RICE UNIVERSITY

A STUDY OF CHAUCER'S HOUSE OF FAME

by

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This investigation is concerned with several problems that continually confront scholars of Chaucer when they are dealing with the *House of Fame*. The study deals with the date the poem was written, with the unity and completeness that it exhibits, and with interpretations of the *House of Fame*.

Evidence indicates that the *House of Fame* is an early work in Chaucer's canon; and most modern scholars have accepted a date within a year or two of 1380 as valid for the writing of the *House of Fame*. This thesis contends that there is evidence to support the belief that the poem may have actually been written at two different times—the first book before the First Italian Journey in 1373, and the last two books in about 1379.

Several scholars have expressed their dissatisfaction with the unity of the *House of Fame* as it stands today, and a few writers have held that the poem does possess unity. In this study it is held that the Dido story is an insertion into the rest of the poem; and if the difference between the modern and medieval conception of unity is remembered, the poem does exhibit a degree of coherence.
Although some students of the *House of Fame* believe that there is a great deal missing from the poem, comparisons with Chaucer's other dream poems and evidence from the poem itself indicate that the work is almost complete as it now stands.

Many interpretations for the *House of Fame* have been offered by scholars of Chaucer, but none have been universally acceptable. Most of these interpretations can be arranged into four general categories. Theories have been advanced that indicate that the poem is an imitation or parody of Dante, that it is an allegory of a court affair or of Chaucer's own life, that it is the prologue to a frame story, or that it is completely meaningful in itself. This paper contends that the last of these interpretations is the most consistent with present knowledge of the poem.

In this thesis it is also held that the date of December 10 may not be a historical date, but rather it may be symbolic of the mood of the poem. December may be symbolic of a mood of melancholy, skepticism, and disillusion—almost all other medieval dream poem are set in the spring—and the tenth day may be an unfortunate day of the month. The date, the story of Dido, the desert, and other usages indicate that the poem is not a happy dream poem; but it is a story of winter love.
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INTRODUCTION

Chaucer's *House of Fame*, like most of his other work, has long been a battleground for critics. Very little is definitely known about its meaning, its date, and the occasion of its composition; and scholars have held various views about these and other complex and important problems. Since Chaucer himself mentions it as his own work (*Retractions* and *Legend of Good Women*, F, 417; G, 405) and the Eagle calls him *Geffrey* (I. 729), there is a general agreement as to the authorship of the poem. Otherwise, however, critics are not united in their opinions about the *House of Fame*.

Robinson's text of this poem is based on three manuscripts and two early printed editions from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Bodley 638 and Fairfax 16 manuscripts are complete, but Pepys 2006 manuscript ends at line 1483. Caxton's edition was printed in about 1496; and Thynne's edition, based on Caxton and the manuscripts, was published in 1532. Caxton's edition breaks off at line 2094, and it adds these twelve apparently spurious lines:

And wyth the noyse of them wo
I sodeynly awok anon tho
And remembryd what I had seen
And how hye and ferro I had been
In my ghoost and had grete wonder
Of that the god of thonder
Had lete me knowen and began to wryte
Lyke as ye have herd me endyte
Wherfor to studye and redo alway
I purpose to doo day by day
Thus in dremyng and in game
Endeth thys lytyl book of Fame.
Thynne continues the poem through line 2158, and he also adds Caxton's conclusion, with the first three lines altered as follows:

And therewithal I abrayde
Out of my slepe halfe a frayde
Remembrig wel what I had sene. 3

The study of the manuscripts is certainly important to editors of this poem, but is slightly beyond the scope of the present paper. Robinson finds that the reading of all manuscripts is "unsatisfactory and considerable emendation is necessary"; and the spelling of Fairfax 16, the manuscript used by Robinson, does not conform to that of the best manuscripts of the Troilus and the Canterbury Tales. 4

The date of the House of Fame is important in determining the meaning of the poem. An approximate eleven-year time limit (1374-1385) is usually fixed for the work; but if the poem is an allegory of Chaucer's own life or affairs at court, it becomes necessary to know which December in these eleven years is the one mentioned in the poem. This question is important merely as another item of knowledge about Chaucer's work, and a definite answer to the question might help us in interpreting the poem correctly.

There are also several technical considerations which might well lead to greater comprehension of the work. In order to understand the work completely, it is also necessary to try to determine the degree of completeness the poem exhibits at the present time. Is this a mere prologue to a great number of love stories similar to the Legend of Good Women, or is it almost complete as it now stands?
This problem, just as the question of a date for the poem, has a twofold significance.

