ABSTRACT

HOLLIS, AMANDA JULIA. Creating Structure: Verbal and Visual Architecture in Chaucer. (Under the direction of Linda T. Holley.)

Chaucer uses physical structures in his dream-vision *House of Fame* and *The Canterbury Tales* in order to shape the action of his poetry. I am particularly concerned with the way in which Chaucer uses these buildings to narrate space. Building on theoretical foundations of Horace, St. Augustine, and Boccaccio, Chaucer outlines his own theory of how issues of sight and tradition should come into play in a work of art. Chaucer uses as an analogue to his buildings the tower that Jealousy builds to protect the Rose in *Romance of the Rose*. In *House of Fame*, the dreamer Geffrey encounters a glass temple of Venus, the house of Fame, and the house of Rumor. As the dreamer walks through and surveys these buildings, Chaucer allows the dreamer's visual scope to guide the narrative flow of the vision. Visual structures imitate and reinforce Chaucer's verbal structures. The organization of buildings here serves as a prototype for a secondary framing of *The Canterbury Tales*. In The Knight's Tale, two buildings become the focus of the action of the tales. Theseus first imprisons Arcite and Palamon in a tower and later commissions a theater for a battle between the two cousins. The tower shows the narrowing scope of the knights' vision, while the theater serves as a microcosm for the rest of the tales in *The Canterbury Tales*. The thesis examines the role of these buildings in their respective works and how they are developed in *The Canterbury Tales* in a way that builds upon ideas in *House of Fame*.

CREATING STRUCTURE:
VERBAL AND VISUAL ARCHITECTURE IN CHAUCER

by
AMANDA JULIA HOLLIS

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DEDICATION

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow
Praise Him all creatures here below
Praise Him above ye heavenly host
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

BIOGRAPHY

Amanda Julia Hollis was born in 1977 and is proud to be a native North Carolinian. She currently lives in Cary, North Carolina with her dog Pimento. Amanda is still learning how to devote her life to God, but for now she is focusing on praising Him and thanking Him at all times for everything.

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Introduction

Throughout his poetry, Geoffrey Chaucer uses physical buildings and structures to mimic and establish the way in which he structures language and ideas, and therefore verbal space. In my thesis, I want to explore how Chaucer uses his verbal structures in order either to describe (*House of Fame*) or create (*The Canterbury Tales*, most notably, The Knight's Tale) structures that shape the action of his poetry. In creating these structures, Chaucer directs the space of the works by subverting the perceived genre space (book space) in favor of his conscious verbal space (narrative space). Chaucer uses three different buildings in his dream vision, *House of Fame*, in order to set up three different spaces for defining the art of poetic creation. *House of Fame* functions as an introduction to Chaucer's poetics, but Chaucer puts these ideas into use in his framing of *The Canterbury Tales*. The large framework of *The Canterbury Tales* is the pilgrimage, but Chaucer purposefully places The Knight's Tale first in order to provide a more precise, circumscribed framework. Within this tale, Duke Theseus builds a theater so that two cousins can fight for the honorable Emelye's hand. Located inside the theater are three temples, one each dedicated to Venus, Mars, and Dyane. Chaucer situates these temples in the theater in a way that reinforces his framing of *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole and that models the ideas of poetic creation that he shapes in *House of Fame*.

In the first chapter, I plan to examine how Chaucer uses an authoritative, literary basis for the ideas he proposes in his work. *House of Fame* is dependent on tradition, as Chaucer even places Fame's house on columns upheld by literary tradition. Clearly, theoretical and literary precursors are important to understanding Chaucer's work.

Theoretical works by Horace, Augustine, and Boccaccio are very important in understanding how Chaucer sees his obligation as a verbal craftsman; these three authorities highlight issues of sight and tradition that Chaucer takes up in his own works. But perhaps one of the most useful precursors for Chaucer's writings is *Romance of the Rose*. The influence of this French dream-vision on Chaucer is obvious, as he translated parts of it into Middle English. In particular, I call attention to the tower Jealousy builds in order to protect the Rose from Guillaume the dreamer. Chaucer configures his own structures based on the dimensions and structuring of this tower, and looking at Jealousy's tower becomes useful for seeing how Chaucer uses his structures to define and organize the space within his works.

Chaucer shows his own defined space through the structures in *House of Fame* and I look at how these structures produce the effect of a created narrative space for Chaucer in chapter two. As Geffrey, the dreamer in *House of Fame*, narrates his dream, he describes several structures that highlight different processes in the act of poetic creation. In Book I, the reader is taken through "a temple ymad of glas" (120) where he finds the detailed drawings of the story of Dido and Aeneas. Throughout this temple, Chaucer takes up a verbal work—Virgil's *Aeneid*—and presents it as he sees it in a visual medium. He transforms media again by showing the visual portrait verbally. After the dreamer leaves the temple, he finds himself in a field where he is picked up by an eagle. Although the eagle is still in the midst of transporting Geffrey to Fame's house, the eagle describes the house in Book II, placing it "Ryght even in myddes of the weye / Betwixen hevene and erthe and see" (714-715) so that it can serve as a hub for all things that are

spoken. Chaucer makes a point of placing Fame's house where it is easily available and accessible, and he describes the house's foundation in a way that shows the reciprocal dependence between fame and tradition. Chaucer also posits Lady Fame as the mistress of his created space. Finally, after the dreamer departs from Fame's house, he encounters the house of Rumor, which he describes in concise measure as "sixty myle of lengthe" (1979). Rumor's house serves as a hub for everything that has ever been said; each individual saying begins to occupy greater space because they are spread as rumors, therefore limiting the space within the house. Once these words take up more space, they then leave Rumor to become subject to Fame's whims. These structures further the plot while they define and refine the verbal-visual surface of his poetry.

Building upon his theory of writing and defining space from *House of Fame*, in chapter three I look at the way Chaucer uses the book space of The Knight's Tale to create a layered narration that ultimately guides the reader's eye and attention within the defined tower and theater. The final description of Rumor's house recalls the way Chaucer describes the temple that Theseus builds for the fight between cousins Arcite and Palamon in The Knight's Tale. Before this theater is built, however, the two knights had been held captive in a tower. For both buildings, Chaucer uses precise, literal measurements in order to circumscribe pointedly the action that takes place within them. Using the ideas he explores in *House of Fame*, Chaucer more precisely frames *The Canterbury Tales*—secondary to the larger frame of the pilgrimage—within the space of the theater and through his use of the three temples. Chaucer uses the eye of the narrator

specifically to frame The Knight's Tale, but within this frame, he provides a useful way for reading and understanding the entire narrative space of *The Canterbury Tales*.

In order to understand my conception of space—narrative space and book space, specifically—it is important to first look at the issue of genre in general and how Chaucer treats genre in both poems. Overall, Chaucer's poetry is narrative, but the idea of specific genre is at issue both in *House of Fame* and The Knight's Tale. Before looking directly at Chaucer's poetry, one must understand the genre tradition in which Chaucer works. Although Chaucer seems to frame *House of Fame* directly as a dream vision, it also has elements of an art of poetry. Though The Knight's Tale at first glance can be described as a romance, Chaucer also raises questions concerning genre in this tale.

With the blurring of generic convention, the impact of Chaucer's buildings becomes vitally important to understanding his poetry. It is within these buildings that Chaucer reorganizes and creates his work: this space of his words and sentences is what I call narrative space. Narrative space for Chaucer is the way in which he shapes his works (within his works) in order to give the reader a sense of flow and direction in the midst of often meandering philosophical contemplations found in his work. The ideas and things Chaucer includes in his poetry originate within the space of the buildings he creates. Although both types of space work together, book space, by contrast, is the outer physical limitations of space: the book is confined by its being a book, defined by genre and other elements that give the reader preconceived expectations of what to expect while reading the work. Narrative space looks specifically at what happens within the book space. By way of examining the legitimacy and usefulness of genre, Chaucer places the reader in a

position to consider both tradition and authority from ideas he proposes both in *House of Fame* and *The Canterbury Tales*. If we follow out the implications of narrative construction we begin to understand Chaucer's vision of Fame's house and how Chaucer carries this vision through in the framing of *The Canterbury Tales*.

A.C. Spearing's *Medieval Dream-Poetry* discusses how medieval writers used the genre of dream vision: "Chaucer comes more and more to use the dream-poem as a means of meditating on his own situation as a courtly poet of love" (6). While it is difficult to understand the whole of *House of Fame* as a love poem, the dreamer does begin with the expectation of finding tidings of love. The search for these love tidings drives the reader through the temple, the house of Fame, and the house of Rumor, but the focus on these tidings is secondary to the narrative eye that leads Geffrey through the spatial consciousness of the tale.

Chaucer himself takes up the idea of the dream vision genre in the proem to Book I of *House of Fame*. In the introduction to Book I, Chaucer explores the ideas of dream genre:

> Why that is an avision
>
> And why this a revelacion,
>
> Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
>
> And noght to every man lyche even;
>
> Why this a fantome, why these oracles,
>
> I not.   (*House of Fame* 7-12)

Chaucer does not specify which genre his poem will fall into; he merely tells the reader it is a dream, but he seems interested only in introducing the possibilities for dream narrative art. Although Chaucer directly employs the genre construction of dream vision, he infuses the internal narrative space with various meditations on language, science, and poetics. While Chaucer uses the verbal space within this supposed love vision to explore these many different topics, the reader raises questions concerning his violation of book space. By violating the expectations of genre space with other subjects, Chaucer draws the reader's attention to the way he uses verbal space within the three structures the dreamer encounters in *House of Fame.*

In the same way, The Knight's Tale is at first glance a romance in the courtly tradition: it concerns people of nobility in a love triangle. While Emelye is the focus of the love triangle, Chaucer's narrative instead focuses on Arcite and Palamon's rivalry and eventual battle. Initially, the story develops around the argument of who has the true right to Emelye and ultimately turns to the final battle scene that occurs in Theseus's theater. Rather than focusing on the love triangle, Chaucer instead gives more attention to the building of the theater and the spectacular fight for which it is commissioned. Chaucer again violates the expectations of book space (in *Romance of the Rose* the encircled garden functions within these expectations and organizes the traditional activities of the lovers), and draws attention to the structures he describes and builds. Leaving behind reader's expectations of genre, Chaucer rebuilds these expectations by causing the reader to re-examine generic space through the way he distributes the space of the tower and the theater. Through these two works, Chaucer violates the traditional

notion of book space, instead exploiting the expectations of book space in order to construct and create his own narrative space.

