible task of reconciling the speaker's "mistakes" and sometimes overly romantic
responses with those skills and ideas of a master poet. In the past, critics have explained
Geoffrey's unscholarly departures from his tale, textual inaccuracies, or overzealousness with
the explanation that perhaps Chaucer was hiding behind an ironic mask at those times of
inconsistency.\(^ {15}\) Unfortunately, such an explanation can be a confusing one, as the point at
which the ironic mask is raised is sometimes difficult to determine. More significantly, however, discussion of an ironic stance demands separation of poet and character to make the concept of a mask meaningful. Chaucer in any mask—ironic or otherwise—still acts out a part: the part of the narrator. In most dramatic situations, whether a play or a reading, the personality of the "masked" character portrayed "on stage" is written to be independent of the personality of the actor behind the mask. The character "lives" outside, and separate from, the life of the actor, who only "borrows" the character's personality for the performance.

The listeners in Chaucer's audience who did not see the differences between speaker and poet may have participated in a falsely autobiographical, and therefore limited, poetic experience. Such a person could have understood neither the irony nor the humor in Geffrey's comments on fourteenth-century life. Like Chaucer's contemporary audiences, today's readers should not fuse the narrator's sentiments with the poet's. As will be discussed below, the opinions of the narrator in the Dido and Aeneas legends sometimes sound more like those of a romantic courtier than those of a diligent government official.

Nevertheless, because I believe new ideas about the role of the poet in fourteenth-century literature were of primary importance to the narration of The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women, the independence of the poet/narrator from that customs official is essential to experiencing the poems as they were originally presented.16

A look at older literary traditions still followed in Chaucer's time also lends support to a separation of author and first-person narrator. George Kane's essay, "The Autobiographical Fallacy in Chaucer and Langland Studies," contributes a clear perspective on Geffrey, the narrator.17 The poet's "self-dramatization," Kane explains, was common practice in the Middle Ages.18 Leo Spitzer corroborates:

The "poetic I" had more freedom and more breadth than it has today

... because literature dealt not with the individual but with all
mankind: And we must assume that the medieval public saw in the
"poetic I" a representative of mankind, that was interested only in this
representative role of the poet.\textsuperscript{19}

This "representative role of the poet" grew out of oral traditions but could be adopted by the
medieval court poet even if the poet did not actually present work to a listening audience.
Such a model allowed a writer to imagine a reading public as if it were a coterie of followers
grouped like an audience around a speaker. Working within this dramatic scenario, the poet
could establish a more intimate relationship between poet, subject matter, and audience.

Medieval dream visions especially employed such an author/speaker convention. These
poems took the form of personal revelations told by a first-person narrator who "conversed"
or was "otherwise engaged" with both real and fictional characters in the poem.\textsuperscript{20} The
dreamer was often given the name of the poet or was in some specific way identified with the
actual author. In addition, while a dreamer/narrator could be given a dramatic personality
similar to the poet's, the audience was expected to understand that the narrator was an
imagined, not an autobiographical, figure. For Chaucer's audience, Kane explains, it was
"unimportant who the empirical person behind this I actually was."\textsuperscript{21} The audience may even
have experienced some pride, as well as amusement, in distinguishing the poet from the
narrator: they knew, with an insider's assurance, that the narrator was a device.

Chaucer's narrator, then, was a familiar literary device serving familiar purposes. The
presence of a poet/narrator heightened the immediacy and authenticity of the poem. In the
dream vision the presence of a poet/dreamer projected, as Kane puts it, "a sense of actuality"
and "a kind of verisimilitude" that encouraged the audience to participate imaginatively in the
story.\textsuperscript{22} The listener, in turn, was to respond by thinking, "This actually happened to this
speaker. I must be hearing a first-hand account, an account I can probably believe."
When the audience put Chaucer, the customs official, out of its mind and accepted the veracity of the tale because the narrator says he personally experienced it, the narrator’s words gained importance. The credibility of the tale now lies with the speaker’s use of rhetoric and language. Appropriate audience responses then become: How does the narrator go about telling the story? Is the speaker simply trying to be entertaining, or is there a point to the story? What is the narrator’s attitude or opinion about this subject? And, lastly, how does that point of view affect our lives? In other words, the text becomes more important than day-to-day fourteenth-century realities, and the narrator’s ideas are more important than identification of the composing poet. The poem creates a world that lives associated with, but separate from, the world of the listening courtiers.

Once the audience asks itself questions about what the narrator means, the device has succeeded in another way: the listeners are beginning to participate intellectually in the entertainment at hand. Engaging the listener’s mind is not only the speaker’s first task: it remains a challenge throughout the performance. Geoffrey, the narrator, regularly breaks the flow of narration to talk directly to the audience. Sometimes he wants to be sure of its attention; at other times he wants to direct its thoughts to issues he considers important. The narrator thus becomes a device to exhort listeners to think even as they enjoy the poem.

And what might the audience think critically about? I suggest it is the opinions of the speaker himself that they are urged to evaluate. Over the course of the evening, the audience members must judge for themselves if the narrator’s points of view are reasonable or not. As Paul Strohm describes it, Chaucer’s purpose in using a narrator was to force his audience into being individually responsive to the poem:

Rather than guiding his audience through these competing ideas with the help of an easily identifiable and authoritative narrator or spokesman, he retires behind his own persona and that of his created
characters and throws his audience still more heavily back on its own resources.\textsuperscript{23}

As Strohm also notes, the audience's responsibility is even more significant because, unlike more typically medieval texts contemporary with Chaucer's work, such as Gower's \textit{Confessio Amantis}, the narrator of \textit{The House of Fame} and \textit{The Legend of Good Women} does not represent an all-encompassing authority.\textsuperscript{24} The Chaucer poems offer instead only one poet's opinions. Geffrey's concerns sometimes coincide with those of ancient writers, sometimes reflect the ideas expressed by contemporary poets, and just as often stem from his own fears and worries. They are, nevertheless, fears and worries most likely experienced by the listeners as well.

The first challenge to the audience is determining when to take Geffrey's commentary seriously and when to be amused by his opinions--a challenge made more difficult by the narrator's demeanor. He is neither dogmatic nor consistently obtuse; that sort of character would have been too easy to disregard. Instead, as will be explored in Chapter I, he is a friendly, well-meaning storyteller who, like most human beings, has his own foibles and biases to convey. Perhaps, however, some readers will object to this view, believing that such a narrator is not authoritative enough to be the voice of a Chaucerian text. In comparison to the quick-witted thinker one might want to imagine Chaucer to have been, "Geffrey" could seem, at times, dull and pedantic. "A grind," says Dorothy Bethurum.\textsuperscript{25} The problem here, however, may be the standard of measurement. Chaucer the man, for the most part, is an unknown quantity. Given the absence of solid biographical information about Geoffrey Chaucer, it seems to be dangerously speculative to assess the wit and cleverness of "Geffrey" the character by measuring him against a figure we imagine to have been Chaucer the man. My discussion will concentrate, therefore, on the character of the narrator only as
he appears in the texts of The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women without equating him with Geoffrey Chaucer. I will try instead to re-create, not the voice of the actual poet, but the voice of the fictional one.
CHAPTER I

THE PERSONALITY OF THE NARRATOR

The personality of the narrator is, in my view, crucial to the success of a poet who
wants his or her listeners (or readers) to participate emotionally in the created work. The
best narrator in such a work is, in my opinion, one who is both a guide to the story and a
friend to the listener. He or she, therefore, needs to be a reliable character who can gain
audience sympathy yet maintain its respect and attention. The narrator must be like the
audience yet different: a carefully balanced combination of leader and follower. Perhaps this
kind of speaker could be thought of, in Robert O. Payne's terms, as a "docent" who leads
the audience on a tour through the narrative.1

Such a narrator would have to be a person with weaknesses as well as strengths. At
times he or she might appear foolish; at other times, knowledgeable. If too stupid, however,
the narrator is merely laughed at, leaving the audience amused but not enlightened. If too
esoteric, the narrator risks losing listeners who seek lighter entertainment for the evening.
And too authoritative a speaker robs the audience of the motivation to think with the narrator.
In sum, the narrator of a participatory kind of literature (of the kind I suggest The House of
Fame and The Legend of Good Women are designed to be) needs to be a believable human
being with quirks that any man or woman in the audience might possess. That narrator,
therefore, needs to have a warm personality in order to coax the audience into the story. At
the same time, he or she must be able to set intellectual traps for lazy thinkers without
arousing audience dislike and must be able to introduce sensitive subjects without being
threatening. An antagonistic speaker does not always gain the listener's attention despite the
correctness of the arguments. Most importantly, I think, the listeners need to like the speaker so that all may enjoy the humorous barbs aimed at audience and narrator alike.

In the chapter below I will discuss the extent to which such a description fits the Chaucerian narrator in The House of Fame and in The Legend of Good Women. I will also suggest that it is the likeable, forthright personality of the narrator that allows him to relate personally to his audience. His mixture of confidence and deference is humorous and endearing: his sincerity and direct discourse with his listeners probably insured a sympathetic house throughout the storytelling. The result of this speaker/audience sympathy is that the speaker, in theatrical terms, nearly upstages his material. His personality and personal opinions steal the limelight from the classical authors he follows. Consequently, the narrator's new version of the Dido legend takes precedence in the listener's mind over the older versions.

From the beginning of both poems, the narrator displays a quiet confidence in his own perspectives. He is respectful towards, but not intimidated by, other opinions. In The Legend of Good Women, for example, he compares his own opinions to popular beliefs:

A thousand tymes have I herd men telle
That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle,
And I acorde wel that it ys so:
But, natheles, yet wot I wel also
That ther nis noon dwellying in this contree,
That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe.... (LGW 1-6)

The narrator, like the audience, is aware of certain widely held beliefs yet is confident enough to qualify those known doctrines. Furthermore, he is sure enough of himself to do this humorously. He first acknowledges that what men tell of heaven and hell is most likely true. Then he slyly adds another truth: there is actually no one alive, "dwellying in this
contee," who has been to heaven or hell and returned to confirm the popular ideas about those places. The narrator cleverly reminds the audience that, when all is said and done, both religious beliefs and literary myths are a matter of personal conviction.

As the character, Geffrey, begins The House of Fame, he does not affirm his own intellectual abilities outright. He defers, instead, to the highest of authorities to solve, in this case, the problem of dreams and their benefit to men and women. "God turne us every dream to goode," he petitions in the opening line of the poem. Later, he reiterates his reliance on heavenly assistance:

For I of noon opinion
Nyl as now make mensyon,
But oonly that the holy roode

Turne us every dream to goode! (HF 55-58)

Geffrey's deference to God's understanding of dreams could be interpreted as a sign of his insecurity. I rather think it shows an appropriate amount of wisdom. Most of Geffrey's listeners would have agreed that it would have been presumptuous for a mortal to think he could "devyne" as well as God the mysteries hidden in dreams. Geffrey would have lost some credibility if he had boasted to the contrary.

At the conclusion of The House of Fame's Proem, however, Geffrey replaces the familiar tone of humility with a note of pride in his own dream:

For never, sith that I was born,
Ne no man elles me beforu,
Mette, I trowe stedfastly,

So wonderful a dream as I.... (HF 59-62)

He declares that no man before him has "mette" so wonderful a dream as he. The dream and the poem into which it is incorporated are both products of Geffrey's imagination; he has
reason to revel in authorial pride. Geffrey’s comparison of the “wonderful” quality of his dream to the dreams of others also introduces an important characteristic of the narrative voice in *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women*. Having chosen to retell the famous Dido legend, the poet must exhibit appropriate deference to those who have told it before. Yet, because he wishes to shape the story according to his own opinions about men and women, he will also reveal pride in his personal version of the tale.

By the time the narrator completes *The House of Fame* invocation, however, the modesty *topos* is exaggerated to bravado. His self-confidence becomes self-righteous annoyance as he tosses out the following challenge to his listeners:

> And whoso through presumption,
> Or hate, or scorn, or through envy,
> Dispite, or jape, or vilanye,
> Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God
> That (dreme he barefoot, dreme he shod),
> That every harm that any man
> Hath had, syth the world began,
> Befalle hym therof, or he sterve,
> And graunte he mote hit ful deserve.... (HF 93-102)

Let every harm known to man befall any man who fails to appreciate this poetic endeavor, says Geffrey with a vengeance. He then lists several ill-founded causes for such “mysdeming”: presumption, hate, scorn, envy, spite, folly, or villainy. His warning against “mysdeming” also applies to listeners of all rank: rich or poor, nobleman or knave. Geffrey concludes solemnly by asking “Jesus God” to grant that these evils be ones his critics fully deserve.
Rather than being irritated by Geffrey's burst of seeming childishness, however, the audience was more likely to be amused and instructed by it. Geffrey's growl is comically unexpected and his threat is an empty one, as he is powerless to bring on the promised plagues. More significant, however, is the fact that Geffrey's wish for vengeance upon his detractors was probably far closer to the real attitude of a struggling poet than was the pretense of humility. This moment of personal "truth" not only humorously dispenses with the traditional humility topos but also lets the listener get closer to the narrating poet's real feelings. Geffrey continues to reprimand his listeners: "Now herkeneth, as I have yow seyd, / What that I mette, or I abreyd" (HF 109-10). Here is a speaker who wants his listeners to remember that the story they are about to hear, despite its classical origins, is his story. Furthermore, as he indicates by his outburst, he is a speaker who is sensitive to criticism or inattention. The audience is to harken, not out of politeness for an evening's reading, but in order to hear what this particular speaker, this "I," has "mette."

In The Legend of Good Women as well, the narrator's deference to other people's ideas is intertwined with authorial pride. As noted above, he first introduces the poem with reference to a well-known idea: "A thousand lymes have I herd men telle / That ther ys joy in hevene and payne in helle" (LGW. Prol. 1-2). He immediately registers his own opinion of that familiar notion by confirming its truth: "And I acorde wel that it ys so" (LGW. Prol. 3). Grammatically, however, the line exhibits more than the narrator's agreement with public opinion. By selecting the first-person pronoun as the subject of the sentence, he makes his personal agreement with the statement appear more important than its popularity. He increases the focus on himself by offering a counterposition: "But, natheles, yet wot I wel also / That ther nis noon dwellyng in this contree, / That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe" (LGW 4-6). The repetition of the pronoun "I" in conjunction with three "objecting" conjunctions ("but," "natheles," and "yet") helps to separate the narrator and his views from those commonly accepted opinions just stated. This juxtaposition of received opinion and an
individual's ideas mirrors the narrator's relationship to his text. The speaker is a poet trying to establish himself within the community of ancient writers and accepted opinions, all the while attempting to say something new and personal. With the aid of this opening passage, a tone is set for the remainder of the poem.

The narrator, nevertheless, does not contend he is a perfect poet. In each of the two texts, he cites some of the skills he thinks he lacks. He comments on his ability to analyze dream theories in The House of Fame:

To understand this right,
For this is warned to darkly:
But why the cause is, nought wot I. (HF 50-53)

And in The Legend of Good Women, he bemoans his literary skills: "Alas, that I ne had Englyssh, ryne or prose, / Suffisant this flour to price aryght" (LGW, Prol. 66-67). It should be said in Geoffrey's defense that both analysis of dreams and writing of poetry in the vernacular were substantial undertakings for any poet in the fourteenth century. And it could be argued that no one by Chaucer's time had improved upon Macrobius's contribution to dream theory or surpassed Dante's efforts at vernacular poetry. The narrator's modesty would, therefore, be appropriate. Similar protestations of inadequate poetic skill can be found elsewhere in Chaucer, for example, The Squire's Tale.

In light of the narrator's subsequent behavior and his continued reference to himself, however, I think that he has a more egotistical message to convey to his listeners. His comments, I believe, are designed to highlight the expertise he has just suggested with feigned modesty he might not have. In other words, the narrator's remarks are neither a true confession of inability nor a rhetorical device; instead, they provide a way the speaker can actually call attention to his skills. By expressing insecurity about those poetic skills, the speaker encourages the audience to listen closely to see if, indeed, the narrator does say "lyt aryght."
In fact, a good look at both texts would dismiss the narrator’s worries about incompetence. Even though he opens The House of Fame with a statement of wonder at the cause of dreams, he follows his supposed profession of ignorance with a fifty-one line exposé of dream theories. In that passage he considers a host of causes of “these miracles,” from the mundane (“by abstinence” HF 25) to the mystical (“that spirites have the myght / To make folk to dreme a-nyght” HF 41-42). In The Legend of Good Women, the narrator’s pose that he “konne but lyte” (Prol. 29) follows a passage of sophisticated commentary on the importance to contemporary life of literature and “remembrance” of old “doctrine” (Prol. 17-28). The narrator’s disclaimer later in the Prologue that he has no “Englyssh, ryme or prose, / Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght” (Prol. 66-67) falls in the midst of a twenty-two line panegyric on his beloved flower’s attributes. The discrepancy between Geoffrey’s expressed insecurities and the actual poetry is so great that his modesty pose might have served humorous, as well as ironic, purposes.

Throughout the two texts, the narrator gives his audience glimpses of another of his supposed weaknesses. He claims he is not a lover, even though he aims to tell a love story. In The Legend of Good Women Prologue, Alceste describes him, “and thogh the lyke nat a lovere bee” (490). Hurling greater insult, the God of Love calls the narrator a “worm” (Prol. 318) and a foe to Love (Prol. 322). In the “Legend of Dido,” the narrator tries to dissociate himself from lovers’ behavior. He describes Dido’s histrionics: “As don these lovers, as I have herd seyd” (LGW 1167). He has not himself participated in the courtly antics normally associated with lovers. In The House of Fame, Geoffrey flatly confesses his inability to understand love:

What shulde I speke more queynte,

Or peyne me my wordes peyne
To speke of love? Hyt wol not be:
I kan not of that faculte. (HF 245-48)

The listener might well ask how a supposed foe of love could understand a lover's plight well enough to describe it poetically. How compelling would a troubadour have been if he or she declared him or herself a stranger to love? With such reservations, the listener might have reason to dismiss Geoffrey as foolish or "nyce." As Alceste suggests, perhaps he is indeed a man who "rekketh noght of what mater he take" (LGW, Prol. 365).

How seriously, however, is the listener to take Geoffrey's confession of failure? Although by his own description he may not be a young and virile lover, his depiction of lovers and their feelings is sensitive and sympathetic. He says he "kan not of that faculty," yet he exhibits in both Dido stories an understanding of love's tensions. It seems that the narrator knows more about human love than he admits to. His reluctance to analyze the causes and effects of love may also reflect, not lack of insight, but a conviction that true understanding of love was better left to God than to men and women, poets or not. In addition, as was the case with the narrator's protestations of literary incompetency, telling the audience he knows nothing of love, yet revealing the opposite through his poetry, was a judicious way to bolster his own image. Better to deliver more than is promised than to promise more than can be delivered.

The narrator's best defense against the charge that he knows little about love is to be found in his poetry, however. The subtlety with which he describes the volatile cave scene in The House of Fame, for example, shows him to be both sympathetic and "wise" to love. The cave scene begins with an occasio. Geoffrey says he cannot recount what occurred in the cave because "hyt were a long proces to telle, / And over-long for vow to dwelle" (HF 251-52). But is the narrator really concerned for his audience's cramped legs? Surely the topic of seduction would have kept the courtiers' attention. Or perhaps Chaucer needed an
excuse to avoid a scene he was too squeamish to have his narrator relate. It is unlikely, however, that the author of Troilus and Criseyde and, later, The Miller's Tale was too prim to depict the union of Dido and Aeneas. As Robert W. Frank, Jr. recommends, "We must not make the mistake of reading too literally and autobiographically the language of an occupatio." 3

An occupatio frequently served the rhetorical purpose of notifying the audience that material they might have expected to hear would be omitted. It is possible that such was the intention here: most listeners had probably read Virgil's Aeneid, Ovid's Heroides, or even the anonymous Roman d'Eneas during school days and would have known the story of Dido and Aeneas well. They would have known exactly what part of the love affair was being omitted. In actuality, however, Geoffrey does not leave out the cave incident; he presents his own version of the scene instead. Therefore, it is likely that the occupatio served a mildly comic purpose. Geoffrey's promise to leave out the most sexual part of the Dido and Aeneas story might have stirred up versions of the cave scene fuller than either Geoffrey or Virgil dared write. As if to encourage listener flights of fancy, Geoffrey expands the cave episode to fourteen lines from Virgil's original eight. He also adds an introduction to the scene, bringing the length of the entire passage to twenty-eight lines. Chaucer's narrator not only enlarges the cave incident, he lingers over it.

Geoffrey's treatment of the moments in the cave is also far more romantic than Virgil's. Geoffrey concludes the introductory portion of the scene by talking of love and weddings:

Of Dido, queene of that countree,
That, shortly for to tellen, she
Becam hy's love, and let him doo
Al that weddynge longeth too. (HF 241-44)
He continues, passionately declaring that Dido made Aeneas "her lyf, hir love, hir lust, hir lord" (HF 258). The Roman poet makes only a brief reference to the lovers' so-called marriage in a terse, two-line phrase: "conjugium vocat" [she calls it a marriage] (Aeneid IV. 190). Virgil condemns Dido for her folly in love, "hoc praetexit nomine culpam" [This is the name she gave as pretext to cover her sin] (Aeneid IV.191). Chaucer's narrator, however, softens the tone of his poetry with comforting "I" sounds. The words, "love," "let him," and "longeth," take away the sting of Virgil's harsh judgment.

Geoffrey repeats the "I" sounds in new words on line 258: "lyf," "love," "lust," and "lord." Those four words alone capture the complicated variety of feelings Dido will experience because of Aeneas. "Love" and "lust" represent the highest and lowest of her emotions. "Life" and "lord" signify both her present freedom and future enslavement. The repetition of these four short words, so similar in sound, also adds rhetorical force to a picture of unstoppable, escalating passion. Despite the rashness of Dido's decision to love Aeneas, however, she is not associated in Geoffrey's cave incident with sin, guilt, or pretexts of marriage. The cutting consonant sounds found in Virgil's text ('j', 'g', 't,' and 'x') are gone from The House of Fame. With his long vowel rhymes ("doo" and "too"), Geoffrey softens Virgil's closed rhymes ("vocat," "hoc," and "culpam"). In short, Chaucer's version presents the audience with a speaker who sympathizes with the yearnings, or excesses, of love. That speaker, in turn, uses his poetic skills to entice his listeners into similar feelings for Dido. Through the process of moving the audience to pity for the Queen, the narrator in The House of Fame makes subtle, but ultimately major, changes in the traditional story.

In The Legend of Good Women, the narrator does not bother with an occupatio before the cave scene begins. He makes it unashamedly clear from the start that the love affair between Dido and Aeneas in this Chaucerian tale is his primary interest. He announces the beginning of another romanticized version of the cave scene: "Now to th'effect, now to the fruyt of al, / Whi I have told this story, and telle shal. / Thus I begynne" (LGW 1160-63).
The narrator goes on to describe the hunt in the best romance tradition, talking of “coursers, swift as any thought” (1195): knights and ladies, and Dido “al in gold and perre wrye” (1201). At last, he brings Dido and Aeneas to the cave and coyly muses that he knows not if they were chaperoned. “The autour maketh of it no mencioun” (1228), he says, deftly using the one sentence to amplify the moment of seduction. How better to arouse the listeners’ imaginations than by hinting at what could happen when two young people are left in a dark place alone?

At this point of consummation, however, The Legend of Good Women narrator breaks off his leisurely descriptive tone and introduces an economy of language not seen in the episode so far. A chill falls over the courtly excitement earlier depicted. Geffrey summarizes the lovers’ exchange of affection succinctly: Dido “tok hym for husbonde, and becom his wyf” (1238). This theme of an unequal exchange of vows recurs throughout “The Legend of Dido.” In the cave scene, the words “husbonde” and “wyf” are balanced against each other. But Aeneas’s ultimate violation of those vows will prove the balance to have been faulty. Geffrey concludes his description of the cave scene with an ironic prophecy. He foresees the lovers’ relationship lasting “for everemo, whil that hem laste lyf” (1239). Dido’s death will prove the statement literally true, but the word “everemo” mocks the lovers’ vows of eternal devotion.

Amidst nostalgic courtly images and pleasant descriptions, then, the narrator interjects a harsh reality. He accomplishes this with icy clarity and a minimum of words. At this point the poetic skills of actual author and fictional narrator intersect; Geffrey employs the expertise usually associated with Chaucer, the master poet. It seems, then, that neither “creator” is stupid or naïve. Nevertheless, although the created Geffrey proves to be a good poet, he worries out loud that he is inadequate. As the text reveals, however, his humility towards his poetry, his scholarship, and his qualifications as a lover is not justified. Literature and rhetoric, love and human nature are subjects he understands well. Geffrey’s humility serves
a rhetorical purpose within the narrative, however. The friendly self-criticism draws his listeners closer to him, making them receptive to his personal thoughts and opinions. Those personal ideas, in turn, become the contributions Geoffrey makes to the Dido legend in particular and to the literature of the future in general. In this "modern" literature, the author's views, more than received opinion, will shape both the narrative and the poetic message.
CHAPTER II

THE NARRATOR AS DREAMER

Introduction to the Dreamer

In Chapter One I presented the narrator as an independent character with an identifiable personality. I also suggested that a function of the narrator was to entice the audience into "seeing" the story of Dido and Aeneas as he does, the metaphor of sight being especially appropriate because the narrator is also relating what he "sees" in his dream. He guides the audience along, stopping whenever necessary to present personal thoughts or to offer interpretations of the events related. The actual progress through the tale of Dido and Aeneas will be the subject of Chapters IV and V; in this and the next chapter, however, I will look at the most noticeable characteristic the narrator assumes to prepare the audience for that personalized version of the Dido legend: namely, the narrator's stance as a dreamer.

I propose to analyze the effects of the narrator/dreamer role by asking two questions: How might the dreamer role have influenced the listener's view of the narrator as a poet? and How might the narrator's characteristics as a dreamer have directed the listener's attitude towards the message of the poem? My major concern will not be to identify all the characteristics of the dreamer or to compare the Dido dreamer to other medieval dreamers. Instead, I will identify possible ways in which the narrator's stance as a dreamer helped involve the listeners in the poem.

Critics investigating Chaucer's handling of the dream vision in the past fifty years have related the similarities between Chaucer's poems and French love visions. This work has been helpful to me in identifying some of the French sources that may have influenced Chaucer. Critics who have analyzed the influence of Ovid's work upon Chaucer's love stories
have also contributed an important base upon which my work rests. I propose, however, to take a more dramatic approach to the study of Chaucer's dreamer than do those who primarily study Chaucer's source material. I will attempt to look at the narrator as an actor who assumes the familiar role of the dreamer in order to establish expectations in the minds of his audience concerning poets and poetry.

In medieval literature, dreams were readily connected with poetry. In Book I of his Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, Macrobius defends the use of dream narratives when he praises a kind of fiction he calls "Narratio Fabulosa" [a fabulous narration or story]. The word fabula is derived from the Latin word fari, meaning "to sing as a poet." Poets and the "fabulous" have been connected since biblical time, as evidenced by the early incorporation of dreams into literature. Plato's "Vision of Er" and Cicero's "Dream of Scipio," for example, were literary dream visions combining the elements of myth and philosophy within a narrative framework. In fact, the fictionalized dream became such an established feature of literary works in the middle ages that C.S. Lewis believed he could make the generalization. "Every allegorical dream-poem in the Middle Ages records a feigned somnium." As discussed earlier, the dreamer/poet was a composite character probably familiar to fourteenth-century court audiences. Listeners could have become acquainted with dream narrators if they had heard or read the works of continental writers such as Machaut, Froissart, Deschamps, and Dante. English poets in the latter half of the fourteenth century also wrote dream visions: writers such as Gower, Langland, and the Pearl Poet could have been known to court audiences. In both The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women, a connection between dreamer and poet is made by the association of the speaking "I" (the dreamer) with Geoffrey Chaucer, an actual poet. As was noted earlier in this study, the narrator is called "Geffrey" by the eagle in The House of Fame and identified by Alcestis in The Legend of Good Women as the author of works known to have been produced by
Chaucer. The dream narrator in both works also characterizes himself, like Geoffrey Chaucer, as a translator of classical materials.

That Chaucer was comfortable with the genre of the dream vision seems clear from the number of dream frames found throughout his poetry: in particular, the translation of The Romance of the Rose, The Book of the Duchess, and The Parliament of Fowls. Repeated use of the dreamer/narrator seems to reflect poetic aims that require a speaker who participates in a human drama yet is a step removed from real life. If Robinson's chronology is correct, The Book of the Duchess preceded The House of Fame, and The Parliament of Fowls preceded The Legend of Good Women. It seems fair to say, therefore, that Chaucer became quite adept at creating the dreamer/narrator by the time he wrote his last version of the Dido legend.11

The Dido narrator quickly identifies himself as a dreamer in the prologue sections of The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women. Following a long introduction about the nature of dreams, Geffrey announces that he is about to relate all the details of a "wonderful" dream he has had:

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

Identification of the narrator as a dreamer in The Legend of Good Women is not as immediate as in The House of Fame. Throughout the beginning of The Legend of Good Women Prologue, he associates himself, instead, with the courtly lover. The figure of the courtly lover, although not necessarily a dreamer role, was nevertheless one associated with dream visions. The narrator in The Legend of Good Women waits for over two hundred lines before calling himself a dreamer. Then, like other dreamer/lovers in courtly narratives,12 he lies down to sleep and dreams about a fabulous visit from the one he loves:
I bad men sholde me my couche make;
   For deynsee of the newe someres sake,
I bad hem strawen flouris on my bed.
When I was leyd, and had myn eyen hed,
I fel on slepe within an houre or twoo.
Me mete how I lay in the medewe tho,
To seen this flour that I so love and dreme.... (LGW, Prol. 205-11)

The Prologue proceeds from this point on as an unbroken narration of the lover’s dream.

The narrator’s dream makes up the bulk of *The House of Fame*. With the exception of 110 lines of Proem and Introduction, the entire poem is a long dream: the tale of Dido and Aeneas is the first part (Book I) of that dream. The ratio of dream to narrative in *The Legend of Good Women* is not so easily established, however. Due to the revision of the first Prologue (F), the exact correlation of dream to legends is debatable. According to Prologue F, the individual legends are a continuation of the Prologue dream. In Prologue G, on the other hand, Geffrey wakes before the legends begin. Nevertheless, while not an actual dream in the G version, "The Legend of Dido" is still, in effect, the product of a dream.

My work here is based upon the F Prologue because the dream and the legends are unambiguously bound together in that version. The portions of *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* that I am studying can therefore be compared to each other as extended dream poems. The F version of *The Legend of Good Women* Prologue, like *The House of Fame*, also displays more of the conventional characteristics of dream visions than does the later G Prologue. As both *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* unfold, however, the scaffolding of the dream vision is less apparent to the listener. Perhaps by the end of the two poems, the narrator no longer requires the artificial setting of the dream to involve the audience in his poem. The dream framework, nevertheless, is an
important device in the introductory passages of both poems. The characteristics and
conventions of the dreamer are integral to the audience's preparation for the remainder of the
narrative. Specifically, this preparation takes place in the Proem and Invocation to The House
of Fame and in the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women. The relationship between
listener and dreamer/narrator as it is established in those sections will be the focus of this
discussion.