The charge has been made that the poem lacks unity. The defect is particularly true because of the Ancas and Dido story in the first book. Several critics have suggested that this long discourse about these two lovers, and other women mentioned as victims of faithless lovers, is unrelated to the rest of the poem. However, the final two books seem to be more closely related; but even scholars who see the poem as a combined whole admit that the Dido story is a "trifle drawn out."

Versification is also of some importance to a thorough understanding of the House of Fame. A hint as to the date of the poem and its place in the Chaucerian canon, points important to an interpretation of the poem, may be obtained from a study of the versification.

Although these topics are to be discussed to some extent in the present paper, my chief interest in the House of Fame has to do with interpretations. What does this poem mean? Why did Chaucer write it?

In 1913 J. M. Manly was moved to write:

One of the strangest facts in literary criticism is that, after more than forty years of intense and occasionally even feverish activity on the part of students of Chaucer, the question heading this article ['What is Chaucer? House-of-Fame?'] is still a legitimate question.5

Although Manly professed to have the answer to the problem, his question remains as valid today as in 1913. Writers have continued
to puzzle over this riddle, but this "even feverish activity" has not
led to a general agreement about the meaning of the poem. Griffith in
his Bibliography of Chaucer 1908-1953 lists seventy-five articles,
books, and other printed material dealing directly with the House of
Fame. Of this number approximately forty percent have to do primarily
with interpretations or with the identification of characters. This
interest on the part of scholars in interpretations of the House of
Fame indicates the importance they attach to such studies.

Theories as to the meaning of the House of Fame can be arranged
into four general categories. Many wish to find personal allegories
in it, and have tried to fit happenings at court and facts from the
author's own life into an allegorical pattern for the work. Since an
eleven year time-limit can be fixed for the poem, those who wish to
find this type of significance have a broad working surface.

The rather religious tone of parts of the House of Fame, and
the unmistakable influence of Dante in sections of it have led some
scholars to think of this as a version of "Dante in English." 
Although there may be a serious note in the poem, one is tempted to
believe this interpretation is due, in part at least, to the modern
writer's desire to find a highly religious note in Chaucer.

It has also been held that the poem is only an introduction to
a group of tales. If this thesis is true, the House of Fame is only
the prologue to an unfinished group of love stories; and the finished
work would be a framed story similar to other of Chaucer's works.

Finally, some believe that the House of Fame is almost complete, that there is no allegory, and that the meaning is literal.

These are four general interpretations of this poem -- a personal allegory, an imitation, only an introduction to a group of stories, or a dream poem with a literal meaning. These theories will be discussed, their plausibility will be examined, and an attempt will be made to justify one of them.
CHAPTER I

THE DATE OF THE HOUSE OF FAME

1. Evidence from Material Within the Poem

During the last ninety years, there has been much controversy concerning the date of composition of the House of Fame; but still there seems to be little possibility of arriving at a conclusion acceptable to all scholars. There is actually very little internal evidence for dating the poem, and external considerations have been almost fruitless. Almost all calculations have been based on two passages from the poem itself. In the first book Chaucer mentions the tenth day of December, and in the second the Eagle more than likely refers to Chaucer's labors in the Customs House between 1374 and 1386. These two references have been the basis for most estimates concerning the dating of the three books.

As early as 1870 ten Brink was impressed by the fact that Chaucer is permitted to make the journey by permission of the god Jupiter, and that Jupiter is mentioned several times in the course of the poem. Since Thursday (Thor's Day) was named in honor of the chief god, ten Brink suggests that Chaucer wrote the poem in honor of this divinity on his day. The Thursday that the author began his work was December 10. Because Thursday fell on that day in 1383, ten Brink postulates that the House of Fame was begun on Thursday, December 10, 1383; and he believes that the work was completed early the next year.
According to ten Brink's astronomical theory, the poem was started in 1383 and completed in 1384.

About twenty years later Koch follows ten Brink's theory, but he adds an hypothesis of his own. In the Troilus Chaucer says:

Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye,
Ther God thi makere yet, or that he dye,
So sende myght to make in som comedye!

(V, 1786-88)

Koch believes that Chaucer wrote the tragedy of Troilus, and in these lines expressed the desire to change his theme to "some comedy." The result was the House of Fame. Koch thus dates the House of Fame about 1383, but he places the Troilus immediately before the other work. The ten Brink-Koch theory, then, also catches up and supplies a date for the Troilus.