By strategically manipulating generic indeterminacy, Chaucer raises questions of tradition and authority. At the end of The Knight's Tale, Theseus gives a speech in which he claims "Ther nedeth noght noon auctoritee t'allegge, / For it is preved by experience" (3000-3001). Oddly, although Theseus as governor claims experience over bookish authority, Chaucer provides him with a speech that depends on a bookish knowledge of Boethian images of a well-constructed universe. He read traditional authors like Virgil, Boethius, Ovid, and Augustine, among others. Piero Boitani writes:

> Chaucer mastered the various traditions of French literature, the courtly and the bourgeois, the love tradition and that of the *fabliau*; he used the classics, especially Ovid, as an inexhaustible mine of stories, myths, and images; from the Italians he learnt style, new perspective on the real and the imaginary, the importance of poets and poetry . . .. Finally, Chaucer knew the tradition of his own country . . .. Chaucer thoroughly assimilated all this into his own personal itinerary and into his own image of poetry and the poet: starting from the conventions of courtly love, he moved away from them, contained them, completed them, mocked them and exposed their tragic contradictions; starting from the concept of "remembrance," he defined the activity of the poet within the tradition, between nature and artifice, between form and substance, between poetry and morality and science. (135)

With traditional literary works as models, Chaucer constructs his own work upon that tradition. The traditional conception of genre construction provides the organizing principles Chaucer employs, and he acknowledges the traditional, authoritative works with which he experiments and eventually builds his own narrative space. Through both

House of Fame and The Knight's Tale, Chaucer accentuates his reliance on tradition as he fashions his narrative from around the physical buildings that populate these works, much the same way that Theseus sets about constructing his arena.

In medieval England, the Bible and St. Augustine's *City of God* served as two highly respected examples of written authority. Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* however, outlines theories of language and representation that help readers to understand Chaucer's own theoretical formulations. Horace's "The Art of Poetry" describes the way poetry is created and legitimized. While it is well known that Chaucer has an affinity for Boccaccio's fiction, he also draws heavily from Books XIV and XV of *Genealogy of the Gods*, commonly called "On Poetry." These three works provide a theoretical basis for examining the way in which Chaucer addresses questions of structure. The *Romance of the Rose* is a dream vision on which Chaucer bases his move from the theoretical constructs of Augustine, Horace, and Boccaccio to the actual use of the theory within his work. In the next chapter, I will examine these four works and offer suggestions, not so much concerning ideas and genre but how they offer models and counter-models for Chaucer's verbal architecture.

Chapter 1

Building His Foundation: Chaucer's Theoretical Framework

Within the works of Horace, Augustine, and Boccaccio Chaucer finds several issues that become integral parts of his narrative works and the original narrative style— issues of sight and issues of authority. Augustine's *On Christian Doctrine* specifically explores ways that the Bible can be read and understood, but his interpretations also provide general ways of looking at and understanding any piece of written work. In *On Poetry* and "The Art of Poetry," Boccaccio and Horace describe the way in which a poet creates a poetic work of art. By fusing ideas from all three of these authors, Chaucer forges a narrative style that mimics the physical structures in his own works. While the ideas in these works are theoretical, they are the beginnings of the way Chaucer uses language to create and enforce structure within his works. In the thirteenth-century French dream-vision, *Romance of the Rose*, Chaucer finds a literary analogue to building structures within the text when Jealousy encloses a garden to protect her precious Rose and a tower to withhold Fair Welcome.

The eye—and its sense of sight—is critical to understanding Chaucer's narrative. In *House of Fame*, Geffrey the dreamer is led throughout his dream's landscape by his eye. In The Knight's Tale, shifting narrative voices direct, control, and limit the sight lines of cousins Arcite and Palamon. Augustine is primarily concerned with two different kinds of sight: visual sight and internal sight. Augustine writes of God that "Although to the healthy and pure internal eye He is everywhere present, He saw fit to appear to those whose eye is weak and impure, and even to fleshly eyes" (13). According to Augustine,

God is always visible to an internal eye, but he purposefully appears to the physical eye through Jesus Christ in order to enact his story of the world. Whereas the idea and reason of God's existence (internal sight) is always present, it is through this visual sight that God presents himself as the determiner-narrator of creation. In the same way, Chaucer, as the mastermind behind his multi-layered narration, becomes his own ultimate narrator and guides his reader to move inside his internal, structural design by the physical vision with which he determines the flow of his narrative. His narrative progresses through the progressing visual scope dictated by his narrators.

Boccaccio and Horace more directly address the issue of visual sight. When Boccaccio discusses and defends his use of his contemporaries, he speaks of a geometrician and says, "Wonderful as it sounds, more wonderful yet is it to see him give immediate ocular proof to anyone who asks, of every word he utters about the stars or heavens" (115). For Boccaccio, the ability to understand something by viewing it deepens the impact of the thing. Visual authority becomes the primary authority, as the geometrician is able to give visual proof of his postulates. Through the sense of sight comes an understandable and palpable proof of truth and authority. When Chaucer tells the story of the *Aeneid* through visual paintings in Book I of *House of Fame*, he brings a written story to the mind's eye, making it accessible to everyone, independent of having the ability to read words. Reading becomes a visual survey instead of being limited to the comprehension of words on a page. Chaucer brings the idea of narrative into a visual arena. Horace describes similar ideas concerning vision, writing: "But things intrusted to the ear / Impress our minds less vividly that what is exposed / To our trustworthy eyes so

that a viewer informs himself / Of precisely what happened" (278).   Horace also highlights the importance of vision, and he elevates the ability of vision to impress the mind of a reader beyond simply hearing words. To illustrate further how poetical works have the ability both to teach and delight their readers, Horace says that:

> A poem is much like a painting: one will please more
>
> If you see it close up, another if seen from a distance;
>
> One prefers being viewed in the shade, while the other
>
> Prefers being seen in broad daylight and doesn't shrink back
>
> From the piercing eye of the critic. (286)

Both poems and paintings can create pleasure and delight within a reader, though on different terms for different readers. Horace explains the differences people perceive in works of art by focusing on visual perception. Ultimately, the eye of the reader becomes the critical element that determines the timeless success and prosperity of a work.

Chaucer's eye is very important throughout his work, as he guides the vision of the reader through the dreamer's eye in *House of Fame* and uses a concentric narrowing of the narrative eye in The Knight's Tale. Chaucer not only constructs his narrative through vision, but also dictates the visual path that the reader follows in considering Chaucer's work. In addition to the idea of sight in his works, Chaucer draws on the treatment of authority in these authors, most obviously by relying on their ideas to flesh out his own theoretical foundation. Just as Fame's house is going to be built upon traditional authors, Chaucer uses the ideas of authority and tradition to serve as the foundation of his own work.

During Chaucer's age, authority primarily belonged to the church, and the Bible and other sacred writings were considered to be written authority. St. Augustine himself was held up as an authoritative voice. Within their discussions of ancient authority, Augustine, Boccaccio, and Horace include perceptions and interpretations of the idea of fame. Augustine wonders, "What then is integrity of expression except the preservation of the customs of others, confirmed by the authority of ancient speakers?" (Augustine 46-47). Through poetry and works of art, people can experience the authority of ancient authors. An author must possess originality of expression while basing the story on the "authority of ancient speakers," and in doing so, the author constructs his or her own temporal and spatial arena for the work. In this way, Chaucer uses the authority of Augustine and others not only to preserve their talent but also to expand it and form his own works. Continuing along similar lines, Boccaccio writes:

> But a man who knows his house is not very strong keeps
>
> constant watch, and as necessity demands, renews his
>
> foundation, stops the cracks in his walls, props his roof with
>
> timbers, and reinforces his galleries; so that the building
>
> that seemed on the point of collapse often lasts for ages. . . .
>
> Decay is not the only fate of a great building: envy skulks
>
> in palaces, and hatred contrives their destruction; but a
>
> small house, with few inmates, familiar to its owner and his
>
> few friends, may last as long as God wills. (106)

In *House of Fame*, Chaucer presents Fame's house as built on a foundation of names and her house as upheld by pillars of traditional authors. Here, Boccaccio encourages building up works through relying on tradition and authority; by reinforcing Fame's house, and therefore his own work, with authoritative works, Chaucer not only strengthens his foundation but takes his "small house" of works and presents it as its own authority that itself provides the foundation of English literature.

Horace takes up similar issues in "The Art of Poetry" with his typical humor. He declares that "You've done it right, if a clever connection of phrases / Makes a good old word look new" (273). He later writes that "You should either stick to tradition / Or invent a consistent plot" and that "You're better off telling the story of Troy in five acts / Than being the first to foist something new and untried / On the world" (Horace 276). While Horace insists on using traditional themes and stories (which is apparently better than creating new ones), he also encourages forging one's own creative path while building on the tradition of others. Chaucer does find that re-telling the story of Troy is beneficial, and he takes the chance of using the story by presenting it in different form— visual paintings—in order to forge out his own foundation on which to build his later poetry and narrative scheme. In his re-telling of the adventures of Aeneas, Chaucer adds significant structural meaning to the way one understands the narrative. Through the paintings on the wall Chaucer shows the story, forming a visual framework upon which he builds his own type of narrative, one that ultimately guides the reader by constructing and confining the visual scope of the reader as dictated by the narrator.

Chaucer uses the ideas of different kinds of vision and treatments of authority in order to build his own canon, his own *House of Fame*. Chaucer, at the end of his best-known work *The Canterbury Tales*, recalls in the Retraction all of his works that are lewd and not spiritually beneficial. Chaucer's dependence, however, on the foundational theoretical works of Horace, Augustine, and Boccaccio and attention to the principles they set out leads to his creation of his own theoretical constraints. Chaucer becomes not only a master of the authoritative texts of his day but also a master of language. For Horace, "The order and inner coherence and careful connection / Are what make your writing take hold: your major success / Consists in mastering the language that is common to all" (281). Chaucer's idea of reading not only verbally but also pictorially reaches out to a greater audience that can now have access to a world of structured understanding. In *House of Fame*, Chaucer uses his verbal medium to translate the visual scope of the dreamer's eye. At the end of his treatise, Boccaccio declares that he has "shown that the poets, contrary to the notion of my opponents, are, I will not say all just men, but at least not absurd nor mere story-tellers—nay, they are marked with secular learning, genius, character, and high distinction" (141). Boccaccio finds that in the greatest storytellers are philosophical notions that go beyond the simple recounting of stories. Chaucer builds his stories on various theoretical backgrounds, and it is through this multi-layered structuring that he effectively constructs viable works of art.

The idea of framing buildings certainly shapes the *Romance of the Rose*. When the dreamer takes a sweet kiss from the Rose, Jealousy wants to protect the Rose. She therefore builds a tower surrounding her precious Rose in order to keep the dreamer away

from the Rose and from being received by Fair Welcome. This tower and its meticulous

construction become the basis for narrative structure in both *House of Fame* and *The*

Canterbury Tales.