Literary Functions of Medieval Dreamers and their Dreams

The nature of the dream vision made it a particularly useful literary form for a poet
interested in the writing process itself. It was also an excellent way to introduce new ideas
about literature to a conservative audience. The poet could employ a traditional, and therefore
familiar, genre within which was embedded revolutionary, even strange, ideas about poets and
poetry and yet not be accused of literary heresy. Because dreams were mysterious and often
filled with "novelty," the dreaming poet could be exempt from the scrutiny given a more
realistic poet. Froissart's narrator in "Le Temple d'Honneur" comments upon his dream
narrative:

Que mon songe ne plus ne mains
Escripsi a mes propres mains
En le fourmne que vous veés:
Si voel que vous vos pourveés
Dou lire et justement entendre
A quoi la matere poet tendre.
Car la cose qui est nouvelle,
Par nature elle renouvelle
Le courage et, s'il est espars,
Il le requiert de toutes pars,
The "familiar mystery" of the dream vision, it seems, allowed the poet a latitude of creativity not always allowed in an authority-oriented world. Its very strangeness also commanded that the listener or reader give more than the casual attention required of an evening's light entertainment.

More importantly, the dream vision structure allowed the poet to draw the audience's attention to himself or herself because the dreamer/author was usually the central figure in such a poem. "Le Temple d'Honneur" provides an example of poetic egotism associated with a dream vision narrator; the narrator introduces his dream poem with an acknowledgement of himself and his feelings:

Encor m'en avint awan une
Qui n'a pas esté trop commune
Ne remoustrate jusqu'à chi,
Dont grandement j'en remerchi
Mon sentement qui l'a gardé
Et si bellement retardé
[Something happened to me this year which has not been very widely known until now—and for that I thank my own feelings, which have preserved it and held it back, held close and in prison, until I have reason to speak and come up with it again. Now it has come back to me again, for my pleasure requires it, which willingly forges on ahead. And this makes me communicate it, and so I dare to reveal it].

The dream vision was a useful way, therefore, for the medieval poet to write with his or her own voice. A dream was personally experienced, and the situation of a dreamer relating his dream could be considered analogous to a poet reciting his poetry. The important similarity was that the mind of the dreamer, like the mind of the poet, was the creating mind. Therefore, whether ideals or indigestion were the cause of the dream, the recitation of it could be considered his/her own creation.

Furthermore, certain characteristics of the dream vision and corresponding attributes of the dreamer could be used to influence audience attitudes towards the powers of literature. The dream vision, as will be discussed below, had played a long-standing role in the conflict between personal revelation and accepted authority. The genre of the dream vision offered a
way to bridge that gap: it provided a framework for combining a poet's personal literary offering with a known and widely accepted story. In this case the listener hears both what ancient authors had said about Dido and Aeneas and what Geoffrey has dreamed about the famous couple. This interweaving forces the audience to question the assumption that truth, at least truth in literature, takes on only one aspect. On the other hand, listeners needed to be equally wary of accepting the narrator's version of the tale as the only right one. Ideally, each listener should be mindful that, as a modern critic recently put it, "To every redactor his own Dido."18

The narrator's skeptical view of the oracular nature of dreams in the Proem of The House of Fame also encourages the listener to take a common-sense approach to authority in literature. As John of Salisbury vigorously pointed out, the variables in dream interpretation are so many that "quae aut nulla aut inanis ars est"19 ["it is no art or at best a meaningless one"].20 One sign may convey many different meanings: "Omnis vero res quot habet aliarum similitudines, tot gerit earumdem significationes"21 ["Any particular thing has inherent many meanings of other objects as it has likeness to them"].22 Thus, the truth of any individual dream is impossible to verify.

The same analysis could be made of poetic narratives as well: there could be as many interpretations of a poet's work as there are readers, listeners, or fellow poets who come into contact with the piece.23 Such freedom of interpretation could have left a doctrinally oriented audience with a sense of futility, however. If it is impossible to discover where the "truth" in a text leaves off and the poet's opinion begins, if there is no authoritative meaning in any given story, what is the purpose of reading, listening to, or otherwise experiencing poetry? Perhaps Chaucer considered that such an objection to the medieval version of reader-response criticism was ultimately restrictive for the poet: perhaps Chaucer's narrator serves as a reminder that every poet has the liberty to create his or her own literary interpretations. Operating under such a principle, the audience's responsibility would be to seek out and
evaluate the personal creativity of the poet rather than that more elusive quality, truth in literature.

The dream vision, therefore, offered the medieval poet an acceptable framework for certain kinds of creative expression. As a dreamer, the narrator had license to tell stories normally unbelievable. Poets, it seems, have relied for centuries upon the dream to provide a sanctioned format for this kind of creativity. Dreams in classical literature were often used to relate conversations with the dead or to see visions of life hereafter. Giovanni Boccaccio claimed freedom from the believable for the art of poetry altogether when he declared in *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*:

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Huius enim fervoris sunt sublimes effectus,
ut puta mentem in desiderium dicendi
compellere, peregrinas et in auditas
inventiones excogitare
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["This fervor of poetry brings forth strange and unheard of creations of mind").

The events related in a dream vision, therefore, did not have to correspond to events experienced in everyday life. The audience, in fact, expected some distortion. Furthermore, medieval audiences did not need Macrobius or a fourteenth-century Freud to tell them that dreams could be mysterious. Personal experience would have been sufficient, I would guess, to remind them that dreams were often "fantastic" experiences. In fact, ancient legend gave dreams supernatural origins. As told in Guillaume de Machaut’s "Le Dit de la Fontaine Amoureuse," the sons and daughters of Morpheus created diverse visions in all shapes and languages and of all tenors:

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Les mille fleus qui entour lui estoient,

Et les filles aussi, se transmuoient
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A leur voloir, car les fourmes prenoient

Des creatures,

Si qu'en dormant, par songes, se moustroient

Diversement; pour ce les gens songoient

Et en songant meintes choses vœoient,

Douces ou sures.

Les unes sont pongnans, les autres dures:

L'une est clère, les autres sont obscures;

De tous païs langages et murmures

Parler savoient:

D'iaue, de feu, de toutes aventures,

De fer, de fust, prenoient les figures. 28

[The thousand sons, and the thousand daughters too, who were round about him (Morpheus), transformed themselves at will, for they look on the forms of creatures, so that they showed themselves very diversely in sleep through dreams. By this means people dreamed, and in dreaming saw many things, both sweet and bitter: some are painful, some are hard; one is clear, others are obscure; they know how to speak all languages: they take the shape of water, of fire, of iron, of wood]. 29

Common human experience also probably confirmed that sleep could produce strange visions.

Therefore, the moment a speaker announced a dream, the listener would know to release the narrator from the demands of realism in his work: simultaneously, the listener would ready his or her own imagination for the unusual.
The dream vision did not signal complete irresponsibility, however. The audience had to do more than accept the marvels it was hearing; it must listen for meaning in the dreamer's "wondrous" vision. Although dreams, according to John of Salisbury, might not convey universal truths, they could nevertheless reflect the dreamer's personal convictions. Macrobius, a more enthusiastic supporter of dream analysis than John of Salisbury, had carefully identified certain kinds of dreams that could reveal truths couched in words that hid their "profound meaning"[^30] ["profundit prudentiae"].[^31] For example, dreams such as the "somnium" [an enigmatic dream], the "oraculum" [an oracular dream], or the "visio" [a prophetic dream] could be considered reliable.[^32] Both dream visions in *The House of Fame* and *The Legend of Good Women* exemplify the kind of "somnia" Macrobius termed "personal."[^33] According to Macrobius, these dreams are considered reliable dreams. Perhaps it is not unreasonable to conjecture, then, that audience members familiar with dream theory would have expected Geoffrey's dream visions to contain reliably enlightening information. The listeners also knew that meaning would be evident only to those present who were sharp enough to see through the dreamer's distorted pictures.

Having a dream vision carried one more potential responsibility for the listener. According to Macrobius, dreams in themselves could suggest "what action to take or avoid"[^34] ["facendum vitandum ve denuntiat"].[^35] Recitation of a dream, therefore, could be thought of as more than simply an opportunity for a speaker to amaze or entertain his listeners. A dream and the subsequent narration of it could serve didactic purposes as well. An audience, then, would be responsible for listening to the dream narration with the intention of searching out what actions were recommended within the dream. Listeners could then translate the ideas found in the dream into actions related to their own lives. And, I suggest, it was the lovers in the audience who were to take the most note of Dido and Aeneas's actions as they are related by Chaucer's narrator.
Finally, the dream narrative was a logical framework for a speaker who was concerned about his or her credibility as a moral guide. Relying on the dream vision's traditional association with authority, spiritual and temporal, the medieval poets could bolster their own image as trustworthy speakers by becoming dreamers. Nicole de Margival's narrator insures his credibility as a poet explicitly through the narration of a dream:

Seignor, j'ai oy des m'enfance
Que songe sont bien demonstrance,
Aucune fois, de verité;
Por ce mes mos a recité,
Que voloir de dire, j. songe ai
N'a pas gramment que le sonjai. 36
[I have heard since childhood that dreams are sometimes a very good indication of truth, and for this reason I have put into words a dream that I dreamed not long ago]. 37

Constance B. Hieatt makes my point succinctly: "The dream convention lends a certain sort of authority, and authority was dear to the medieval public." 38 The medieval dream narrator, as Geoffrey T. Shepherd describes him, 39 pretends to be composing in such a way that his authorization cannot be challenged. Chaucer's narrator likewise wants to appear knowledgeable before his audience. As if to reinforce an air of authorial confidence, he periodically breaks into his narration to defend his opinions against critics and skeptics. Regular reminders of the marvelous nature of his dream worked to impress listeners just as did Long Will's assertions in the Prologue to Piers Plowman. 40 It implanted the idea that poets who are subject to wonderful visions must be special. Even if the listener did not fully understand the meaning of the poet's experience, he or she knew that a dreamer of wondrous visions was worthy of attention.
The Dreamer in The House of Fame: The Proem

The waking narrator wastes no time in announcing his dream vision: "God turne us every dream to goode!" he proclaims in the first line of the Proem to The House of Fame. The sentence as well as the sentiment would have been a familiar opening for the audience. Not surprisingly, he also begins The Legend of Good Women with a sentence: "A thousand tymes have I herd men telle / That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle" (Prol. 1-2). Geffrey's appeal to God would also have made the poem's opening less threatening to his audience: it was often argued in the Middle Ages that poetry came from God. Boccaccio, for example, acknowledged the "science of poetry" as coming from "the bosom of God":

Inquient forsan isti obiurgatores
perlucidi, et si dixerim scientiam hanc ex
dei sinu recentibus adhuc animabus
infundi . . . poetam natura ipsa valere, et
mentis viribus excitari, et quasi divino
quodam spiritu inflari.42

[Now though I allege that this science of poetry has ever streamed forth from the bosom of God upon souls while even yet in their tenderest years . . . poetry depends solely upon an inborn faculty infused with a strange supernal inspiration.]43

The announced genre of the poem itself, combined with the rhetoric of the introduction, welcomed the listener onto comfortable literary ground. At the same time, an appeal that God turn every dream to good reminded the listeners of the potentially supernatural connections between poet, God, and the dream narrative they are about to hear.
Elaborating on the importance of God's help in his work, Geffrey continues: "For hyt is wonder, be the roode, / To my wyt, what causeth swevenes" (HF 2-3). Perhaps God understands the cause of dreams, for Geffrey certainly does not. The idea that God not only knew the cause but was responsible for human dreams was often expressed in medieval poetry. At the beginning of The Pearl, for example, the poet explains his or her trance as an action initiated by the grace of God:

_Fro spot my spyryt ther sprang in space,_
_My body on balke ther bod in sweuen,_
_My goste is gon in godes grace,_
_In auenture ther meruaytes meuen_44

[From that spot my spirit sprang apace. On the turf my body abode in trance. My soul was gone by God's own grace Adventuring where marvels chance].45

Concluding the vision, the Pearl Poet relinquishes both the Pearl and the dream to God, saying, "and sythen to god I hit bytaste / In krystcs dere blessyng and m yn"46 ["with Christ's sweet blessing and mine own I then to God it did resign"].47 The poet/dreamer of Parlement of the Thre Ages ends his or her dream with the conclusion that God, by way of the dream, has brought bliss to both poet and mankind: "There dere Drightyne his daye dele us of thi blysse"48 ["There, dear God, on this day give us of thy bliss"]. Leaving the cause of dreams to God, as well as the final analysis of them, therefore, was a properly pious gesture on Geffrey's part.

It is also apparent from the opening line that Geffrey wants to involve his audience immediately in the complexities of his dream narrative. He uses the first-person-plural pronoun "us" ("trune us every drem to goode") to draw his listeners into the poem. Narrator and audience are to grapple with the same problem. And, with help from God,
each listener is to turn the dream (the poem) to his or her own good. The charge is a warm invitation to work together, and the pronoun “us” helps extend that invitation to the audience.

Geffrey continues, thinking out loud about the mysterious nature of dreams:

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.... (HF 2-6)

Why do some dreams “come true” and others “never come” to pass? His thoughts might have reminded a listener of the Romance of the Rose, which also begins with a discussion of the degree to which dreams foretell the future:

Aucunes genz dient qu’en songes
n’a se fables non et mençonges:
mes l’en puët tex songes songier
qui ne sont mie mençongier,
ainz sont après bien aparant,
si en puis bien traire a garant
un auctor qui ot non Macrobes,
qui ne tint pas songes a lobes,
angois escrit l’avisyon
qui avint au roi Scypion.
Qui c’ouques cuit ne qui que die
qu’il est folor et musardie
de croire que songes aviegne,
[Many a man holds dreams to be but lies. All fabulous: but there have been some dreams No whit deceptive, as was later found. Well might one cite Macrobius, who wrote The story of the Dream of Scipio, And was assured that dreams are oftentimes true. But, if someone should wish to say or think 'Tis fond and foolish to believe that dreams Foretell the future, he may call me fool. Now, as for me, I have full confidence That visions are significant to man Of good and evil].

Despite sharing similar subject matter, the two dreamers mentioned do not share all of the same attitudes towards dreams. Chaucer’s narrator does not enjoy “full confidence” in the predictive value of dreams as does de Lorris’ dreamer. Instead, Geffrey is neither a believer nor a disbeliever; he simply does not commit himself.

This indecision, however, does not discredit the narrator; rather, it brings audience and narrator into sympathy with each other. They shared, most likely, doubts about the significance of dreams. Who in the audience, no matter how pious, knew with surety the origins and meanings of dreams? Even philosophers like Macrobius and John of Salisbury disagreed on the subject. Geffrey’s skepticism, combined with his proposals that one’s “complexion” or “feftenesse of her brayn” could cause dreams, helps refocus the audience’s
concentration away from the supernatural aspects of dream literature towards the more down-
to-earth problem of understanding the dream/poem itself. The poem, at any rate, has palpable connections with the real world through the mind of the narrator even if its origin is unknown.

Geffrey's skepticism has a humorous side as well, as evidenced by the length and breadth of his musings about the causes of dreams. The speaker in *The Romance of the Rose* asks about and confirms the significance of dreams in thirteen lines. In *The House of Fame*, on the other hand, Geffrey debates the issue for fifty-eight lines. George L. Kittredge describes Geffrey's peroration as a technical masterpiece "run into one long, eager, and breathless sentence." At the last, the narrator turns the whole inquiry over to God, declaring, "oonly that the holy roode / Turne us every dream to goode" (*HF* 57-58). In the end, nothing is concluded. Geffrey's extensive philosophizing is only a display of erudition and comedy.

The rhyme scheme in that "breathless" sentence also creates comic effects. The listener is lulled into his or her own dreamy stupor by the sing-song patter of multi-syllabic rhymes like "swevenes" and "evenes," "complexions" and "reflexions," and "dysordynaunee" and "acustum aunce." Periodically, the narrator jiggles the rhythm with quick and easy rhymes such as "thinke" and "swinke" or "sayn" and "brayn." Awkward, almost forced rhymes like "causes" and "cause is" are added to encourage the listener, perhaps, to smile at Geffrey's nonsense. The rhyme on lines 57 and 58, which concludes the long sentence, particularly captures the mood of the argument, "oonly that the holy roode / Turne us every dream to goode." The broad sound and mono-syllabic simplicity of the rhyme emphasize the childishness of the entire discussion.

These concluding two lines (57 and 58) are important in one other aspect. The lines repeat almost word for word the Proem's opening line: "God turne us every dream to goode!" The repetition serves a purpose other than rhetorical neatness. Here is a way to
show the audience members that a discussion of dream interpretation can lead them in circles. The symmetry of the poetry proves fatal to the prestige of dream theories. The narrator conceivably could have shrugged his shoulders as he spoke in order to punctuate the pointlessness of further discussion.\textsuperscript{53} Despite the knowledge Geffrey displays in his long catalogue of scholarly information about dreams, his concluding argument makes a tautology, not a proof. In the end, then, the elaborately constructed discussion of the causes of dreams satirizes the entire system of dream analysis itself.

Geffrey, nevertheless, begins this satire straightforwardly enough. He asks innocently about the various kinds of dreams and visions, saying:

\begin{quote}
And why th'effect folweth of somme,  
And of somme hit shal never come:  
Why that is an avisioun  
And this a revelacioun,  
Why this a drem, why that a sweven,  
And nought to every man lyche even:  
Why this a fantome, why these oracles,  
I not…. \hfill \textit{(HF 5-11)}
\end{quote}

But again the rhetoric of the lines contributes to a humorous view of dream analysis. In the opening series of questions, Geffrey repeats the interrogative pronoun "why" six times. The series builds to a crescendo, but the flurry of anaphora ends with an anticlimactic thud. Why is this a dream, why that a revelation, why another a fantome? "I not," says Geffrey, shrugging away the issue with only two words.

Despite the thirteen dream problems and seventeen potential causes cited, the audience is left without any answers. Geffrey, however, has knowledgeably recited the various classifications of dreams and dream causes established by classical and medieval commentators.
Like Macrobius, Geffrey can differentiate between an "avisioun," a "revelacioun," a "dreem," a "sweven," and a "fantome." For answers to many of his questions, he could have turned to Macrobius or a similar source; these commentators established the basis of medieval dream theory. Yet Geffrey leaves the listener with the disclaimer that he knows nothing definitive about the subject. Is the listener to conclude that Geffrey is simply being modest despite his encyclopedic knowledge?

I would suggest rather that this display of erudition leading nowhere was designed to show the listener that answers to questions about dream analysis were not really worth finding. Locating the source of a poet's inspiration, like finding the cause of a dream, is a similarly meaningless task. The source of a creative experience, be it literary or spiritual, ought to be considered less important than the work itself. The dream, or vision, or poem perhaps is best appreciated and understood if considered as an entity apart from its sources.

Geffrey's abrupt, two-word refusal, "I not," to support any of the familiar dream theories may have been an initial warning to his audience that, like his dream, the source of his poetry was less significant than the creative integrity of the poem itself.

Geffrey continues, nevertheless, to apologize for his failure to understand the nature of dreams, as if not yet ready to leave the subject: "for I certeinly / Ne kan hem noght, ne never thinke / To besily my wyt to swinke" (HF 11-16). Thirty-four lines later he reiterates his confusion:

To understonde hyt aryyght,

For hyt is warned to derkly:--

But why the cause is, noght wot I. (HF 50-52)

Geffrey seems to take no pains to flatter himself in front of his audience. The more he demurs, however, the more evidence he displays of his real knowledge about traditional approaches to dreams and similar imaginative events. Geffrey, I would argue, is not as
witless as he pretends to be. Other readers of *The House of Fame* might not concur, although I would offer that those who view the narrator’s self-criticism as cause to question his credibility as a literary critic are perhaps not “listening” closely enough to what Geffrey actually says. Consequently, those reader/listeners never come to know Chaucer’s brilliantly drawn character named “Geffrey.” Kemp Malone, for example, dismissed Geffrey altogether by declaring that use of an obtuse narrator was a Chaucerian joke.\(^{55}\) G.L. Kittredge only saw Geffrey as an ignorant fellow who served to highlight Chaucer’s ironic attitude towards the authority of the narrator.\(^{56}\) Hieatt explained Geffrey’s vagueness by equating it with what she perceived as Chaucer’s own skepticism, and Wolfgang Clemen believed the “aloof” and “disinterested narrator” was a tool employed to reduce all “learning to a farce.”\(^{57}\) While I disagree with Clemen’s description of the narrator, I nevertheless agree with his idea that Geffrey deliberately undermines the reverence the audience might usually have accorded the supposedly learned theories of dream analysis.

Geffrey’s feigned inability to discover the secrets of his dream serves another purpose, one less satiric and more dramatic. It gives him an opportunity to involve his listeners in the creative process: he challenges them to figure the business out: “But whoso of these miracles / The causes knoweth bet then I; / Devyne he” (*HF* 12-14). Even though Geffrey uses the third-person pronoun in the sentence, a listener might still feel personally addressed. As Geffrey pronounced “whoso,” he might have looked out from his podium to stare at courtiers in the front row to make the reference even more direct. In a similar way, William Langland’s *Long Will* exhorted his listeners to divine the meaning of his dream about the belled cat: “What this meteles by meneth, ye men that ben merye, / Devyne ye, for y ne dra, by dere god almythen.”\(^{58}\) While the pronoun “ye” in Will’s speech is more directly aimed at the audience/reader, the command to others to “devyne” the dream is of the same nature. Geffrey, like other dream narrators concerned with instructing their listeners, viewed the audience’s intellectual participation as essential to the unfolding of a dream narrative.
Geffrey continues to seek his listeners' participation, using humor as a means to engage their interest. He gently ridicules certain personality types thought to be predisposed to dreams or visions. Those types or "humours" probably described people familiar to both narrator and audience members, perhaps even describing themselves. For example, Geffrey speculates that dreams could come to those too "curious in studye," "melancolyous," or too full of "drede," "devocion," or "contemplacion" (HF 29-34). He makes fun of poets like himself who spend too much time with their books. Such dreamers, he mischievously implies, can lose their sense of balance through excess devotion and study; not coincidentally, the eagle criticizes Geffrey for this same fault in the second book of the poem. Geffrey's inclusion of himself in a satire of dreamers, just as he is on the verge of telling his own dream, helps set a friendly tone in which all present could feel comfortable enough not to take themselves too seriously. The ability to make self-incriminating jokes also indicates the narrator's confidence in himself as an entertaining yet self-conscious storyteller.

Lovers in the courtly audience are also fair game for the narrator's jokes. He muses about their passions, suggesting their emotional life negatively affects their dreams:

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

Young lovers in the audience may have merely laughed off this analysis of their sometimes foolish behavior, but Geffrey's comments could also have taught them something about how to respond to the narrative ahead. The listener might have remembered that, after falling in love with Aeneas, Dido, too, suffered dreams that kept her from sleeping. The listener now faces a problem: Can one believe the dreams of either poets or lovers? If lovers and poets
alike engage in activities "over-muche" and so suffer strange dreams from their passions, are these dreams trustworthy? Do their passions delude them? If so, the listener needs especially to be wary of a poet's version of a love story. A narrator/poet posing as a dreamer could be guilty of inserting his personal, perhaps immoderate, passions into his account.

Those passions, however, may not be such inappropriate biases to add to a poem, an idea that will be discussed throughout the remainder of this study. Furthermore, reference to the poet's feelings suggests another motivation for Geffrey's skepticism about dreams. By refusing to identify an external cause of the dream, Geffrey opens the way to claiming personal authorship of it. He says he does not know what caused his dream, and his jabs at dream analysis suggest the metaphysical sources usually thought to cause dreams are not worth pondering. Consequently, the audience is not encouraged to search out a divine cause. Rather, it is urged to pay attention to the human author, the poet. This narrator's inspiration or dream vision source comes, in good part, from within himself. As will be discussed further in the chapters that follow, Geffrey's passions will color and beautify the narrative to come. Despite his humor and self-effacement in the Proem, then, Geffrey proudly announces his personal dream and asks that the audience think of it as his own creation.

**The Dreamer in The House of Fame: The Invocation**

The narrator's emphasis on himself and the special nature of his dream characterizes the ending of the Proem and the beginning of The Invocation. He concludes the Proem with a boast that no man before or after him has ever dreamed so "wonderful" a dream as his:

> For never, sieth that I was born,
> Ne no man elles me beforne.
> Mette, I trowe stedfastly.
>
> So wonderful a drem as I.... (HF 59-62)
Announcing the wonderful or marvelous nature of the dream was one way a dreamer could reinforce his credibility. Early in *Piers Plowman* the dreamer declares, "and merueylousliche me mette, as y may telle." Chaucer's dream narrator in the *Book of the Duchess* similarly introduces his dream of the sorrowing knight:

Me mette so ynly swete a sweven,
So wonderful, that never yit
Y trowe no man had the wyt
To konne wel my sweven rede.... (BD 276-79)

A dream narrator could rely on reference to the marvelous nature of a dream to generate respect for himself or herself as a speaker. The remarkable dream experience presumably enlightened the dreamer in a way that could command credibility.

Geffrey, however, seems to ask his listeners for recognition, not because of his role as a teller of marvelous stories, but because of his personal involvement in the story. In his four-line boast at the end of the Proem, Geffrey repeats the word "I" three times: he uses the objective form of the pronoun "me" another time. On each line there is indication that Geffrey is aware of his own presence in the narration:

...I was born.... (HF 59)
...no man elles me befor.... (HF 60)
...I trowe stedfastly.... (HF 61)
...as I [mette].... (HF 62)

In declaring that no man born before or after him has dreamt so wonderfully, he sets himself apart from all other dreamers, ancient or contemporary. His work, the dream narrative, is to be judged above the work of others. The sources, those writer/dreamers born "beforn" him, are not as marvelous in Geffrey's eyes as is his own narrative.
In the next line he introduces another even more obviously unconventional element into his dream narrative. Unlike most dream visions that occurred in May or during the warm spring season, Geffrey's takes place in cold December, "the tenthe day now" (HF 63). This unusual time-setting continues to separate Geffrey from traditional dream poets. And before he turns to The Invocation, Geffrey leaves his listeners with a final reminder that his own thoughts will direct this narrative. While he promises to tell them "everydel" about his dream, that commitment is qualified in an important way. He will tell the dream "as I kan now remembre" (HF 64). The contents of the narrative will be directed by what Geffrey recalls or chooses to recall. Perhaps a hint of the more modern role of poet/author as fiction writer is embedded in Geffrey's words.

The opening of The Invocation section also emphasizes the importance of the speaking poet. Geffrey introduces the section: "But at my gynnynge, trusteth wel" (HF 66). He then adds, "I wol make invocacion" (HF 67). For Geffrey, "my" beginning and the audience's trust in his thoughts precede the announcement of the rhetorical device. Geffrey's own sense of inspiration comes before the formal request for it. The imposition of personal self-confidence upon the more impersonal convention marks this invocation as having been created, I suggest, not as a classical imitation, but as a mirror of Geffrey's own sense of self-worth as a writer.

The directive to the audience found in the opening lines of The Invocation helps to build that mutual trust Geffrey asks for between himself and the audience. The first line of The Invocation is tied by rhyme to the concluding line of the Proem. In the Proem line Geffrey has promised, "I wol yow tellen everydel" (HF 65). Geffrey rhymes in The Invocation, "But at my gynnynge, trusteth wel" (HF 66). The listener can make an aural connection between the two sections, a connection that underlines the fact that the two phrases ("I wol yow tellen" and "trusteth wel") are both directed to the audience. A give and take between speaker and listener, the "I" and the "yow," seems to be in order. The "I" will
tell the "yow" "everydel." But the "yow" must agree to "trusteth wel" what the speaker relates. Thus, one of the aims of the narrator is to use his self-confidence to gain the audience's confidence. This trust needs to be established before he proceeds with his story.

In case the audience was not yet ready to believe him on his own authority, however, Geoffrey adds a traditional voice of authority to The Invocation. He invokes Morpheus, the God of Sleep. This classical deity was important not only because he gave sleep to humans, but because his offspring had the power to transport dreams of all kinds into the mind of the sleeper. In Ovid's story of Ceyx and Alcyone, the dreamer/narrator enlists the aid of Morpheus to bring a vision of drowned Ceyx to sleeping Alcyone. Froissart's narrator in Le Paradis d'Amours prays "so much to Morpheus" that, as a result, he falls asleep and has "such reflections as will be related" in the poem to follow. Geoffrey indicates that he also knows of Morpheus' powers as he describes the god's attributes:

I wol make invocacion,
With special devotion,
Unto the god of sleepe anon,
That duelleth in a cave of stoon
Upon a strem that cometh fro Lete,
That is a flood of helle unswete,
Besyde a folk men clepeth Cymerie,—
There sleepeth ay this god unmerie
With his slepy thousand sons,
That alwey for to slepe hir wonen is. (HF 69-76)

The God of Sleep was frequently called upon in literature to provide enlightenment by way of visions, making Geoffrey's decision to call upon Morpheus for aid seem unexceptional.
As other poets had done, Geffrey also speaks in The Invocation of his concern for telling the poem correctly. After introducing to his listeners his intention to call upon Morpheus, Geffrey explains exactly what he will ask of the god:

And to this god, that I of rede.
Prey I that he wol me spede
My sweven for to telle aryght,
Yf every drem stonde in his myght. (HF 77-78)

Ovid's invocation to The Metamorphoses expresses a similar need for supernatural power in order to tell of miraculous events with the right "voice":

In nova fert animus corpora: di, coeptis (nam vosmutatis et illas) adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen.64

[Now I shall tell of things that change, new being out of old: since you, O Gods, created Mutabile arts and gifts, give me the voice To tell the shifting story of the world From its beginning to the present hour].65

For a moment, the listener seems to be promised only a good imitation of old poetry. In turn, however, the listener need bring nothing more unusual to this literary experience than the deference accorded accepted poets. If the audience members were not paying close attention, they might have been lulled into the comforting thought that their intellects were not going to be overly challenged that evening. As Geffrey's Invocation progresses, however, it begins to differ more noticeably from classical models. Simultaneously, more is demanded of the listener, who must determine what Geffrey is trying to say by those differences.

As early as the first eleven lines of The Invocation, there are indications that the narrator will rely more upon his own authorial voice than any voice supplied him by
metaphysical powers. At the same time that Geffrey formulates his prayer "to this god," he distances himself from the classical deity. He prays to a god "that I of rede" (HF 77). Morpheus is not a figure in the narrator's present life; Morpheus is an antique literary character. The audience might have assumed from his comment only two facts, however: that Geffrey has erudition and that he is self-consciously imitating the masters. And the next line seems to confirm Geffrey's imitative aims. While peppered with first-person pronouns, the line follows the Ovidian model for invocations: "Prey I that he wol me spede" (HF 78). Exactly what Geffrey asks Morpheus to expedite, however, belies a more modern, egotistical poet: "Prey I that he wol me spede / My sweven," continues Geffrey. It is his own dream, "my sweven," he wants to "telle aright" (HF 79). One could argue that the line is nevertheless tradition-bound because the original creator of the dream seems to be identified as Morpheus; "every drem stonde in his myght" (HF 80). One small word at the head of that line, however, suggests a counter argument. "Yf," says Geffrey, "every drem stonde in his myght." The qualifier, "yf," throws doubt on the idea of supernatural authorship and, in contrast, highlights the more likely source of creativity, the narrating poet.

Because Morpheus was such an obviously antique deity, it is also possible that Geffrey's invocation to Morpheus was meant to be humorous. As David M. Bevington puts it, "Morpheus is a ridiculous deity to invoke when requesting the audience's attention for the next hour." Sleep was not a condition to be encouraged during the forthcoming presentation. Thus, the traditional invocation becomes subject to "a treatment comical and facetious." Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that in the next line the narrator seeks the aid of another, more contemporary, god.

In this second stage of The Invocation, Geffrey calls upon the Christian deity that was, indeed, part of his and his audience's present life: The Great Mover of all. This portion of The Invocation may have touched a more familiar note for audiences, encouraging them to bring their own contemporary values into play as they listened to the narrative. The narrator
also uses this appeal to God to reach out to his listeners in a personal way. Geffrey asks that The Great Mover turn his attention, not to the poet this time, but to those in the audience. He specifically asks that God give them joy in their own dreams:

And he that mover ys of al
That is and was and ever shal,
So yive hem joye that hyt here
Of alle that they dreme to-yere.... (HF 81-84)

May God give to those here joy in all that they dream this year. Geffrey also begs God’s aid for those who wish to succeed as lovers:

And for to stoden alle in grace
Of her loves, or in what place
That hem were levest for to stonde.... (HF 85-87)

May they succeed as lovers, either by winning the good graces of a lady love or, perhaps, by finding grace through the more spiritual love of God.