Placing this long, mature work before the House of Fame created a great deal of discussion and scholarly effort to determine the validity of the arguments put forth by the two writers. In 1905 Lowes brushed aside the theory that the House of Fame is the Dantesque comedy to which Chaucer refers in the Troilus. The whole argument depends, he says, on the single mention of a "comedie." He believes that the passage means only that Chaucer wishes to change his theme, and The Legend of Good Women is the result of this change. The word comedie is naturally associated with tragedie, and it may have been used only as a rime word. Lowes also points out the fact that Chaucer corrected in Troilus an error in translation from Latin that he made in the
House of Fame. Loves observes a more mature humor in the Troilus than in the House of Fame. The comedy in the House of Fame is derived primarily from situation, whereas the humor of Pandarus is much more complex, more ironical and elusive; and it stems, as that of the Wife of Bath, from a "fundamental and pervading attitude towards life." Loves completely rejects the ten Brink-Koch calculation, and dates the poem about 1379.²

In an article published two years later, Tatlock takes issue with several points made by Loves. He wishes primarily, however, to re-establish the Troilus as the predecessor of the House of Fame. He agrees that the reference to a comedy might mean almost anything; and he also points out the fact that by ten Brink's estimation the poem could have been written in 1377 as well as in 1383, since Thursday falls on December 10 every six years. Tatlock would date the Troilus about 1377, but he and Loves reach almost the same conclusion as to the time of composition of the other work. After Tatlock has disagreed with Loves on other points, they both date the House of Fame about 1379.³ The Root and Russell calculations, however, seem to have rather firmly established the belief among scholars that the Troilus was completed in or after 1385.⁴

Tatlock also points out certain parallels between Chaucer's poem and Gower's Mirour de l'Omme. He believes that Gower borrowed the last six lines of his poem from Chaucer. The House of Fame, says
Tatlock, was probably written just prior to Gower's work, which he dates in 1379. He concludes that Chaucer's poem had been in composition for a year or more; and this belief is supported by use of ten Brink's calculation, which could as well be in 1377 as 1383.

Kittredge rejects Tatlock's theory that the *House of Fame* came after the *Troilus*. He believes that the poet would not have had time to become thoroughly acquainted with the Italians and write so long a poem as the *Troilus* between 1373, the date of the First Italian Journey, and 1377. He calls the time between 1373 and the writing of the first work in the Italian manner (either *Troilus* or *Palamon*) a transition period; and during this time he believes the author will be found writing poems in the French vein with unmistakable signs of this new influence.

Kittredge finds three poems written in the transitional manner — *St. Cecilia*, the tragedies from the *Monk's Tale*, and the *House of Fame*. While he does not find the *House of Fame* Dantesque, he observes much more Italian influence here than in the other two works. Chaucer has not merely appropriated the passages in this poem from Dante and Boccaccio, but he has made them an inherent part of his own work. The poet is still, however, more indebted to the *Roman de la Rose* than he is to this new source; therefore, Kittredge concludes that this is a transitional poem.
And then, still in the Transition Period, came the House of Fame,—full of spirit and verve and conscious power, but not to be compared with what was to follow, in the Italian Period, when Chaucer had "found himself," recognizing Boccaccio as his proper guide.

In an article published in 1912, Imelmann, because of an allegorical interpretation of the poem, suggests dating the work on December 10, 1381. He believes that Chaucer is to hear love tidings of interest to Englishmen. He concludes that these tidings are about the romance between Richard and Anne, and that the poem is to be in honor of the princess. When Chaucer heard of the expected arrival of Anne, he began his poem on December 10, 1381; but the arrival on December 18 caused the poet to leave his work unfinished, because he did not have time to complete it.