At the beginning of the *Romance of the Rose*, Guillaume awakens to find himself

walking through a meadow. While he is walking, he encounters a garden "Ful long and

brood, and everydell / Enclosed was, and walled well / With highe walles embatailled"

(137-139). Within his dream, Guillaume finds himself faced with a walled garden. The

walls of the garden have distinct pictures of Hate, Felony, Villainy, Covetousness,

Avarice, Envy, Sorrow, Old Age, Hypocrisy, and Poverty. Despite such horrible

pictures, Guillaume knocks on the door in order to enter the garden. De Lorris places the

walled garden within the concept of his dream-vision, taking the reader from the wide

open space of the meadow and focusing the reader's attention down to the action and

philosophizing that is going to take place within the confines of the tower garden. The

narrator-dreamer limits the narrative space of the vision first within the garden. After

knocking on the door to the garden, Guillaume is finally able to enter the garden, greeted

by Idleness, and he thinks to himself:

> And whanne I was inne, iwys,
> Myn herte was ful glad of this,
> For wel wende I ful sikerly
> Have ben in paradys erthly.
> So fair it was that, trusteth wel
> It semede a place espirituel,
> For certys, as at my devys,
> Ther is no place in paradys
> So good inne for to dwelle or be
> As in that gardyn, thoughte me. (645-654)

For Guillaume, the space within the garden is a paradise and it is within this paradise that he not only encounters the Rose he loves but also Reason. Throughout the work of both de Lorris and de Meun, the space within the garden becomes representative of the narrative space of the entire vision. They create a book space within the vision that here functions within defined expectations, but Chaucer uses the idea of framing his narrative space within a re-defined book space in his own narrative structure.

Once the dreamer steals his kiss from the Rose, Jealousy appears immediately to remedy the situation. Jealousy tells Shame that she "wole with siker wall / Close bothe roses and roser" (3918-3919) in order to keep them from the lustful wishes of the dreamer, presumably the author of the first 5000 lines of the poem, Guillaume de Lorris. She declares that "close I shall the weye / Fro hem that wole the Rose espie" (3936-3937) and that she will "make anoon a forteresse, / T'enclose the roses of good savour. / In myddis shall I make a tour / To putte Bialacoil [Fair Welcome] in prisoun" (3942-3945). Over the next lines, the dreamer describes how Jealousy builds the tower to protect the Rose. In order to keep her roses secure, she

> Aboute hem made he a diche deep,
> Right wondir large, and also brood;
> Upon the whiche also stod
> Of squared stoon a sturdy wall,
> Which on a cragge was founded all;
> And right gret thikkenesse eke it bar.
> Aboute, it was founded square,
> An hundred fademe on every sid;
> It was all liche longe and wid.
> Lest ony tyme it were assayled,
> Ful wel aboute it was batayled,
> And rounde enviroun eke were set
> Ful many a riche and fair touret. (4152-4164)

Jealousy's purpose is to keep her roses completely protected, and she takes precautions such as digging a ditch and building up a wall in order to protect them.

Guillaume's description of building the tower and the enclosing garden serves as a detailed analogue for the theater that Theseus commissions. Here, the tower is placed within the dreamer's visual scope within the already confined space of the garden. The tower remains important because of what it holds inside instead of how it continues to define the narrative structure, unlike Theseus's theater. Theseus builds the theater to create a space where love eventually triumphs when Palamon wins the love of Emelye, while Jealousy's tower limits not only the visual scope but also reshapes the attention of love to philosophical meanderings of the dreamer. In the corner of the wall, Jealousy sets "a tour full pryncipall" (4166) that had a "porte-colys defensable / To kepe of enemyes, and to greve" (4168-4169). The tower within the garden here is not simply a holding place like Chaucer's tower that keeps Arcite and Palamon captive but is instead a bulwark that stands against any invasion, especially the invasion of an unwanted lover.

In addition to the circumscribing of the area, Guillaume describes the tower in a way that brings up several important spatial issues that become important to Chaucer's construction of narrative. First, he describes the foundation of the tower, in which "The stoon was hard, of ademant, / Wherof they made the foundement" (4181-4182). The foundation of Fame's house becomes pivotal in understanding Chaucer's attitude toward fame and its basis. Fame's house is built upon a block of ice inscribed with names of people Fame has granted recognition, and Rumor's house is built on a strong foundation of beryl and will stand strong to withhold the words that will eventually get sent to

Fame's house. The way in which Guillaume describes the tower that holds Fair Welcome reminds the reader of how Chaucer builds his own tower:

> The tour was round, maad in compas;
> In all this world no riccher was,
> Ne better ordeigned therwithall.
> Aboute the tour was maad a wall,
> So that bitwixt that and the tour
> Rosers were sette of swete savour,
> With many roses that thei bere. (4183-4189)

Here, Guillaume emphasizes the roundness of the tower, just as Chaucer points out the roundedness of the theater that Theseus builds. Chaucer uses similar language in The Knight's Tale, saying of the theater that "Round was the shap, in the manere of the compass" (I, 1889). The round shape of the two towers serves to direct everything to a center that is equidistant from circumference of the towers. He uses this form to guide his narrative schematic that eventually focuses the reader from Chaucer the author's narrative voice to Theseus's narrative guidance in the poem. The construction of the theater exhibits Theseus's control and makes palpable the organizing power of book space. The reader's attention is brought to see that the narration is layered through many narrators. The events within the tale and within the theater are under the rule of the narrator-author. This constructional principle gives Chaucer the ability and underlying support to ultimately create his narrative works.

The framing structure of the theater in The Knight's Tale reminds readers of the tower Jealousy builds to protect the Rose. In the same way that Jealousy encloses the Rose so that we know the narrative space of the lover's longing and the Rose's challenge, Chaucer encloses the object of *The Canterbury Tales*—the tales themselves—within the

temples found in Theseus's theater. Before turning directly to The Knight's Tale, I am going to look at how Chaucer surveys the glass temple, Fame's house, and Rumor's house in *House of Fame*, and how Chaucer, through these structures, builds his own narrative constructs for use in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Chapter 2

Looking at *House of Fame*: Ideals of Construction through the Eyes of a Dreamer

Throughout the *House of Fame*, Chaucer explores ideas of writing, art, and poetry. While using the form of an art of poetry as the background for his frame of a dream vision, Chaucer more directly focuses on taking written tradition and verbally transferring it into visual form, offering his own reconfiguration of narrative and narrative structure. In each of the three books, Chaucer centers the reader's attention on different structures: a glass temple, the house of Fame, and the house of Rumor. Within these buildings, and throughout the narrative, Chaucer surveys the landscape of his vision. Chaucer uses the space within these structures to accent different characteristics of narrative that relate to the vision as a whole. Through the survey of space, Chaucer allows the dreamer's visual scope to guide the narrative flow of the vision. These buildings function to represent different traits of storytelling through the images describing the structures and the images within the structures. Chaucer's narrative focus throughout this dream vision allows the reader to see a fledgling style of structure, by means of which Chaucer will later frame *The Canterbury Tales*.

Criticism of *House of Fame* has generally focused on the poem as an art of poetry. However, two specific pieces of criticism concerned with the language structure of *House of Fame* provide valuable ways of understanding this poem. In his book *Chaucer's Poetics and the Modern Reader*, Robert M. Jordan explores *House of Fame* in terms of language instead of genre. He claims it has a "preoccupation with questions about the validity of language and the nature of poetic composition," while "it also displays in its

compositional structure evidence of a distinctly self-conscious, 'experimental' orientation toward the uses of language" (23-24). While *House of Fame* is definitely focused on questions of language, each section's action and language are focused around pre-existing structures. In Book I, the dreamer witnesses an old story in a transparent glass temple. While the eagle carries the dreamer to the House of Fame, he tells the dreamer the precise location of the house, and in Book III the dreamer travels to and describes the House of Rumor. Throughout this dream vision, these three structures serve not only as the locale for the "action" of the poem but also as critical structural centers where Chaucer and the reader explore language and narrative.

Later on in this chapter, Jordan writes that this "different kind of narrative directs awareness to the verbal surface that mediates between object and subject. It is on this surface that the writer has faced his blank page and created an instrument of perception, and it is here that the reader's mind converges with the writer's" (32). Chaucer uses the verbal medium to construct and describe these three structures; at the same time, he transfers the reader from a verbal focus to a visual focus, guiding the reader visually instead of verbally. Throughout *House of Fame*, the dreamer-narrator Geffrey, and therefore the reader, follows his wandering vision, which guides the progression of the action. The verbal and visual texturing in this poem serves as a theoretical test for the structure and framing of *The Canterbury Tales*.

Lara Ruffolo examines Chaucer's use of lists in *House of Fame* in her article "Literary Authority and the Lists of Chaucer's *House of Fame*: Destruction and Definition Through Proliferation." For Ruffolo, the many lists within the poem place

Chaucer's encyclopedic knowledge of "bookish lore in a disorderly heap. The heap is unified only by the fact that it is a heap—its members simply appear as sights in the narrator's dream vision, unrelated by narrative, by causal connection or history" (327). These lists give the narrative a multi-faceted, varied texture within the defined buildings the dreamer encounters. Within the structures that serve as frames, the lists introduce the breadth of Chaucer's art, which he examines through the poem. Through the lists within the buildings, Chaucer looks at how words and language function within tradition and explores the reciprocal relationship between fame and tradition. Chaucer builds his own narrative upon the tradition of Virgil in Book I, and in doing so, he becomes one of the pillars upholding Fame's hall and thereby strengthens the fame of Virgil by this reference. Chaucer uses his lists to decorate the structures within *House of Fame*, and he later uses a more mature sense of ornamentation with the multi-faceted tales in *The Canterbury Tales*. He organizes his own sense of book space within *House of Fame*, and in his *Tales* he uses this organization in the structuring of the framework.

The Glass Temple: Story and the Intermixing of Genre

Chaucer uses Book I in *House of Fame* in order to transfer the story of Dido and Aeneas from the verbal form of Virgil into a visual form on the walls of a cave. Chaucer begins his dream vision with the first image he encounters as he awakes into his dream, writing that "me mette I was /Withyn a temple ymad of glas" (119-120). The use of glass in the structure not only allows for a transparency of the images guiding Chaucer throughout the temple but also allows the reader the freedom of viewing the portraits on

the walls (even though the reader's direct vision is inhibited through the second-hand description of them). The transparency of glass is important because Chaucer transforms the medium by the retelling of the story in pictures, and he is guided by the fluidity of following where his eye goes instead of being confined to more strict, written verbal form that itself dictates the flow of the reader's mind. Within the temple, the dreamer finds many pieces of artwork:

> ther were moo ymages
>
> Of gold, stondynge in sundry stages,
>
> And moo ryche tabernacles,
>
> And with perre moo pynacles,
>
> And moo curiouse portreytures,
>
> And queynte maner of figures
>
> Of olde werk, then I saugh ever. (*House of Fame* 121-127)

The dreamer is non-specific in his description of the temple, simply noting that there are different stones, statues, and pinnacles present in this temple. Here, the temple itself is unremarkable, but as the dreamer progresses through the house guided by what he sees and led by where his eye wanders, he encounters a story painted on the walls. The temple's glass allows the story to be clearly seen to the dreamer, who can then translate it more clearly into the verbal medium. Although Chaucer uses ten lines to describe the portrait of Venus in her temple, the restless dreamer "romed up and doun" in search of something else, and he finds the introduction to the story of Aeneas. Despite being in the temple of Venus, where one would think he would search for and find the love tidings,

the dreamer does not find whimsical stories of love but instead a focus on the tragic love story of Dido and Aeneas.