In the next twenty lines, Geffrey continues to focus on both God and his audience. He connects the audience’s response to the poem with that spiritual aid for which he has just petitioned. Having asked a blessing upon dreamers and lovers, Geffrey now asks the Lord to protect listeners who are sympathetic to his work:

And shelde hem fro povertre and shonde,
And from unhap and ech disese,
And sende hem al that may hem plese,
That take hit wel and skorne hyt noyte,
Ne hyt mysdem en in her thoght
Thorgh malicious entencion. (HF 88-93)
The six lines quoted above could be simply an example of the traditional pose of humility often assumed by medieval poets: may the Lord protect and bless those who do not scorn the poet’s work. The humble poet begs in conventional fashion for a fair and positive reception of his work from courtiers of diverse loyalties.

Geffrey quickly begins a new sentence, however, with an attitude considerably less humble. This new burst of confidence is directed towards the poor souls who do “mysdeme” his work:

\[ \text{And whoso thorgh presumpcion,} \]
\[ \text{Or hate, or skorn, or thorgh envye,} \]
\[ \text{Dispit, or jape, or vilanye,} \]
\[ \text{Mysdeme hyt, pray I Jesus God…. (HF 94-97)} \]

In rapid succession, Geffrey lists seven potential sources of “malicious entencion.” Tension builds as he repeats the “or” phrase five times in a row. If Geffrey had looked out at selected audience members he suspected were guilty of any or all of the “seven deadly sins” cited, a few people might have squirmed in their chairs. The narrator finishes his plea to “Jesus God” with a threatening flourish:

\[ \text{...pray I Jesus God} \]
\[ \text{That (dreme he barefot, dreme he shod),} \]
\[ \text{That every harm that any man} \]
\[ \text{Hath had, syth the world began,} \]
\[ \text{Befalle hym therof, or he sterve,} \]
\[ \text{And graunte he mote hit fal deserve…. (HF 97-102)} \]

Geffrey wishes vengeance on all who scorn his work, be they rich or poor. May they suffer all the ills of the world since time began, and may they be granted all that they deserve, requests Geffrey of the Savior. The previously contrite prayer for help in telling his dream “astyght” has become a thoroughly egotistical, and partly comic, authorial outburst. The
Invocation has progressed from classical imitation to contemporary adaptation. At the end, Geffrey seems to parody the very idea of an invocation.

In Geffrey's fit of spleen, the audience could watch with humor as the poet exaggerates the power of "the creator" in order to sentence disbelievers to all manner of punishments. As if he were a priest announcing a parable, Geffrey compares the fate of any who misjudge his work to that of the legendary ruler Cresus:

Lo, with such a conclusion
As had of his avision
Cresus, that was kyng of Lyde,
That high upon a gebet dyde!
This prayer shal he have of me:
I am no bet in charyte!... (HF 103-08)

Geffrey equates the fate of those scornful listeners with that of King Cresus, who died because, through greed and lack of insight, he misinterpreted his own dream. The story was probably familiar one; it appeared in the Romance of the Rose and Chaucer condensed it in "The Monk's Tale." Cresus rejected his daughter's allegorical interpretation of the dream, choosing to believe his own literal one. Cresus declared: "car sachiez que cist nobles songes, / ou fause glose volez metre, / doit estre entenduz à la letre" ["a dream so noble, on which you have put / Such false significance, a literal / Interpretation needs"]. The King put his faith in a materialistic and ultimately foolish outcome of the vision. As a result of this failure, King Cresus "non feist au gibet pendre" ["could not save himself from gallows tree"]. Such will be the fate of those listeners who do not appreciate the complexity or depth of his narrative, implies Geffrey.

The example of Cresus ends the narrator's introductory attempts to warn his audience against literal, unthinking interpretations of either the present "vision" or their own dreams.
Like the King's daughter, Phanie, in the classical story, Geffrey tries to lead the way to the best interpretation of the mysteries of life—in this narrative, the mysteries of human love. The final couplet reflects clearly the teacher-pupil role desired between narrator and audience: "Now herkeneth, as I have yow seyd, / What that I mette, or I abreyd" (HF 109-10). Now listen, he tells the audience, to what I am telling you. Emphasis is placed upon the "I" as the giver of information; the "yow" is identified as the object or receiver of the knowledge. Geffrey, as both the writer of literature and a character within a piece of literature, becomes another educator in the centuries-old process of teaching through storytelling. In this case, however, the old ideas passed down are newly infused with the narrator's personal thoughts.
CHAPTER III

THE DREAMER IN

THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

The Waking Narrator

Like that of The House of Fame, the actual dream section of The Legend of Good Women does not begin immediately. The narrator has work to do in the Prologue first. As in the introductory portions of The House of Fame, The Legend of Good Women narrator's task in the Prologue is to prepare the audience for the narration to follow. In both poems a waking narrator attempts to put each listener into the best frame of mind to appreciate that same narrator's about-to-be-narrated dream. The introductory work done by the waking poet in the Legend, however, is lengthier than that in The House of Fame. The narrator's presentation of himself as a poet saturates The Legend of Good Women Prologue well before he actually becomes a dreamer: the Prologue, therefore, contains a fuller discussion of the narrator's literary goals than can be found in the Proem and Invocation to The House of Fame.

Like Geffrey in The House of Fame, the narrator in The Legend of Good Women has a second important job in the introductory section of his poem. He must gain the attention and trust of his audience so that his "Geffrey" will be believed when he later relates his own versions of certain "olde stories." As the stories (or "legends") are actually Geffrey's personal creations, despite their historical sources, he has a special interest in their reception. And so he takes care to introduce them properly.

Also like Geffrey in The House of Fame, The Legend of Good Women narrator starts his introduction with a sententia: "A thousand tymes have I herd men telle / That ther ys joy
in hevene and peyne in helle" (LGW, Prol. 1-2). The joy of heaven and the pain of hell were ideas that saturated the Catholic Mass and were graphically illustrated in literature by Dante in La Divina Commedia. The two lines seem to say to the audience, "Here is an idea everyone in the room understands." The familiar nature of the sentiment might have served to put the listeners at ease quickly.

Such an opening would also have been effective because an appeal to ideas held true by the general public was not an unusual way to begin a poem in the Middle Ages. DeLorris' narrator, for example, opens his poem by declaring, "aucunes genz dient qu'en songes" ["many a man holds dreams to be but lies"]. The speaker in Sir Orfeo explains to his audience, "We redyn ofte and fynde ywryte / As clerkes don us to wyte" ["we often read and written find, / As learned men do us remind"]. The technique is related to oral traditions, as exemplified by the early Anglo-Saxon narrative poem Exodus, which begins, "hwæt we feor and neah gefrigen habbath / Ofer middangeard moyses domas / wraetlico wordrint wera cn eo risu m" ["lo! we have heard far and near over the world of the judgments of Moses"]. By the fourteenth century, Jean Froissart combined public and personal means to confirm truths in the opening of his dit, Le Temple d'Honneur:

Je cuide et croi, et s'est mes dis,

Ensi l'ai je veu toutdis,

Qu'il n'est onques jours qui ajourne"["I think and believe, and have been told (and constantly observed)

that there is never a day that dawns..."]

Geffrey's listeners would probably have considered his own opening statement to be an accepted introductory device designed to bring them together quickly on an undisputable issue. The Legend of Good Women narrator continues to encourage a congenial atmosphere in the next line when he concurs with those who say there is joy in heaven and pain in hell. He
comfortingly agrees with well-accepted theory, saying, "And I acorde wel that it ys so" (LGW, Prol. 3).

The familiarity of the idea presented in the opening lines of the poem works to unite speaker and audience because it focuses attention on a universally agreed-upon notion. Geffrey's long-range goal, nevertheless, is not to repeat old truths: he will soon use the logic behind the accepted idea to support his own, less orthodox ones. Before that can be effected, however, Geffrey must establish himself as an independent thinker who knows his own mind. By the fourth line Geffrey begins to do just that. He counters his statement of "acorde" on line three with a contradicting "but" and argues:

And I acorde wel that it ys so;
But, natheles, yet wot I wel also
That ther nis noon dwellyng in this contree,
That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe,
Ne may of hit noon other weyes witen.
But as he hath herd seyd, or founde it witen:
For by assay ther may no man it preve. (LGW, Prol. 3-9)

The qualifying thought the narrator offers is both factual and humorous. Geffrey bets that there is no man living or "dwellyng in this contree" who has been to heaven or hell to prove the point. The belief in heaven's joy or hell's pain, therefore, cannot be proven by "assay." Such a fact is literally true, although the idea that any mortal person could visit heaven or hell and return, Dante notwithstanding, is preposterous.

The narrator's factious hair-splitting is more than entertaining, however. It gives him an opportunity to create the impression that he has a real personality. The diction of the first several lines also contributes to the feeling that a person, not simply an impersonal speaker, addresses the audience. Even though the opening line is a pronouncement of a
commonly held belief, it is the voice of the narrator, not the idea itself, that is most prominent in the poem. By the fifth word in the poem, Geffrey introduces himself, the "I," into the story: "A thousand tymes have I herd men telle" [LGW, Prol. 1]. By comparison, other texts employing the same sort of sententious opening lines use more impersonal phrases, such as "many men," or choose the pronoun "we." These techniques place the narrator into a general group with the audience, in contrast to Geffrey's more independent stance. The active verb in The Legend of Good Women also makes the opening line powerful: Geffrey states, "have I herd," rather than adopting a weaker, more passive, approach in which he might have said, "A thousand times it has been said." The "I" is meant to be noticed in Geffrey's telling. To be sure it is, Geffrey reiterates the "I" on line three and on line four: three times within four lines.

Line four, which introduces Geffrey's alternative view to the homily first presented, especially indicates the narrator's forthright personality. He declares, "But, natheles, yet wot I wel also" (LGW, Prol. 4). The four qualifying words in themselves suggest a strong voice, "but," "natheles," "yet," and "also." What remains of the phrase, "wot I wel," is an announcement that the poem will contain the speaker's own ideas. The alliterated, monosyllabic words "wot" and "wel" surround the all-important "I" and emphasize the independent spirit of the poet.

It is important to note that Geffrey wants to be heard, yet he does not want to appear overbearing. That is not in his nature. As if trying not to offend the more devout listeners, he quickly concludes the opening stanza with the following, rather proverbial affirmation:

But God forbede but men shulde leve
Wel more thing then men han seen with ye!
Men shal nat wenen every thing a lye
But yf himself yt seeth, or elles dooth:
For, God wot, thing is never the lasse sooth,
Though every wight ne may it nat ysee,
Bernard the monk ne saugh nat all, pardee!  (LGW, Prol.10-16)

Geffrey explains that lack of proof merely argues for the belief in, and the acceptance of, "wel more thing then men han seen with ye!" This proverb was one most medieval listeners would have agreed was sound advice. The idea that men should believe more than meets the eye—that proof goes beyond what can be seen or heard by one man or woman—was a conventional argument for religious faith. The argument, however, serves Geffrey in other ways. First, it brings the listeners together once more on comfortable ground. More importantly, it prepares them for making two other leaps of faith more relevant to Geffrey, the narrating poet. Those leaps will be (a) to accept Geffrey's rendering of his dream, an event that could only be "seen" with the eye of the poet, as authentic poetry and (b) to consider how that dream poem could teach them to improve or enrich their own lives.

In providing a resolution to the old philosophical dilemma—How do you know something is true if you cannot see or feel it?—Geffrey simultaneously provides his listeners with an easy way to accept the veracity of his dream. As he states it, the logic is the same in both the metaphysical and literary situation: Believe more than you see, hear, or presume to be true from your physical senses. "Yeve credence," Geffrey says, "in every skylful wise" to those "that tellen of these olde appreved stories" (LGW, Prol. 20-21). Trust in the authority of books (and their authors, it is implied) "thurgh whiche that olde thinges ben in mynde" (LGW, Prol. 18). The writings of theologians will show cause for belief in heavenly joy and hellish pain, just as the tellers of "approved stories" can show cause for belief in the powers of poetic imagination. Geffrey works hard, therefore, to establish his credibility in order to bolster his authority as a teller of "approved stories."
There is, nevertheless, an important difference in temperament between the authoritative voice of the church fathers, for example, and the narrating voice in *The Legend of Good Women*. Geffrey, I suggest, intends the audience to think and question along with him: the comparatively doctrinaire clerics may have preferred their listeners to be more immediately accepting of the ideas expressed. Geffrey begins a new stanza by declaring, "Than mote we to bokes that we fynde" (*LGW*, Prol. 17). It is significant that the "we" appears twice in the one line. This pronoun appears once as the subject of a subordinate clause that describes the nature of books. These books "that we fynde" are not simply books discovered by a dogmatic narrator who presents their contents to a passive, accepting audience. Geffrey's audience was not to be, as Thomas Gradgrind in the nineteenth century preferred his students, an "inclined plane of little vessels . . . ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim."¹⁵ This was to be a contributing audience: we must turn to the books that we find. The switch from the indirect address of the opening stanza to the direct address of line 17, therefore, is an unambiguous invitation to the listeners to participate in the narrative at hand.

Twice in the Prologue, Geffrey actually asks his listeners to participate in the unfolding of the poem by bringing their own experiences or judgment to bear upon the scene he describes. On line 68 he makes an extended request to the lovers in his audience:

But helpeth, ye that han konnying and myght,

Ye lovers that kan make of sentement;

In this cas oghte ye be diligent

To forthren me somewhat in my labour... (*LGW*, Prol. 68-71)

"You who have the understanding and ability," Geffrey petitions, "bring to mind what you can make of sentiment to share in this story." As if needing an incentive for audience participation, Geffrey piques the listener's conscience by saying "be diligent" in giving this
aid—"as you ought." Seventy lines later, possibly in a more humorous vein, he challenges his listeners to reinterpret his phrase "other observaunces." " Construeth that as you lyst" (LGW, Prol. 152). The audience, it seems, is expected to personalize its experience of Geoffrey's poem, just as Geoffrey in his way personalizes the conventional dream vision.

By way of reinforcing the need for both belief in the old stories as well as trust in authors, Geoffrey tells his listeners about his own "feyth and ful credence" (LGW, Prol. 31) in books. He begins the new stanza by first calling attention to himself, however: "and as for me" [and my opinion of books] (LGW, Prol. 30), he begins. Yet wishing next to appear more humble, he continues demurely, "though that I konne but lyte" (LGW, Prol. 30). Despite the "heary modesty topos," as Robert O. Payne calls it, Geoffrey wishes his audience to believe as he does. For the next five lines, Geoffrey throws his lot in with the faith-in-books doctrine without mention of, or apology for, his supposed ability to "konne but lyte." He pledges his faith:

On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And to hem yive I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence
So hertely, that ther is game noon
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon.... (LGW, Prol. 30-34)

Geoffrey presents himself as an example to follow, representative of those who have already given themselves over to trust in literature.

If the audience members have accepted Geoffrey's recommendations so far, they have but one more stretch in order to complete the first literary leap of faith. They must give credence not only to the ancient writers whose books Geoffrey himself pours over, but to Geoffrey's own writing as well. Reverence for the established stories must be extended to those stories that Geoffrey will tell. Such a transferral of respect is encouraged by the fact
that The Legend of Good Women is a collection of vignettes about women whose histories have come from the "olde approved stories." The legends as Geffrey tells them, however, are now redirected by the poetic and personal aims of a fourteenth-century narrator: as such they have become Geffrey’s own stories. Geffrey’s creative additions to the well-known tales, such as his confessions of personal idiosyncrasies, his ironic asides, and his editorial comments about the ancient texts, may have required a narrator to be more than usually effective in order to be taken seriously. Geffrey devotes the next sixty lines of his Prologue to preparing his listeners to endorse his particular poetic endeavor.

Geffrey entices his listeners to support his work by suggesting that they break with tradition. Both literally and figuratively, he encourages the audience to throw away its old ideas about literature for a moment. Using himself as an example once again, he describes the conditions under which he actually does just that. He amends his avowed loyalty to books by confessing:

But yt be seldom on the holvday,
Save, certeynly, whan that the month of May
Is comen, and that I here the foules synge,
And that the floures gynnen for to sprynge,
Farew el my bok and my devocioun! (L GW. Prol. 35-39)

When that delightful month of May comes around, when the birds sing and the flowers begin to grow, then Geffrey bids “farewel” to his book. The listener receives a nearly literal image of Geffrey tossing down or throwing away the old books in favor of seeking the joys of spring.

A recitation of The Legend of Good Women might not have been the first time the audience members had heard about a Chaucerian narrator’s need to free himself from reading books. In The House of Fame, the eagle chides Geffrey for retreating to his study every evening:
Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon;
And, also domb as any soon.
Thou sittest at another book.... (HF. II. 655-57)

Poor "domb" Geoffrey sits all night reading, "tyl fully daswed ys thy look" (HF. II. 658).

Constant application of texts dulls the mind instead of sharpening it, warns the eagle.

Geffrey's defection from books to bower was also associated with an actual antidote to winter's clausrophobic life at court. As Eustache Deschamps confirms in his Lay de Franchise, "dont maintes gens ont la coutume en France / En ce douz temps d'aler le May cueiller"17 ["many people in France have the custom of going in this sweet season to gather the May"].18 Guillaume de Machaut strengthens this image of a May foray into the mead as a liberating experience when he represents the narrating poet in Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre as physically escaping his chambers, "his prison," after being shut up there for months in fear of the plague:

Devers l'air qui si dous estoit
Et si cler qu'il m'amonnéstoit
Que hors ississe de prison
Ou j'avoie esté la saison.
Lors fui hors d'esmay et d'effroy,
Se montay seur mon palefroy
Grisart qui portoit l'ambléure
Moult souëf et de sa nature,
S'alay aus chans isnellement
Chevauchier par esbatem ent,
Pour moy jouer et soulacier
Et la douceur a moy lacier
Qui vient de pais et de deduit,
Ou cuers volentiers se deduit,
Qui n’a cure de cusuançon
Qui touche a noise, n’a tenson,
Mais bien vorroit cusauconner
Ad ce qui puet honneur donner*19
[That air was so soft and clear that it called on me to leave the
prison where I had been for the season. Then I put all fear behind
me and mounted Grisart, my gently ambling palfrey. I rode quickly
into the fields to enjoy myself in that sweetness which comes from
peace and delight, when the heart takes its pleasure without thought of
argument or disagreement but cares only for what is honourable].20

Geffrey, like Machaut before him, associates springtime liberation from winter’s drudgery with
freedom of the imagination. He further uses that connection to gain credibility for his own
dream. The dream is, after all, a mental escape from reality, a flight of his imagination:
an image made real in Book II of The House of Fame when Geffrey dreams he flies up to
the heavens in the eagle’s talons.

This association might have been additionally effective because many in the audience
would have been familiar not only with the literary celebration of May, but also with their
own youthful “affection” for the joys of the season. Despite the universality of such
feelings amongst listeners, however, Geffrey does not want his emotions to blend with those of
the crowd. He wants to keep himself the focal point of the narration. Consequently, he
begins the ensuing panegyric on the daisy by identifying the situation as one special to
himself, saying, “now have I thanne eek this condicioun” (LGW, Prol. 40).
Geffrey’s condition is not unique; his passionate love of daisies is a malady imitative of that found in the popular Marguerite poems and French love visions. In the French poems, as exemplified by Froissart, Deschamps, and Machaut, the poet most often identifies himself as a lover—a lover of women, flowers, even animals—whose lays of love ultimately further Love’s cause. Despite a declared passion for the daisy, however, Chaucer’s The Legend of Good Women narrator characterizes himself as an author whose “heretical” texts actually hinder the servants of the God of Love. It is the presence of a poet, rather than that of a lover, that most distinguishes The Legend of Good Women Prologue from similar love visions.

Geffrey begins to break away from the role of the frustrated French lover and create for himself the image of a nervous English poet quite early in the Prologue. Only twenty-five lines into a passage that has threatened to be a re-created Marguerite poem, he interrupts himself. He has just waxed eloquent about walking in the “ntede,” praised the red-and-white flower “fulfilled of al vertu and honour,” and declared his love “til that myn herte dye,” in keeping with the best courtly poetry. In the next line he breaks the flow of the passage to assure his listeners of his integrity: “Al swere I nat, of this I wol nat lye” (LGW, Prol. 58). But ten lines later he interrupts himself once more to worry over his poetic skills. He frets, “Allas, that I ne had Englyssh, ryme or prose, / Suffisant this flour to preyse aryght” (LGW, Prol. 66-67). Even though he has successfully paraphrased the French dits, he appears insecure about his ability to express his feelings in English.

A poet’s confession of inability to praise something sufficiently was not always meant to be taken seriously, however. Machaut made his grieving knight declare of his lost love in Le Jugement dou Roy de Behaigne:

"On ne porroit en tout le monde espire
Sa pareille, ne tous li mens souffire"
Ne porroit pas, pour sa biaute descrire
Parfaitement\textsuperscript{21} (["...the whole world would not be enough to describe her beauty completely"]).\textsuperscript{25}

Given such an impossibility, a mere poet could only be expected to do his or her best. In turn, the audience was to ignore any protestations of humility as merely rhetorical embellishments. Because Chaucer was an innovator in the use of English as a poetic language, however, I suggest that the identification of the narrator as an English-speaking poet, nervous about his work, was not simply a rhetorical aside. The audience was supposed to see before it an English poet struggling to translate old ideas into what Geffrey later calls "fresshe songes" (LGW, Prol. 79). The Legend of Good Women narrator is only figuratively a romantic lover; he is primarily a serious poet. Geffrey's two-line modesty topos can be considered part of a presentation that reveals the narrator's view of himself and provides information that the listener should not ignore.

The couplet on lines 66-67 also introduces an eighteen-line discussion in which the narrator further illustrates his view of his personal relationship to audience and poetry, past and present.\textsuperscript{26} Geffrey asks directly for help from his listeners in his "labour":

\begin{quote}
But helpeth, ye that han konnyng and myght,
Ye lovers than kan make of sentement:
In this cas oghte ye be diligent
To forthren me somwhat in my labour.... (LGW, Prol. 68-71)
\end{quote}

He asks that the lovers in the audience, "ye" who have had personal experience in love, further him in the writing of his poem. Lovers, he implies, have known the same feelings he is trying to convey (they "kan make of sentement"), and so he next asks that "ye han in your freshe songes sayd, / Forbereth me, and beth nat evele apayd" (LGW, Prol. 79-80).
The lovers can supply from their own experience and “fresthe songes” what Geffrey means in case he misspeaks. The closeness of the author-audience relationship is paralleled later in the passage when Geffrey, speaking now in the language of a lover, ties his “word” and his “werk” to the thoughts of his mistress, the flower: “My word, my werk ys knyt so in youre bond” (LGW, Prol. 89).

Geffrey calls upon all those lovers:

Whethir ye ben with the leef or with the flour.

For wel I wot that ye han her-biforn
Of makyng ropeyn, and lad awey the corn,
And I come after, gleneyng here and there,
And am ful glad yt I may fynde an ere
Of any goodly word that ye han left. (LGW, Prol. 72-77)

He views himself as “coming after” the past masters, taking away (or gleaning) bits and pieces. He declares he will be happy to find “any goodly word” left behind. The passage, like the earlier expression of humility on lines 66-67, nevertheless, is more than a routine depiction of a deferential poet. Rather, it creates a graphic image of the narrator picking and choosing amongst past works and searching for an untrammeled idea not already incorporated into the love songs of the day. This “goodly word,” this “ere,” left by the other lover/poets will become the core of Geffrey’s work. He will nurture it according to his own perspectives and from it grow an entirely new field.27

Geffrey next explains to his audience why he asks for its forbearance. The audience is to help him in this endeavor:

Syn that ye see I do yt in the honour
Of love, and eke in service of the flour
Whom that I serve as I have wit or myght. (LGW, Prol. 81-83)
In giving this explanation, he also presents his primary motivation for what he writes. He writes this poem, he says, in honor of love and in service to the flower that he serves as he has the wit or might. The topic, love and service to one's beloved, was a well-worn one in contemporary literature. Geoffrey takes care, however, to point out what aspects of the popular topic he will not address. The first instance occurs following a passage in praise of the beloved daisy that is particularly reminiscent of the courtly Marguerite poems. Geoffrey warns his listeners that, his panegyric on the daisy notwithstanding, popular court games are not his subject:

But natheles, ne wene nat that I make
In preysing of the flour agayn the leef,
No more than of the corn agayn the sheef.... (LGW, 188-90)

The same pattern of strong, contradictory word-sounds used earlier on line four reappears here to direct the listener's attention away from pastimes such as the Flower and the Leaf contests. "But," he commands, "ne wene nat." He reinforces the directive by stating his own attitude towards such contests of manners:

For, as to me, nys lever noon ne lother.
I nam withhelden yit with never nother:
Ne I not who serveth leef, ne who the flour. (LGW, Prol. 191-93)

The three lines contain eight negatives, all of which contribute to the feeling that Geoffrey's comments are, perhaps, intended as a reprimand to the listeners.

Geoffrey ultimately dismisses the problem of the flower and the leaf or other fashionable trends by calling attention to the goals of the present narrative: "For this thing is al of another tonne, / Of olde storie, er swich stryf was begonne" (LGW, Prol. 195-96). "This thing," this poem, is a wine of a different cask or, less literally, is in a different vein of thought than the courtly love visions. The stories in the Legend of Good Women involve
characters who lived well before courtly games existed, and the passions recounted in the
legends transcend the petty problems debated in the mock Courts of Love. The strident word
"stryf" applied to the inconsequential game of love also suggests some sarcastic criticism of
courtly occupations. The phrase "of olde storye," strategically placed at the beginning of the
line, further contrasts the subject matter of this poem to contemporary gossip.

Geffrey also defends his personal mission as a poet at some length during the dream
sequence itself. After the God of Love has berated him for having "doon to love trespas,"
Geffrey protests:

Ne a trewe lover ought me not to blame,
Though that I spake a fals lover som shame,
They oglite rather with me for to holde,
For that I of Creseyde wroot or tolde,
Or of the Rose; what so myn auctour mente,
Algate, God woot, yt was myn entente
To forthren trouthe in love and yt cheryce,
And to ben war from falseness and fro vice
By swich ensample, this was my menynge. (LGW, Prol. 466-74)

Geffrey insists that his purposes in writing were honorable, despite the apparent anti-love
contents of the famous stories he has retold. He further sets himself apart from those
original authors when on line 470 he sets the sources against his work: "what so myn
auctour mente, Algate, God woot, it was myn entente." What they meant is one thing, but
"myn entente," he continues, is to further truth in love, to cherish love. "By swich
ensample," such as the stories of Creseyde or Dido or any of the others to come in the
Legend, he teaches the listener to beware falseness and vice in love. His didactic interest, as
well as his artistic intents, are deliberately stated for all--the God of Love, Alcesta, and his
audience--to hear.
The positions of these passages within the Prologue (lines 188-90 and 466-74) also point up their didactic purposes. The assertion on line 195 that "this thing is al of another tone" appears at the end of the last stanza before Geffrey begins his dream sequence. It is the last reminder to the audience of the narrator’s aims before he figuratively falls asleep. In the stanza following it, night falls and Geffrey moves into the fantasy world of the dream. The longer statement of intent on line 466 occurs towards the end of the Prologue, just prior to the moment when Geffrey receives the charge to write a book, "a glorious legend / Of goode wymmen" (LGW, Prol. 483-84). Although Geffrey defends his past work in the passage, his sentiments could easily be applied to future books, in particular the one Alceste will assign him only eight lines later. Geffrey’s two statements of apology are placed as preface to, and conclusion of, the God of Love’s challenge to the dreamer/poet. Geffrey’s remarks, therefore, are both a preliminary answer to the imagined charge and an instruction to present and future audiences concerning his poetic aims.

The Dreamer in the Prologue

Geffrey’s dream does not begin until nearly one-third of the Prologue has unfolded. Nevertheless, he spends over one hundred lines preparing listeners for his particular "avisioun" of Love to come. In those intervening one hundred lines, the listener is plunged into the fanciful world of Nature at her springtime best. Geffrey announces on line 108, "And this was now the first morwe of May." The date, the first of May, immediately tells listeners to summon up all their luwhest imaginings associated with May Day and courtly romance. As J.L. Lowes puts it, those leafy trappings of courtly love were "so familiar that the mere mention of it brought to mind a lovely setting and story." To aid the listeners’ escape to the fantastic world of dreams and to prepare them for the coming of Alceste, her nineteen ladies, and the God of Love, the narrator intones a litany of familiar, almost hackneyed, images of romance. Geffrey’s descriptions are stylized enough in places to prompt Robert Frank to describe the Prologue as a "literary throwback." Lively
personification of birds and animals in their natural habitat, earlier found in poems such as "Le Songe Saint Valentin" and Chaucer's own *Parliament of Fowls*, reappears in the Prologue. The "foules" are transformed into tree-top troubadours singing Layes of Love: the lords, Daunger and Pite, and the ladies, Mercy and Curtesye, inhabit the meadow just as they did the garden of delights in *The Romance of the Rose*. The grass, embroidered with flowers, emits an "odour overal" that "for to speke of gomme, or herbe, or tree / Comparisoun may noon ymaked bee" (*LGW*, Prol. 121-22). Visual and sensory imagery intoxicates the listener and removes him or her from the not-so-aromatic world of the fourteenth century.

Geffrey sets a devotional mood, so appropriate to a love vision, with equally conventional techniques. He meshes the otherworldliness of the environment with the religious imagery of Christianity. Geffrey begins the day "with dredful hert and glad devocioun, / For to ben at the resurreccioun / Of this flour..." (*LGW*, Prol. 109-11). He pays homage to the daisy on his knees, "knelying alwey, til it unclosed was" (117). The birds share in his worship by singing, "Blessed be Seynt Valentyn" (145): the birds themselves kiss, "yeldyng honour and humble obeysaunces / To love" (149-50). This picture of penitential devotion evolves unrestrained for over forty lines before Geffrey can bear it no more: his sense of humor will out and he cannot resist adding a contemporary, even baudy, flourish to his handiwork. Those birds, yielding honor and humble obeisance to love, have, like the poet, an earthy side. They "diden hire other observaunces / That longeth onto love and to nature" (150-51), in response to which Geffrey, with mock innocence, quips, "Construeth that as yow lyst, I do no care" (152).

This interjection seems to prepare the way for more frequent authorial interruption throughout the remainder of the preparatory love vision material. Geffrey continues to describe the courtly behavior of the birds, using language reminiscent of *The Romance of the Rose*. Concurrently, however, he introduces his own thoughts about love that are especially
applicable to human beings—in particular, those humans he will soon write about in his Legends. For example, the tydif, Geoffrey says, begs for mercy for his trespasses, namely for his desire for "newfangelnesse" (LGW, Prol. 154). This singularly Chaucerian word will recur in condemnation of Aeneas in the "Legend of Dido."