This allegorical-historical interpretation will be more fully discussed later on, but several facts make this reasoning seem improbable. In the first place, the poem is complete; there could not be more than a few lines missing from it. Chaucer himself calls this third part his "lytel laste boke," which is in the present state considerably longer than either of the others. Caxton easily completes the work in a dozen lines, and Chaucer no doubt planned very little more for it than Caxton added. Although these facts do not disprove Imelmann's date for the beginning of the dream, it is almost certain that Chaucer did not turn to something else only because the princess had arrived. An hour's labor would have probably completed the task.
In discussing Imelmann's article, Manly also points out that Anne was expected to arrive the preceding summer. When she did begin her journey, it was by slow stages. After she arrived on the coast of Flanders, she was halted for a month because of pirates in the Channel. Richard issued an order for her reception on December 1, and undoubtedly Chaucer knew of these affairs well in advance of December 10. Manly believes that if Chaucer had wished to celebrate this arrival, he would have had ample time in which to compose his poem.\(^8\)

In *The Chaucer Tradition* Brusendorff accepts Imelmann's theory that the poem refers to the Richard-Anne affair, but he believes Imelmann has erred in establishing the year of composition. Whereas, as Manly points out, December, 1381, does not seem a fit time for the composition, Brusendorff believes that 1380 is more in accord with events. He notes that in 1380 negotiations for the marriage were already taking place. Ministers from Bohemia had come to England, but they were not successful in arranging for the marriage. On December 12, 1380, English ambassadors were appointed to treat with the Bohemians in Flanders. This decision would have been reached a couple of days before the decree was signed, which would be about December 10. Chaucer, says Brusendorff, heard of the appointment of ambassadors on that day and began his work.\(^9\) Pollard\(^10\) follows Brusendorff's opinion.

Brusendorff believes also that Chaucer was in debt to Froissart's *Le Temple D'Onour* for his own poem. In this work Froissart begins
by insisting on the importance of new tidings. He then narrates how in a dream he finds himself in the middle of a wood, where a horseman discovers him and shows him the way to Le Temple D'Onneur. *Honneur* is seated on a throne, and before the throne are gathered a young couple with seven male and seven female virtues. *Honneur* makes a long speech on the fourteen virtues, and the poem concludes with a hint about the marriage of a well-known couple whom Froissart does not name.

Although Brusendorff does admit that "there are hardly any verbal parallels between the two poems," he thinks that "their similarity in plan and construction is so great as practically to prove interdependence." Brusendorff, however, is not able to arrive at a date for the French poem; but since he is almost certain that Chaucer derived his plan from this poem that ended with marriage tidings, he thinks Chaucer also was to complete his in the same manner for the Richard-Anne romance in 1330. 11

In a thesis written in 1927 and published in 1928, Riedel briefly considers opinions about the date of writing of this poem. 12 He is greatly impressed by Tatlock's manner of trying to relate the House of Fame to contemporary literature, while he accuses Imelmann and others of being more interested in elucidation than in chronology. He believes that they pick out an event and then try to fit the poem and its date to the event. He then surmises that Tatlock's conclusions are "more reliable" and "less prejudiced" than others. Riedel accepts Tatlock's suggestion that the poem was written about 1379.
Riedel has not, however, given up the allegorical interpretation of the work; but he accepts Tatlock's date and then looks for an event at about that time to fit into an allegorical theory about the poem. He finds that John of Gaunt may have been Chaucer's mark for satire. This interesting hypothesis will be discussed later in this thesis, but it is sufficient to say at this time that Riedel dates the dream poem at about 1379.

Bronson, in an article written in 1934, attempts to show that Imelmann, Brusendorff, Pollard, and all others who wish to relate the poem to the Richard-Anne affair are forgetting the nature of the almost completed work. He believes that Chaucer was a more intelligent courtier and a better artist than he would appear to be if the poem were related to the marriage. Chaucer, he says, would not fill it full of irony and skepticism, go out of his way to emphasize the faithlessness of men to women, and then expect his poem to be an acceptable present to Richard and Anne.

Bronson also finds evidence of a satirical attack on someone, but he does not commit himself as to whom it is directed against. He does, however, mention Riedel's article in a footnote; and while he does not feel that Riedel has proved his point, he does consider the poem to be an attack on someone, not a gift to a royal couple.

A review of various opinions about the date of the House of Fame was published by H. Lloyd Jones, Jr., in an article in 1946. After
Jones has surveyed and discussed the major works on dating this poem, he draws several conclusions about them. First, he says that it now seems rather conclusive that the *House of Fame* comes before the *Troilus*. Secondly, by internal evidence he, as most others since ten Brink, dates the work between 1374 and 1385; but he soundly rejects, and probably justly so, ten Brink's astronomical theory. Finally, by contemporary writings — the *Temple D' Omneur* and the *Mirour de l' Omme* — and by the verse and character of the poem he fixes an approximate date of 1379-1380. His personal opinion is that Brusendorff is correct in dating the poem December 10, 1380.