Though progressing through the temple guided by his vision, it is ultimately a tablet with words that catches his attention. When he finds this tablet, he recites the inscription:

> I wol now synge, yif I kan,
>
> The armes and also the man
>
> That first cam, thurgh his destinee,
>
> Fugityf of Troy contree,
>
> In Italye, with ful moche pyne
>
> Unto the strondes of Lavyne. (143-148)

Chaucer gives the reader the verbal information he receives from the tablet. Within this inscription, Chaucer presents several different media of presentation to the reader, as it purports to "synge" of the story. While these lines are a translation of Virgil, the interaction that Chaucer produces through this translation becomes important to understanding the way Chaucer manipulates questions of genre. The tablet pledges to "synge" the story of Aeneas. Chaucer still uses the words to highlight the effect of the multi-sensory process: auditory, visual, and verbal all intertwine to create the tour of the glass temple through the senses of Geffrey the dreamer.

Chaucer then sees that the story is told in pictures. He makes a transition to the first picture, saying, "First sawgh I" (151) and continues through several of the panels to alert the reader to the changes between the panels, repeating several times "I saugh next"

and "Ther sawgh I." The dreamer is seeing the story, as he moves through the temple, in several visual portraits while simultaneously relating the story to the reader in verbal form. Even within the portraits, Chaucer finds several long speeches. After Aeneas has left her, Dido's lament goes on for about fifty lines. In the instance of this lament, Chaucer violates the correspondence between the visual and the verbal, as his verbal extrapolation removes the reader from the visual story the dreamer is supposedly relating. Chaucer moves from the first 100 lines of the description, where he continually reminds the reader that the story is something he sees, to the strictly verbal medium. Interestingly enough, as he begins the lament, the dreamer-narrator claims:

> In suche wordes gan to pleyne
>
> Dydo of her grete peyne
>
> As me mette redely—
>
> Non other auctor alegge I. (311-314)

Chaucer's departure from the visual medium represents his poetic departure from Virgil's story, as John M. Fyler remarks in the poem's explanatory notes: "Chaucer is indeed his own *auctor*, since most of his lament appears to be original" (980). Chaucer makes part of the story his own creation, despite his layered dependence on prior authority through Virgil and through the artist who painted the images in the temple. He constructs the visual pictures from the verbal text while using the space within this visual text to create his own verbal text.

Chaucer has created his own verbal dialogue not only within Virgil's tradition but within the space of the temple's paintings. The question of authority is direct when the

dreamer leaves the hall of story; he remarks that he has seen this incredible work of art but he finds no attribution. He wonders:

"A Lord," thoghte I, "that madest us,

Yet sawgh I never such noblesse

Of ymages, ne such richesse,

As I saugh graven in this chirche;

But not wot I whoo did hem wirche." (470-474)

While incredibly impressed with the art he has seen, and although Virgil is the verbal authority on which the art is based, the dreamer realizes that behind the paintings is no directly attributed author. The tension that Chaucer has continually pointed out throughout his journey through the temple by moving between the visual and verbal dissolves now; he admits no knowledge of the artist, and instead of wondering on whose authority he is basing his story, he instead wonders if he can find someone "that may me telle where I am" (479). The dreamer leaves the temple with no care for his visual authority and simply rests on Virgil's authority. Geffrey leaves the temple satisfied with the work itself and the Virgilian authority on which it is based.

In the glass temple, Chaucer introduces his dreamer's narrative eye. The dreamer follows the hall by means of following his vision of the story panels and retells the story he sees through his verbal text. The narrative space is therefore marked by a fluidity that allows the reader not only to be guided by the dreamer's eye but also to be guided by her own eye as it follows the visual sense of the verbal text. The shifting medium accents the role of the reader as an observer of Chaucer's own verbal form, just as the dreamer

observes the verbal story through a visual medium. Chaucer creates his own book space—and his own narrative space—within the space of the glass temple.

The House of Fame: Tradition and Lady Fame

After leaving the glass temple, Chaucer flies with an extraordinary eagle on a journey to visit Fame's house. The eagle introduces the house of Fame in Book II, but the dreamer provides more precise detail of the house upon his arrival there in Book III. The witty, learned eagle tells the dreamer about many things during his trip through the sky, including a scientific description of how sound travels to Fame's house through concentric circles. Moreover and most important, instead of focusing on what happens within Fame's house, the eagle gives a careful account of where the House of Fame is located. Geffrey records the eagle's description of the location of the house:

> Hir paleys stant, as I shal seye,
>
> Ryght even in myddes of the weye
>
> Betwixen hevene and erthe and see. (II, 713-715)

The eagle situates the house in a space in the sky that is equidistant from heaven, earth, and sea. This location becomes key in understanding Chaucer's structure throughout the dream vision. In the first book, Chaucer looks at the idea of story in its elementary, visual form. In book III, he surveys the space of Rumor's house, where all things ever said travel and become magnified before going to Fame's house. The reader first comes into contact with Fame's house in book II, between the other two structures. The eagle

describes the house of Fame as centered within creation, while Chaucer places his thematic center—the idea of fame—in the middle of the vision.

Chaucer further emphasizes the centering of the house, saying that no matter where the sound is spoken, "The way therto ys so overt, / And stant eke in so juste a place / That every soun mot to hyt pace" (718-720). Although the dreamer refuses in Book III to submit himself to Fame's whims, the eagle claims that, because of the location of the house, anything that is said necessarily comes to Fame. Structurally, within the poem, the palace is located between the transparent, glass temple of Venus and the incredibly busy and noisy house of Rumor. Although the eagle labels the palace as the meeting place for sound, and provides for the dreamer and the reader a description of how that sound comes to the house, it is indeed a tableau of many different sensory experiences that, for Chaucer, are involved in creating poetry.

Therefore, claims the eagle,

> what so cometh from any tonge,
>
> Be hyt rouned, red, or songe,
>
> Or spoke in suerte or in drede,
>
> Certeyn, hyt moste thider nede. (721-724)

Within the oral tradition of Chaucer's time, any work would likely be transferred and shared through reading aloud. Even through this act of oral transmission, Chaucer once again moves between media, this time from the written verbal to the heard verbal. Through this transmission, Chaucer circulates his words into the world to be subject to questions of Fame and put to the test of tradition and authority; his words necessarily

become subject to fame. The eagle extends his treatise on location by claiming that nature ("kynde") has a right place for everything. He tells the dreamer, "Thus every thing, by thys reson, / Hath his propre mansyon / To which hit seketh to repaire, / Ther-as it shulde not apaire" (753-756). The eagle introduces Geffrey to the fact that every word and sentence has its own proper space to fill. Since Fame's house is the proper place for sound, it is where Chaucer eventually, though unwillingly, finds his work.

The eagle has familiarized the reader with the location of Fame's house, but it is in Book III that the structure itself is the focus of both the reader's and the dreamer's attention. When the eagle drops him off, the dreamer tells the reader his purpose—what he is going to do while surveying the house of Fame, saying: "I wol yow al the shap devyse / Of hous and site, and al the wyse / How I gan to thys place aproche" (1113-1115). Chaucer promises the reader that he will outline not only the house itself but also the whole landscape surrounding the house. Interestingly, he also seeks to recount the manner in which he is to approach the house. The work for the dreamer in Book III is to lay out the plan of Fame's palace. During this description and survey, Chaucer extends the cataloging we saw in the temple of glass and will witness in the house of Rumor. The dreamer must organize the visual space he encounters, and he uses the existing physical structures to contain his oft-wandering visual space. When Geffrey encounters the house's foundation, Fame's hall, and Lady Fame herself, he must shape the house not only within the confinement of narrative re-telling but also within the confinement of Fame's space itself. Within this survey, Chaucer revisits the ideas of using language to bring time into orderly space.

The dreamer first notices that the foundation for the house "was every del / A roche of yse" (1129-1130). Instead of being built upon a strong, durable metal, the house is built on what the dreamer declares a "feble fundament" (1132). Besides the fact that the house is built on such an undependable foundation, the ice itself is reminiscent of the glass in the glass temple. There, the glass allowed for a transparent viewing of the pictures on the wall, but here the transparency functions differently because it implies mutability and the inconstant (and sometimes meaningless) judgment of Fame. In the temple, the paintings did not depend on the glass (aside from support), but rather they could be seen through the glass. Since ice serves as the structural basis for the house of Fame, Fame herself then becomes largely dependent on the ice's naturally transitory properties in order to be upheld at all. At the same time, the idea of fame weakens, as the reader's expectations for Fame's effectiveness are unstable: perhaps the names on the melting ice are truly worthy of recognition but by virtue of being exposed to the heat they are left with no voice—and no book space—for future readers.

As the dreamer draws closer and is able to discern writing on the ice, he notices that it is full of written names. On one side, the names "were molte awey with hete, / And not awey with stormes bete" (1149-1150). Such a simple thing as heat, not a violent event like a storm, has caused these names to lose their fame as etched in the foundation of Fame's house. For the reader, the question becomes which ordeal is most important—the continued scrutiny of intense glare and focus, or to be covered up and protected from such intense scrutiny in order to be subject to the arbitrary nature of Fame. The dreamer then encounters a side where it

> was writen ful of names
>
> Of folkes that hadden grete fames
>
> Of Olde tyme, and yet they were
>
> As fressh as mean had writen hem here
>
> The selve day ryght, or that houre
>
> That I upon hem gan to poure. (1153-1158)

The dreamer sees nothing but names; although they are well preserved, he does not tell the reader anything specific about them. The names become insignificant other than as part of Fame's foundation. These names were "conserved with the shade of a castel . . . / And stood eke on so cold a place / That hete myghte hit not deface" (1160-1161, 1163-1164). Being hidden beneath the shade of Fame's castle does two primary things for those names the dreamer is able to discern. First, they are protected and therefore can be seen by all who approach Fame. Focusing in on this idea, however, Chaucer poses an important question concerning the idea of fame. While the names in the sun's heat are being melted, they are more immediately put under eyes and vision in order to be perused and fairly judged; they are more accessible, perhaps because they are easily understood by the populace as opposed to works that require study. Chaucer here calls into question how Fame asserts her supposed authority, wondering if the shade of her castle serves as anything more than a way to limit the interaction of her favored works with an audience.