Later in this same passage the birds interact with the well-worn figures of Daunger, Pitee, Mercy, Ryght, and Curtesye: yet Geoffrey elaborates not on these allegorical figures familiar to lyric poetry but on the meaning of the scene as it applies to his own attitudes towards acceptable standards of love. Furthermore, he cites for this commentary a classical source rather than choosing his French contemporaries for reference. Geoffrey clarifies the significance of the personification he has just employed by relating it to his personal views on love. He concludes the explanation with the telling phrase, "in swich maner I mene":

Al founde they Daunger for a tyme a lord,  
Yet Pitee, thurgh his stronge gentil myght,  
Forgaf, and made Mercy passen Ryght,  
Thurgh innocenc and ruled Curtesye,  
But I ne clepe nat innocenc follye,  
Ne fals pitee, for vertu is the mene,  
As Etik seith: in swich maner I mene. (LGW, Prol. 160-66)

Geoffrey says he believes that innocence in loving should not be called folly: virtue is to be the measure, the middle or balanced way, in love. This is the "maner" in which Geoffrey "menes" the passage to be interpreted. A similar defense will later be made for poor Dido's actions in contrast to Aeneas' deliberate falseness. Thus the introductory material is again connected to the remainder of the work.
Soon Geffrey lies down in the meadow to watch the daisy. He reclines, "lenynge on myn elbowe and my syde" (LGW, Prol. 179), wakeful the whole "longe day" (180). This experience will shortly be re-enacted on lines 205-10; there a sleeping narrator reclines on a flower-strewn bench in his garden. Just as Geffrey's daytime posture in the meadow is a preview of his evening activity, so the nearly one-hundred lines of courtly poetry forecasts the contents of Geffrey's dream. The dream will creatively refashion the waking narrator's May Day observances. Geffrey shows the audience this connection himself, saying, "Me mette how I lay in the medewe tho, / To seen this flour that I so love and drede" (210-11). In Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls and The Book of the Duchess, the waking narrator reads a book as part of his sleeping preparations; yet this detail is missing from both The House of Fame and the Prologue to The Legend of Good Women. No intermediate text serves as the basis for Geffrey's dream: his own experience provides the material. In this way, Geffrey's reality is transformed through his poet's mind into literature.

By the time the actual dream begins, the audience has been reminded of most of the important literary characteristics associated with dream visions. Listeners have heard the narrator involve himself personally in the vision as the "I," or speaker/actor. At times the "I" has also adopted a didactic tone appropriate to the truth-telling authority often believed to be embedded in dreams. The preparatory visit to the "medewe" has helped to establish that the dream vision will be a form of poetic insight inspired by the transports of love. One familiar characteristic of dream literature, however, remains to be presented: the promise of fantasy or artistic distortion of reality. The fulfillment of this characteristic of dream literature, nevertheless, marks the beginning of Geffrey's visionary experience.

Into the meadow, recently inhabited by only Geffrey and his daisy, walk Queen Alceste and the God of Love. Characters such as these were well known to fourteenth-century literary circles. Froissart had included a visit to the God of Love in Le Paradys d'Amours, and Venus appears to, and converses with, the lover in Machaut's "Le Dit de la Fontinne
Amoureuse." In Geoffrey's story, however, the mere presence of mythical characters is less significant than the imaginative roles the characters play in the dream. By the conclusion of the Prologue, Geoffrey learns through the God of Love that Alceste is no mere woman but is a daisy transformed: she represents not only a lovely courtly damsel but a legendary woman and the daisy Geoffrey has so loved. An attentive listener would remember that the effectio of Alceste as she first appeared to Geoffrey anticipated such a transformation. She was "clad in real habit grene" (LGW, Prol. 214), a "whit corowne she beer / With flourouns smale" (216-17) that "made hire lyk a daysie for to sene" (224). Three hundred lines later, Geoffrey discovers that there stands "good Alceste, / The daysie, and myn owene heretes reste" (518-19). Her white crown bears witness to her many virtues, which take the shape of "smale flourouns in hire corowne" (527-29).

In response to hearing such praise of herself, "this queene wex reed for sham e a lyte, / Whan she was preysed so in hire presence" (LGW, Prol. 535-36). Queen Alceste responds as if she were flesh and blood, despite her mythical nature. Another human foible brightens the text when the God of Love reproaches Geoffrey because he has forgotten to put Alceste, of all people, into his Balade. "Thy litel wit was thilke tynte aslepe," jibes the god (547). Like Geoffrey himself, the mythical characters seem lifelike and personable. In the dream, Geoffrey describes fantastic events and characters realistically without having to be accountable to physical laws of nature, an action that illustrates the usefulness of the dream frame. For all its conventionality, the dream vision provides the poet creative latitude to make fantasy comprehensible to the audience.

Over a hundred lines earlier, Geoffrey had begun to prepare his listeners for the fantastic elements of his story. On line 99 he urges them (for a second time) to believe more than meets the eye. Geoffrey reminds the audience that belief in the unseen or unproven--an act that demands exercise of the imagination--is an important message of the poem:
And that men most men thyng beleve
Then men may seem at eye, or elles preve,—
That shal I seyn, whanne that I see my tyme:
I may not al at-ones speke in ryme. (LGW, Prol. 99-102)

The decisive phrase "that shal I seyn" again highlights the authorial voice. Because the phrase begins the concluding couplet of the sentence, it also affirms the significance of the proverb by its placement in the text. While it may not be apparent now, Geffrey insists he will make the value of such belief clear when he sees the best time. "I may not al at-ones speke in ryme," he explains to any impatient listeners.

The narrator's support of intangible proofs is, by extension, support for dreams and visions stemming from an individual's own mind. The audience is simultaneously reminded that its own visionary experiences, as well as Geffrey's or other poets', have value. The theme of looking beyond the usual for the unusual—the surface for the interior meaning—is reintroduced in the "Legend of Dido" with a slightly different, nonliterary, application. In the "Legend," Dido fails to "see" Aeneas in any other way than what her first surface impression shows her. Her lack of vision proves to be fatal.

Another metamorphosis occurs in Geffrey's dream, with less fanfare than Alceste's transformation but with equal degree of fantasy. The "ladies nineteen" dressed in royal habit, who had accompanied the God of Love and Alceste, become the very women whom Geffrey has addressed in his Balade. Sitting before him now are Cleopatra, Polixene, Tisbe, Hero, Laudomia, Dido, and others he had earlier praised. The God of Love commands that these women become the basis of The Legend: "Have hem now in thy legende al in mynde" (LGW, Prol. 557). In another way, then, Geffrey's visionary experience becomes the substance of the poem.
The metamorphosis of Alceste and her ladies is one aspect of the larger transforming process going on in the mind of the poet and in the poem itself. Alceste was a woman famous for her loyalty in love: her story had been preserved by poets in classical legend and re-created in medieval literature. She would now undergo yet another re-creation in the mind of the fourteenth-century poet called “Geffrey.” He dreams of her precisely because of her classical fame as a devoted wife; in his dream he elaborates upon her history by adding to the original story the phenomenon of her transformation into the daisy, a contemporary image for both a lovely woman, in general, and Geffrey’s own “love,” in particular. The dream then evolves into a new poem, *The Legend of Good Women*, through which Geffrey transmits Alceste’s story to modern audiences. The nineteen other ladies were also women immortalized by both ancient and contemporary poets, and they are celebrated again in Geffrey’s *Balade*, his poem within a poem. Once the ladies are identified by the God of Love, they, too, are transformed into contemporary literary figures a second time by way of Geffrey’s legends. The presence of the *Legend of Good Women* in print further ensures that Alceste and her ladies will, in a sense, metamorphose indefinitely. They become part of a continuum of literary transformations carried out in the minds of a succession of new readers.

In the meantime, Geffrey does his best to make an identifiable mark of his own within that literary continuum. The core of the dream in the Prologue is consequently devoted to a debate about the value of Geffrey’s poetry. Party to the argument are Geffrey, the God of Love, and Alceste. In order to offer his opinions about poetry in as unpretentious a manner as possible, Geffrey presents himself as challenged, seemingly without cause, by the God of Love himself. It might have seemed natural for Geffrey to defend himself against Cupid’s charge, but the God’s subsequent demand for “thyn answere” (*LGW*, Prol. 335) even better justifies both the poet’s response and Alceste’s defense of Geffrey.

Before this critical discussion begins, however, Geffrey must be sure that his listeners sympathize with him on both a personal and a “professional” level. Not only must he be
thought likeable, but his credibility as a poet must be unshakeable if he is to withstand Cupid's charges. Speaking to the first issue, Geffrey describes his initial meetings with the great God in such a way as to offer support for his own character. In twenty-five lines of formal, rhetorical portraiture, Geffrey admires Alceste and Cupid (LGW, Prol. 212-37). Despite the admiration, however, the God of Love looks sternly at the poet, striking fear into Geffrey's heart. Geffrey explains the situation this way: "For sternely on me he gan byholde, / So that his looking dooth myn herte colde" (239-40). The audience is encouraged to fear likewise for Geffrey, who means no harm.

Thirty lines later audience fear might have turned to indignation, albeit lighthearted, when the God of Love again accosts Geffrey while the latter reverently kneels before the daisy. He waits "as stille as any ston" (LGW, Prol. 310) in dread anticipation of learning the meaning of Cupid's, Alceste's, and her ladies' presence. Cupid asks, "Who kneleth there?" (312). Geffrey replies it is he and ventures towards the God, saluting him. The poet is polite and a little awed. The God of Love, however, responds to this show of respect with disdain:

...What dostow her
So nygh myn owne flour, so boldely?
Yt were better worthy, trewely,
A worm to neghen ner my flour than thow. (LGW, Prol. 315-18)

Cupid snubs the poor poet, comparing him unfavorably to a worm. The listener, on the other hand, knows that Geffrey is there "in good entente" (308) out of devotion to his beloved daisy. Geffrey's worthy motivation, in contrast to Cupid's insulting remarks, spurs the audience to indignation. Listeners are thus made ready for the narrator's defense even before the God of Love actually challenges Geffrey's writing.
Anticipating the audience's readiness for such a defense, Geffrey strategically places evidence of both his "good entente" and his poetic ability between Cupid's first cold look and his next biting attack. That evidence primarily takes the form of a Balade that Geffrey dedicates to Alceste. This song or poem-within-a-poem helps Geffrey communicate three important ideas to the audience. First, Geffrey shows that, like the renowned French poets before him, he can work competently within established poetic modes. Evidence of such a skill strengthens his literary credibility. Second, the Balade, as well as the thirty lines that follow it, displays the narrator's admiration for women known to have been true in love. Reiteration of Geffrey's affirmation of the importance of truth in love is of thematic value for both his forthcoming response to Cupid in the Prologue and his point of view in The Legend itself. Lastly, the song and the accompanying text keep the focus of the Prologue on the poet rather than on the more usual centerpiece of a love vision, the beloved.

Composing smaller units of poetry within a larger work was not uncommon in love visions. With feigned spontaneity, poet/lovers in earlier love visions displayed their virtuosity in a variety of contemporary formes fixes, especially on the topic of love. Within a single dream narration, the narrator in Froissart's Le Paradys d'Amours composes a rondel, a complaint, a rondelet, a lay, a virelay, and, finally, a balade. Furthermore, Froissart's concluding balade is punctuated by the refrain, "sus toutes flours j'aime la margherite." It is probably not coincidence that Geffrey's refrain in his Balade honoring Alceste, the transformed daisy, also indirectly praises that one flower above the rest. "My lady cometh, that al this may disteyne," says Geffrey in imitation of the French masters (LGW, Prol. 255; 262; 269).

Further comparison of the Balade to its French counterparts shows that Geffrey was well versed in contemporary formes. He handles the standard balade features with ease. His poem is in the familiar seven-line, three-stanza structure: a repeated refrain concludes each stanza: the rhyme scheme of ABABBCCC and the use of decasyllabic lines are consistent and
typical; classical references so common to lyric poetry saturate the Balade; and the ubiquitous rhetorical devices of apostrophe, anaphora, and the catalogue or list are used effectively. Geffrey’s Balade, while correct, is quite conventional—and probably intentionally so. The Balade, while affirming the poet’s competence, is not so exceptional as to take away the audience’s attention from the more creative framework of the Prologue itself.

The subject matter of the Balade also follows conventional modes. Throughout all three stanzas Geffrey amplifies the ideal characteristics of one woman, the Queen who approaches, by comparing her to other famous women from classical literature. She is not specifically named in version F. The usual virtues of the other women are listed (“gilde tresses,” “thy faire body,” “thy passyoun”); but compared to Alceste, these ladies pale. She will “disteune” them all. The arrival of Alceste’s court of ladies, immediately following the recitation of the Balade, reinforces Geffrey’s idolization of his one lady. The royally dressed ladies—nineteen and the multitude of women accompanying them complete a familiar image: an ideal queen surrounded by a court of beautiful, but less perfect, damsels.

Another theme recurs in the second and third stanzas of the Balade, adding a noticeably human touch to this conventional poetic interlude. The group of women cited in the Balade—a group that includes Dido—is famous for remaining true in love, despite betrayal by the very men to whom they are devoted. This virtue will become an important part of Geffrey’s defense of Dido in her legend. The same theme appears in the description of the host of royal ladies, in which Geffrey praises certain women for their “trouthe” in love. These ladies also celebrate “trouthe” in women; the damsels suddenly kneel as if praying “and songen with o vois, / Heel and honour / To trouthe of womanhede’” (LGW, ProL, 296-97). The repetition of the virtue, “trouthe” in love, draws listener sympathy to all ladies who suffer for that cause. The repetition also confirms the importance of this virtue in the narrator’s personal view of love, and reveals his savvy as a storyteller. Geffrey probably knew that lovers exhibiting great loyalty, even if it is misguided, would pique human interest.
Geffrey’s introductory and concluding commentary upon his Balade maintains the focus on the poet and his problems. A couplet first announces the Balade: these two lines contain a direct reminder that the work will be of the poet’s own devising: “and therfore may I seyn, as thynketh me, / This song in presysng of this lady fre” (LGW, Prol. 247-48). He is humble as he asks permission to address Alceste (“may I seyn”), yet he balances his humility with self-assurance: when praising the ideal woman, the song will be “as thynketh me.” Geffrey displays more self-confidence at the conclusion of the Balade when he urges the singing of his song: “This balade may ful wel ysongen be, / As I have seyd erst, by my lady free” (270-71). His humility seems to return as he defends the performance of his song with an assurance that his lady will outshine the poem. Alceste’s beauty notwithstanding, however, the lady is imaginary and the poem is real. Thus, Geffrey’s recitation of his Balade keeps attention directed towards the literary, rather than the imagined, work of art.

Alceste is therefore allotted only four more lines of comparatively perfunctory praise before the audience must consider a more immediate problem: the God of Love’s attack upon the poet. Alceste’s presence is now important only because she protects the poet from Cupid’s power:

For, nadde comfort ben of hire presence,
I hadde ben ded, withouten any defense,
For drede of Loves wordes and his chere,
As, when tyme ys, herafter ye shal here. (LGW Prol. 278-81)

Geffrey says he would have surely died of fear in the face of the God of Love if Alceste had not been there. The listener has heard earlier of the God’s effect on Geffrey: “his loking dooth myn herte colde” (240). Because the audience is prepared to sympathize with the intimidated narrator, its concern for Geffrey is quickly engaged when he states dramatically, “I hadde ben ded.” The abruptness of Geffrey’s four word declaration of fear, combined
with the driving "d" sounds found throughout the line ("hadde," "dede," "defense"), draws the aural and emotional focus to the nervous poet. In fact, Alcest's presence, noted in the tentative line above ("hadde comfort ben of hire presence"), is nearly forgotten. The "d" sounds recur in the following line, highlighting two key words: "drede" and "worde." The poet's predicament is at last specified. He is in "drede of Love's worde."

The God's direct challenge to Geffrey does not actually occur for another thirty lines. Nevertheless, the passage following the Balade creates an important transition in the narrative progress towards that event. Also in the passage, the listener learns it is an episode Geffrey will not relate until he is ready, "when tyme ys" (LGW, Prol. 281). That it is to be an experience to be attended to is indicated by Geffrey's concluding directive to his listeners: "herafter ye shal here" (281). But the audience does not have to wait long to "here": the intervening thirty lines move rapidly, and Geffrey's homage to the Ladies of Court is soon cut short by Cupid's ire. By line 321, both Geffrey's personal ideas about love and, more importantly, the poetry in which those ideas are expressed are called into question by the great mythical power. The listener is now about to hear discussed the "tonne" most meaningful to Geffrey. If the eminence of the judge is any indication of the weight of the issue, we can conclude that Geffrey's literary trial is of grave significance. The length of the debate, 134 lines, also gives the subject importance.

Cupid's accusations are severe and quite personal:

"For thow," quod he, "art therto nothing able.
Yt is my relyke, digne and deltyable,
And thow my foo, and al my folk werreyest,
And of myn olde servauntes thow mysseyest,
And hynderest hem with thy translacioun,
And lettest folk from hire devocioun"
To serve me, and holdest it folye
To serve Love. Thou maist yt nat denye".... (Prologue, LGW, 320-27)

With his "translaciouns," Geffrey has hindered those who would serve Love, and for this fault Cupid outright declares Geffrey his foe. Both the individual and his art work are challenged. Geffrey's words echo those used by the Machaut narrator when that poet figure is attacked by the lady in Le Jugement dou Roy de Navarre:

...je fui de lit galiez
Ramosnez et contraliez
Aussi com se j'eusse fait
Encontre li un grant meffait41
["I was mocked, derided and attacked (by her) as if I had committed a great crime against her"].42

In The Legend of Good Women prologue, as it is in Machaut's poem, the narrator's writing gets him into trouble on the subject of love. Geffrey is accused of making "wise folk from me withdraw" in his translation "the Romautne of the Rose" (LGW, Prol. 331). In Troilus and Criseyde he supposedly makes "men to wommen lasse triste" (333). Says the lady to Machaut:

Vers les dames estes forfais,
S'en avez enchargié tel fais
Que soustenir ne le porrez,
Ne mettre jus, quant vous vorrez43
["You have wronged ladies, and accused them of things you will see that you are unable to support"][44]
The phrase "in one of your books" ["en l'un des vos livres escript"], however, is as specific as the Machaut poem becomes on the subject of the poet's work. In Geffrey's dream, on the other hand, a full listing of specific titles is presented for judgment. Alceste in her defense of Geffrey cites seven works by name and mentions an entire collection of lays, balades, roundels, and virelays composed by the poet. The French dit may have been a model for the The Legend of Good Women Prologue, but the Chaucerian work places far more emphasis on the poet's complete portfolio than does Machaut's poem.

Alceste continues to focus on the characteristics of a fourteenth-century poet in a speech supporting Geffrey as one "falsly [ben] accused" (LGW, Prol. 350). She defends Geffrey in two ways: first, by affirming that he is merely carrying out certain responsibilities a poet owes his or her king and, second, by pointing out those personal qualities that vouch for Geffrey's sincerity. Alceste outlines to Cupid in her defense of Geffrey just what the kingly attitude should be towards the poet. Thus, through Alceste's voice, the narrator can discuss the touchy issue of the poet's relationship to court concerns. This self-conscious defense of poets might have been dangerous for a poet dependent on the good will of a sovereign. Geffrey, however, has provided himself with double protection. First, the dream frame removes the taint of direct criticism from Alceste's speech: secondly, the fact that a gentle lady (and a mythical one, at that) speaks, instead of Geffrey, protects him from charges of self-aggrandizement.

Alceste contrasts Geffrey with courtiers who tell lies to the King. These "losengeours" have falsely accused Geffrey because they are envious:

For in youre court ys many a losengeour,
And many a queynte totele re accusour,
That tabouren in youre eres many a sown,
Ryght after hire ymagynacioun.

To have youre daillance, and for envie. (LGW, Prol. 352-57)

It seems that the poet has in the past enlightened the King. Now, however, jealous gossipers seek the King’s company and would remove the poet from his rightful place. Alceste concludes her warning against envious tattlers with a quote from Dante:

Envie ys lavendere of the court alway,
For she ne parteth, neither nyght ne day,
Out of the hous of Cesar: thus seith Dante:
Whoso that gooth, algate she wol nat wante. (LGW, Prol. 358-61)

By citing an esteemed literary source to support her point, Alceste further confirms the poet’s insight as being most trustworthy.

Following this serious commentary comes a facetious section in which Alceste suggests a variety of reasons why Geoffrey should not be held responsible for his own work. Perhaps poor Geoffrey is only a simpleton who, "gessyng no malice," has no idea what he is saying (LGW, Prol. 363). He merely "useth thynges for to make" (364), borrowing ancient texts without comprehending their meaning. Alceste offers another alternative: perhaps he writes at the command of a patron, "or him was boden maken thilke tweye / Of som persone, and durste yt nat withseye" (366-67). Later she suggests that Geoffrey is only translating that which "olde clerkes writen" (370). It is possible, Alceste continues, that the poet himself regrets his work and "repenteth outrley of this" (368). Geoffrey’s credibility would appear to be seriously diminished by these proposals. Alceste, however, qualifies her arguments with the phrases "and eke, peraunter" and "he myghte doon yt" and starts three lines in a row with noticeable vagueness: "or him was boden," "of som persone," and "or him repenteth."

The speculative nature of these lines undercuts their seriousness. Furthermore, as Geoffrey has taken pains to show how personally involved he is in this work, the listener would
probably have dismissed Alceste's arguments about patrons and poetic naïveté as a little "nyce" themselves. Geffrey knows what he is doing and ultimately will claim full credit for it.

As if unaware of the irony in her proposals, Alceste suggests that the King keep them in mind before he condemns Geffrey:

This shoolde a ryghtwis lord have in his thoght,
And nat be lyk tirauntz of Lumbardye,
That han no reward but at tyrannye. (LGW, Prol. 373-75)

Alceste's comments about Geffrey's simpleness were probably meant to be humorous: nevertheless, the bulk of her remarks to the King should be taken seriously. For the next thirty-four lines, Alceste warns the King against tyrannical behavior towards his subjects. As the poets and philosophers have said, a "lige man" is a ruler's "tresour and his gold in cofre" (379-80). She also reminds the King that he should not damn a man "without answere of word" (401). Finally, she urges the King to be merciful in his judgments. Not only does Alceste pave the way for Geffrey's "answere" to Cupid's charge and for a sympathetic hearing of that answer, but she exemplifies the role of poet-as-court-advisor. Her speech is a poem in its own right, aimed at guiding a king's response to the larger poetic work into which her remarks are set. Alceste, acting as the spokeswoman for the poet, urges the king to "consydre" the "honour" of the poet and judge poetic works with mercy: "wegen every thing by equytee" (398), she recommends.

The importance of the poet as royal advisor is also presented as a specific, rather than a general, issue. Alceste identifies exactly which poet should be honored for literary service to the court:

He made the book that hight the Haus of Fame,
And eke the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse,
And the Parliament of Foules, as I gesse.

And at the love of Palamon and Arcite

Of Thebes, thogh the storye ys knowne lyte.... (LGW, Prol. 417-21)

Alceste continues for ten more lines to list those particular works known to have been written by Geoffrey Chaucer. These references briefly unite the fictitious narrator, “Geffrey,” and the actual poet, Chaucer. The passage is the only obviously autobiographical moment in the work and adds enough realism to validate the seriousness of Alceste’s lecture to the King. In other words, her advice has application beyond the imaginary world of the dream poem. Specifically, the poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, should be honored for serving the king with “his kunnynge” (412) and “his makyng” (413).

In the immediate future, Chaucer (through the figure of Geffrey) will use his cunning in the making of a work about “wommen trewe in lyvyng al hire lyfe” (LGW, Prol. 438). This theme has already been introduced in the Balade and will be reiterated in the forthcoming identification of Alceste and her ladies. Alceste promises that in this new work Geffrey will serve the God of Love better than he ever has before. In light of all Alceste has said, Cupid forgives the poet. Characteristically, Cupid’s speech praises the good queen and her wisdom more than it lauds the poor poet. Geffrey, however, humbly adds his own compliments to Alceste and expresses the hope that one day he will “knowe soothly” (460) who or what she is. Once these amenities of reconciliation are accomplished, however, Geffrey is quick to launch his own defense of his work.

Geffrey’s declaration of his “entente” is short (only fifteen lines), but his comments confirm two important ideas: first, he has a personal interest in the theme chosen by Alceste for his forthcoming book; and second, his own voice has been, and will be, an important feature of his works. He begins by affirming his support of true lovers:
Ne a trewe lover oght me not to blame,
Thogh that I speke a fals lovere som shame.
They oghte rather with me for to holde,
For that I of Creseyede wroot or tolde.
Or of the Rose.... (LGW, Prol. 466-70)

He calls attention to the theme of truth in love in his works and contrasts his attitudes with those of earlier writers on the same subject matter:

...what so myn auctour mente.
Algate, God woot, yt was myn entente
To forthren trouthe in love and yt cheryce,
And to ben war fro falsnesse and fro vice
By swich ensample: this was my menynge. (LGW, Proclamation 470-74)

No matter what the earlier authors of the Romance of the Rose or of Crisseyde's story had meant by their poetry, Geoffrey's intentions were to further truth in love, to cherish love, and to warn against falseness and vice. Parallel phrases that conclude two lines of the passage quoted above set the figure of Geoffrey, the poet, in relief against earlier authors: "yt was myn entente," he comments (471); and "this was my menynge," he concludes (474). These phrases are the final reminders that Geoffrey is a writer with artistic intentions of his own. Significantly, the audience receives these reminders just as the legends are about to begin.

Now that Geoffrey has established his relationship to other authors, the Queen tries to clarify his relationship to love and women. As if reprimanding Geoffrey for becoming overconfident, the Queen cuts short his authorial philosophizing by saying, "Lat be thyng arguyng" (LGW, Prol. 475). She tells him to learn about the ascendancy of true love from her: "For Love ne wol nat countrepleted be / In ryght ne wrong; and lerne that at me" (476-77). Geoffrey may know best how to be a poet, but the Queen knows best about love.
Fifteen lines later she exhorts him to speak well of love even though "the lyke nat a lover bee" (490). Apparently, Geoffrey is no longer a handsome young courtier. Perhaps this scene was intended to be a humorous re-creation of the long-standing battle of the sexes for sovereignty in love. Geoffrey, nevertheless, responds seriously. He counters suspicion that his understanding of love is dimmed by age or girth by declaring that he can still perceive goodness in love. "Now fete feel the goodnesse of this wyf" (520), says the poet when Cupid reveals Alceste's identity. The comment could also serve as a signal to the listener as to how he or she should feel towards Alceste and her ladies.

The confrontation between the narrator and the God of Love concludes with Cupid's last instructions to the poet. The god chides Geoffrey for leaving Alceste out of his Balade and commands Geoffrey to write about the Queen and her entourage. It would seem, at first, that Cupid has won the fight and, in assuming the role of patron, has robbed Geoffrey of initiative by dictating the content of his book. Cupid's command is not such a restricting one, however. Geoffrey is to write about only those ladies he knows: "Have hem now in thy legende al in mynde: I mene of Item that ben in thy knowynge" (LGW, Prol. 557-58). Furthermore, Cupid leaves the poetic style of the work up to the poet: "Make the metres of hem as the lest" (562). The God of Love orders that Geoffrey begin the book with Cleopatra but does not specify how that lady's truth in love is to be demonstrated. He merely challenges Geoffrey to show how any man could have suffered stronger pains in love than did Cleopatra: "For lat see now what man that lover be, / Wol doon so strong a peyne for love as she" (568-69). Cupid even gives Geoffrey license to edit the women's stories as he wishes, the actual histories being far too long to recite in every detail:

\[\text{I wot wel that thou maist nat al yt ryme,}\\\text{That swiche lovers diden in hire tyme;}\\\text{It were to long to reden and to here. (LGW, Prol. 570-73)}\]
Cupid does recommend, however, that Geoffrey focus on the most famous, the "grete" women, who have previously been treated by "thise olde auctours" (574-75).

The poet is now armed with Cupid's commission and the promise of winning his love if he completes the project well. Geoffrey then turns to his books and his composition. "And with that word my bokes gan I take, / And ryght thus on my Legende gan I make" (LGW, Prol. 579), he tells the audience. The pronoun "my" is singularly descriptive of the book to follow. The phrase "I make," the last words of the Prologue, was probably designed to echo in the minds of the listeners as long as they were present to hear each successive legend.
CHAPTER IV

THE POET AND HIS "MATERE":

THE STORY OF DIDO AND AENEAS IN THE HOUSE OF FAME

The "Matere" of Dido and Aeneas

Given the narrator's expressed concern in both The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women for books "that [he] of rede" (HF 77) and for "olde appreved stories" (LGW, Prol. 21), it is not surprising that he tells the story of Dido and Aeneas. The use (or, more accurately, re-use) of classical material had long been associated with greatness and authority in poetry. Alcuin had declared in the ninth century, "Facunda est, si grammaticae regulas servat et auctorite veterum fulciter" \[A poet's style "will be eloquent if it observes the rules of grammar, and is supported by the authority of the ancients"\]. Close to Chaucer's time, Dante urged vernacular poets to imitate classical authors, asserting that the more closely the great or "regular" poets are followed, then, "thus it happens we write more correctly" \["il perché adviene, che quanto più strettamente imitiamo quelli, tanto più drittamente componiamo"\]. While a modern reader of poetry might criticize a poet who reproduces an ancient story as being uncreative or unoriginal, "poet" status in the Middle Ages was not generally conferred upon a writer unless he or she relied upon classical sources in some way.

Translation of Virgil's works, in particular, was a frequently used way to carry out Dante's recommendations. "Virgilian Redaction," and especially the remodeling of The Aeneid, became a convention with identifiable characteristics. These characteristics included the addition of, and elaboration upon, extra details from Trojan history, use of "ordo naturalis," creation of contemporary settings and characters within the story, and expansion of
the Dido and Aeneas episode in Book IV of *The Aeneid.* Chaucer incorporated many of these medievalizing techniques into his versions of the Dido legend, as will be discussed below. Chaucer, however, does more than update an old story for the sake of maintaining a convention or establishing his own reputation as a "correct" or "modern" poet. Chaucer, I believe, is creating a new dimension in medieval poetry: namely, a narrator who works to build personal links or connections between poet, text, and audience. Through deliberate self-revelation to a perhaps imaginary but, nevertheless, addressed audience, the narrator puts one foot of the poet figure inside the story while keeping the other foot slightly outside the tale. The narrator, in effect, builds a bridge between audience and text, using his personal reactions and opinions as the planks.

The fourteenth-century narrator of the Dido and Aeneas stories faces a challenge, therefore. He must follow the traditional rules of rhetoric and poetry yet try to include in his text his personal views on the subject. The two perhaps contradictory demands, however, seem to have worked together in Chaucer’s poems, rather than against one another. Although a virtually prescribed aspect of medieval poetry, use of ancient stories demanded a good deal of creativity from a writer, especially when the Dido legend was the subject matter. The famous love story was one of the most popular and variously reproduced episodes of classical literature. Master poets throughout the Middle Ages had plumbed Virgil’s text and recrafted his fourth book in many genres and styles. Ovid incorporated Dido’s woe into the “Epistula Dido Aeneae”: the anonymous author of *The Roman d’Eneas* converted *The Aeneid* into a courtly romance; and, in Gottfried von Strassburg’s *Tristan*, Tristan harps the “Lay of Dido” and the lovers debate:

daz ez der küniginne
von Tire und von Sidone,
der seneden Didone
The Duenna in Jean de Meun's section of the Romance of the Rose recounts Dido's tale of sorrow: and yet clerical writers such as Fulgentius, Bernard Silvester, and John of Salisbury used Dido's lust for Aeneas as fuel for their moralistic commentaries on the evils of women. Chaucer's narrator's "new" version of the Dido story would need to be excellent in order to stand with the versions already presented by the masters who came before Geoffrey. A listening audience, knowing this speaker had accomplished authors to follow, was likely to consider protestations of modesty appropriate.

Nevertheless, the fourteenth-century poet who wanted to be innovative in his or her presentation was wise to select the tale of Dido as a source. The Dido story was subject to a variety of individualized interpretations throughout late classical and medieval times. Ovid's epistle focused on Dido's passionate nature, making a sympathetic plea for the Queen. The Roman d'Eneas disparaged Dido for her emotional nature and held up Lavinia as a model of the courtly heroine instead. Chrétien and von Strassburg returned Dido to heroine status in their romances. Clerical writers, including St. Augustine, focused on Dido's lustful flaws, using her as an example to illustrate their views on virginity and marriage. The Ovid Moralisé actually turned The Aeneid into a religious allegory, elevating Aeneas to a Christ figure and demoting Dido to the loathsome role of Heresy. Chaucer's speaker would not be the first narrator to realign Virgil's story with his or her own views of Love and the sexes.