An earlier article also concerns itself with placing another of Chaucer's poems after this one. In 1916 Martha Hall Shackford made an observation that seems to indicate that the *House of Fame* precedes the *Parliament of Fouls*. When Chaucer wrote the long discourse about the dream of Scipio in the *Parliament*, it is almost certain that he knew the dream at first hand. In Book II, 916, of the *House of Fame*, Chaucer calls Scipio a king; and in line 286 of the *Book of the Duchess*, he also uses the same title to refer to Scipio. Shackford notes that commentators have tried to explain away Chaucer's apparent ignorance of the fact that Scipio was not a king, but she believes that Chaucer actually thought that he was a king. Chaucer may have been obtaining his information from the *Roman de la Rose*, for here the dreamer is also referred to by that title. She concludes that Chaucer
may have known of Macrobius only through the Romani when he wrote the Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame, and he copied its error. When he wrote the Parliament, however, he had probably just been reading Macrobius; and he did not again make the mistake. The House of Fame, therefore, would come before the Parliament as before the Troilus.

Robinson, in his first Cambridge edition of Chaucer, places the poem at about 1379-1380 on the basis of style. In his 1957 edition, however, he does not commit himself to an exact year; but prefers to list several works, including the House of Fame, as having been written between 1372 and 1380.

These are some of the best known and most important theories about the time of composition of this work. It now seems to be generally accepted that the House of Fame came before both the Troilus and the Parliament, and most scholars have placed the poem in one of two periods. Ten Brink and others suggest the year of 1383 as the possible date of composition; but Lotes, Tatlock, and most later writers have chosen a period three or four years earlier. Before a date for this poem is accepted, however, let us reconsider evidence found in the poem itself.
2. Biographical Evidence

As has been noted in the previous discussion, much of the evidence for dating the entire poem comes from three passages; and two of these are found in the first book. In the "Proem" the author says:

For never, sith that I was born,
No no man elles me beforne,
 Matte, I trowe stedfastly,
So wonderful a drem as I
The tenthe day now of Decembre,
The which, as I kan now remembre,
I wol you tellen everydel.

(11. 59-65)

And this same important line is repeated later:

Of Decembre the tenthe day,
Whan hit was nyght, to slepe I lay
Ryght ther as I was wont to done,
And fil on slepe wonder sone,

(11. 111-14)

Since this line is repeated twice in the first 111 lines of the work, it is, without a doubt, important in the mind of the writer; and some scholars who have commented on the poem have used the date to establish the tenth day of December as the exact day of the month when Chaucer began the House of Fame. It must be remembered, however, that the dream, not the poem, is said by Chaucer to have taken place on the tenth day.

These lines from the first book, however, are used by some critics to establish an exact day and even the year in which the poet began his poem; and certain lines from the second book are used to
limit the number of years in which the poem was written. This second
important passage for determining a date is part of the Eagle's
speech. He remarks:

And noght conly fro fer contree
That ther no tydynge cometh to thee,
But of they verray neyghebores,
That duellen almost at thy dores,
Thou herist neyther that no this
For when thy labour doon al ye,
And hast mad alle thy reckenyme,
In stede of reste and newe thynges,
Thou goost hom to thy hous anoon.

(II, 647-55)

These lines are usually conceived to refer to Chaucer's labors in
connection with the customs, for this position was given to him on
the condition that he write his rolls himself.

Chaucer's service as a customs official began in 1374.

Robinson says:

On June 2, 1374, he was made Controller of Customs and
Subsidy of Wools, Skins, and Hides in the port of London,
on condition that he should write his rolls with his own
hand. The regular stipend of this office was ten pounds
a year, in addition to which Chaucer seems to have received
annually, as a reward for diligent service, a gift of ten
marks.13

If the above quotation from the *House of Fame* refers to this service,
and almost all scholars have held that it does, the earliest date
that can be fixed for this passage is about the middle of 1374.

Chaucer held this office for a number of years; but during his
absences on other business, he seems to have employed a deputy or
deputies to fill his position.

His residence was of course interrupted by the foreign journeys that have been mentioned, and also, it seems, by absences on private business in 1383, when he obtained leave to appoint a deputy for four months, and in 1384, when he was granted the same privilege for a month. In 1382 he was appointed Controller of the Petty Custom on wines and other merchandise, with permission to have a permanent deputy. In February, 1385, he obtained leave to have a permanent deputy in the wool custom. But the following year his employment at the Custom House came to an end. . . .