Chaucer focuses on the difference between the glass temple and the ice again later by adding an additional barrier. He encounters walls of beryl "That shoone ful lyghter than a glas / And made wel more that hit was / To semen everything" (1289-1291).

These outer walls of the castle serve as a magnifying glass. Instead of simply providing a

clearer picture, they enhance those people to whom fame has been granted. Throughout

the blessing of Fame, objects become more than they in reality are. Preserving her

arbitrary nature, Fame herself magnifies the qualities of a work in order to preserve them.

A positive judgment from Fame is less dependent on the thing that is being judged than

on the fact that Fame has (however arbitrarily) approved it.

The hall overwhelms Geffrey, and he notices the pillars that surround the walls.

He describes them when he first sees them:

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

Geffrey begins to describe several of the pillars in greater detail, and he gives the reader

pictures of the pillars of Jewish tradition, Thebes, Troy, the god of love, Rome, and the

story of Pluto and Proserpine. While these stories have been addressed and explored by

many different authors, they constitute tradition within Fame themselves, independent of

the authors who tell their stories. However, he notices that Virgil himself is a pillar,

responsible for the story of Aeneas. In describing the pillar of Virgil, the dreamer writes:

> Tho saugh I stonde on a piler,
>
> That was of tynned yren cler,

> The Latyn poete Virgile,
>
> That bore hath up a longe while
>
> The fame of Pius Eneas. (1481-1485)

For Virgil's *Aeneid*, fame is not dependent on Lady Fame but is rather dependent on Virgil himself upholding the timeless story of Aeneas. Although Geffrey does not know who created the artist's pictures in the glass temple, he is acutely aware of the Virgilian tradition behind the story. Through this more legitimate upholding of the concept of fame, independent of Lady Fame's whims, Chaucer constructs his own work while exploring the reciprocal relationship between tradition and fame. Relying on tradition itself instills fame, and tradition serves not only as a natural fame independent of Lady Fame but also serves to uphold Fame herself and Fame's judgments. Ultimately, Lady Fame becomes subject to the pillars that uphold her house in designating eternal fame. Without their support, her empire would not exist; those who seek her favor uphold both the foundation and the walls. Just as the markings on the ice foundation indicate, for the dreamer, a questionable tension between being recognized and subjected to perusal versus simply being protected by an artificial judgment of Fame, the presence of these pillars in comprising the structure of Fame's hall indicates a co-dependence between Fame and tradition.

Fame serves as the mistress over all of this landscape that the dreamer encounters. Earlier, after Geffrey had entered the hall, he recounts the experience of seeing Lady Fame firsthand. Geffrey sees lady Fame as a character enthroned in riches and recognizes her beauty. Within this vision of seeing her, his eye confuses his

perception. Although at first he "thoughte that she was so lyte / That the lengthe of a cubite / Was lengere that she semed be" (1369-1371), her power eventually overwhelms him through her growing appearance. Fame becomes a large, imposing figure, reminiscent of Boethius' Lady Philosophy, "That with hir fet she erthe reighte, / And with hir hed she touched hevene" (1374-1375). In order to rule over the richness of tradition and the capriciousness of fame, Lady Fame must be a strong, imposing being. As mistress over the grounds and house the dreamer has surveyed, she presides with power and control over the action and events which occur there. Lady Fame has dominion over the buildings just as she has dominion over who she decides should be granted fame, despite the grounding of the pillars in tradition. The question over Lady Fame remains in her choice of interaction between her whims and well-rooted tradition. Although the traditional pillars provide support, Lady Fame acts as a mistress of ceremonies, governing those on whose strength she will depend. Her ultimate strength lies on the back of traditional authority, but her power lies in deciding who will have fame and therefore who will support her. In a useful comparison, Theseus in The Knight's Tale is also a master of ceremonies, and the supposedly well-ordered world he creates in his theater becomes involved in guiding the action and events while serving as a structure for the other tales in *The Canterbury Tales*.

House of Rumor: Spreading and Sharing

Geffrey leaves the hall under the leadership of a stranger who promises to show him a new place where he may be able to find the tidings he was initially promised. He

continues his surveyor's description of the landscape of the place. When they leave the hall, he sees "stonde in a valeye, / Under the castel, faste by, / An hous" (1918-1920). Upon his first glance at Rumor's house, Geffrey remarks that it is more elegantly wrought than "Domus Dedaly, / That Laboryntus cleped ys" (1920-1921). Since the house of Rumor is more elaborate than the Labyrinth, it follows that it must also be quite complex and encapsulating.

By using this metaphor, Chaucer causes the reader to begin to discern the complexity of Rumor. Despite such perceptions of complexity, Geffrey describes the materials of this house, which are quite simple:

> Twigges, falwe, redde,
>
> And grene eke, and somme weren white,
>
> Swiche as men to these cages thwhite,
>
> Or maken of these panyers,
>
> Or elles hottes or dossers. (1936-1940).

The multi-colored twigs contribute to the lively effect that Chaucer later magnifies through the presence of all kinds of sounds: "That, for the swough and for the twygges, / This house was also ful of gygges, / And also ful eke of chirkynges, / And of many other werkynges" (1941-1944). Made of multi-colored twigs, and full of different sounds, the house swells as a result of the magnification by the expansion of rumor. In order to protect and free the sounds which become magnified, the roof contains "A thousand holes, and wel moo, / To leten wel the soun out goo" (1949-1950). Once rumor has strengthened these sounds, they leave through these holes and travel to Fame's hall. The

dreamer finds a circumscribed locale for all of the tidings he was promised he would find, and he lists many different kinds of tidings found there. These tidings address all areas of life, both peaceful and not. They constitute and form the inside space of the house, and they represent Chaucer's very keen perception that ultimately all poetic works address one or more of these accessible, important subjects. Chaucer uses this list of tidings, as Lara Ruffolo mentions, as a "disorderly heap" through which poetry can be etched out and created (327). The heap of sounds must become subject to Fame, and through Fame's favor, poetic creation becomes known.

After describing the many tidings that he finds, the dreamer provides a description of the space that the house holds. He claims that it was "sixty myle of lengthe" (1979) and is upheld by "tymber of no strengthe, / Yet hit is founded to endure" (1980-1981). Though the house has a questionable foundation, the dreamer is quite secure about its endurance. With Fame, however, Chaucer presents her hall as being also built on the foundation of ice, but he does not place his faith in its permanent strength. Rumor's house, which swells with all things ever said, is not arbitrarily discriminating and is therefore more stable and sure, although the words themselves can be harmful or helpful, untrue or true. Chaucer's shift from the description of the many kinds of tidings to the description of their enclosing framework is a basis for the way in which he moves from the larger framing in *The Canterbury Tales* to the more minute theatrical framing that he introduces for The Knight's Tale.

Geffrey sees the eagle again as he surveys the house of Rumor. Before the eagle agrees to take the dreamer into the house, he warns the dreamer about the violent

interactions of the tidings within the building. Once inside the loud, uncontrolled house, Geffrey remarks that he is given only a "fote-brede of space" (2042). He is caught amidst the many rumors, and he is only one of many people there fighting for attention. While in Fame's house, Geffrey had commented that "I wot myself best hou y stonde" (1878), and while in Rumor's house, he is acutely aware of the space he inhabits. While in the midst of these rumors, he notices that through their re-telling they become magnified; their narrative becomes more consuming of the space within the house. In Rumor's expansive yet simple arena, the existence and magnification of the tidings is independent of Lady Fame. Geffrey earlier declared poetic independence from Fame, but upon being in Rumor's house, he is indirectly persuaded to be caught up in Fame's grips. Although he inhabits his own "fote-brede" of space, he is still to be magnified and have his space increased—independently of Fame—and then become subject to either her goodwill or her denouncement. However, once they are suffcently increased, then:

> Thus out at holes gunne wringe
>
> Every tydynge streght to Fame,
>
> And she gan yeven ech hys name,
>
> After hir disposicioun,
>
> And yaf hem eke duracioun,
>
> Somme to wexe and wane sone. . . . (2110-2115)

While they were in Rumor's house, the non-judgmental force of rumor caused all tidings to be magnified. Once they leave because they are now large and take up lots of space in the crowded house, they enter Fame's framework for judgment, independent of any

agency.   Within a tightly contained, semi-chaotic (though ultimately ordered and controlled by Fame's whim) room, all of poetic creation will see how it stands up to Fame's arbitrary judgment.

Chaucer's dreamer contends with the role of poet, unsure of finding an appropriate place for himself and his works. After he meets with Lady Fame and sees her arbitrary assignment of fame, he decides that it "Sufficeth me, as I were ded, / that no wight have my name in honde" (1876-1877). Although it seems that poetic fame is controlled by Fame, Chaucer removes himself from the bonds of Fame and instead remains a hard-working poet who allows his work to speak for itself, in the tradition of Virgil who alone upholds the fame of Aeneas, apparently along with Fame's favor. When he says "I wil myselven al hyt drynke, / Certeyn, for the more part, / As fer forth as I kan myn art" (1880-1882), Chaucer places his value on the work of his creation instead of Fame's blessing or rejection, empowering the author-creator over arbitrary decision. He removes his work from the path of Fame even though he enters Rumor's house and defines and declares his space there. From his description of the glass temple along with his dependence on the pillar-worthy authority of Virgil, Chaucer places himself within pre-existing tradition that indeed upholds Fame. Although he denies a desire to put himself before Fame, he has encountered many of the sources of his own work in the pillars and columns that uphold Fame's house, and he builds the physical structures within his vision upon tradition's strong authority as opposed to impermanent ice. Instead of depending on Fame's decision directed towards him, Chaucer places himself in the tradition of the many columns that uphold the house and therefore Chaucer's work.

House of Fame ends abruptly and excitedly as Geffrey encounters a "man of grete auctoritee" (2158). A.C. Spearing notes that there is "the final appearance of a bustling crowd . . . as pointing towards *The Canterbury Tales*, where Chaucer was to find in the framed narrative a final solution to the problem of the validity of fiction" (88-89). As a continuation of the theories and themes explored throughout his vision of Fame, Chaucer frames the *Tales* within a pilgrimage where each pilgrim is commissioned to tell stories. However, as the Knight begins the first tale, the location of which is determined by the linkage between the tale and the General Prologue, Chaucer uses Duke Theseus as a ringmaster of sorts. Theseus commissions a large theater so that the cousins Arcite and Palamon can battle for Emelye. With *House of Fame*, there is no true thematic or structural center. The dreamer wanders through all of the buildings and comes face to face with an unknown man who has authority. Throughout the vision, the reader's visual and narrative field is confined within the three structures. Due to the fluidity of a dreamer's eye, the reader does not feel constricted within the space of the dream. In the structuring of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer reverses the imposition of structure by embedding the subtler framework of the theater within the larger framework of the pilgrimage to Canterbury. In the same way that the buildings serve as a focal point for meaning in *House of Fame*, this theater serves as a guiding force in framing the structure of the tales as a whole. In the next chapter, I am going to explore the construction of the theater and how it guides the *Tales*.