In particular, Chaucer's Dido narrators acknowledge the special debt owed to Virgil, the original Dido poet, early in their narrations. Near the beginning of the Story section in The House of Fame, Geoffrey paraphrases The Aeneid outright. And, almost before he starts, he amends the Virgilian lines with an apology for his personal skills:
"I wol now singen, yf I kan,
The armes, and also the man
That first can, thurgh his destinee,
Fugityf of Troy contree.
In Itayle, with ful moche pynge
Unto the strondes of Lavyne." (HF 143-48)

In The Legend of Good Women, the narrator begins the "Legend of Dido" with a toast to Virgil, qualified immediately with a statement of humility:

Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantoan,
Be to thy name! And I shal, as I can.
Folwe thy laterne, as thou gost byforn.

How Eneas to Dido was forsworn. (LGW 924-27)

The two editorial comments, "yf I kan" and "as I can," are nearly identical phrases suggesting the narrator feels in both cases subservient to the source. "I will tell the story of The Aeneid following the great poet's guidance in the best way my poor abilities will permit," he seems to be saying. This attitude would not have been unnatural, either, especially if the narrator wanted his listeners to think him free of arrogance.

The two subjunctive phrases, however, might have conveyed another meaning. If emphasis is placed on the subject of the sentence, "I," instead of on the verb "can" or "kan," a more positive tone results. An interpretation such as the following is achieved when emphasis is put on the first-person pronoun: "I will tell a tale from The Aeneid as I have responded to it, and you, in turn, will hear the story as I have devised it." Almost two hundred years earlier, von Strassburg made a similar boast in the Prologue of his Tristan:

Ich weiz wol, ir ist vil gewesen,
die von Tristande hant gelesen:
The implication in Tristan, and I suggest it is the same implication in The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women, is that this time this narrator will tell the tale "aright." Geoffrey states his claim to authorship more specifically in The House of Fame when he explains:

In suche wordes gan to pleyne
Dydo of hir grete peyne,
As me mette redely:
Non other auctour alegge I. (HF 311-14)

The verb "alegge" is a strong word choice, meaning to allege or declare positively. The strength of that particular verb suggests that Geoffrey is attempting to assert himself. He wants to differentiate his additions to the narrative from what the earlier authors had contributed. Throughout the two tellings of the legend of Dido, the narrator makes deliberate efforts to separate his poetic contributions from those of his sources, Virgil and Ovid especially. His attitude varies at those times from boasting of his personal creativity to musing in a slightly perplexed fashion about the credibility of those other "auctores." The overall effect, however, is to call attention to himself and his personal version of the story.

In this and the following chapter, I will look at the major instances in which the narrator breaks the narrative frame of his tales of Dido and Aeneas to instruct his audience how to interpret the story. These interruptions take various forms: direct addresses or apostrophes to the audience; rhetorical occupatio; digressions and asides referring to his
personal life, his feelings, or those of his listeners; and commentary on, or challenges to, the texts of the ancient authors he "follows." Perhaps these rhetorical devices could be passed over as merely reflecting Chaucer's training as a grammarian. The narrator is, in that view, simply the puppet of a diligent government official who writes poetry by the book. I prefer to think of the narrator's breaks in the tale, however, as parts of a personal signature to be found, like some artists' names, woven or painted into the design of the work itself. By investigating what the narrator in the story says to his listeners, I suggest we can see a poet figure emerging in fourteenth-century England who is trying to make literature a personal experience for both author and audience. Here is a poet/speaker presenting, as Alan T. Gaylord expresses it, the voice of a poet with "his own narrative assignment."

The Poet/Narrator in The House of Fame

Geffrey begins his dream narrative by involving himself with both text and audience in a friendly and colloquial way. As mentioned in Chapter II, he has already broken dream vision tradition by announcing December 10th as the date of his dream. That surprising detail is followed, however, by a comment on the everyday nature of this particular evening's routine. He says, "To slepe I lay / Ryght ther as I was wont to done" (HF 112-13). By the second line of the story, Geffrey has already made an aside to his listeners, relaying a moderately intimate detail about his bedtime habits. "I lay down to sleep one night, just as I usually do," he confides.

Unlike the tortured insomniacs of other dream narratives, Geffrey admits to falling asleep "wonder sone." Significantly, he is also not dreaming under the influence of another poet's work, as was the dreamer in Book of the Duchess, for example; this dream will be induced by the workings of Geffrey's own brain. Geffrey's explanation for his ability to doze off so quickly provides the audience with another view of this poet. He makes a comparison between his readiness to sleep and the exhaustion of a pilgrim who has visited the shrine of St. Leonard:
And fil on slepe wonder sone,
As he that wery was forgo
On pilgrymage myles two
To the corseynt Leonard.
To make lythe of that was hard. (HF 114-18)

The distance traveled may have seemed comic: a two-mile pilgrimage was a quick jog to peripatetic courtiers. More certainly humorous, however, was the choice of destination. Perhaps it was not such an easy trip for an overweight or middle-aged Geffrey. "Corseynt Leonard" was the patron saint of marriages, captives, and lovers. A trip there with the aim of making hard burdens light was probably a not-so-veiled association of narrator with henpecked husbands. Indirectly Geffrey thus reveals homely details about himself, setting a personal tone for the narrative to come.

Geffrey next dreams himself into the center of a complex metaphor for literary experience: a temple made of glass housing an array of "ymages," "curiouse portreytures," and "figures of olde werk" (HF 120-27). Here Geffrey stands "witheyn," as if in a museum devoted to the literature of antiquity. He simultaneously reflects upon past works of art and prepares himself for his own literary work, the story within the dream. The possibility of an infinite number of "visions" resulting from this double image of reflection is reinforced by the fact that the temple itself is made of glass. A viewer can look from the inside out, as well as from the outside in. This is a temple of multiple perspectives. Geffrey quickly gives his listeners a description of the inside of the temple. Here he finds "queynie . . . figures of olde werk" (HF 126-27). He then steps back to give a more general, yet personal, assessment of the temple, saying the images were "moo ryche . . . moo curiouse . . . then I saugh ever" (HF 123-27).
The temple as a metaphor for literature is further developed as the listener discovers through Geffrey's eyes that one wall of the temple displays a brass tablet inscribed with the story of The Aeneid. Geffrey reads a near verbatim translation of the opening of Virgil's epic:

But as I romed up and doun,
I fond that on a wall ther was
Thus writen on a table of bras:
"I wol now singen, yif I kan,
The armes, and also the man
That first cam, thurgh his destinee,
Fugitif of Troy contree,
In Itayle, with ful moche pyne
Unto the stromes of Lavyne." (HF 140-48)

The temple is dedicated to Venus, Goddess of Love and mother of Aeneas. It also appears that the temple walls are devoted to the story of Aeneas. The walls, in their own way, provide a catalyst for Geffrey's work. The couplet ending the first 150 lines of the Story section captures that sense of interaction: "And tho began the story anoon, / As I shal telle yow echon" (HF 149-50). The walls, in effect, tell a tale that Geffrey retells. When Geffrey refers to his listeners, "yow echon," he adds a third dimension to the process of transmission: Geffrey is now in charge of this next stage of the storytelling. He will also be an intermediary between the listener and the tale until the end of the reading.

In a general way, Geffrey claims responsibility for the subsequent narration of the tale. He establishes himself as an "insider" to the story, as well as an "outside" receiver of the walls' text. One particular detail supports Geffrey's insider's connection to the history of Dido and Aeneas, a detail that unites Geffrey with Aeneas himself. When Geffrey stands
within the dream temple and gazes at the pictures of the Trojan War presented there, he becomes another Aeneas. In Book I of *The Aeneid*, Aeneas finds himself inside Dido's partly constructed Temple of Juno viewing pictures of the Trojan War:

Namque sub ingenti lustrat dum singula templo  
reginam opperiens, dum quae fortuna sit urbi,  
artificumque manus intra se operumque laborem  
miratur, videt Iliacas ex ordine pugnas  
bellaque jam fama totum vulgata per orbem\(^{21}\)

[For as, while waiting for the queen, he inspected everything which there was to see under the mighty temple-roof, in wonder at the city's prosperity, the competitive skill of the craftsmen, and the great scale of their tasks, he saw pictured there the Trojan War, with all the battles round Ilion in their correct order, for their fame had already spread over the world].\(^{22}\)

The similarity in roles between dream narrator and classical hero provides the audience with another connection between speaker, present text, and source. Geffrey's identification with Aeneas and *The Aeneid* also makes him a participant, not in the actual events of the story, but in the centuries-old process of literary transmission.

For the next ninety lines, the Chaucerian text parallels Virgil's. Geffrey, like Aeneas, views the unhappy history of Troy's destruction, Sinon's deceit, and the death of Priam. Geffrey also incorporates details here that appear later in Virgil's second book, such as Venus's intervention, the flight from Troy, the tempest at sea, and the arrival at Carthage. Aeneas's sorrow at reviewing these tragedies is reflected in Geffrey's "pitous" account. In *The Aeneid*, Aeneas despair, "sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt"\(^{23}\) ["here too there are tears for human happenings and mortal sufferings touch the heart"].\(^{24}\) Geffrey
liberally sprinkles phrases, such as "allas!" or "byt was pitee for to here" (HF 189), throughout his version. Geoffrey, of course, is a step removed from these events: they did not happen directly to him as they had to Aeneas. In this way Geoffrey's position is similar to the audience's: they are both indirect recipients of the story. Geoffrey reinforces this aspect of his role by regularly reminding his listeners that he is also a visual receiver of the story. Geoffrey repeats the phrase "saugh" or "saugh I," for example, nine times in ninety lines. The phrase is a graphic way to illustrate the image of narrator-as-reader, or in this case, viewer.

Nevertheless, Geoffrey's own emotions color the Virgilian tale even as he views the tablets. When relating the mishap of Creusa, Geoffrey continues to paraphrase The Aeneid, expressing, as did Aeneas, his confusion about how Creusa was lost. Geoffrey, however, chooses to use the first-person pronoun and the present tense: "How Creusa was ylost, alas! / That ded, not I how, she was" (HF 182-83). In the Latin text, Aeneas's uncertainty is more impersonally expressed with a past participle: "erravitne via seu lassa resedit, / incertum" ["perhaps she strayed from the path or just sunk down in weariness. It is unknown"]). Geoffrey also allows vernacular vocabulary to reshape Virgil's story. In the account of Eolus, for example, Geoffrey describes how the god's wind storm drenched every "Lord and lady, groem and wenche, / Of al the Trojan nacion" (HF 206). By using colloquial nouns such as "groem" and "wenche," Geoffrey creates a slightly anachronistic, and perhaps humorous, picture of drowning Greek knights, damsels, stable lads, and kitchen wenches.

So far in The House of Fame, then, the narrator has presented a Virgilian story spiced with Geffrian amendments or variations. The plot of The Aeneid, nevertheless, overshadows Geoffrey's comments to this point. At the entrance of Queen Dido, however, Geoffrey begins to edit his source more extensively. He tells of Aeneas's arrival in Carthage but eliminates
much of the epic background to that event. Instead, Geffrey inserts two occupation in four lines that delete Dido's history as well as the activities of the Roman gods:

And, shortly of this thyng to pace,
She made Eneas so in grace
Of Dido, queene of that contree,
That, shortly for to tellyen, she
Becam hys love, and let him doo
Al that weddyng longeeth too. (HF 239-44)

Unlike Virgil or even the romance poet of the Roman d'Eneas, Geffrey wants to get quickly to the love affair. This subject he discusses with emotion for the next 188 lines, lines that comprise most of the remaining Story section and over a third of the entire poem. He cannot proceed, however, without voicing once more his personal fears about his capabilities to tell the story as he wants:

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

He protests that he cannot continue because he knows nothing of love. As was discussed in Chapter I, however, those protestations prove groundless. The narrator will further prove this in the complaint and the address to the ladies, which follow. The stanza, therefore, serves as a preface to Geffrey's forthcoming reshaping of the Dido legend into a medieval love story.

The irony in Geffrey's declaration, "hyt wol not be," that he will not speak about love, was probably obvious. Perhaps he will not discuss love as an idea, but the love story of Dido and Aeneas was one of the most famous of the age; Geffrey could not tell their tale without speaking of love. Not surprisingly, Geffrey's next line announces Dido's love for
Aeneas. Twenty-seven lines follow of lecture to the ladies about the pitfalls of loving "unknown" men. Even though he has denied all personal knowledge of love, Geoffrey embellishes the remainder of Book I with two rhetorical devices long associated with love literature: a complaint and a catalogue of famous women betrayed by love. With these hints, in addition to the fact that Geoffrey's imaginary temple is devoted to the Goddess of Love, the audience is prepared for Geoffrey's conversion of the classical epic into a fourteenth-century love story.

At this point Geoffrey also mixes his personal feelings about Dido into his narration. These feelings color the remainder of his story. Unlike earlier, more moralistic commentators such as the Roman d'Eneas poet or Virgil, Geoffrey is sympathetic to Dido and critical of Aeneas. These feelings are revealed as he describes how Dido falls in love with Aeneas. Matter of factly, in a plain declarative sentence, Geoffrey states that "Eneas / Tolde Dido every caas / That hym was tyd upon the see" (HF 253-55). Gone is mention of Aeneas's glorious destiny or description of the deprivations Aeneas and his men endured. These are Virgilian details that could have moved the listener to pity the man. Set against the three terse lines quoted above are seven highly charged lines that present Dido as a warm and giving young woman.

The increase in lines devoted to Dido's personality corresponds to Geoffrey's admiration for his heroine rather than his hero. It becomes apparent in his description of the exchange of gifts between Aeneas and Dido that Geoffrey believes Dido gave the most and received the least. Geoffrey's sensitive rendering of love's struggles in lines 256-62 has been discussed in Chapter I; I call attention here, however, not to the poetic feeling of the passage, but to the attitude exhibited in it towards Dido. As Geoffrey tells it, after Dido hears Aeneas relate his adventures at sea, she gives him her "reverence" and presents him with gifts of "dispense." Geoffrey's account of the scene differs markedly from the same moment in the Roman d'Eneas, for example:
Quant Eneas li recontoit,
la râine se merveilloit
des mals, des dolors et des pertes
et des poines qu’il a sofertes.
El lo regardoit par dolçor
si com la desreingnot Amor:
Amor la point, Amor l’argüe,
sovant sospire et color mue.27

[While Aeneas was telling his tale the queen marveled at the evils, the sorrows, and the losses, and the pains which he had suffered. She looked at him sweetly, as love urged her. Love goads her, love spurs her: often she sighs and changes color.]28

Both poets use familiar courtly imagery. Geffrey depicts a bounteous queen graciously receiving foreign royalty; the Roman poet describes a sweetly sighing damsel. In the Roman, however, Dido is not entirely in control of herself. She is overcome by her emotions: “love goads her” into action. At least in Geffrey’s passage Dido retains her dignity, if not her heart, at the moment of falling in love.

Geffrey also encourages sympathy for his heroine by comparing Dido’s reactions to the contemporary norm. Her actions, he says, were the same as those “any woman myghte do” (HF 261). Dido is a normal woman: she is later to be pitied as any jilted woman should be. Dido acted as any woman would do “wenynge hyt had al be so / As he hir swor” (HF 262-63). In other words, Dido did as any woman would who, like her, believed that all Aeneas had sworn was true. The short, emphatic phrase “as he hir swor” puts the burden of guilt on Aeneas’s false oaths rather than on Dido’s credulity.
Dido had been characterized as a victim long before this: Ovid and the Roman poet had both portrayed her as a helpless thrall to love. For those poets, however, Dido was a victim of her own passionate nature; her sex and sentiment undid her. In Ovid’s “Epistle” Dido pleads for pity as Aeneas is about to depart and “abandon unhappy Dido” [“certus es ire tamen, miseram-que reliquere Dido”]. She calls herself a “fond fool” who is “ablae with love” and “raves” [“sim stulta”; “pia fumosis”; “fallor”]. Her mind is deluded by the enchanting image, “the fancy,” of Aeneas [“ista mihi falsa jacetur imago”]. The Roman poet goes beyond Ovid and paints an almost ludicrous picture of Dido “trapped” by the “deadly poison” of Love she has drunk [“ele ne set qui l’a sorprise, / mortel poison avoit beu”]. Love-torn, she is seen swooning, stretching, panting, sighing, yawning, trembling, shaking, and more. A great queen is reduced to a creature in the grip of a seizure. In neither the “Epistle” nor the Roman d’Eneas is Dido portrayed as a monarch unjustly repaid for courtly services rendered, as Geoffrey presents her.

Geoffrey considers the real cause of Dido’s misfortune to be Aeneas, who misrepresents himself. Geoffrey points out Aeneas’s flaw as follows: “As he hir swor; and herby demed / That he was good, for he such semed” (HF 263-64). The rhyming couplet linking the word “demed” (judged) with “semed” (seemed) highlights the difference between Aeneas’s seeming goodness and his true baseness, his past braveries and his future cowardice. Reference to the outward charm that hides Aeneas’s inherent treachery recurs throughout the remaining story, specifically in the address to the ladies, Dido’s lament, the catalogue of betrayed lovers, and the narrator’s concluding commentary.

The accusation that Aeneas broke his promises to Dido was not new to the Dido story. Throughout Ovid’s “Epistle” Dido refers to Aeneas’s false oaths, vows, and “the perjury of your false tongue” [“protinus occurrent falsae perjuriae linguae”] no less than nine times. In fact, midway through the lament in Ovid, Dido makes a statement that could have provided inspiration for Geoffrey’s address to the ladies:
Omnia mentiris: nec enim tua fallere lingua

Incipit à nobis, prima-que plector ego.

Si quaeras, ubi sit formosi mater Iuli:

Occidit à duro sola relicta viro.

Haec mihi narraras: nec me movere; merentem

Ure: minor culptä poena futura meä est³⁹

[You are false in everything—and I am not the first your tongue has deceived, nor am I the first to feel the blow from you. Do you ask where the mother of pretty Iulus is?—she perished, left behind by her unfeeling lord! This was the story you told me—yes, and it was warning enough for me! Burn me: I deserve it! The punishment will be less than befits my fault].⁴⁰

Geffrey similarly begins his address to the ladies in the audience:

Allas! what harm doth apparence.

Whan hit is fals in existence!

For he to hir a traytour was:

Wherefore she slow hirself, allas!

Loo, how a woman doth amys

To love him that unknowen ys! (HF 265-70)

Later Geffrey adds:

For this shal every woman lynde.

That som man, of his pure kynde.

Wol shewen outward the fayreste,

Tyl he have caught that what him lest... (HF 279-82)
Although Ovid's version is more specifically focused on women previously deluded by Aeneas, both poets suggest that deceit is a male characteristic and gullibility a female trait. Dido is not the first to have "suffered from a rash belief" or been duped by a man who "wol shewen outward the fayreste" side to her. The two authors might have agreed that Dido and Aeneas were equally culpable for their misfortunes. I would argue, however, that Geoffrey conveys a more positive impression of Dido than does Ovid. I would further suggest that a primary difference in the two presentations stems from the choice of narrating voice. In the "Epistle," Dido speaks at all times: in The House of Fame, with the exception of Dido's short lament, Geoffrey, a male poet, speaks. The tone of The House of Fame becomes quite different from that in Ovid's "Lament" as a result of the change in narrators.

When a listener hears Dido's woe in the "Epistle," it is in the form of a personal confession. Dido pours out her misfortunes directly to the audience, and she does it with all the self-pity and hysteria typically associated with a woman scorned. She has described herself as one of many deluded women, called herself a fool, and declared that she deserves her torment as punishment for "a rash belief." The vehemence alone of the Ovidian Dido discredits her. Her overly emotional response suggests that she did, indeed, deserve her fate.

Geoffrey, as principal narrator in The House of Fame, is a step removed from the events related by the Queen in Ovid. Although he is a participant in his own dream, he is not a participant in Dido's story. This distance between Geoffrey and Carthage coincides with his didactic purposes in telling the story in the first place. He is less interested in reliving the love affair or displaying pathos than he is in helping his listeners learn from Dido's unhappiness. Dido is presented in a positive way, not simply to show the narrator's compassion, but because the audience would be more likely to take lessons from a character for whom they had developed some sympathy. Further evidence that Geoffrey's aim is not simply to dramatize a woman in the midst of an emotional crisis is the appearance of another occupatio soon after Dido's complaint concludes.
Dido, explains Geoffrey matter-of-factly, "rof hirselfe to the herte / and deyde" (HF 373-74). Unlike Ovid, Geoffrey kills Dido quickly; he neither gives her a chance to deliver a final, pathetic speech nor provides sensational, audience-tingling details about her death. Geoffrey instead tells his listeners:

And al the maner how she deyde,

And alle the wordes that she seyde,

Whoso to knowe hit hath purpos,

Rede Virgile in Eneydos

Or the Epistle of Ovyde,

What that she wrot or that she dyde.... (HF 375-80)

Dido's pathetic last moments are recorded elsewhere in The Aeneid. Ovid's "Epistle," and The Roman d'Enecas, for example. But Geoffrey states that a rehearsal of such details is not suited to his purposes. Whoever ("whoso") "hath purpos" in hearing those details should consult other authors. Geoffrey specifically recommends Virgil and Ovid, two poets who include Dido's emotion-charged letter to Anna in their works. Geoffrey's use of an occupatio here reminds listeners that his purposes are different from those of past Dido poets.

For Geoffrey, Aeneas's departure from Carthage and Dido's subsequent suicide illustrate a long-standing problem in love, a problem that distresses him greatly. Men and women, it seems, have acquired the bad habit of falling in love without really knowing each other first. More specifically, men are too willing to hide their flaws under a façade of rhetoric about their brave deeds; and women too easily mistake that heroic illusion for reality. Geoffrey despairs over this too-human weakness throughout the remainder of the tale. As if needing to make sure every listener understands the problem, he begins his speech to the ladies with a dramatic epigram summarizing the situation: "Allas! what harm doth apparence, / Whan hit is fals in existence!" (HF 265-66). Appearance ("apparence") is clearly contrasted with
reality ("existence"). The opening interjection, "allas!" and the couplet’s concluding exclamation point serve as spotlights for the epigram in the center, an epigram that encapsulates Geoffrey’s fears about the dangers of falling in love too quickly.

This same idea is repeated in epigrammatic or proverbial form over the next thirty lines. As if presenting a sermon, Geoffrey begins line 269 with the interjection "loo," theatrically calling his audience to attention. "Loo, how a woman doth amys / To love him that unknown ys!" (HF 269-70) he says, using the beginning, "loo," and the ending exclamation point as rhetorical spotlights once more. Here is the female side of the trouble as Geoffrey sees it: women go amiss by loving men who are unknown to them. Nevertheless, the men, he has implied two lines earlier, are the cause of this deception and subsequent downfall of women. They are liars or, like Aeneas, "a traytour" (HF 267). Aeneas-the-traitor deceives Dido "wherfore she slow himself, alias!" (HF 268).41 Geoffrey supports his theory about men later in the passage with a moral again delivered with a preacher’s fervor: "For, be Cryste, lo, thus yt fareth: / Hyt is not al gold that glareth" (HF 271-72). An oath, "be Cryste," is punctuated by another "lo," which is strengthened by the introductory clause "thus yt fareth." The effect is to declare to the listener, "Q.E.D." And what is proven? Geoffrey has confirmed the age-old maxim that all that glitters is not gold or all men are not what they seem.42

In the next sixteen lines, Geoffrey shifts from the prophetic tone to a more conversational one. Perhaps Chaucer feared Geoffrey’s audience would lose interest as a result of too much preaching; perhaps he felt a folksy approach at this moment would help connect listener and narrator. Whatever the reason, Geoffrey colloquially bets that many a wicked vice is hidden under comeliness:

For also browke I wel myn hed,

Ther may be under godlyhed

Kevered many a shrewed vice. (HF 273-75)
He further warns, let no person be so foolish as to love for looks, speech, or friendly manner:

Therefore be no wyght so nyce,
To take a love onely for chere,
Or speche, or for frendly manere.... (HF 276-78)

Because the contemporary word "wyght" can mean either "person" or "man," it is likely that Geffrey intends his advice to be applied to both sexes. His comments in the following seven lines, however, specifically address the women in the audience:

For this shal every woman fynde,
That som man, of his pure kynde,
Wol shewen outward the fayreste,
Tyl he have caught that what him leste;
And thanne wol he causes fynde,
And swere how that she ys unkynde,
Or fals, or privy, or double was. (HF 279-85)

Geffrey invites every woman to take heed of his generalizations, for it will invariably be harder on the woman than the man. As soon as the man has "caught that what him leste," he will find an excuse to depart. The woman will be left with the blame and the man will be free to hunt once more. Dido stands as proof of this.

Just at this point, when Geffrey's criticism of men takes on a potentially controversial tone, he reminds his listeners that these thoughts are his personal opinions: "Al this seye I be Eneas / And Dido" (HF 287-88). Two lines later he again uses the first-person pronoun to emphasize his authorship: "Therfore I wol seye a proverbe" (HF 289). The "I" reminds the listener that the narrator is in control of the text. The word order of lines 287 and 289 also confirms the narrator's control over his subject matter. The "I," the subject, precedes
the object to be related. On line 287, "I" comes before "Dido and Aeneas"; on line 289 "I" precedes "a proverbe." Geffrey, not the ancient story or the proverb, is the authority in this situation.

The proverb that Geffrey quotes not surprisingly repeats the theme of appearance vs. reality: "he that fully knoweth th'erbe / May saufly leye hyt to his ye" (HF 290-91). Only he who fully knows the powers of the herb may place it safely against his eye. The metaphor from herbal medicine was probably a familiar one, and the notion that misplaced love can kill as surely as a misused drug is quite applicable to the Dido story as Geffrey interprets it. In case listeners were still skeptical about his expertise, he reinforces his message with the asseveration, "without drede, this ys no lye" (HF 292), reminding all of the value of his advice.

Having done his best for the women in the audience, Geffrey turns his attention to Aeneas. "But let us speke of Eneas," he announces (HF 293). The command "let" and the first-person-plural pronoun "us" would recapture any listeners whose attention had wandered during the address to the ladies. Geffrey wastes no time in setting the tone of this discussion, either. Echoing Chrétiien de Troyes, Geffrey will speak of: 13

How he betrayed hir, alas!
And lefte hir ful unkyndely.
So when she saw al utterly,
That he wolde hir of trouthe fayle,
And wende fro hir to Ilayle.... (HF 294-98)

The images of Aeneas as traitor and false rhetor reappear. More damning, however, is the fact that Virgil's political motivations for Aeneas's departure are deleted from Geffrey's introductory comments. Geffrey is not interested in the founding of empires or the role played by the gods in Aeneas' destiny. In Geffrey's story Aeneas is self-motivated.
Geffrey does make brief mention of Rome, but it appears 129 lines after Aeneas is introduced to the narrative. Furthermore, reference to heavenly injunctions in *The House of Fame* offers only cool praise for Aeneas. Geffrey abruptly interrupts his story to remark offhandedly:

But to excusen Eneas

Fullyche of al his grete trespas,

The book seyth Mercurie, sauns fayle,

Bad hym goo into Itayle,

And leve Auffrikes regioun.

And Dido and hir faire toun. (*HF* 428-32)

The verb "excusen," meaning to exonerate or make excuses for, presumes Aeneas' guilt. The rhyming of "Eneas" with "trespas" also associates the man with his fault. In light of the number of times Geffrey has registered his own opinions of the events in the narrative, I suggest that reliance here on what "the book seyth" is deliberately sarcastic. Virgil, not Geffrey, excuses Aeneas's "grete trespas" because of Mercury's command. Geffrey's failure to endorse Mercury's role contributes to the listener's suspicion that the adverb "fully" is also used ironically. The concluding line of the passage ("And Dido and hir faire toun") is similarly telling. The only word of praise in the six-line sentence supposedly written in defense of Aeneas modifies Dido and her "faire toun" of Carthage. Despite Geffrey's deference to the Virgilian view of Aeneas, the audience probably doubted its sincerity.

Geffrey's partiality to Dido is also revealed in two literary devices he uses to bring his story of Dido and Aeneas to a close. Those devices—Dido's complaint and the catalogue of deserted women—were familiar techniques of amplificatio. They were also devices particularly associated with the story of Dido and Aeneas. Dido's angry soliloquy in Book IV of the *Aeneid* served as the model for her lament in Ovid's "Epistles." The Ovidian lament is
echoed by Dido's complaint in the Roman d'Enées. The recitation of lists, especially of heroic or legendary figures, was a traditional way to gather exempla. Poets of all nationalities, including Boccaccio, Deschamps, Alain de Chartier, and John Gower, had used the device; Dido's name had been included in these lists since the fourth century. Like Geffrey in The House of Fame, the Dueena in Jean de Meun's portion of The Romance of the Rose concludes her telling of the Dido legend (lines 13203-53) with a catalogue of deceived women. The catalogue technique is also used in conjunction with the Ballade in The Legend of Good Women, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Use of traditional literary devices, it is true, suggests a conservative, rather than an experimental, narrative voice. This narrator, however, uses such traditional devices to bring his personal concerns into view. For Geffrey in The House of Fame, Dido's lament becomes an opportunity to discuss contemporary problems shared by his characters and the audience. The result is an intimacy between narrator and audience. Geffrey furthers this intimacy each time he steps out of the frame of his dream narrative to identify for his listeners particular changes he has made in the traditional story. This self-consciously creative narrator, I would argue, is a Chaucerian addition to the medieval narrative.

In The House of Fame, Geffrey's presentation of Dido's lament begins in typically romance fashion: "She gan to wringe her handes two" (HF 299). The Enées poet begins his redaction similarly: "El tuertz poinz, deront sa crime" ["She wrings her hands and tears her hair"]. The similarity between the courtly Enées text and Geffrey's version continues for one more line. In The House of Fame, Dido cries out: "Alas! . . . what me ys woo!" (HF 300). In the Enées, Dido also proclaims her woe: "Heu lasse, vait s'en il issi / que faz ge done" ["Alas, since he is going away from here what shall I do now"]. In the two couplets that follow in The House of Fame, however, Dido introduces a question not previously asked in a Didoan lament:
Allas! is every man thus trewe,
That every yer wolde have a newe,
Yf hit so longe tyme dure,
Or elles three, peraventure? (HF 301-05)

Do all men, like Aeneas, tire of a woman so quickly they must have "a newe" love—or three—a year? In Ovid's "Epistle," Dido makes a brief reference to another woman deceived, as was she, by Aeneas: "nec enim tua fallere lingua / Incipit a nobis, prima-que plector ego"51 ["I am not the first your tongue has deceived, nor am I the first to feel the blow from you"]).52 She refers specifically to Creusa, Aeneas's first wife, however, and intends no general condemnation of "every man." Geffrey's Dido is concerned, on the other hand, not only with her own sorrow but with the selfishness of all men.

Dido's accusation that men require multiple lovers might have been simply a Chaucerian jibe at courtiers who embraced the chivalric idea of homage to women too expansively. Dido, however, does not consider male appetites subject for humor. She analyzes with biting clarity the ways each "newe" woman can serve male needs:

...of oon he wolde have fame
In magnifyinge of hys name:
Another for frendshippe, seyth he:
And yet ther shal the thridde be
That shal be take for delvt,
Loo, or for synguler profit. (HF 305-10)

Dido identifies the rationalizations men most frequently give for sacrificing women to their pleasures. They take a woman for fame, friendship, delight, or, worst of all, for profit or advantage. Aeneas proves to be guilty of this last most unprincipled wrong. Geffrey's Dido has thus introduced to her complaint a subject ageless in its occurrence yet new to the legend of Dido and Aeneas.
The contemporary spiciness of the subject also has the potential to draw an audience to attention quickly. Perhaps a squire or two squirmed uncomfortably as they heard Dido’s complaint. Or the women might have exchanged knowing glances. The charge that men jilt lovers because of a desire for “newefangelness” recurs in Chaucer’s poetry. In “The Squire’s Tale,” for example, the falcon complains of the tercelet’s yen for “newefangelnesse.”