Chapter 3

Being Inside The Knight's Tale: Structural Construction in *The Canterbury Tales*

Chaucer opens *The Canterbury Tales* with a description of all the pilgrims going on the journey by a pilgrim who is presumably Chaucer himself. After these descriptions are finished, each pilgrim draws straws to see who gets to tell the first tale. Appropriately, the honorable Knight draws the shortest straw and tells his tale first. The Knight's Tale introduces and highlights the extra-textual, framing structure that pervades the entire work and that builds upon the frame of the whole pilgrimage. Though employing the discourse of romance, the Knight reaches far beyond the form's normal scope. By manipulating the standard of a courtly romance, Chaucer presents a text of literary theory that builds on the theoretical propositions of *House of Fame* and that also serves as the basis for the rest of the tales. Chaucer begins the tale by focusing on two knights who are cousins, Arcite and Palamon. Although they remain present and somewhat central in the second half of the tale, Theseus, duke of Thebes, becomes the great organizer of the events in the tale. Theseus commissions a theater for the battle for Emelye while Chaucer, through the verbal organization of the tale, builds a theoretical framework in which the pilgrims will battle for recognition and the free meal at the Tabard Inn. Where *House of Fame* had three primary structures that reveal different aspects of Chaucer's theoretical issues and ideas, The Knight's Tale is framed with two primary structures: the tower in which Arcite and Palamon are originally held captive, and Theseus's theater in which the duel between the two cousins occurs.

Charles Muscatine, Robert Jordan, and Helen Cooper provide analyses of The Knight's Tale that serve as an introduction on ways to think about the basic structure of the tale. Charles Muscatine provides a seminal study in The Knight's Tale. Muscatine claims that the Knight's Tale is a "poetic pageant" which is "neither a story nor a static picture" (181). As his essay begins, Muscatine states that "In the Knight's Tale, furthermore, form and style are so functional that they point directly to the meaning" (177). Not only the symmetry of the tale, but the actual form and style of the tale shape the reader's understanding of this tale and the entirety of *The Canterbury Tales*. Muscatine realizes that Chaucer emphasizes the detail of the structures "so as to give the impression that we are present at their construction" (177). Muscatine focuses on the verbal and visual style of the tale, and looking further into the structure of The Knight's tale demonstrates the enclosing stylistic structure and framework that Chaucer takes the reader into throughout *The Canterbury Tales*.

Robert Jordan, in contrast, in *Chaucer and the Shape of Creation*, takes up the argument that Chaucer's writings are inorganic and disunified and in the course of his discussion presents Theseus as the master of ceremony in the tale. Jordan describes the theater that he commissions as "a comprehensive figure which contains within itself the distinctly structured elements that constitute its wholeness" (171). Since the reader is present while the theater is built in the tale, she is able to see the effect of the theater as flanked by the three temples. Although the temples are separate entities, as are the two cousins and Emelye, they are part of the structured theater. Jordan notes that Chaucer

emphasizes the wholeness of the structure although the characters are separately framed units. The focus is on structure, not unification:

> For in its second half the narrative outgrows its
>
> protagonists and very nearly outgrows its theme. That is,
>
> it moves not only beyond action but also beyond
>
> descriptive spectacle to express itself in the abstract terms
>
> of pure structure. (172)

Later in the chapter on The Knight's Tale, Jordan concedes that a direct correlation between theories of structure and theories of poetics may be difficult when he says that "precise equivalence is of course impossible, a poem not being an arena" (178). However, though the Knight's Tale itself does not directly translate into an arena, the framework of the pilgrimage in *The Canterbury Tales* can be viewed through the examination of the theater and structure of The Knight's Tale as a metaphorical arena.

Helen Cooper focuses on the issues raised in The Knight's Tale as an introduction to the issues that are raised in the remaining tales. She writes, "This open-ended exploration is contained in a brilliantly controlled narrative and rhetorical structure, and given form through a handling of genre that in itself suggests that there is no single or simple way of looking at the world" (91). The Knight's Tale stands not only as a structural introduction to the pilgrimage, but as we will see later, the issues (including such questions of genre) that Chaucer introduces through the tower and the theatre serve as thematic centers of the work. The thematic issues can be seen most brilliantly within the temples of Mars, Venus, and Dyane that Chaucer builds within the amphitheater.

Guided by Whose Eye?: The Confinement of the Tower

At the end of the General Prologue, Chaucer recites Plato's doctrine that "The wordes moote be cosyn to the deed" (I, 742). Although he is using this doctrine to support his recounting all of the tales even though some contain questionable content, this line actually leads into The Knight's Tale, where the Knight tells a story of dueling "cosyns," Arcite and Palamon. Arcite and Palamon are generally indistinct from each other, although the argument has been made that Arcite is more logical while Palamon is more passionate. Arcite often thinks analytically about his situation, while Palamon is often described as "wood." Because of this reciprocal presentation of the two knights, the reader becomes uneasy with the direction of the tale. The monodramatic ideology of courtly love becomes obvious in their indistinctness, and the problem seems therefore to lie within questions about the genre that the Knight chooses as his primary mode of discourse—the romance. In the glass temple, Geffrey had encountered the subversion of genre through changing and interacting media; there, Chaucer presents a tension between the visual and verbal ways of telling and reading stories. In The Knight's Tale, the nearly indistinguishable knight-cousins represent separate ways in which Chaucer's words dictate the space within his tale, and Chaucer again violates the perceived book space. The cousins seek their own visual space, but the narrative guidance of the Knight takes precedence over their desires.

Initially, the tale seems to function as a romance because of the focus on the Arcite-Emelye-Palamon love triangle. However, the genre of romance cannot fully account for a tale the magnitude of The Knight's Tale, especially as it changes its focus

to spectacle in the second half of the tale. The expectations of episodic, purely entertaining romance are subverted in favor of grandiose, singularly focused theatricality. Theseus saves the two knights, imprisons them, and then commissions their battle. Theseus is governor not only of Athens but also of the ceremony of the battle that is going to take place between Arcite and Palamon.

Originally, Theseus finds the two knights in a heap of bodies, "nat fully quyke, ne fully dede" (I, 1015). As an act of mercy, instead of killing them, Theseus decides to imprison them in Athens:

> . . . in a tour, in angwissh and in wo,
>
> This Palamon and his felawe Arcite
>
> For everemoore; ther may no gold hem quite. (I, 1030-2)

This tower is crafted before the framing of the tale. Norman Klassen notes that Boccaccio's buildings in the *Teseida*, a source for The Knight's Tale, are built before the tale occurs and that this lack of circumscribing structures within the tale leaves no "clearly defined controlling context" (129). Even though the tower imprisons the cousins for a long period of time, it has no central thematic role in the tale because the reader does not witness the actual creation of the tower. In *House of Fame*, all three of Chaucer's structures previously existed before the action of the tale. In that poem, the central idea is based upon tradition and the detailing though not building of these three structures signifies Chaucer's dependence on tradition.

Although Boccaccio's work is the literary precursor to The Knight's Tale, Chaucer here builds a structure within his re-telling, and by that construction he calls

attention to craftsmanship. In the tale and for the tale, the tower simply serves as a non-consequential holding place. The context for the creation of the tower also is outside of the tale and unavailable to the reader. Palamon and Arcite are actually held captive from action although they can observe what goes on in the garden below:

> Ther as the knyghtes weren in prisoun
>
> (Of which I tolde yow and tellen shal),
>
> Was evene joynant to the gardyn wal
>
> There as this Emelye had hir pleyynge. (I, 1058-61)

They are free to look out at beautiful Emelye in her garden, but the "wyndow, thikke of many a barres" (I, 1075) separates the two worlds while they are locked in the tower. Freedom of movement occurs outside of the location in which the reader is located. Instead of being able to follow their own lines of vision like Geffrey in *House of Fame*, Arcite and Palamon are held captive by the tower, which dictates their sight by the location of its windows. Whereas Geffrey was allowed the chance to peruse freely the works of art by his own eye, the two knights are instead guided by a narrator (the Knight) who focuses their eyes onto Emelye and her garden. Chaucer refines the narrative eye to move the plot of the tale instead of relying on random sight and vision to account for the majority of the tale. Although Chaucer is still using sight as the primary sense, the narrator's direction of sight blocks out the dream-like state of *House of Fame* in favor of sight and vision in "real" time.

Arcite is later freed from his imprisonment because of the pleas of his friend Duke Perotheus. Arcite therefore cannot observe Emelye's freedom from the lookout of the

tower although he is free to roam anywhere but Athens. Palamon can still gaze at Emelye; his fate is truly no better because he lacks the freedom to roam about as he wishes. Chaucer excludes sight from guiding both knights freely since the object of Arcite's gaze remains unseen and Palamon's gaze is still directed by the tower the narrator uses to circumscribe him. This metaphor extends into Chaucer's idea of a requirement for a literary text. In *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer needs a framework in which his tales will occur, although with his statement of Plato's doctrine he insists that he be given freedom to tell what he wishes to tell within this frame. Neither Palamon nor Arcite fully has either one of these two necessities: though Palamon is in a framing tower, the tower itself is literally barred from the action, and while Arcite has his freedom, his freedom is incomplete because he is prohibited from returning to Athens.

Through the Knight's structuring of the tale in this way, the central locale of the story must change; the plot is dependent on the gaze of the two knights, and this gaze must be similarly and centrally focused. The Knight has given himself the power to shape and define the narrative, and he must actively guide the narrative into another circumscribing structure in order to continue the story. Seven years after Arcite is freed, Palamon escapes from prison and Arcite returns to "Atthenes, everemoore unknowe" (I, 1406) because his appearance has changed. Now that both knights have achieved freedom, their stories are nearly complete. In The Knight's Tale, the movement between the knights is not at all fluid, because it is imposed structurally through the tower and verbally through the narrator. But Chaucer seems to develop a plan: he designs the controlling eye overseeing his poetic creation instead of allowing the characters to follow

their own guidance. Chaucer's narrator—the Knight—has freedom, even the responsibility, to govern the narrative flow. The cousins are set free from their confinement and are directed towards each other—two cousins who can't be separated from each other and who ultimately drive Theseus to become the narrator within the tale and creator of their battle.

Master of his Domain: Theseus Taking on his Role

Both Arcite and Palamon have been freed from the tower, and the narrative direction imposed by this tower has become undone. Since they have been removed from their first tower, the continuation of their plight must have a confined locale. Theseus, with his love of theater, serves as the architect (or author) of this encompassing structure after he stumbles across Arcite and Palamon as they begin to attack each other in the garden. Though not condemning them again to imprisonment, Theseus takes the chance to commission not only the battle between the two but also a large battlefield. Through this act of mercy towards the two knights, Theseus governs spectacle, putting himself as the intermediary through which they can achieve their goals.

The tale adheres to Theseus's love of theatricality because the tale changes from a focused love triangle to a grandiose battlefield. He both frees the knights and circumscribes their action. Norman Klassen writes, "both knights soon find themselves again subject to the duke's control and certainly within a larger visual framework" (127). This outward expansion provides the framework for the action in the second half of the tale. Through Theseus, Chaucer expands the tale's space in which Arcite and Palamon's

freedom can be properly explored. In *House of Fame*, Lady Fame acts as the mistress over her house. She can decide to whom she grants fame. Here, Theseus places himself in the role of Lady Fame since in that he is now in control of the plot of the story. Although the Knight is the narrator of the tale and Chaucer is the author of it, Theseus is the figure within the tale that decides how the movement and flow of the tale will be determined. Chaucer structures his narrative concentrically, empowering the Knight and then Theseus as sub-narrators under his author-authority. By allowing Theseus to stand as commissioner and builder of this theater, Chaucer posits Theseus as the person who circumscribes the action of the tale, guiding not only the reader's gaze but also confining the area in which the knights can independently focus their own eye. Chaucer the poet creates Chaucer the pilgrim, who retells how host Harry Bailly creates the larger framework of *The Canterbury Tales*; within this framework, Chaucer causes the Knight to focus the attention and gaze of Arcite and Palamon within the tower. The cousins achieve freedom from the Knight's narrative power only to become subject to the new narrative power that Theseus then usurps.

The theater appears at the beginning of part three. The Knight directly enters the tale to emphasize the importance of this structure:

> I trowe men wolde deme it necligence
>
> If I foryete to tellen the dispence
>
> Of Theseus, that gooth so bisily
>
> To maken up the listes royally,
>
> That swich a noble theater as it was

I dar wel seyen in this world ther nas. (I, 1881-6)

Chaucer knows that it is necessary to describe the pageantry of the theater, and he focuses the reader's attention on the theater by guiding the gaze through both Theseus and the Knight himself. Although he often summarizes certain parts of the story included in its source the *Teseida,* he finds it important that the theater must be described in the tale. The vastness of the tale increases with the construction of the theater, even though now there is a restricted location of action. The pre-configured tower is now definitely gone, and a new discourse of action appears, confined and headed by Theseus. The theater is set up as vast and separated from what is outside it: "The circuit was a myle aboute, / Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute" (I, 1887-8). Theseus has created a self-contained world that is so distinct from the outer world that it is surrounded by a ditch; he takes great care to place himself in control over the action that will occur in the tale. Through the Knight's narration, Theseus encloses the space of the tale further by limiting and directing the gaze of the reader to what happens inside the theater. The reader becomes confined in the theater just as Palamon and Arcite were confined and held captive in the tower.

"Round was the shap" of the theater, "in the manere of the compass" (I, 1889), telling the reader that it is circular, following the concentric framing of the narrative. Although the theater is expansive, Chaucer is sure to say that "Whan a man was set on o degree, / He letted nat his felawe for to see" (I, 1891-2). The people who would attend the battle are seated by rank, but because of the physical arrangement of the seats in the theater, no one's view is inhibited by those around them. The theater rises in concentric

circles; because the sphere limits people from perceiving their fellow audience members, the focus is definitely led towards the central action. As the narrators themselves become increasingly involved in the tale, the theater's circumscribed space focuses the reader's eye downward to the field of action. This world of uninhibited sight, created and governed by Theseus, mirrors the arena of a poet's work, which in turn mirrors God and his creation. Just as Theseus frees his prisoners from the tower and creates his own theater, Chaucer frees his poetry from the older conventions and forges out his own patterns. Although he makes extensive use of his sources, Chaucer tends to mold them to his own end and desires. Fame's house serves as the foundation of names, and pillars of tradition uphold the walls of her hall. Chaucer uses the foundation of different literary tradition in order to provide the seeds for his stories, and he creates his own stories and theoretical framework. Structurally, Chaucer creates a theater whose concentric construction focuses the reader's attention from the larger construction of the arena (and the encompassing framework of the *Tales*) to the battle that is to be held there. Chaucer uses the zooming in of the narrative voice (from author to teller to character) to emphasize this change and to guide not only the action of the characters within the tale but also the reader's understanding of narrative space.

The Temples

Now that Chaucer has circumscribed the action of the tale, the precise encircling of the tale's verbal space brings the reader's mind to the larger issue of the structuring of *The Canterbury Tales* as a whole. The reader's thoughts are brought back to the General Prologue both because of Plato's doctrine and because of the theatrical framing in the

Knight's Tale. What goes on inside the theater serves as a microcosm of what is going on inside the framing structure of *The Canterbury Tales*. In *House of Fame*, Geffrey's description of the house of Rumor makes the reader aware of a verbal space that encourages the strengthening and empowering of words before subjecting them to Fame's judgment. Each of the three characters involved in the love triangle in the Knight's Tale turns to one of the three temples in the theater to seek out help and guidance before the battle begins and before they become subject to Theseus's guidance. Chaucer furthers his talent at exhibiting control over many narrators when he uses these three iconographic temples as structures that foretell the multi-faceted storytelling within the framework of the whole pilgrimage.

Previous criticism has looked at the temples particularly as functioning differently. In his book *Chaucer and the Imagery of Narrative*, V.A. Kolve specifically looks at the wall paintings Chaucer describes in each of the temples. Here, Kolve writes, is the change from Boccaccio's *Teseida* that "most enlarges Chaucer's theatre as an iconographic narrative image, converting it from an emblem of reason and restraint into a comprehensive image of human life both rational and impassioned" (114). While I agree with Kolve, Chaucer's incisive description of the temples does not offer such an image to function solely within The Knight's Tale. Rather, the temples take on a more meaningful assignment as representative images that Chaucer more fully explores throughout his tales. Kolve goes on to claim that Chaucer's changes to Boccaccio's temples concentrate the theater "into a single narrative image that is more dense with suggestion and more potent in the memory" (114). The power of this image accentuates and underscores the

frame of the entire pilgrimage with a thematic and structural frame for the *Tales* found within the temples.

The Knight takes a general visual survey of the theater, as if he were standing in the middle and looking up and around it.

> Estward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
> Westward right swich another in the opposite.
> And shortly to concluden, swich a place
> Was noon in erthe, as in so litel space;
> For in the lond ther was no crafty man
> That geometrie or ars-metrike kan,
> Ne portreyour, ne kervere of ymages,
> That Theseus ne yaf him mete and wages
> The theater for to maken and devyse.
> And for to doon his ryte and sacrifise,
> He estward hath, upon the gate above,
> In worshipe of Venus, goddesse of love,
> Doon make an auter and an oratorie;
> And on the gate westward, in memorie
> Of Mars, he maked hath right swich another,
> That cost largely of gold a fother.
> And northward, in a touret on the wal,
> Of alabastre whit and reed coral,
> An oratorie, riche for to see,
> In worshipe of Dyane of chastitee,
> Hath Theseus doon wroght in noble wyse. (I, 1893-1913)

The Knight finds himself in the middle of the tale, subject to Theseus's construction and narrative guidance, just as Chaucer's reader takes a generalized view of *The Canterbury Tales* in awe of Chaucer's creation. Theseus employs all master craftsmen in order to perfectly array his theater; Chaucer employs the masters of his art, including Boccaccio, Dante, and Ovid, throughout the tales. The craftsmen Theseus employs arrange the theater with the temples of Venus and Mars facing each other while Dyane's temple is in the middle. In this structure, love and war go up against each other while both flank

chastity. This structure almost seems to imitate and mock the ideology of courtly love:

the chaste, hunted woman is the center of the knight's love and battles. Chaucer realizes

that courtly love itself is a construction, and the creation of the theater exemplifies it by

making a physical structure of courtly love's ideals.   Within the theatrical structure,

Chaucer ultimately denies conventional book space. As he did in *House of Fame*,

Chaucer uses the structures to create his own narrative space.

After this general description, Chaucer takes a systematic, individual look at the

three temples. Norman Klassen makes the argument that

> Chaucer draws attention to the impression of the theater
>
> and then of the temples in it; he employs not merely a
>
> general visual stress but an iconographic one . . . . The
>
> meaning of the lives of the major characters is about to be
>
> completely bound up with the images in the amphitheater
>
> . . . . (128)

The iconographic structures that occur within the temples draw the reader out of the focus

on the General Prologue and the Knight's Tale to consider the other tales in the

collection. Arcite, Palamon, and Emelye are going to be bound up by Theseus's theater

and narrative, while the personalities of the pilgrims, the medieval estates, and the old

authoritative texts are going to be transformed by Chaucer's work.

Just as Chaucer the dreamer first encounters the temple of Venus, the reader first

sees Venus's temple in the theater. Chaucer begins the description of Venus's temple

with pictures of courtly love and lamenting. He goes on to describe the many allegorical faces of love. Painted on the wall are

> Festes, instrumentz, caroles, daunces,
>
> Lust and array, and alle the circumstances
>
> Of love, which that I rekned and rekne shal. (I, 1931-3)

Throughout the temple, the reader visualizes both the torments of love and the pleasures of love. In *House of Fame*, the description of Venus is virtually ignored and overlooked although the apparent purpose of the dream is to find love tidings. Here in The Knight's Tale, where the traditional genre space of courtly love has been violated and where Chaucer creates his own unique verbal space, the idea (and ideal) of love has been pushed to the background through the focus on the cousins' rivalry.

The Miller's Tale immediately follows the Knight's Tale and in many ways responds to the ideas and issues Chaucer raises through his jumbling of expected book space. Helen Cooper writes that in the temple Chaucer constructs, "Venus overturns all human ideals of moral action" (98). In looking at the scheme of the tales, the temple of Venus seems to relate to the Miller's Tale, where morality certainly becomes subordinate to love. The Miller's Tale comes directly after the Knight's Tale, and it is therefore the first tale that is read under the framing structure that the Knight's Tale suggests. Within the Miller's Tale, a tale that is considered a fabliau in the French tradition, Nicholas, John the carpenter, and Absalom all function differently under the auspices of their love for Alisoun, and images within Venus's temple represent the different ways in which each of their loves functions. John is like the "cokkow sittynge on hir hand" (I, 1930) because he

is cuckolded by the trickery of Nicholas and Alisoun. Because of his strong, lusty desire

for Alisoun, Nicholas experiences "The firy strokes of the desirynge / That loves servantz

in this lyf enduren" (I, 1922-3). Scorned throughout the tale by Alisoun, and a heavy

proponent of the rituals of courtly love, Absalom is like the picture of Cupid, who sits

with Venus. Cupid has a "bowe he bar and arwes brighte and kene" (I, 1966), just like

the poker that Absalom uses at the end of the Miller's Tale to burn Nicholas, with whom

Alisoun eventually shares her love. Venus's temple shows all different types of love, and

the Miller's Tale takes up these types of love in a humorous way. In using the discourse

of fabliau for this tale, Chaucer indicates that he indeed does find humor in the romance

ideology that he paints in Venus's temple.