The rejected fowl makes a lament similar to Dido’s:

Tho dwelte a tercelet me faste by,
That semed welle of alle gentillesse:
Al were he ful of treson and falsnesse,
It was so wrapped under humble cheere.... (CT, V. 504-07)

So newefangel been they of hire mete,
And loven novelries of propre kynde:
No gentillesse of blood ne may hem bynde. (CT, V. 618-20)

The unfaithful tercelet shares faults with Aeneas. The bird appears to be of gentle and humble “chere” yet proves false: he chooses what is novel and “newefangel” over “gentillesse of blood.” The recurrence of this unknighthly characteristic in Chaucerian heroes suggests there might have been some consensus at the fourteenth-century court concerning male behavior. Geffrey’s characterization of Aeneas may have been based upon a familiar model of The Cad.

A listener well versed in classical and medieval variations of the Dido legend might have noticed this personal perspective on love that Geffrey has just incorporated into the famous lament. But Geffrey does not leave that realization to chance. He breaks off Dido’s speech to tell the audience what he is doing. He addresses them in his own voice:
In suche wordes gan to pleyne
Dydo of hir grete peyne,
As me mette redely:
Non other auctour alegge I. (HF 311-14)

In such words did Dido begin to complain of her great pain, just as I truly have dreamt; no other author do I cite in proof of these words, says Geffrey. His imagination is the creative force in this passage, he tells the audience. "Suche wordes" in Dido's complaint are of his own devising and need no further proof of their veracity other than his promise that they are the very words he dreamt.

By mentioning his dream in this passage, Geffrey also reminds his listeners of the full scope of his creativity. Specific mention of the dream framework had not been made since line 256 of the Story section, nearly sixty lines past. Geffrey has since begun to tell a personal narrative, leaving behind the device of the dream temple and its brass tablet. The audience needed to be reminded, however, that the Dido story is part of the larger work, the narrator's dream, which in turn is part of a full-length poem. That reminder is accomplished, not only by direct reference to the dream, but by the prosody of the passage. Line 315, the second half of the couplet, begins with a strong downbeat and finishes with a stress on the pronoun "I" ("non other auctour alegge I"). The words "me," "mette," "non," and "I" stand out as both words and concepts to be stressed. The shortness of the key words, the meter, and the punctuation of the couplet suggest an emphatic reading of the lines. Adding dramatic flair to this important announcement was not inappropriate, either.

Geffrey deserves celebration as both the author of the "new" Didoan lament and of the entire work, The House of Fame. Once Geffrey has reiterated his authorial role, he speaks again with Dido's voice. Here he allows Dido to lapse for sixteen lines into traditional lament:

Aeneas's departure, cries Dido, will be the cause of her death:
"Allas!" quod she, "my swete herte,
Have pitee on my sorwes smerte.
And slee mee not! goo noght away!
O woful Dido, wel-away!" (HF 315-18)

In this fashion, Virgil, Ovid, and the Eneas poet also made the Queen of Carthage weep. These authors portrayed Dido as a hyperbolically inclined damsel-in-distress. Geoffrey's Dido, nevertheless, quickly pulls herself together to analyze the situation. She determines that the perfidy of men is to blame for her tragedy and says with frustration, "O, have ye men such godlyhede / In speche, and never a del of trouthe" (HF 330-31).

Dido also tries to draw the female portion of the audience into sharing her anger with men. She complains bitterly about the way "we" women are "served everychone":

Allas! that ever hadde routhe
Any woman on any man!
Now see I wel, and telle kan,
We wreched wymmen konne noon art;
For certeyn, for the more part,
Thus we be served everychone. (HF 332-37)

Despite another melodramatic "allas!" this Dido exhibits determination and strength of character even in her despair. She is not an Ovidian Dido begging forgiveness at any price, nor a lustful Dido of the Roman d'Eneas dying of neglect. Here is a woman who does not hesitate to state her opinions. "Now see I wel, and telle kan," she asserts. Using the phrases "for certeyn" and "thus," she reinforces her belief that, in the face of male artifice, women will invariably become victims.

Dido next summarizes her feelings with a familiar apostrophe to Fame. As other Didos had done, she worries about what others will say about her:
O, wel-eway that I was born!
For thorgh yow is my name lorn,
And alle myn actes red and songe
Over al thys lond, on every tonge.
O wikke Fame! for ther nys
Nothing so swift, lo, as she is! (HF 345-50)

The idea of Fame, meaning both rumor and reputation, appears in most versions of the Dido legend. Geffrey borrows from Virgil the figure of "wikke Fame," who spreads tales of Dido's misbehavior throughout Carthage. In Geffrey's narrative, Dido despairs over her lost reputation, just as she did in Book IV of The Aeneid:

... te propter eundem extinctus pudor
et, qua sola sidera adibam, fama prior

[Because of you (my) honor and former reputation, that fame which was my only hope for immortality, is destroyed].

The Roman poet also borrowed Virgil's image of fleet-footed Fame and created from it a new mythological character for the French poem.

Dido's worry over her fame takes on a new dimension, however, in The House of Fame. She is concerned about the literary legacy her actions will bring her and fears infamy: "And alle myn actes red and songe / Over al thys lond, on every tonge" (HF 347-48). She prophesies correctly: by the fourteenth century, her story had been read or sung by nearly "every tonge," literate or not. Furthermore, that transmission will recur every time Chaucer or another speaker presents this poem. In future generations, readers will continue the process every time they read The House of Fame. Virgil's notion of "Fama" as Carthaginian rumor expands, in Geffrey's hands, into an idea that reflects centuries of literary interpretations of Dido's character and the events leading to her death.
Through every author's and every critic's interpretation of her motives and desires, audiences will see a new Dido. By means of those varied texts, her fame will spread and she shall "thus judged be" (HF 356).

In the conclusion of Dido's lament, Geffrey also comments on the power of literature to affect human behavior. The editorial comment made there on Dido's misfortune is thematically important, and the stanza in which it appears is a pivotal one in the structure of the first book. This five-line passage simultaneously concludes the lament and introduces the forthcoming catalogue. Geffrey instructs his listeners as to how they are to respond to Dido's misfortune:

But wel-away! the harm, the routhe,
That hath betyd for such untrouthe,
As men may ofte in bokes rede,
And al day sen hyt yet in dede,
That for to thynken hyt, a tene is. (HF 383-87)

Such is the harm come from Aeneas's "untrouth," a situation often read about in books and seen every day in deed. The kind of behavior Dido and Aeneas exhibited, observes the poet, is seen regularly in both books and real life. The listener, however, must think beyond the meaning of the present story. He or she should make a connection between art (in this case, Geffrey's story) and reality. As Geffrey says, the two worlds can look quite similar. The outcome of the story of Dido and Aeneas is an example of the kind of universal lesson to be learned from close attention to literary depiction of life.

Through Geffrey's narrative, the listener is first shown the unhappiness of the legendary Queen Dido, a woman who was betrayed by love at a point in history long past. The listener is next invited to compare Dido's woe to "the harm, the routhe" experienced by lovers in the fourteenth century. This situation, Geffrey declares, is seen "al day."
narrator's tale is both a re-creation of Dido's historic misery and an illustration of the pain suffered "in dede" by contemporary friends, acquaintances, and audience members. Listeners are encouraged to respond with equal pity to ancient and modern examples of "untrouthe." Whether the "untrouthe" is read about in books or seen in real life, "that for to thynken hvt, a tene is" (that thinking of it is a sorrow). Literature, as a mirror of life, can illumine human foibles past and present. And audiences of any time period can be moved to reflect on what is presented there and modify their own behavior.

Geffrey further reinforces the conjunction of life and literature in the list of "trayed" women that immediately follows. He cites seven examples from literature of women deserted by the men they trusted. He intersperses his recitation with rhetorical questions and editorial comments that clearly indicate what attitude listeners ought to have towards the examples given. Geffrey poses this rhetorical question concerning Demophon's betrayal of Phyllis: "Loo! was not this a woo and routhe?" (HF 396). He curses Theseus: "The devel be hys soules bane!" (HF 408). Adriane's misfortune he describes with details that closely link her story with Dido's own:

And yet he had yswore to here
On al that ever he myghte swere,
That, so she saved hym hys lyf,
He wolde have take hir to hys wif.... (HF 421-24)

As he did earlier in the lament, Geffrey connects the past deeds of literary heroines with the present feelings of his listeners.

The catalogue, therefore, is not simply a rhetorical device used to affirm the narrator's erudition. The list, as Geffrey would see it, illustrates an important responsibility of the poet. A poet should not only tell the old stories but in doing so should show contemporary audiences how to make those ancient tales meaningful to their own lives. Literature, in this
view, can provide more than moralistic commentary; it can evoke feelings in the receivers of that literature which can, in turn, prompt actions to improve their own lives. The events of the story, therefore, should make listeners answer a heartfelt “yes” when Geffrey asks, “was not this a woo and routhe?” And perhaps those feeling pity might be prompted to change contemporary society so as to avoid such unhappy situations. At the least, males guilty of Aeneas-like, or Theseus-like, behavior might feel regret, and women likely to be duped, as were Dido and Adriane, might be now less unwary.

Repetition of literary examples to illumine real life seems to have intrigued Chaucer. In The House of Fame, the expanded episode of Dido and Aeneas in love, amplified by briefer references to similarly famous stories, characterizes most of Book I. Although the Dido episode in The Legend of Good Women ends where The House of Fame catalogue begins, thus eliminating the list itself, the entire format of The Legend of Good Women is an expanded catalogue. The overall structure of The Legend of Good Women serves the same poetic purposes as does the first book of The House of Fame.

Geffrey concludes the catalogue in The House of Fame with the phrase, “as the book us tellis” (HE 426). Once more, the pronoun “us” draws the listener into the narrator’s thoughts. The audience’s acceptance of the narrator’s perspective becomes important at this point because the first book (and, perhaps, the first sitting of an oral presentation) is coming to a close. It would seem that Geffrey has now strongly affirmed his belief that the narration of tales from antiquity can prove to be a means to evoke emotions in “us,” his modern audience. Geffrey will add in the remaining lines of the poem, however, a significant modification of that idea.

Because the individual poet can be the controlling factor in how an ancient tale is told and retold, those emotions called up in the audience probably will reflect the poet’s own concerns. Geffrey illustrates this fact by the way he tells, or does not tell, the rest of the story of Aeneas. In lines 427-45 he gives only a sketchy account of Books IV through VI
of *The Aeneid*. On line 446, he directs those in his audience, those people "whoso willeth for to knowe" about what he has left out, to consult Virgil, Claudian, or Dante. Finally, in only thirty-six lines, he makes a whirlwind summary of the remaining books of *The Aeneid*. Unlike other authors, Geffrey is interested in only one aspect of the classical story: the love affair between Dido and Aeneas. The lovers’ motivations and reactions fascinate Geffrey; their relationship is the focus of his narration. Their emotions as imagined by Geffrey, as well as Geffrey’s own emotions, provide the tenor of the poem.

Not surprisingly, Geffrey’s final moments in the glass temple are spent in prayer to Venus, Goddess of Love. He first tells the listener that Aeneas “acheved al his aventure” (HF 463) because of Venus’s prayers to Jupiter on his behalf. Then Geffrey makes his own prayer to Venus: “The whiche I preye alwey save us, / And us ay of oure sorwes lyghte!” (HF 466-67). Geffrey began his tale with a reference to St. Leonard’s power to lighten love’s burdens; he concludes with a prayer to the Goddess of Love herself to do the same. There in his personal “chirche” of love, he reminds the audience of the fundamental reason for his telling the story of Dido and Aeneas. He hopes that, through hearing of and sympathizing with the plight of Dido, we will learn enough about human nature so that “oure sorwes” will, indeed, become “lyghte.”
CHAPTER V

THE POET SPEAKS HIS MIND: 
"THE LEGEND OF DIDO" IN THE LEGEND OF GOOD WOMEN

If separated from the body of "The Legend," the opening passage of "The Legend of Dido" would appear to discredit the idea of a Chaucerian poet/narrator interested in breaking away from his sources. Geoffrey begins and ends his story of Dido with reference to Virgil and Ovid. In the first two lines of "The Legend," he delivers outright praise for his predecessor: "Glorye and honour, Virgil Mantuan, / Be to thy name!" (LGW, III. 1-2). In the concluding two lines, he recommends that his listeners read Ovid to find a full account of Dido's letter: "But who wol al this letter have in mynde, / Rede Ovyde, and in hym he shal it fynde" (1366-67). The extent to which Geoffrey works to establish his own poetic voice throughout the remainder of the Dido legend, however, suggests the opening and closing passages are conventional covers for the narrator's personalized book.

Geoffrey's homage to Virgil and Ovid, I believe, serves both his own purposes and the dictates of convention. When the narrator declares he will follow Virgil's lantern, he follows an acknowledged master; imitation of a classical master could earn the medieval poet a good measure of respect. Kevin Brownlee comments on the conventions followed by the Wace clerk/narrator in the same way: "The topos of translatio studii linked to that of translatio imperii is employed to bestow immense value and prestige on the (poetic) activity of the clerk." Geoffrey's promise to "take / The tenor" (LGW, III. 928-29) of "Naso and Eneydos" not only documents his material, but it also shows his good sense of aesthetics in selecting these Roman authors to help him "the grete effectes make" (929). For twenty-six lines Geoffrey diligently follows that Virgilian lantern and outlines the events in Aeneas' life leading
up to his arrival in Carthage. This historical tone, supported by details found in the first two
books of The Aeneid, further confirms the reliability of the narrator.

In the midst of this chronicle, however, Geffrey abruptly stops his Virgilian recitation to
declare his poetic independence. His purposes will not be the same as those of the ancients
from this point on:

But of his aventures in the se
Nis nat to purpos for to speke of here,
For it acordeth nat to my matere.
But, as I seyde, of hym and of Dido
Shal be my tale, til that I have do. (L GW, III. 953-57)

The narrator is not going to give his listeners an adventure story: that aim does not accord
with his material. The moment Geffrey identifies “[his] matere,” he differentiates the present
narrative from his sources. He continues to emphasize his point by calling his work, “my
tale.” Unlike Virgil’s epic, the love story of Dido and Aeneas will be the main subject of
Geffrey’s poem.

The five lines quoted above, while the most dramatic, are not the first indications to be
found in the Dido legend that Geffrey’s abilities and inclinations will direct the narrative.
Nor is the passage the first evidence of Geffrey’s interest in the Dido and Aeneas love story.
As early as the second line of the legend, Geffrey modifies the degree to which he will
imitate Virgil. He will follow the master “as [he] can” (L GW, III. 925).2 The pronoun “I”
suggests authorial direction of the story even as the phrase appears to be a declaration of
modesty.

Two lines later, however, Geffrey is less subtle in stating his storytelling aims. Even
as he acknowledges Virgil “as how [who] gost byforn” (L GW, III. 926), Geffrey displays a
very different attitude towards his subject than did Virgil. Geffrey will tell “how Eneas to
Dido was forsworn" (927). In the view of the Chaucerian narrator, then, Dido was betrayed by a perjurer who falsely swore his love to her. The Roman attitude towards Dido was quite the opposite, as exemplified by Virgil's comments in Book I on Anna's encouragement of Dido's feelings for Aeneas: "His dictis impenso animum flammatam amore / spemque dedit dubae menti solvitque / purorem."

"By speaking so Anna set Dido's heart, already kindled, ablaze with a new access of love, gave new hope to tempt her waverint intention, and broke down her scruples". Geffrey nevertheless dismisses Virgil's opinion that Dido trapped Aeneas because of her corrupted principles: Geffrey will tell, rather, how Dido was betrayed by Aeneas. The meager allowance Geffrey makes for Aeneas's departure in the beginning of the Dido legend—it "wolde his destinee" (952)—is also reminiscent of the small praise given Aeneas in The House of Fame. There, too, Mercury's insistence that Aeneas fulfill his destiny only faintly excuses Aeneas's conduct. In both The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women, the narrator's personal allegiance to Dido rather than to Aeneas is thinly disguised.

Both The House of Fame and The Legend of Good Women Dido stories proceed chronologically, plumbing material found in Book I of The Aeneid. The two Chaucerian versions do not amplify the same events, however. The opening scene in The House of Fame concentrates upon Aeneas's experience in Dido's Temple of Venus. In "The Legend of Dido," Geffrey expands upon an earlier incident: Aeneas's meeting with Venus in the wood. Such selective editing of material was not innovative: the techniques of amplification and abbreviatio were commonly used by Chaucer. Geffrey not only employs the devices, however, he uses them with marked frequency in this early section of the Dido legend. He also uses the occupatio five times more before the conclusion of this short, only 442-line, poem.

Twice in ten lines Geffrey announces what he is not going to say. He will not explain Dido's past history, for example, "of which as now me lesteth nat to ryme: / It nedeth nat, it were but los of ryme" (LGW, III. 996-97). The concern expressed over lapsed time was a
conventional one: the verb “lesteth,” meaning to desire, wish, or prefer, however, could reflect the less conventional fact that the narrator’s personal goals or desires are shaping this narrative. This background material is also not required for Geffrey’s purposes: “It nedeth nat.” Five lines later he inserts an occupatio that covers an even wider range of potential deletions from Virgil’s story: “I coude folwe, word for word, Virgile, / But it wolde lasten al to longe while” (1002-3). At the same time the narrator affirms his complete knowledge of his source, he implies that any number of those Virgilian details or events will be excised from his text for his own reasons.

Having used classical methods to prepare the audience for what has been left out of the original story, Geffrey turns to more modern poetic means to amplify those incidents he has chosen to keep in the poem. He begins to medievalize the Roman story through the addition of courtly description. Aeneas has set off into the “wildernes” (LGW, III. 970) like a knight errant with his trusted “knyght” Achates (964). There he meets Venus, who is described as if she were a courtly heroine: “the fayreste creature / That evere was yformed by Nature” (974-75). Venus bids Aeneas go to Dido, who, in turn, is “fayrer . . . than is the bryghte sonne” (1006). Reminding the listener of Geffrey’s preoccupation with flowers in The Legend of Good Women Prologue is a second description of Dido that praises her as “holden of alle queenes flour, / Of gentillesse, of fredom, of beaute” (1009-10). These courtly embellishments upon the classical epic helped, I suggest, to bring the story into a more contemporary frame of reference for the listener. The familiar romance setting would then have made it easier for the audience to recognize itself and its foibles within the narrative.

In general, Geffrey seems to be sensitive to what his audience will believe throughout his story. When a detail of the original tale seems too antique or too magical for contemporary listeners, Geffrey apologizes for it. According to Virgil, Aeneas was invisible when he first entered Dido’s temple. Whether such a feat was truly possible, Geffrey is not prepared to say:
"I can nat seyn if that it be possible,
But Venus hadde hym made invyisible--
Thus seyth the bok, withouten any les." (LGW, III. 1020-22)

Geffrey assures the audience of his truthfulness while letting his source take the blame for unrealistic details. It is a curious point, however, that Geffrey mentions the invisibility of Aeneas at all: after Geffrey's several announcements that he will abbreviate the original text, the listener would not necessarily have expected to hear every Virgilian detail accounted for or rationalized.5 Perhaps Geffrey's sensitivity grows less out of audience concern and more from a desire to make opportunities to differentiate his poem from Virgil's.

A later incident of rationalization further reinforces the notion that Geffrey is motivated by a desire to separate his poem from the Roman epic. Ascanius, Aeneas's son, attends the feast Dido gives in Aeneas's honor. In The Aeneid, Venus substitutes Cupid in place of Ascanius, thus hastening Dido's love for Ascanius's father. Geffrey, however, doubts the supernatural cause:

But natheles, oure autour telleth us,
That Cupido, that is the god of love,
At preyere of his moder hye above,
Hadde the liknesse of the child ytake,
This noble queen enamored to make
On Eneas: but, as of that scripture,
Be as he may, I take of it no cure. (LGW, III. 1139-45)

In this case, he includes the audience in reference to Virgil. Now Virgil is "oure autour" who "telleth us." Geffrey asserts openly that he disagrees with his source: "I take of it no cure." The point of disagreement is made more noticeable by Geffrey's choice of the word "scripture" to describe Virgil's text: Geffrey dismisses a text he associates with biblical truth.
The instances cited above pertain to the way in which Dido and Aeneas meet and fall in love. The next time the narrator disagrees with his source concerns the crucial meeting of the two lovers in the cave. Into the cavern flee the two protagonists. Virgil declares that, once Juno gives a sign, the union is fated to be; but Geffrey brings the matter down to earth. He suggests that the lovers' "depe affeccioun" (LGW, III. 1229) springs up because they were unchaperoned in a secret place. This is a point of which Virgil makes no mention, says Geffrey: "I not, with hem if there wente any mo: / The autor maketh of it no mencioun" (1227-28). It is important to Geffrey that he find natural causes for his lovers' relationship. And I think the reason is apparent. If Dido and Aeneas's love affair is attributed to supernatural powers that operate outside the realm of mortals, then the story becomes less effective as a means to teach contemporary listeners about human love. In order to invoke empathy for Dido and to lead listeners to self-knowledge, Dido and Aeneas must be motivated by the same human emotions as are felt by those listeners.

As in The House of Fame, Geffrey provides the audience with many opportunities to admire Dido. One such opportunity is created when he reverses what would have been the normal chivalric characteristics associated with the hero and heroine. Aeneas is weak and unmanly; Dido is generous and aristocratic. The first glimpse of this exchange of characteristics occurs when Aeneas reaches Dido's temple and finds the history of the Trojan war "depeynted on a wal" (LGW, III. 1025). These pictures, which primarily served as a narrative device in The House of Fame, become in "The Legend of Dido" a vehicle for characterization. In reaction to the pictures, Aeneas breaks into a tearful lament:

"Alas, that I was born!" quod Eneas:

"Thourghout the world oure shame is kid so wyde,
Now it is peyned upon every syde.
We, that weren in prosperite,
Although Virgil allowed Aeneas to indulge in tears at the sight of the Trojan mural, the Roman hero is not so emotionally wounded by the experience as is his Chaucerian counterpart. Aeneas analyzes the situation philosophically in the epic: "Sunt lacrimae rerum at mentum mortalia tangunt" ["Here too there are tears for human happenings and mortal sufferings touch the heart"].

In The Legend of Good Women, Aeneas is brought so low by his emotions that he threatens to kill himself. He mimics, in effect, Dido's behavior in the Roman d'Eneas.

On close look, Aeneas's speech in The Legend of Good Women is also a paraphrase of Dido's complaint in The House of Fame:

"O, wel-away that I was born!
For thorgh yow is my name lorn,
And alle myn actes red and songe
Over al thys lond, on every tonge.
O wikke Fame! for ther nys
Nothing so swift, lo, as she is!
O, soth vs, every thing ys wyst,
Though hit be kevered with the myst.
Eke, though I myghte duren ever,
That I have don, rekever I never".... (HF 345-54)

Both characters bemoan their birth, their loss of reputation, their published shame, and their inability to survive the tragedy. When Aeneas weeps in The Aeneid, he does so with dignity: "largoque umectat flum ine vultum" [His face was wet with a stream of tears].

Geffrey, however, describes his warrior breaking out to weep "so tenderly that routhe it was to sene" (LGW, III. 1034). Aeneas has momentarily become the lamenting heroine.
Immediately juxtaposed to this picture of Aeneas tenderly weeping is the view of Dido as she enters the temple:

This fresshe lady, of the cite queene,
Stod in the temple, in hire estat real,
So rychely and ek so fayr withal…. (LGW, III. 1035-37)

Dido is young and energetic, the aristocratic ruler of the city garbed royally in rich clothes. She appears in marked contrast to the sorrowing fop newly arrived on her shores. Geffrey continues to apply the best of courtly adjectives to Dido: "yong," "lusty," "euen glade," "goodnesse," "trouthe," and "semelynesse." Were it not for the addition of the word "womanhod" on line 1041, the passage could describe a young squire.

How could Aeneas not love such a "lady swete" (LGW, III. 1042)? Geffrey's romantic query implies that he thinks the relationship ought to have ended happily. Nevertheless, Geffrey quickly introduces the human flaw that will undo both Dido and Aeneas. This flaw is identified by the phrase, "so newe a chaunce" (1045). As in The House of Fame, the lure of "newefangelnesse" will bring about the downfall of the lovers, who are attracted to each other out of curiosity for "the new." Geffrey explains that Dido is attracted to Aeneas because "as, God do bote, / To som folk ofte newe thyng is sole" (1076-77). Later, he refers to Aeneas as Dido's "newe gest" (1158). In turn, Aeneas in Dido's eyes is "so newe a chaunce" (1045). In these passages Geffrey shows his concern for the flaws inherent in human nature. It is a concern he will elaborate upon later in his climactic speech to the women in his audience.

In Geffrey's less-than-chivalric description of Aeneas, he focuses on another human weakness. This flaw is, in his view, a particularly female one, namely, the tendency for women to be fooled by appearances in men. The same fault is a concern of the narrator in The House of Fame as well. Unfortunately, in neither poem is Dido given the advantage of
the narrator's critical eye or access to his telling descriptions of her soon-to-be lover. With such information she might have detected Aeneas's falseness before it was too late. When Geffrey describes Aeneas in The Legend of Good Women and in The House of Fame, he uses the comparative "lyk" to undermine praise given the hero. Aeneas is "lyk a knyght" (LGW, III. 1066) and "lyk to been a verray gentil man" (1068). In the same vein, he "semede" to be a lord (1074). Aeneas's words and visage appear pleasing and noble, but no inner goodness lies behind them. With the prevaricating phrase "I gesse" and the use of the subjunctive "myght," Geffrey quickly diminishes Aeneas's beauty: "No man myghte be half so fayr, I gesse" (1073). Finally, Geffrey gives the most honest comment yet made about Aeneas's appeal: "He was a straunger" (1075) who seems vulnerable because of "his distresse" (1081). In reality, Dido knows next to nothing about the man she will love. She has "herd ofte of Eneas er tho" (1062) and is fooled by his knightly reputation and appearance.

As if trying to outshine Aeneas and the courtly trappings that so dazzled Dido, Geffrey next launches into seventy lines of virtuoso romance poetry. His primary theme is a celebration of Dido's generosity, a quality that serves her badly in the end. Dido declares she will save Aeneas's company and victual his ships. She then speeds to the castle to set up a typically courtly banquet, a "feste of devotees and rychesse" (LGW, III. 1100). It is an event, Geffrey says, that there is little need to describe. Dido's hospitality would rival any princely welcome imagined by Chrétien de Troyes. Geffrey itemizes Dido's gifts to Aeneas in a long, perhaps deliberately overlong, passage marked by one anaphora after another:

There nas courser wel ybrydeled non,  
Ne stede, for the justing wel to gon,  
Ne large palfrey, esy for the nones,
Ne jewel, fretted ful of ryche stones,
Ne sakkes ful of gold, of large wyghte,
Ne ruby non, that shynede by nyghte,
Ne gentil hawtie in faucoun heroner,
Ne hound, for hert or wilde bor or der,
Ne coupe of gold, with floreyns newe ybete.
That in the land of Libie may be gete,

That Dido ne hath it Eneas ysent. ... (LGW, III. 1114-24)

The rhetoric matches the Queen's magnanimity, but the outlay exceeds what Dido will finally receive. In a literal sense, this imbalance could refer to the actual gifts Dido receives at the banquet from Aeneas. As E.B. Atwood pointed out nearly fifty years ago, the presents Aeneas brings from his ship pale beside those given out by the Queen. The summarizing phrase that follows the long listing of Dido's gifts also suggests a broader ironic message. "And al is payed" (1125), declares Geffrey, forewarning that Dido, indeed, will have paid dearly for her generosity. The listener should have begun to suspect that Geffrey aims to show both the splendor and ultimate worthlessness of courtliness when it is all show and no meaning.

Once the banquet is over, the story of Troy recounted, and the "longe day" (LGW, III. 1154) passed, Geffrey can concern himself with his real reasons for telling this legend. The courtly proceedings dispensed with, he can now write about the love affair. First, however, the audience must understand Dido's emotional state at the end of the feast. A tone of foreboding is established as Geffrey describes Dido's reaction to her day with Aeneas and his company:

...ther gan to breden swich a fyr,

That sety Dido hath now swich desyr
With Eneas, hire newe gest, to dele; 

That she hath lost hire hewe, and ek hire hele... 

(LGW, III. 1156-59).

Geffrey effectively uses a well-known metaphor, love as a burning fire; in this case it is an image that will cease being a symbol and become the actual means to Dido's death. Geffrey's imagery might have reminded the audience that Dido's loss of health, in its early stages here, will become more serious than girlish love-sickness.

With more than half of the narrative delivered, Geffrey again alerts his audience that the part of the narrative most significant to him is still to come: "Now to th'effect, now to the fruyt of al" (LGW, III. 1160). His words "effect" and "fruyt" may have caught a listener's attention. Classical rhetoric sought "effects," as Geffrey himself noted in the opening lines of "The Legend": "In Naso and Eneydos wol I take / The tenor, and the grete effectes make" (5-6). The term "effect," therefore, aligned Geffrey's upcoming material with a long history of "auctores." The word "fruyt" was often associated with the idea of reward or the choicest part of something. Chaucer may have borrowed from Boethius the use of the word "fruit" as the most excellent result of critical thinking. In Prose I of The Consolation of Philosophy, Lady Philosophy warns Boethius about evil books that destroy the bounteous fruits of reason: "infructuosus affectuum spinis uberen fructibus rationis segetem." Chaucer translates the phrase in his Boece: "with thornes and prikkinges of talentz or affeccions which that ben nothyng fructifyenge nor profitable, destroyen the corn plentlyvous of fruytes of resoun." The phrase "now to th'effect, now to the fruyt of al" most likely signaled to the audience that the most important part of Geffrey's thinking was forthcoming.

Geffrey confirms this idea when he states unequivocably in the next line that the material that follows will explain why he has told this story: "whi I have told this story, and
telle shal" (LGW, III, 1161). The first word, "whi," presumes a reason or motivation for the story. In the phrase "I have told," the active verb preceded by the first-person pronoun strengthens his position as narrator. Geoffrey makes himself appear even more forceful in the next phrase, where he succinctly tells the listener what he will do: he "telle shal." His next words, "thus I begynne" (1162), formally announce a new beginning. The sense of resolution or summation implied in the word "thus" also suggests that a speaker might have actually stopped speaking for a moment. The aural hiatus would have highlighted the difference between the story as others have told it and "th'effect" Geoffrey will soon "telle."

Before his tale of Dido's woe progresses much further, Geoffrey stops again. This time he wants to clarify his personal relationship to Dido's situation. He reminds the audience that he is an outsider's perspective: he is a sympathetic observer but not a lover himself. He has already explained this relationship to the audience in the Prologue when he repeats Alceste's remark that he "lyke nat a lovere bee" (LGW, Prol. 490). This fact bears repeating, however, in order to keep an objective distance between Geoffrey and his subject. Dido, Geoffrey now tells his audience, paces sleeplessly, sighs, writhes, and "maketh many a breyd" (LGW, III, 1166). She performs this undignified scene like most lovers do, says Geoffrey, "as I have herd sevd" (1167). His comment suggests that he does not know about this kind of activity from personal experience: he has only heard about it. In one view, the effect of Geoffrey's abdication from the role of courtly lover is comic: here is an older courtier laughingly protesting personal ignorance of the foolish behavior of the young. More seriously, however, this distance that Geoffrey has established between himself and overwrought lovers strengthens his role as a believable narrator. Geoffrey is a more credible storyteller precisely because he is not a participant in this adolescent aspect of the story.

Geoffrey's synopsis of Dido's speech to her sister, Anna, also reflects the mind of a poet more preoccupied with creating effective literature than reliving a love affair. The images Geoffrey uses to convey Dido's infatuation in that same speech reflect a concern with a "wel
ywrought” text (LGW, III. 1173). Geffrey is not an epic chronicler nor a romancier concerned with following the rules of genres, however. Instead, he creates a story augmented by the teller’s personal views on life. Virgil’s Dido, when speaking to Anna, praises Aeneas’s noble lineage ["gentis honos"], his valiant bearing ["quem sese ore ferens"], and his divine parentage ["genus esse deorum"]. In the Roman d’Eneas, Dido recalls Aeneas’s physical qualities: "his face, his body, his form" ["son vis, son corset, sa fauteur"]. The Roman poet also mentions "his words, his deeds, his speech, the battles of which he has told her" ["ses diz, ses faiz, sa parleure, / les batailles que il li dist"]. But the battle stories Aeneas has told are only a dimension of his heroic demeanor. Geffrey’s Dido, on the other hand, develops a literary picture of her love affair.

The queen begins her speech by asking a question that might have been particularly significant for an audience hearing a dream narrative. "Now, dere sister myn, what may it be / That me agaseth in my drem?" asks Dido (LGW, III. 1170-71). Like Geffrey in The House of Fame, Dido is confused about the cause of her dream and searches for the meaning of it. In her mind and "thought," she sees Aeneas "so wel ywrought" (1172-73), a compliment that could also refer to a well-crafted poem. "Have ye nat herd him telle his aventure?" presses Dido (1177). She rests the cause for her love on Aeneas’s ability to tell of his adventures and implies that Anna would feel likewise had "[she] herd" such stories. Dido uses another literary image when she asks Anna if she agrees with her opinion of Aeneas: "now certes, Anne, if that ye rede it me" (1178). Dido uses the verb "to reden," which means to read aloud or interpret, as well as to guide or advise. The love affair, like a book or a poem, can be read and analyzed.

Dido’s summarizing remarks to Anna sound not at all like a lovesick woman but like a speaker announcing the climax of a narrative. "This is th’effect" (1180), Dido declares, repeating the rhetorical reference to "effectes" that Geffrey used earlier to announce the most important part of his poem. "What sholde I more seye?" (1180) she asks with the finality of
a poet concluding a story. Dido's dream or "vision" of Aeneas seems to be a mirror-in-miniature of Geffrey's own dream narrative. In this view, Dido and Geffrey are united in the process of "making" their own reality.

Geffrey seems to think that Dido's "making" of her own reality is more important, at this point in the narrative, than weighing the good and bad of it. He tells the audience that Anna did answer Dido and even tried to dampen her sister's enthusiasm for Aeneas. That response, however, is not of interest to Geffrey. He cuts the narration of Anna's speech short, saying: "But herof was so long a sermounynge, / It were to long to make rehearsynge" (LGW, III. 1184-5). The occupatio confirms Geffrey's greater interest in Dido's feelings for Aeneas than for Anna's unromantic advice. The words Geffrey uses to refer to Anna's speech, "sermounynge" and "make rehearsynge," might also have implied that words of common sense about love (Geffrey's forthcoming address to the ladies perhaps withstanding) are tedious, sermonlike, and best dispatched with quickly. Practical discussions about love are generally pointless, for "love wol love, for nothing wol it wonde" (1187). If one wants to love, nothing can stop it.

To prove that love is an all-controlling yet delightful power, Geffrey turns next to the cave scene. Here Aeneas returns, or pretends to return, Dido's love. In Geffrey's hands, the hunting scene, which precedes the cave incident, becomes an extended metaphor for sexual pursuit and, finally, male dominance. Dido is called "amorous" and a "lusty freshe queene" (LGW, III. 1189: 1191). Around her hover "yonge knyghtes": spears and nets for capture are made ready: and hounds and swift horses are brought out on parade (1194-96). Dido herself rides a paper-white palfrey and is seated on a red embroidered saddle. The white female horse decorated in red recalls the colors earlier associated in the Prologue with daisies and fair damsels. The Queen also sports the familiar colors of red and white. Woven into the titillating description of "these yonge folk" (1216) so lusty and fresh, however, is the voice of the narrator, older and a little rueful about the inevitable outcome of the lovers' hunt.
Geffrey adds one particular detail to Dido’s description that effectively clouds this picture of a carefree maiden. He comments on her horse’s jeweled bit, a “gold and perre wrye” (LGW, III. 1201), as if wanting to stress the slavery, albeit a seemingly beautiful one, imposed upon both Dido and the palfrey. A similar phrase used earlier by Geffrey also plays upon the unlovely association of woman and horse: “So priketh hire this newe joly wo” (1192), says Geffrey, describing Dido’s emotional state. Love “prike” or spurs Dido as if she were the horse and her emotions the rider. Geffrey’s repetition of “joly wo,” an oxymoron often found in medieval love poetry, also suggests ambivalence towards Dido and the reliability of her emotions.

Aeneas, too, is identified by the bridle with which he controls his horse. He sits upon a courser, a symbol of male strength, that is so responsive to his touch that “men myghte turne hym with a litel wyr” (1205). This ability to control easily continues to characterize Aeneas: “The fomy brydel with the bit of gold / Governeth he, ryght as hymself hath wold” (LGW, III. 1209). The Trojan governs the horse with the golden bit just as he governs Dido later in the story. Aeneas rules as it pleases him, “as hymself hath wold.” His inherent selfishness and concern for his own glory, combined with Dido’s self-destructive willingness to be dominated, are vividly expressed in this quintessentially medieval metaphor of the knight and the horse. Geffrey shows his listeners chivalry at its most pernicious.

And what is Geffrey’s reaction to the scene he has just imagined? He steps away from it. His age, perhaps, keeps him from personally sharing the young people’s exuberance. His wisdom, however, tells him not to belittle it outright. Therefore, he sends Dido on her way to the hunt with no reproach: “And forth this noble queen thus lat I ride / On huntynge, with this Troyan by lyre side” (LGW, III. 1210-11). Geffrey does not hide his sympathy for his heroine, however; she remains the “noble queen,” while Aeneas becomes only “this Troyan.” Geffrey cheerfully re-creates the excited calls of the hunters on finding their prey, bringing a contemporary tone to the event: “Hay! go bet! pryke thow! lat gon.”
lat gon!" (1213). He steps away from the role of participant once more, however, as he summarizes the scene: "Thus sey these yonge folk" (1216). Having separated himself from the immediacy of the hunt, he then concludes on an objective, even cynical, note: "And up they kyll / These bestes wilde, and han hem at here wille" (1216-17). The reminder of the loss of will soon to be imposed upon the victims of the hunt makes for a sober commentary on the snares of Love.

Geffrey’s description of the natural events that hasten the lovers’ consumption parallels the pessimistic view of love expressed in the hunt scene. The heavens rumble and roar with a grisly din. The skies unleash all their artillery of rain, sleet, hail, and lightening:

Among al this to rum belen gan the hevene:

The thunder rored with a grisely stevene:

Doun cam the reyn, with hayl and slet, so faste,

With hevenes fy, that it so agaste

This noble queen, and also hire meyne.... (LGW. III. 1218-22)

In the storm description, Geffrey enlivens what other authors presented matter-of-factly. For them, the storm was merely a device to get the lovers together in isolation. The heavenly outbreak for Geffrey, however, becomes a symbol for the unavoidable heartbreak in store for both Dido and the women he addresses twenty-five lines later as "sely wemen, ful of innocence" (1254). They, like the queen, will be "agaste" by the forces unleashed by passion. The outcome of Dido and Aeneas’ storm-driven "affeccioun" (1229) both justifies Geffrey’s amplified description of the squall and proves valid his concern for the victimization of women. For those who do not heed the warning of the heavenly "rumbelen," all will be lost. For Dido the immediate result will be that "wikke fame" will tell "how Eneas hath with the queen ygon / Into the cave; and demede as hem liste" (1242-44).
Geffrey began to establish this negative tone thirteen lines earlier when he declares that
the cave incident ushers in "the fistre morwe / Of hire gladnesse, and gynning of hire
sorwe" (LGW, III. 1230-31). He echoes both Virgil's comment in The Aeneid and his own
prophecy of "joly wo." For all that Aeneas "swore so depe to hire to be trewe" (1234), he
proves false to Dido. Geffrey now focuses on the Trojan's faithlessness and turns the cave
incident into an exemplum on the fickle nature of love. Aeneas promises not to "chaunge
hire for no newe" (1235), reviving the theme of "newefangelnesse." Aeneas deceitfully
pledges his love to Dido, as such "a fals loveere so wel can pleyne" (1236). The sorrow
Aeneas will cause Dido is "a routhe and pite for to here" (1249). Such changeableness,
however, is to be expected in love:

But, as in love, alday it happeth so,
But oon shal laughen at anothers wo,
Now laugheth Eneas, and is in joye
And more richesse than evere he was in Troye."

(LGW, III. 1250-53).

This passage introduces Geffrey's discussion of deceit in men as exemplified by Aeneas.
Geffrey begins the discussion in the address to the ladies that immediately follows the cave
scene.

In this address, Geffrey restates his opinion about love unambiguously, whereas
previously it was suggested, hinted at, or metaphorically conveyed within the narrative. To
make certain that his listeners understand the issues that concern him, Geffrey puts to them a
series of four direct questions:

O sely women, ful of innocence,
Ful of pite, or trouthe, and conscience,
What maketh yow to men to truste so?
Have ye swych routhe upon hyre feyned wo,
And han swich olde ensamples yow beforne?
Se ye nat alle how they ben forsworn?
Where sen ye oon, that he ne hath laft his leef,
Or ben unkynde, or don hire som myscheef,
Or piled hire, or bosted of his dede? (LGW, III. 1254-62)

The listeners, especially the women, could not have helped but respond to Geffrey's heartfelt questions. Why do you so trust men? Have you not learned from past examples? Do you not see how untrustworthy men are? The use of the second-person pronouns "yow" and "ye" five times in the first nine lines clearly identifies who is to answer the charges. The realistic nature of the questions would also have brought the charges home to most lovers. Who did not know, either personally or through literature, of an unkind, mischievous, or boastful lover? The slightly accusatory nature of the questions suggests that Geffrey wished to include the women with the men amongst those who err in love. Geffrey is quick to accuse men of feigning woe, breaking oaths, boasting of conquests, and even of thievery. On the other hand, Geffrey demands of the women: "What maketh yow. . . ": "Se ye nat. . . "; and "Where sen ye oon. . . ". The force of the charges implies that women have a responsibility to be wiser, less trusting, and less pitying.

Geffrey continues to instruct his listeners, pointing out that there are many examples to be found that confirm his view of men and women: "Ye may as wel it sen, as ye may rede" (LGW, III. 1263). These examples come from both life and literature: there is no excuse for naivety. Here again is a reminder to the listener that literature can teach as well as entertain. The pedagogical tone helps, also, to bring the poem's focus back on the narrator. This is an idea with which Geffrey has associated himself throughout the text; poetry and poets can be moral guides. The poet figure defended by Alceste in the Prologue
and the figure of Geffrey instructing his listeners to learn about life from literature merge here into one character. The audience sees before them a poet bringing "olde ensamples" (1258) to their attention with the aim of bettering their lives.

Geffrey reinforces his teacherly role by showing the audience how to recognize Aeneas-like tendencies in men in their own courtly circles. He accomplishes this by substituting medieval equivalents for classical details as he describes the actions of the Trojan hero. "Tak hede now," says Geffrey to gain attention, "of this grete gentil-man / This Troyan, that so wel hire plesen can" (LGW, III. 1264-65). Aeneas is described by the courtly term "gentil-man," which makes him more readily associated with the polished lovers of fourteenth-century great halls. Geffrey then lists the familiar "obeysaunces" practiced by these unscrupulous gentlemen, who only appear to serve women. These knights adopt a host of courtly mannerisms to hide their falseness:

...[they] wayten hire at festes and at daunces,
And whan she goth to temple and horn ageyn.
And fasten til he hath his lady seyn,
And beren in his devyses, for hire sake,
Not I not what.... (LGW, III. 1269-72)

All is done in name "for hire sake." In fact, however, there is no meaning to these actions. Geffrey again distances himself from such lovers when he comments, "not I not what," in reference to what love tokens men carry in their "devyses." Geffrey implies that he has not participated in such showy forms of lovemaking.

The list of suspect courtly gestures continues, reflecting those same attributes that caused Dido to love Aeneas. Insincere gentlemen are characterized by activities such as the "songes wolde [they] make" and how they "justen, and don of armes many thynge, / Sende hire lettres, tokens, broches, rynges" (LGW, III. 1273-75). Dido fell in love with Aeneas as he
recounted his experiences in arms during the Trojan War and on his voyage at sea. At the banquet he brought her "bothe sceptre, clothes, broches, and ek rynge" (1131). Geffrey breaks off his litany of false behaviors to focus on the potentially disastrous outcome of loving such courtly liars. Once more he sharply calls his listeners to attention: "Now herkneth how he shal his lady servel!" (1276). The "he" in this line refers both to Aeneas and contemporary men like him. Thus Geffrey establishes a connection between the distant world of The Aeneid and the fourteenth-century present.

Geffrey's narrative still follows Virgil's outline, but it is becoming a story colored by his own themes. The classical story had established matter-of-factly that Dido fell in love with Aeneas. Geffrey, however, elaborates on that event and explains that, because of her great sympathy for Aeneas's perils, Dido gives up her body and crown, "hire body and ek hire reame," into Aeneas's hand (LGW. III. 1281-82). Aeneas, who once "so depe yswore," becomes "wery of his craft" (1285-86). The newness of the affair wears off and "the hote ernest is al overblowe" (1287). The themes of Dido's self-sacrifice and the fickleness of lovers, earlier introduced, recur. Following Virgil's plot, Aeneas plans to sneak away by night; when Dido discovers his treachery, he excuses himself on the grounds that Mercury bade him sail to Italy. Geffrey, however, is not interested in providing supernatural excuses for human weaknesses. Consequently, he restates his distaste for this excuse when he describes Aeneas's reaction to Mercury's message. According to Geffrey, Aeneas declares his heart is broken by Mercury's command. He takes Dido in his arms, as would a romantic lover. Yet, "false teres" (1301) spring into Aeneas's eyes. Aeneas may pretend that he acts by heavenly command, but Geffrey disbelieves him. So will the audience when they learn from Geffrey that the hero prepared his ships for departure before Mercury even appeared. Clearly, Mercury's command proves to be but a convenient excuse for a previously determined plan of action.
Geffrey's fear that women who plunge too deeply into love risk losing mind, body, and, most importantly, self-esteem is well illustrated in his version of Dido's lament. In most sources, the lament portrays a Dido who alternately rages angrily at Aeneas and melodramatically sobs, falls to the floor, tears her hair, or otherwise physically responds to the situation. In Geffrey's version, Dido neither lashes out nor demands center stage. Instead, she displays a pathetic, almost whining, desperation about her future. Dido expresses concern for her role in life as a deserted woman who enjoys only the status of mistress rather than wife. The few histrionics she is allowed are only briefly reported, not quoted, by the narrator. At no time does she accuse Aeneas of wrongdoing, as even Dido in The House of Fame had done. The Legend of Good Women Dido is so blinded by her love that she hardly can believe Aeneas has been treacherous. Some in the audience might have longed for the return of that angry Queen Dido of past narratives to rescue Geffrey's monarch from insipidness. At least in The Aeneid, Dido achieves a kind of dignity in her moments of rage when she rebels against Aeneas's perfidy. The Dido of "The Legend of Dido" seems, in contrast, to have given away her self-confidence when she gave up her heart.

The dialogue between Dido and Aeneas in this lament is equally vapid. When Dido hears Aeneas tell of his imminent departure, she responds with incredulity. The false security of Aeneas's deceitful bond keeps her deluded still: "'Is that in earnest?' quod she, 'wole ye so? / Have ye nat sworn to wyve me to take?'" (1.103-04). Geffrey blandly uses the word "quod" to minimize Dido's reaction. This Dido is not affronted by Aeneas's treachery, rather she is fearful she will not be a wife. Virgil's Dido has a vastly different reaction to Aeneas's departure. There, Dido denounces Aeneas on the basis of rumors even before he can defend himself: "dissimulare etiam sperasti, perfide, tan tum / posse nefas tacitusque mea decedere terra?" ["Traitor, did you actually believe that you could disguise so wicked a deed and leave my country without a word?"] the furious ruler asks of her guest in Book IV.25 The
Roman queen makes it clear that Aeneas’s behavior not only hurts her but is an insult to her intelligence. Geoffrey’s Dido can only murmer, "Allas" (LGW, III. 1305). Three lines later she pathetically repeats what Aeneas earlier uttered in Venus' temple, "that I was born, allas" (1308).

Geffrey’s Dido continues to worry, not over Aeneas’s treachery or potential political problems, but over her social position. If Aeneas leaves, she will be a lost woman. She asks him, "What woman wolde ye of me make?" (LGW, III. 1305). She is a "gentil woman and a queen" (1308) but, despite her royalty, can only utter in despair, "What shal I do?" (1308). To avoid social ruin she is prepared to offer herself as Aeneas’s slave, "his thral, his servaut in the lest decre" (1313). To accent the baseness to which Dido is willing to subject herself, Geoffrey depicts her falling at Aeneas’s feet at this moment, her golden hair disheveled about her (1314-15). This picture of the tamed ruler fuses with the earlier image of Dido, the governed horse. The metaphor of entrapment, suggested in the hunt scene, is now made real: Dido has become the downed prey prostrate at the feet of the hunter. Her once glorious pelt lies demeaned upon the ground, and, vanquished, she can only beg, "Have mercy" (1316).

Each new plea for mercy reflects Dido’s decreasing sense of self-worth. She fears that rival lords will destroy her and adds that they will kill her, not for her sake, but for Aeneas’s. Four times in her short lament, she calls herself "wif" or begs Aeneas to "wyve" her; she calls herself Queen only once. Desperate, Dido stoops to deceit. Geoffrey now makes his Queen seek Aeneas’s pity through the Ovidian ploy that she is "with childe" (1323). Yet she asks only to save the child’s life, not her own. Finally, she proposes that, if Aeneas will wed her, she will give him leave "to slev me with youre sword now sone at eve" (1321). For the name of "wif" she would deliver herself to be killed. Having offered Aeneas her life, both metaphorically and literally, she has nothing left with which to bargain: thus she concludes her lament weakly, deferring to Aeneas as "lord" and begging for him to "have pite in youre thought" (1324).
Pleas for pity, however, will not change Aeneas's personality or take away his drive for personal gain. By way of indicating this, Geffrey abruptly cuts off Dido's complaint: "But al this thing avayleth hire ryght nought" (LGW, III. 1325). A similar brusqueness appears in The House of Fame where Geffrey comments, "al hir compleynt ne al hir moone, / Certeyn, avayleth hir not a stre" (HF 362-63). In "The Legend," Geffrey continues to tell his listeners of Aeneas's hardheartedness:

...he let hire lye,
And stal awey unto his companye,
And as a traytour forth he gan to sayle
Toward the large contre of Ytayle.
Thus he hath laft Dido in wo and pyne.
And wedded ther a lady, hyghte Lavynye. (LGW, III. 1326-31)

The selection of verbs in the passage reinforces a black view of the hero: "let hire lye," "stal away," and "laft." The alternation of passive and active tenses also highlights Aeneas's ruthless disregard for others. His conscience allows him to desert old commitments quickly and to pursue new, more promising ones with no reservations. Aeneas let Dido lie and happily "forth he gan to sayle." He "laft Dido" and calmly "wedded ther a lady." A sensitive listener would also have heard the implied comparison between Lavinia, the lady, and Dido, a queen but not a lady. The cruelest hurt to Dido is the apparent ease with which Lavinia gained the marriage prize Dido so desperately wanted.

Of Aeneas's person, Dido now possesses only "a cloth" and "his swerd stondynge" (1332): for herself, she has only her soul. Even that, however, she bequeaths indirectly to Aeneas. She kisses the cloth "ful ofte for his sake" (1337) and speaks to it as if addressing a relic: "O swete cloth, whil Juppiter it leste, / Tak now my soule, unbynd me of this unreste" (1338-39). Passively, she concludes that her fortune has run out: "I have fulfild
of fortune all the cours" (1340). Without Aeneas's "socours" (1341), she is powerless to help herself; she can only swoon twenty times in response to her woe. At the conclusion of the complaint, Dido is a diminished character who will regain no glory through final rhetorical flourishes. Her inability to fight back, either physically or verbally, confirms that her emotions have rendered her impotent.

Geffrey plays out the image of Dido's speechlessness to the end of "The Legend of Dido." In Virgil's story, Dido has a final opportunity to wax eloquent in her complaint to Anna. Geffrey, however, chooses not to present this speech at all. Although his emotions have not previously prevented him from writing of Dido's misfortune, in this case Geffrey's feelings of great pity prevent him from repeating the complaint:

And whanne that she unto hire syster Anne
Compleyned hadde—of which I may nat wryte,
So gret a routhe I have it for tendite.... (LGW, III. 1343-45)

The "I" is again prominent in the occupatio: the phrases "I may nat wryte" and "a routhe I have" stand at the core of the couplet. Neither Geffrey nor Dido will gain further advantage by offering the audience more words. As long as Dido proves herself unable to overcome her emotions, Geffrey will not provide her with a last rhetorical flourish. As Geffrey has already presented his thoughts repeatedly throughout his poem, there is little need to compose a second complaint simply because Virgil or other medieval writers did so.

Geffrey will also not glorify Dido's death by elaborating upon either her stabbing or her burning. The Eneas poet, by contrast, melodramatically pictured "Io rai del sanc vit saillir fors" ["the stream of blood flowing forth"] and described "char et bele et tendre . . . brulle et mercire" ["Dido's beautiful and tender flesh . . . turning black in the flames"]. Instead, Geffrey succinctly catalogs Dido's actions. She bids her nurse fetch fire for a sacrifice, she falls upon the fire, and she stabs herself with Aeneas's sword (LGW, III.
Although Geoffrey does not outright editorialize upon the death in any way, the alert listener could have heard his views in the final phrase of the stanza. He says that Dido "rof hyre to the herte" (1351). Dido is her own agent in this stabbing. As he did throughout the love affair, Geoffrey holds Dido as equally responsible as Aeneas for her death. Geoffrey ironically comments that, with her death stroke, Dido pierces herself to the heart. Sadly, she has already "rof hyre to the herte" when she gave herself to Aeneas. For Geoffrey, Dido's "fir of sacryfice" has been burning since she gave her heart unconditionally to love.

Having made his views on Dido's affair evident, Geoffrey dedicates the final sixteen lines of "The Legend" to a more universal, but nevertheless personal, concern: the continual evolution of Dido's story through literature. He ends his own commentary on line 1352 and refocuses attention, first, on the additions made to the legend by past poets. "But, as myn auctour seith," says Geoffrey referring to Ovid, "yit thus she seyde" (LGW, III. 1352). Ovid added to the story of Dido the fact that she wrote a letter to Anna; he then wrote his Epistle based upon that imaginative concept. Geoffrey paraphrases the opening lines of Ovid's poem, but he is not interested in replicating the literary contribution made by Ovid. Geoffrey's concern, instead, is that his listeners understand that every poet can bring new insights and ideas to old stories. I believe it could be for this reason, not humility, that he deliberately points his listeners to Ovid's work: "But who wol al this letter have in mynde, / Rede Ovyde" (1367). For Geoffrey, Ovid's "Epistle" could be a supplement to the Dido story: it was not in competition with his own version, in any case. Listeners and readers could learn as much from both the ancient writers and the present poets.

Geoffrey synthesizes his idea of past, present, and future enlightenment through literature into the final couplet of "The Legend." He tells the audience, "but who wol al this letter have in mynde, / Rede Ovyde, and in hym shal it fynde" (LGW, III. 1366-67). Present literary audiences are identified as those who, as a result of hearing Geoffrey's tale, want to know more about Dido. A past author, Ovid, is recommended for further information. And
the potential for future insights is suggested as Geffrey concludes the poem in the future tense saying, “he shal it fynde.” Geffrey makes even Dido speak of her contribution to her literary fame. To do this he paraphrases a sentence from the “Epistle”: “I may wel lese on yow a word or letter” (1362). This is Dido’s last speech in “The Legend,” and it is not surprising that it contains reference to the words and works of literature that will live after her. The reference also provides Geffrey a final way to remind his listeners of the ever-evolving process of literary immortality of which classical masters, such as Virgil and Ovid, and fourteenth-century Geffrey are all a part.
AFTERWORD:
GEFFREY'S VOICE AND THE POET'S MIND,
SOURCES OF POETIC AUTHORITY

"Now to th'effect to the fruyt of al,
Whi I have told this story, and telle shal."

(LGW. III. 1160-61)

Throughout his poetry, Geoffrey takes pains to explain why he tells the story of Dido and Aeneas; his voice is heard clearly amidst familiar classical details. Before leaving the imaginary poet in front of his imaginary audience, however, I would like to speculate briefly about why the real author chose Geoffrey's voice to "tell this story." Why did Chaucer create a narrator who so loudly imposes himself upon the well-known story? Why is this narrator allowed to interject such a high degree of personal expression into his story even while seeming to be aware of the more traditional, impersonal rules of medieval poetry? Might Chaucer have been depicting in the poet figure Geoffrey a new kind of poet, one more self-conscious than were his predecessors about making personal experiences and opinions part of the fabric of literature?

I would argue that, through the character of Geoffrey, Chaucer begins to break down the limitations imposed upon poetry by early Christian views of literature and by rhetorical rules which had long governed the creation of literary works. More particularly, I believe Chaucer seeks to explore the potential of the English poet. Chaucer's decision to follow Dante and Boccaccio and write in the vernacular suggests an interest in poetic innovation; perhaps Chaucer also hoped to lead English poets who dared to use the "new" poetic language to greater artistic freedom. Ideas about English life, as well as the use of the English language,
could become the substance of a new kind of literature. The modern notion that “all creative writing must begin with the writer’s unique experiences and perceptions” may owe a debt to Chaucer’s Geffrey.  

A fourteenth-century poet inherited several assumptions about literature. From the early writers, for example, came the belief that poetic inspiration was of divine origin. Like Caedmon, true poets did not acquire their skills from a human teacher. Rather, those skills were a gift from God. The actual subject of poetry need not always be philosophical or religious: nevertheless, earthly subjects were acceptable only if the poetic work served didactic purposes. Boccaccio valued the poets’ depiction of the many varieties of human nature and conversations because such descriptions could teach the reader or put him or her on guard. A poem was to reflect God’s will, not the poet’s own ideas about truth. As Augustine argues it, a poet’s task is to lead other men’s minds to universal truths, not to unburden his or her mind for purposes of self-expression.

In succeeding centuries, rhetorical prescriptions buried what little notion of personal inspiration might have lingered in the early Christian definitions of poetry. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, poets began to be charged by writers of rhetorical handbooks to use their own wit or personal invention to make a poem engaging. But such license applied primarily to stylistic ornamentation of existing material. Neither was a poet encouraged to treat new or unusual material. Only in technique and metrical forms was authorial freedom permitted. The notion that a poem could be the rendering of an individual poet’s vision (whether of divine origins or not) was overshadowed by the rules for producing it. The poet’s mind served, not as a source of creative ideas, but as a storehouse for clever techniques. The poet figure of Geffrey, however, provides an antidote to these limitations as he brings his own, very human perceptions into the text.

Use of the poet’s own circumstances as a starting point for literature was not entirely missing from early literature. Boethius begins The Consolation of Philosophy by describing
his sorrow at his imprisonment and the physical effects those circumstances have wrought upon him. The philosopher, however, backs away from claiming personal responsibility for what he is about to write: "Ecce mihi lacerae dictant scribenda canetae" ["wounded Muses tell me what I must write"]. Singers and jongleurs followed in oral courtly traditions by using the first person and made "their" love affairs the subject of their verses. The effectiveness of a sympathetic but fictitious voice, however, in enhancing the receptivity of these lyrics suggests rhetorical concerns were at work, not innovative theories about poetry. Dante had also found appropriate places in a literary heaven and hell for his friends and enemies; nevertheless, the moral and allegorical nature of his poetry overshadows his personal or political opinions.

The first-person narrator who told what purported to be a personal dream was also not new to literature by the fourteenth century. The Roman de la Rose, for example, provides an innovative model for Chaucer's intrusive narrator. Throughout the Roman de la Rose, the narrator's love for his rose influences the direction of his poem. As Charles Dahlberg puts it, the Roman de la Rose "is probably the first major French narrative poem that uses a first-person narrator to control the point of view from beginning to end." Liberal use of the complaint in continental literature may have also contributed to the personalization of poetry. The natural connection between a poetic complaint, a love lyric, and the speaker's emotional state could have encouraged the injection of personal dilemmas into the text. Aspects of Geoffrey's personality can be seen, as well, in narrators created by Froissart, Deschamps, and Machaut. However, as has been discussed in the chapters above, while Chaucer probably imitated some of the work of his French colleagues, his Geoffrey is a more fully developed, more three-dimensional character than the French models.

Several poems of Giovanni Boccaccio, on the other hand, offer examples of a first-person narrator who could have provided a well-developed model for Chaucer's Geoffrey. In the introduction to Filostrato, for example, the speaker clearly states that he has deep personal
motivations for retelling a classical love story in the vernacular. He will relate the story of Troilus and Criseida so that Love will "fate che alle mie nole presti alcuna pace, e lei smarrita riconfortiate" 10 ["give some peace to (his) troubles and solace (his) hapless life"].11 Like Geffrey, the Filostrato narrator addresses an audience (or readers) identified in the text, in this case identified in two ways: "nobilissima donna"12 ["his most noble love"] who has left him, bereft, for the suburbs; and youths or lovers in general. A similarly love-torn narrator in the Teseida offers to the lady Fiammetta a reworking of another classical love story.13 Lastly, in the Decameron a self-conscious "I" defends the choice of stories and language found in his book before the noble ladies of leisure for whom he declares he writes.14 In both Filostrato and Teseida, the narrator further integrates his personal feelings into the poem by directly associating himself with the actions of his lover-heroes. As each hero behaves towards his beloved, so would the narrator wish to be seen behaving towards his love.

Audience awareness of the narrator's personal "entente" is a vital part of both Chaucer's and Boccaccio's work. Despite this similarity, however, I believe the two medieval poets create narrators who have different relationships to their texts. Furthermore, stated differences in these narrators' characteristics correspond to dissimilar poetic goals. In Filostrato and Teseida Boccaccio's narrator declares himself to be a lover who writes in order to give outlet to personal anguish.15 Geffrey, however, is not a lover and denies it regularly. In contrast to the Italian narrator, he aims to ameliorate the condition of others who do or would love. Boccaccio's narrator wants to function as a vicarious participant in his poem to serve his own ends: Geffrey primarily acts as a commentator who deals with more universal human concerns. It might seem, therefore, that Geffrey is more removed, more distanced, from his narrative. To conclude only this, however, is to miss the genius of Chaucer's created poet/narrator.
In my view, Geffrey is at once more of a commentator and more of a participant in the Chaucerian poems. His thoughtful voice is heard throughout the narrative; his asides and touches of anachronistic humor are woven into the very fabric of the legend he tells; and the poem itself is presented as Geffrey's own dream in which he is an actual character. In contrast, the highly literary voice of Boccaccio's narrator is heard only in sections of the text separated from the main story, in, for example, introductions, conclusions, or a dedicatory letter. Boccaccio's "I" is part of a formal frame to the poetry itself. He is not presented as a person "inside" the text, as is Geffrey. Through Geffrey's believable dialogue with his addressed audience and within his text, he comes alive as both an observing poet and a participant in the story.