Palamon approaches Venus's temple to ask for her favor in the battle against

Arcite for Emelye's love. He claims to have "no langage to telle / Th'effects ne the

tormentz of myn helle" (I, 2227-2228). In putting himself under the power of Venus,

whos "vertu [power] is so greet in hevene above / That if yow list, I shal wel have my

love" (I, 2249-2250), Palamon places his faith in Venus's power. His agency is once

again not by narrative control but by his self-subjection to structural and verbal control.

Directly facing Venus, Mars's temple seem to act as an antidote to Venus's love

theories. The description of Mars's temple is lengthier than those of Venus and Dyane.

Mars's temple is very dark and dreary, from the first painting of the forest, "with knotty,

knarry, bareyne trees olde, / Of stubbes sharpe and hidouse to biholde" (I, 1977-8). It is

as if the forest has been completely obliterated. With its dark imagery, the temple can be

likened to the Parson's Tale, because of the images that the Parson paints of sin. In

discussing Mars's temple, Helen Cooper recognizes that Mars is the God not only of battle but "all of irrational violence: of theft and conspiracy, suicide and murder, human and animal blood lust, fatal accidents" (98). The Parson describes the tree of the seven deadly sins, with pride at its roots, and it is in these descriptions that the tale becomes treacherous and uncertain. Only through the hope the Parson later gives can this desolation be answered. The Parson's Tale serves as an antidote and answer to these dark images.

Within the temple, the paintings are mostly of dark allegorical figures. The Parson's Tale occupies more textual space like the description of Mars, and instead of literally following the images, the Parson's Tale also provides answers to the desolation of this scene. Interestingly, the narrator states that in the temple "wyndowe on the wal ther was noon, / Thurgh which men myghten any light discerne" (I, 1988-9). Though the landscape of Mars's temple is dreary, the beginning of The Parson's Tale details light, and the end result of The Parson's Tale is eternal light. Within the study of courtly love in The Knight's Tale, there can be no answer to this desolation. By contrasting Mars's temple and the Parson's Tale, Chaucer admits that the answers to life are not to be found within the circumscribed locale of action but outside of the spectacular theater.   Mars's temple remains within the circumscribed theater of action. Although The Parson's Tale remains within the frame of *The Canterbury Tales*, it leads to Chaucer's Retraction, which functions outside the framework of the tales themselves. As the last tale, The Parson's Tale is physically and thematically in direct opposition to The Miller's Tale, which thrives on sin and trickery, in the same way that Venus faces Mars in the theater.

Arcite uses Mars's temple to pray for victory in battle. He knows that he "moot with strengthe wynne hire in the place, / And wel I woot, withouten help or grace / Of thee ne may my strengthe noght availle" (I, 2399-2401). Since Arcite is acclimated to being under narrative direction, Chaucer closes in the circle of the driving narrative force in order to limit Arcite's chances for winning Emelye; at the end of his prayer, Arcite declares "Yif me [victorie]; I aske thee namoore" (I, 2420). Within Mars's temple, Arcite is aware of the strengths and purposes of Mars. For one moment, Arcite is able to choose his own path, undirected by narrative force, but he subjects himself to structural force that ultimately leads to being guided by Mars.

The temple of Dyane stands as a moral center between these two temples. He writes that the walls are painted "Of huntyng and of shamefast chastitee" (I, 2055). Chaucer's own Tale of Melibee seems to be the verbal macrocosm of this temple. The Tale of Melibee is a strict translation of a moral treatise that Chaucer puts in his own mouth perhaps as a play on modesty. He is stopped from telling the tale of Sir Thopas because of its horrid rhyme before he begins this moral tale, and he modestly admits his weakness in the craft of rhyming. As he introduces the tale, he claims:

> . . . in my sentence,
>
> Shul ye nowher fynden difference
>
> Fro the sentence of this tretys lyte
>
> After the which this murye tale I write. (VII, 961-4)

He admits that he remains true to his source, in the same way that in the General Prologue he admits that the words he recounts are simply exact details of what goes on

during the pilgrimage. In this way, Chaucer equates himself with the pilgrim's persona.

Chaucer is not only the author, but he also participates in both the dream and the tales.

Within the Tale of Melibee itself, Prudence is the personification of good judgment.

Prudence, like Theseus, governs over spectacle in that she suggests to her husband that he

gather his friends to seek their advice. Because of these two factors, Prudence stands as a

"goddesse on an hert ful hye set, / With smale houndes al aboute hir feete" (I, 2075-6).

Prudence, Theseus, the Knight, and Chaucer are all respectively set apart like Dyane,

with their spectators crowded around their feet. In the same way that Emelye's primary

request—that she not be married to either man—is not granted, both of Chaucer the

pilgrim's tales "fail" in different ways. Cooper notes that the imagery within Dyane's

temple focuses on her role as goddess of the moon, and therefore change, appropriate

imagery since "Emily must change her allegiance from maidenhood to marriage" (99).

Harry Bailly orders that he stop telling the tale of Sir Thopas, and the tale of Melibee is

nothing more than a direct translation of a moral treatise that lacks material or structural

originality. Harry Bailly, as the director of narrative in this instance, demands change,

and Chaucer the pilgrim follows the guidance of a narrative voice that is greater than his.

Emelye is the first character to pray, and she chooses to approach the temple of

Dyane, "Goddesse of maydens" (I, 2300). Throughout the tale, Emelye's only role has

been the object of the gaze of Arcite and Palamon, as directed by narrative intervention.

She reflects back the focus to the two knights, praying that Dyane "sende love and pees

bitwize hem two, / And fro me turne awey hir hertes so" (I, 2317-2318). An answer to

Emelye's most sincere prayer is impossible: the narrative gaze has focused the sight and

hearts of both knights on her, and she must, impossibly, become the answer to the love prayer of Palamon and the victory prayer of Arcite. When Emelye tries to direct narrative authority onto herself, she is denied her primary prayer and granted her secondary prayer that:

> If so be thou wolt nat do me grace,
>
> Or if my destynee be shapen so
>
> That I shal nedes have oon of hem two,
>
> As sende me hym that moost desireth me. (2322-2325)

The idea of love finally overcomes the tale as Palamon, who valued love over victory in the battle, wins the heart of Emelye after Arcite dies suddenly after his victory.

Throughout the rest of the tale, Theseus sets up equal armies for both of the knights and a great battle ensues. However, within the description of the physical structure of Theseus's theater, Chaucer organizes the space of the tale, following the patterns of constructing narrative space that he set up in *House of Fame*. Theseus does have a theater and Chaucer does have a collection of tales with a defined circumference. Here, Chaucer has the freedom to roam about his medieval landscape to explore personality, psychology, and people; though he is still limited by language, he uses visual structuring to become more accessible and understandable. He admits ultimate defeat, especially when he describes the desolation of Mars's temple, although he ends his tales with the Parson's Tale as an answer to this desolation. Through the relation of The Miller's Tale to Venus's temple, the reader recognizes that Chaucer understands (and causes his reader to understand) his contemporary notion of courtly love and completely

subverts it. He shows the actual truth of its ideals through the iconography of a Venus who asserts the importance of love (and lust) over morality. Rounding out the iconographic nature of his structure, Chaucer constructs as center a pillar of morality, however unoriginal it may be, in the form of Dyane's temple and his Tale of Melibee.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of The Parson's Tale, Chaucer writes his Retraction, reclaiming all of the stories he has told as a probable response to the tale. He writes "And if ther be any thyng that displese hem, I preye hem also that they arrette it to the dafaute of myn unkonnynge and nat to my wyl, that wolde ful fayn have seyd bettre if I hadde had konnynge" (X, 1082). Chaucer claims innocence on the basis of ignorance, and he asks that works other than his translation of Boethius and "othere bookes of legendes of seintes, and omelies, and moralitee, and devocioun" (X, 1088). Whereas in *House of Fame* Geffrey seeks to be free from the judgment of Fame, here Chaucer allows that his works not be considered for fame despite their popularity and familiarity. He ultimately responds to the idea of fame, and he claims to seek his treasure "so that I may been oon of hem at the day of doom that shulle be saved" (X, 1092). Chaucer releases not only his responsibility in creating the works but he also destroys his own narrative space in favor of the rigid book space of traditional philosophical space.

In *House of Fame*, Chaucer directly sets out to present the landscape and layout of Fame's kingdom, providing the reader with a collection of richly designed, multi-sensory buildings in which he fleshes out the importance of sight guidance. Though the narrator in *Fame* is a dreamer named Geffrey, Chaucer designs the poem so that the dreamer's eye becomes the narrator and Chaucer-author is simply the recorder of the dreamer's experience. Since Geffrey follows his eye through the many spaces he explores through *House of Fame*, it is evident that sight is extremely important to Chaucer. Chaucer uses

this eye to guide the creation of his internal narrative space, within which he violates the perceived expectations of genre and book space.

While there is also a focus on buildings in The Knight's Tale, Chaucer uses the buildings here in a way that highlights the shifting narrative voice as it moves from Chaucer the author to Chaucer the pilgrim to Harry Bailly to the Knight and finally to Theseus himself. Chaucer combines his studies of space and poetics that he originally constructs in *House of Fame* in order to examine the interaction of narrative and audience. He constructs his narrative space around the way his layered narrators define and limit the visual perception of the characters within the tale and therefore the reader. The narrative space he defines becomes the holding place for the rest of the tales. Ultimately, Chaucer's explorations of spatial constructs lead him throughout the literary and verbal space of *The Canterbury Tales*.

So, what questions does Chaucer leave in the readers mind with this structuring of the *Tales*? He invites the reader to enter his arena and have an unhindered view of life as he paints it. He promotes equality, so that all people may view the interactions that occur on his stage. John Edwin Wells wrote, "Frequently it has been well said of Chaucer, we go to him to be amused, to be entertained, to watch the show of things. He is the poet of the eye, not of the heart or soul" (605-6). Using his eye, Chaucer not only shapes his tales and the structures within them but also draws a visual-verbal picture of his concern about the art of words. Through his violation of book space, Chaucer creates his own narrative space within the buildings he constructs with his words. The narrative space that he outlines in *House of Fame* and puts into practice in *The Canterbury Tales*

redefines traditional authority while at the same time creating a new space for examining

questions of structural validity while telling great stories.

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