Geffrey cannot be isolated from the text as if he were merely a piece of machinery by which rhetorical speeches, debates on public or private issues, or displays of poetic virtuosity are presented, as happens in the French dream visions and in Boccaccio. The Chaucerian narrator becomes an integral part of the English narrative. Geffrey's personal insights, direct discourse with the audience, and regular interruptions to express his thoughts about the story he tells all become part of Chaucer's picture of the creative process of making poetry. Geffrey, in effect, portrays the poet thinking out loud about being a poet. The audience hears the poem as it unfolds from the poet's mind with the help of the poet's own structural guides: "I wol make invocation" (HF 67); thematic concerns: "for it acordeth nat to my mate" (LGW. III. 1145); details of his personal habits as they relate to his vision: "to slepe I lay, / Ryght ther as I was wont to done" HF 113); and his own emotional responses to his poetry: "I may nat wryte, / So grete a routhe I have for t'endite..." LGW. III. 1345).

The mind of the poet is opened up to show the listener not just an edifying story but how an author makes a new poem from an old one. As Chaucer puts it in The Parliament of Fowls:
For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yer,
And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
Cometh al this newe science that men lere. (PF 22-25)

Chaucer displays both the product and the process of making "newe corn" from "olde feldes."

The anxiety the character Geffrey expresses over integrating his own experiences into his new poem may well have been reflected Chaucer's own concerns. As Geffrey explains in the Proem to *The House of Fame*, the philosophical debate over the authority of received opinion as opposed to that of personal experience posed an ongoing problem for the poet. At the time Chaucer wrote his versions of the Dido legend, the extent to which a poet was justified in using his or her own perceptions as a basis for authority in literary works was perhaps an issue unresolved in his own mind. I do not want to suggest, therefore, that Chaucer aimed to validate the mind of the poet in order to reject the authority of the words of God or of the ancients. Rather, I believe that Chaucer had a special faith in both God and humanity. He trusted God's word and the ancients' wisdom, as well as the modern poet's imagination, to bring forth meaningful interpretations of universal truths. Those human values embedded in literature could steer men and women away from unhappiness, making life more satisfying and their "sorwes lyghte" (HF 467). The story of Dido in Chaucer's hands thus becomes a synthesis of classical literature, universal ideas about human needs and frailties, and a contemporary poet's vision of the tensions between men and women.

Chaucer may have been trying to expand upon his vision of the single poet presenting his or her personal view of reality in his final work, *The Canterbury Tales*. In that poem, multiple voices are heard telling their own truths through the interpreting voice of a fellow...
pilgrim named "Chaucer." That first-person narrator explains in the beginning of the General Prologue that he will "telle" the "degree," "condicioun," and "array" of his companions as it appears to him:

Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun
To telle yow al the condicioun
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree.

And eek in what array that there were inne.... (CT I. 37-40)

In turn, each tale-telling pilgrim becomes for a time a poet, philosopher or storyteller: in the stories told, each reveals his or her own opinions and values. This proliferation of authorial voices might cause the listener to sense a lack of philosophical unity in the poem. Such a display of the range and fullness of human experience, however, could serve to challenge the listener to evaluate his or her own ideas about "truth." Chaucer perhaps believed that the juxtaposition of many personal truths is potentially more enlightening than the presentation of only one supposedly right way of thinking.

The effect of this artistic aim upon non-Chaucerian literature produced in the late fourteenth century or upon works written during the generation immediately following Chaucer is not clearly evident. Chaucer appears to have been greatly admired by fifteenth-century writers as a philosopher, translator, and court poet. Richard Firth Green describes a "brotherhood of poets" that looked back to Chaucer as a revered master. As the poets' use of the English language increased, so did the status of the English poet. The more recognized the writer's occupation, the more authority could be allowed the poet's judgment. At minimum, Chaucer's literary efforts helped to lift the poet from the level of crafts-person to artist.
The influence of Christian humanism in the next century and its simultaneous emphasis on God's providential order and human dignity further argued for the worthiness of poetic vision. By the sixteenth century and the English Renaissance, in fact, poets seem to share Chaucer's interest in the exploration of the poet's mind. Sir Philip Sidney may be thinking of Chaucer's attitude towards the poet's imagination when he declares, "a Poett no industry can make if his owne Genius be not carryed into it."\(^9\) In any case, Sidney's admiration for Chaucer is made clear when he comments on the combination of art and genius in Troilus and Criseyde:

Chaucer, undoubtedly did excellently in his Troilus and Criseid: of whom truly I knowe not whether to meruaile more, either that he in that misti tyme could see so clearely, or that we in this cleere age goe so stumblingly after him.\(^9\)

Sidney's praise of the medieval poet is, I believe, fully justified. The English Renaissance was perhaps less a rebirth of poetic achievement and more a continuation of fourteenth-century explorations into the potential of the English poet. It is possible, however, that Chaucer was uncertain whether he always saw so clearly. Like Sidney, he may have felt that he, too, was stumbling in his own misty time, searching for a way to understand his own world through his own vision.

Whether it be in his presentation of classical legends in The House of Fame or The Legend of Good Women, or in his literary mosaic of medieval humanity, The Canterbury Tales, Chaucer asks questions about what it means to be human. His poetry is a display of that very personal and lifelong inquiry. The character Geffrey struggles to do the same in his reworking of the legend of Dido and Aeneas. Geffrey pours over the "olde bokes" absorbing the thoughts of past authors. The audience can hear him sifting and sorting the old material, the old sources, as he searches for a way to apply those ideas to his own world.
This same process later becomes a foundation of Renaissance humanism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. By the time Christopher Marlowe writes his comic version of the Dido legend, the artistic process of revisioning classical literature in light of the individual poet’s view of human strengths and weaknesses no longer needs to be self-consciously justified. As William Shakespeare suggests in Hamlet, an individual can be acknowledged "noble in reason" and "infinite in faculty" (II,ii.316). Shakespeare's commendation of men's and women's ability to think both logically and creatively suggests an Elizabethan acceptance of the idea that the poet has license to exercise imagination in literature. I suggest this "modern" characteristic of the poet was acquired, not only because of the attitudes of Renaissance writers, but because of Chaucer's reaction against early medieval literary principles and, in turn, because of the efforts of his imaginary poet, "Geffrey."
NOTES

Introduction

1See Mary Griffin, Studies on Chaucer and His Audience (Quebec: L'Eclaire, 1956): 107, who speculates about actual persons in Chaucer’s audience to the extent that she identified certain Benedictines of the Norwich Cathedral Priory as members of one Chaucer audience. Paul Strohm has also worked to characterize, if not identify, Chaucer’s audience. (“Chaucer’s Audience,” Literature and History) 5 [1977]: 26-41, and “Chaucer’s Fifteenth-Century Audience and the Narrowing of the ‘Chaucer Tradition,’” SAC 4 [1982]: 3-32).


4Bethurum, "Chaucer's Point of View" 518; Morton Donner, "Chaucer and his Narrators: The Poet's Place in his Poems," WHR 27 (1973): 189-95; and Sharon Pattyson Robinson, "Narrative Voice in Chaucer's Dream Visions," diss., U of Toledo, 1976, trace the growth of the narrator from the dream visions to The Canterbury Tales. Each of these critics also considers the narrator of The House of Fame less sophisticated than later counterparts.


The "Chaucerian Persona Puzzle," as it was termed by Thomas J. Garbáty, in "The Degradation of Chaucer's 'Geffrey'," *PMLA* 89 (1974): 97, has entertained and confounded critics for years. E. Talbot Donaldson points out ("Chaucer the Pilgrim" 930) that Chaucer's narrator shares literary characteristics both with traditional medieval narrators such as Long Will, the Pearl Poet, and the speaker in Gower's Confessio Amantis, and with later, self-consciously innovative narrators such as Swift's Gulliver and the "I" of Somerset Maugham's works.


Rowland, "Pronuntiatio."

Rowland, "Pronuntiatio" 34.


For a color reproduction of the miniature see Margaret Galway, "The 'Troilus' Frontispiece," *MLR* 44 (1949): 161-77.

Donaldson, "Chaucer the Pilgrim" 11.

The ironic mask theory is defended by Dorothy Bethurum, "Chaucer's Point of View" 514-16: B.H. Bronson, "Chaucer's Art in Relation to his Audience" 36-38; and David

16. For a valuable discussion of the "idea of the poet" in French literature see Kevin Brownlee's "Machaut and the Concept of 'Poete'" in his Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1984) 3-23.


22. Kane, "Autobiographical Fallacy" 12.


25. Bethurum, "Chaucer's Point of View" 514.
Chapter One

1 "Chaucer's Realization of Himself As Rhetor" 281.

2 The squire protests, fashionably, that he cannot describe the beauty of Canacee. Instead, like Geoffrey, he will describe her "as [he] kan":

But for to telle yow al hir beautee,

It lyth nat in my tonge, n'yn my konnyng:

I dar nat undertake so heigh a thyng.

Myn Englissh eek is insufficient.

It moste been a rethor excellent,

That koude his colours longynge for that art,

If he sholde hire discryvcn every part.

I am noon swich, I moot speke as I kan. (CT, V. 34-41)

Chapter Two


5 Ambrosii Theodosii Macrobiui, *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*, ed. Jacobus Willis (Leipzig: Teubneri, 1963) 5. First note references to original texts used in this study indicate a page reference to the work cited. All subsequent citations to original texts give the name of the work cited and a page reference to the text used.


8The Discarded Image (London: Cambridge UP, 1964) 64.

9Dream visions such as "Dit dou Vergier," "Dit dou Lyon," and "La Fonteinne Amoureuse" by Machaut: "Le Temple d'Honneur" by Froissart: and Dante's La Divina Commedia were probably known to Chaucerian audiences.

10See Gower's Confessio Amantis (1368-90); Langland's several texts of Piers Plowman (1370-after 1390): and the anonymous poems The Pearl, Wynnere and Wastoure, or Sir Gawain and the Green Knight all considered to be written before 1400.


12See for comparison the anonymous "Pearl," Ovid's "Cees and Alcyone," and Froissart's "Le Paradys d'amours."

13Perhaps it was because Chaucer had later become more confident in his "personalizing" of literature that he dropped the dream frame from the Legends section of the revised text.


15Windeatt, Chaucer's Dream Poetry 133. All translations are noted giving the translator's name, short title of text used, and a page reference. When the translation is my own, no note will appear following the bracketed translation.
This idea about medieval poetry is closely allied with twentieth-century reader-response criticism. Robert Crosman argues against the notion of "one right meaning." Because readers make meaning, the "number of possible meanings of the poem itself is infinite." See his "Do Reader's Make Meaning," *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1980) 154.

Macrobius describes certain dreams as "tegit figuris et velat ambigibus" (*Somnium Scipionis* 10) [concealing information with "strange shapes" and "veiling truth with ambiguity"]. (Macrobius: Commentary on the Dream of Scipio, trans. William Harris Stahl [New York: Columbia UP 1952] 90.)

Examples include Plato's "Dream of Er"; Cicero's "Dream of Scipio"; and Ovid's "Ceyx and Alcyone."

Ed. V. Romano (Bari: Laterza, 1951) 699.


Windeatt, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry* 32.
Macrobius describes five varieties of the enigmatic dream (the "somnium"): "personal, alien, social, public, and universal. It is called personal when one dreams that he himself is doing or experiencing something" (Stahl, Macrobius: Commentary 90) ["huius quinque sunt species, aut enim proprium aut alienum aut commune aut publicum aut generale est, proprium est cum se quis facientem patientemve aliquid somnialit" (Somnium Scipionis 10)].
Winny introduces his chapter on The House of Fame by describing "the comic persona" who "begins the poem with a long profession of ignorance which disproves itself." The narrator declares the learned opinions are beyond him, but, in Winny's assessment, "the length of this disclaimer, and the familiarity with technical terms and scholarly argument which it displays, show Chaucer indulging in a characteristic joke" (Chaucer's Dream Poems 76).

See Beryl Rowland, "Pronuntiatio' and its Effect on Chaucer's Audience" 33-45 for discussion of the importance of the speaker's mode of delivery in Chaucer's poetry.

Chaucer and his Poetry (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1915) 75.

Chapters on Chaucer (1951: Westport: Greenwood, 1979) 47.

Kittredge, Chaucer and his Poetry 76.

Hieatt, Realism of Dream Visions 35: Clemens, Chaucer's Early Poetry 75.
Dido complains to her sister, "Anna, soror, quae me suspensam insomnia terrent" (The Aeneid, ed. R.D. Williams [London: MacMillan, 1975] 74) [Anna, sister, why do terrifying dreams leave me wavering between sleep and wakefulness?]

Oton de Grandson’s narrator comments on the wonderful nature of his or her own dream by generalizing about heavy-hearted dreamers: "Et, en dormant, il songera / Aucune chose merveilleuse, / Bonne pour lui on dangereuse, / Aussi com je feis, au matin, / Le jour de la saint Valentin" ["And while sleeping he will dream something wonderful or trying for him, just as I did on the morning of St. Valentine’s Day" (Le Songe Saint Valentin, "Windeatt, Chaucer’s Dream Poetry 120)]. "Le Songe Saint Valentin," Oton de Grandson: sa vie et ses poésies, ed. Arthur Piaget (Lausanne: Payot, 1941) 309.

Judith M. Davidoff suggests in "The Audience Illuminated, or New Light Shed on the Dream Frame of Lydgate’s Temple of Glas" that the December setting was designed to provoke an emotional response in the audience. "To an audience accustomed to bright spring mornings for love visions, the December setting would immediately suggest a dark, sober theme and perhaps a sad outcome" (SAC 5 [1983]: 103-25).

Windeatt, Chaucer’s Dream Poetry 42.


The Obtuse Narrator" 291.

The Obtuse Narrator" 292.

Roman de la Rose 198-203. The final "tragedia" the Monk relates before the Knight interrupts him is the "Tale of Cresus" (CT. VII. 3917-56).
69 Roman de la Rose 202.

70 Robbins, Romance of the Rose 136-37.

71 Roman de la Rose 202.

72 Robbins, Romance of the Rose 137.
Chapter Three

1."Putting the audience into a certain frame of mind" is the second of three Aristotelian modes of persuasion brought into play by the situation of the spoken word. The personal character of the speaker and the words of a speech itself are the two other aspects or modes of persuasive rhetoric. See Payne, "Chaucer's Realization of Himself as Rhetor" 278.

The narrator in The Legend of Good Women does not give out his name as does the narrator of The House of Fame, although The Legend of Good Women speaker identifies himself as the poet who created certain works attributed to Geoffrey Chaucer. As discussed in the Introduction and Chapter I, I believe it is misleading to analyze the biographical connection between the real poet, Geoffrey Chaucer, and the narrating poet; nevertheless, I also believe the name "Geffrey" (perhaps deliberately reflective of the poet Geoffrey Chaucer) is as appropriate a name for the poet/narrator in The Legend of Good Women as it was in The House of Fame. I will, therefore, also refer to the narrator in The Legend of Good Women as "Geffrey."

3From a Mass for the Dead, Offertory 2: "Domine Jesu Christi Rex gloriae libera animas omnium fidelium defunctorum de poenis inferni, et de profundo lacu" (The Liber Usualis, ed. The Benedictines of Solesmes [Belgium: Desclee, 1961] 1812. [Lord Jesus Christ, King of Glory, free the souls of all those faithful dead from the pains of hell and the profound deeps]. From Vespers Antiphon 6F: "Gaudent in caelis animae Sanctorum, qui Christi vestigia sunt secuti" (The Liber Usualis 1160) [Happy in heaven are the souls of the Blessed who followed in the footsteps of Christ]. And Chaucer in "The Parson's Tale": "Thanne shal men understande what is the truyl of peneance: and, after the word of Jhesu Crist, it is the endeles blisse of hevene, / ther joye hath no contrarioussee of wo ne grevaunce" (CT, X. 1076-77).

4Dante Alighieri, La Divina Commedia. Tutte le Opere, ed. Fredi Chiapelli (Mursia; U Mursia, 1965) 5-362.
R.W. Frank also comments on the "supportive value" of moral verse in fourteenth-century literature. "When, as in Gower, moral poetry accompanied narrative, it could add a useful and enriching dimension to the work as a whole and, often, to the narrative itself. Aside from its qualities as moral verse—a distinctive type of verse to be judged by distinctive standards—it had a supportive value for audience and artist. It made what might seem troubling or offensive comfortable and pleasing, what might seem strange ultimately familiar, what might seem pointless or irreverent happily instructive" (Chaucer and The Legend of Good Women 17).


1 Roman de la Rose 1.
2 Robbins, Romance of the Rose 1.
4 Tolkien, Sir Gawain 123.
7 Œuvres 2, 162.
8 Windcatt, Chaucer's Dream Poetry 133.


18 Windeatt, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry* 152.


20 Windeatt, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry* 139.

21 Critics have demonstrated the resemblance between *The Legend of Good Women* Prologue and French love visions for many years. For a full discussion see John H. Fisher, "The Legend of Good Women," in Rowland, *Companion to Chaucer Studies* 464-76. Fisher points out that as early as 1775, Thomas Tyrwhit compared the Prologue to the Marguerite poems of Machaut and Deschamps (*The Canterbury Tales of Chaucer* [London: n.p., 1775]: xii-xiii) and that in 1904, John L. Lowes ("The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women as Related to the French Marguerite Poems, and the Filostrato," *PMLA* 19 [1905]: 593-683) identified Deschamps's "Lay de Franchise" as the specific source for the first 196 lines of the Prologue and determined that Froissart's "Paradys d'Amours" provided the material for the remainder (465).

Over the past eighty years, critics have continued to find parallels between the Prologue and other French works such as "Le Dit de la Panthère d'Amours" (Albert C. Baugh, "Chaucer and the Panthère d'Amours," *Britannica: Festschrift für Hermann M. Flasdieck* [Heidelberg: Winter, 1960] 51-60) and "Le Jugement Dou Roy de Navarre" (Robert M. Estrich, "Chaucer's Prologue to the Legend of Good Women and Machaut's Le Jugement Dou Roy de Navarre," *SP* 36 (1939): 20-39). I am particularly indebted to B.A. Windeatt's recent collection, translation, and annotation of twenty major sources for Chaucer's dream visions. Windeatt summarizes his work: "It is the purpose of this present collection of
translations—largely of Chaucer’s sources in French—to draw together the main materials from
which he ‘translated’, and also some analogous works that are part of the French literary
background of Chaucer’s ‘minor’ or ‘dream’ poems. The ways in which Chaucer transforms
as he translates these French poems reveals his greatness as a re-creating translator, and
makes it indeed particularly fitting that he should be hailed in French by a contemporary
French poet as Grand translateur (Windeatt, Chaucer’s Dream Poetry xvi).

22 Unlike most French love vision narrators, the speaker in Machaut’s “Le Jugement
Dou Roy de Navarre” is a poet. Like the narrator in The Legend of Good Women
Prologue, he is identified by the same name as the actual author, and is castigated for having
wronged ladies through his poetry. Chaucer may well have used the “Jugement dou Roy de
Navarre” as a model for the Prologue.

23 The following are similar lines from Machaut’s “Le Dit de la Marguerite”:

Or reguardons à ceste douce flour:
Toutes passe, ce mest vis, en coulour:
Et toutes ha surmonté de doucour.

Ne comparer

Ne se porroit nulle à li de coulour.

Par excellence est garnie d’odeur,

Et richement parée de verdour.

Pour conforter

Sa grant douceur garit les maiz d’amer:

Sa graine puert les mors resusciter:

Car elle m’a gari d’outre la mer

De ma doulour.

Si la doy bien servir et honnourer,
Et mettre en li cuer, et corps, et penser,
Et dessus tout li chiérir et am'er
De fin am'our (Oeuvres, ed. Prosper Tarbé

[Now let us look at this sweet flower: it seems to me that she surpasses all others in worth, and has surpassed all in sweetness, nor can any be compared with her in colour. She is richly endowed with fragrance and adorned with verdure to give comfort. Her great sweetness cures the ills of love, and her golden centre can raise the dead to life, for she cured me from beyond the sea of my sorrow. And I should certainly serve and honour her and put heart, body and thought in her, and love and cherish her above all with a pure love (Windeatt, Chaucer's Dream Poetry 145)].

The same sentiments recur in Froissart's "Le Dit de la Marguerite":

Et la flourette en un lieu cruçon prent,
Où n'orie est d'un si doux element
Que froit ne chaut, plueve, gresil ne vent
Ne li poën donner empecement;
Ne il n'ila planette ou firmament
Qui ne soit preste à son commandement;
Un cler soleil le nourist proprement
Et entumine.

Et ceste flour, qui tant est douce et fine,
Belle en cruçon, et en regard benigne,
Un usage a et une vertu digne
Que j'ai moult chier, quant bien je l'Imagine:  
Car tout ensi que le soleil chemine  
De son lever jusqu'à tant qu'il decline,  
La margherite encontre lui s'encline,  
Comme celi  
Qui moustrer voelt son bien et sa doctrine:

(Oeuvres de Froissart, vol. 2, 211)

[And this flower which is so sweet and pure, lovely in her growing and benign in looks, has a custom and a worthy virtue that I hold dear when I consider it: for as the sun passes on his way from rising until he goes down, the daisy bows towards him, as she who wishes to bear witness to his goodness and his instruction (Windeatt, Chaucer's Dream Poetry [49]).]

21Oeuvres, vol. 1, 68.
22Windeatt, Chaucer's Dream Poetry 7.
23R.A. Shoaf discusses the relationship of the Prologue material to Chaucer's attitude toward his "inherited" poetry in "Notes Towards Chaucer's Poetics of Translation," SAC. I (1979): 55-56.
24Chaucer also used the image of the field and the corn to suggest the new life possible through literature in the Parliament of Owls: "For out of olde feldes, as men seyth, / Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere, / And out of olde bokes, in good feyth, / Cometh al this newe science that men lere (PF 22-25)."
25Robinson notes that "court society in both England and France was apparently divided into two parties of amorous orders devoted respectively to the Flower and to the Leaf" (Works 842).
Here the narrator of *The Legend of Good Women* differs from Geffrey in *The House of Fame* who chose December for his dream setting. The Prologue in *The Legend of Good Women* follows the literary models for dream visions more closely than does Book I of *The House of Fame*.


31 *Chaucer and The Legend of Good Women* 12.


35 Oton de Grandson's "Le Songe Saint Valentin" also portrays birds in a parody of love-making:

Et les columbeaux se baisoyent.
Chascun faisoit en sa maniere
Ce qui lui sembloit que bon yere.
Et bien se sgavoient aisier
Fust de regard ou de baisier,
Ou de tout se que l'un sgavoit
Qui à l'autre plaire devoit (Sa vie et ses poesies 311)

[The turtle-doves kissed each other. Each one of them did in his own way what seemed good to him. And they very well knew how to take their pleasure, whether it was in looks or in kissing, or in all that one knew would please the other (Windeatt, *Chaucer's Dream Poetry* 121)].
Robinson has determined that the source named here, "Etik," probably refers to Horace (Works § 842).

In "Chaucer's Audience" 35, Strohm sees a connective foreshadowing relationship between Prologue and dream in all of Chaucer's dream poems: "He learned in his vision poems to state a conflict in the Prologue and to restate it in the dream."

In "Chaucer and the Making of his own Myth: The Prologue to Chaucer's Legend of Good Women," Payne feels the element of metamorphosis is so important to the Prologue that he declares: "The first principle of Chaucer's myth-making in his poem is transformation" (Chaucer 9 [1975]: 207).

See Wimsett for a good review of the characteristics of fourteenth-century lyric poetry (Chaucer and the Poems of 'Ch' I-8).

Wimsett, Chaucer's Dream Poetry 140.

Oeuvres, vol. 1, 165.

Wimsett, Chaucer's Dream Poetry 142.

Chapter Four


5. See Kevin Brownlee’s chapter, “Machaut and the Concept of ‘Poete’,” Poetic Identity in Guillaume de Machaut 3-23 for a discussion of the evolution of the word “poete” as it grew out of the classical term “auctore.”


7. As Hall sees them, these are the most important characteristics of Virgilian redaction (Hall, “Chaucer and the Dido-and-Aeneas Story” 149).

8. Three hundred years later such a narrator will appear more fully developed as a personal interpreter of events in the figures of Gulliver in Gulliver’s Travels and Tristram Shandy in Sterne’s Tristram Shandy, for example.


16 The original version reads:

Arma virumque cano, Trojae qui primus ab oris
Italian fato profugus Laviniaque venit
litora-multum ille et terris jactatus et alto
vi superum (The Aeneid 1)

[I sing of arms and a man, a Trojan who, fated to be an exile, first came to the Lavinian shores (Virgil, The Aeneid, trans. W.F. Jackson Knight [New York: Penguin, 1956] 1)].

The theme of men as deceivers was a familiar one. (Shannon, Chaucer and the
Roman Poets 364). Dido herself called Aeneas "perfide" [scoundrel] (The Aeneid 83). In Ovid's "Epistle," Dido accuses Aeneas of killing her by his Phrygian perfidy: "Et Phrygia Dido fraude coacta mori" ("Epistola," Heroides 88) [And Dido, compelled to die by Phrygian perfidy].

The Canon Yeoman warns against avarice with the same proverb: "But al thyng which that shineth as the gold / Nis nat gold" (CT. VIII. 962-63).

Chretian writes:

li arçon estoient d'ivoire,

s'i fu antaillie l'estoire

comant Eneas vint de Troye,

comant à Cartaige à grant joie

Dido an son leu le reçut,

comant Eneas la decut,

comant ele por lui s'ocist (Chretian de Troyes, Erec et Enide, CFMA [Paris:Champion, 1955] 161)

["The saddle-bows were of ivory, on which was carved the story of how Aeneas came from Troy, how at Carthage with great joy Dido received him to her bed, how Aeneas deceived her, and how for him she killed herself"] (Chretien de Troyes, Erec et Enide, Arthurian Romances, trans. W.W. Comfort [London: Dent, 1975] 69).


See the "thula" or "Balade," Prologue F, lines 249-69. "The Monk's Tale" is an extended use of the list-making technique. In the Monk's case it is a catalogue of good men, however.

Eneas. Roman 60.
Yeunck, Eneas 96.
Eneas. Roman 61.
Yeunck, Eneas 96.
"Epistola," Heroides 89.
Showerman, Heroides 88.

In The Canterbury Tales, the mauncle characterizes men as having a "likerous appetit" (IX. 189), untrue to their wives because "flesh is so newelangel" (IX. 193). In Anelida and Arcite, Chaucer writes of "this fals Arcite, of his newfanglenesse" (141).

Geoffrey makes a similar assertion in the proems of each successive book in The House of Fame. He apostrophizes in Book II: "O Thought, that wrot al that I mette, / And in the tresorye hyt shette / Of my brayn (523-25)." And in Book III he begs that Apollo, God of science and light, "wilt helpe me to shewe now / That in myn hed ym arked ys--"(1101-02).

Robinson notes that C.G. Child compares the lament with the Amorosa Visione, c.xxvii in MLN 10, 191 f., and that R.M. Estrich suggests a parallel from Daude de Pradas in MLN 55, 342 ff. (781).

"Exemplo Libyae magnas it Fama per urbes, / Fama, malum qua non aliud velocius ullam" (The Aeneid 79) [Suddenly, Rumour flew through the great cities of Africa, Rumour, the swiftest evil of them all].

The Aeneid 84.

In the sixteenth century, Marlowe presented Dido as a melodramatic heroine in his
play, Dido, Queen of Carthage. George Eliot attests to the degree to which familiarity with Dido's story was still an expected dimension of a gentleman's education in the nineteenth century when she describes lawyer Riley as exhibiting "a subtle aroma from his juvenile contact with the 'De Senectute' and the fourth book of the Aeneid" (The Mill on the Floss [New York: Collier, 1902] 27).

Robert W. Hanning comments that "this casual comparison of art and life states, with characteristic Chaucerian indirection, a concern that runs like a strong and lively current beneath or at the surface of much of Chaucer's poetry: the relationship between the artistic impulse that underlies storytelling, role-playing (the creation of a 'false' identity), or the use of a language to foster illusion, and the world of experience to which the artist's imagination must always respond. By proving this relationship, Chaucer is of course commenting on the power and limits of his own 'craft,' but he is also exploring the basic propensity we all share to transform, in fact or fancy, the reality of our character and our situation, to bring it into line with our desires or felt needs" ("The Theme of Art and Life in Chaucer's Poetry," Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. George D. Economou [New York: McGraw, 1975] 37).

In addition to the authors mentioned earlier in this chapter, Machaut used the catalogue in his work, "Le Judgment du Roi de Navarre," as did Ovid in Heroides, Epistles 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10 and 12. He did not use the catalogue in his "Epistola Dido," however.
Chapter Five


[2] See chapter IV for a full discussion of this authorial comment.


[5] In comparison, the Roman d'Eneas makes no mention of this or any other magical details such as those discussed below.

[6] Virgil puts it: "prima et Tellus et pronuba Iuno / dant signum: fulsere et conscius aether conubis" (The Aeneid 79) ["Primaeval Earth and Juno, Mistress of the Marriage, gave their sign. The sky connived at the union" (Knight, The Aeneid 102)].

[7] In the Roman d'Eneas, emotional values are taken out of the temple scene. Instead, the temple stands as evidence of Dido's craving for power and status (Eneas, Roman 16-17).


[12] Von Strassburg makes a similar comment in Tristan. He says of Tristan's investiture ceremony:

ja ritterlich zierheit
diu ist so maneg wis beschrieben
und ist mit rode also zetriben,
daz ich niht kan gereden dar abe,
da von kein herze föröude habe (Tristan 129)

[Knightly pomp, I declare, has been so variously portrayed and has been so overdone that I can say nothing about it that would give pleasure to anyone (Hatto, Tristan 105)].
See, for example, the wedding festivities of Erec and Enide (Erec et Enide 59-70).

Two Alterations of Virgil in Chaucer’s Dido,” Speculum 13 (1938): 455.


Chaucer uses similar phrases twice in “The Man of Law’s Tale”: “The fruut of this matere is that I telle” (CT, II. 411) and “The fruut of every tale is for to seye” (CT, II. 706).

The Aeneid 74.

The Aeneid 74.

The Aeneid 74.

Yunck, Aeneas 80.

Eneas. Roman 38.

Yunck, Eneas 80.

Eneas. Roman 38.

Virgil identifies that ominous day in the cave: “ille dies primus leti primusque malorum / causa fruit” (The Aeneid 79) [“on that day were sown the seeds of suffering and death” (Knight, Aeneid 102)].

The Aeneid 83.

Knight, Aeneid 106.

Eneas. Roman 64.

Yunck, Eneas 98.

Eneas. Roman 65.

Yunck, Eneas 99.
Afterword

1 Stephen Phillip Policoff, letter to the author, 1 September 1986.
3 Genealogie Deorum 707.
6 Boethius: Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy 128.
7 Boethius: Tractates and The Consolation of Philosophy 129.
8 La Divina Commedia. Chiapelli, Tutte le Opere 5-362.
12 Opere 775.
13 Boccaccio retells the history of King Theseus, focusing on the love of Palamon and Arcite for Emily. Tesceida delle Nozza d'Emilia, ed. Aurelio Roncaglia (Bari: Laterza, 1941).
14 Opere 694-97.
15 See the "proemio," Opere 778-79: see "A Fiammetta," Tesceida 1-5.
Barbara Nolan ("'Poet Ther Was'" 154-69) suggests that Chaucer makes three attempts at authorial voicing in the Prologue through a series of impersonations.

Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1980) 208.


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