He held the office of Controller of Customs until 1386, but the appointment of additional deputies might lend support to arguments that favor dating the poem before 1384. In fact, Margaret Galway has published an article which strongly indicates that these theories are true. On October 12, 1385, Chaucer was appointed as a justice of the peace in Kent; and although it was not then specifically required that justices had to reside in their area, it was the accepted practice. Chaucer must have left his house in Aldgate by this time. Galway writes:

There is, in short, strong evidence for assuming that in 1385 Chaucer was employed as a steward or in some similar capacity by one of the greatest nobles in Kent, most probably the king, and very possibly on the royal manor of Eltham. . . .

Considered by themselves these data go a long way towards justifying the solution proposed at the beginning: that from early in 1385 till the middle of 1389 Chaucer was an overseer at Eltham and Sheen, with a house at Greenwich, probably on crown land. . . .
We should probably be justified in thinking that the period in his official life which gave him at once most leisure and the general circumstances most encouraging for writing began in February, 1385 and ended in October, 1386. Prior to that period he had spent a solid decade mostly if not entirely in the city, enduring the racking drudgery of perpetual bookkeeping. Then early in 1385, in time to watch spring transform his garden, he was allowed to leave London and to live and work in the country. A few months later, in the Prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*, we find traces of his delight in his new surroundings and employment.  

By this reasoning it appears quite likely that the period from the beginning of 1385 until the end of Chaucer's duties as Controller of Customs may be safely excluded from the time limit in which the *House of Fame* was probably written. Regardless of the truth of this assumption, this portion of the second book must have been written between 1374 and 1386, a period of twelve Decembers.

3. **Evidence from Sources**

Another factor which often enters into a discussion on dating of Chaucer's works is the influence that he is working under at the time. It has been stated that this poem is one of Chaucer's first poems after he came under the domination of the Italians. Some have felt that the influence of Dante is so great in the *House of Fame* that Lydgate, in his *Fall of Princes*, refers to it as "Dante in English." This theory will be examined more closely in its proper place, but Dante's influence helps to date the *House of Fame* after the first Italian journey.
From December 1, 1372, till May 23, 1373, he was once more on the Continent, on what is usually regarded as his first Italian journey. . . . From this famous journey. . . has usually been dated his first acquaintance with the Italian language and literature.21

It may be assumed, then, that influence from the Italians began after 1373; and this conforms to the theory that the poem was written after 1374.

Let us now consider the three books of the House of Fame. The date of December 10 is found in the first book, while the probable reference to duties with the customs is found in the second book. When one begins to read the second book of the House of Fame, he immediately finds the influence of Dante and Boccaccio. If he wishes confirmation of this influence, he has only to read Robinson's Explanatory Notes on the second and third books of the poem. He states:

(Book II)

518-19 This invocation to Cipris is almost certainly reminiscent of Tes., i, 3. Throughout the passage memories of Boccaccio are mingled with those of Dante.

520ff. The address to the Muses is clearly an imitation of Inf., ii, 7. With the following lines cf. also Inf., ii, 8-9; Par., i, 11; xviii, 87.

(Book III)

1091 ff. The invocation is imitated from Par., i, 13-27.

1136 . . . With the names carved on ice and melted by heat Professor Brusendorff (p. 161, n.) has compared Petrarch's Trionfo del Tempo, ii. 127 ff. 22.
When the reader returns to the first book, however, there is a vast difference. Here it is immediately noted that the French and Latin poets are Chaucer's chief sources and models. The following notes from Robinson make this very clear.

For the opening passage on dreams Chaucer seems to have been chiefly indebted to suggestions from the Roman de la Rose. . . .

66 ff. There has been considerable discussion as to the source of the three invocations. The second and third (ll. 518-528, 1091-1109) clearly come from Dante, and it has been held that the whole idea of invocations was suggested by the Divine Comedy. But their use was common in poetry of various kinds and not unexampled in love-visions. In fact the particular address to Morpheus in the present passage seems to have been suggested by Froissart's Treso Amoureux. . . . The description of the god and his habitat is based upon Ovid. . . . With the lines on Lethe Dr. T. Spencer compares Claudian. . . .

198 From here to l. 225 Chaucer follows the first book of the Aenid. . . .

240 ff. Virgil's account of Aeneas is here considerably enlarged. . . . This development was due. . . to the influence of Ovid.

368 ff. The examples of untrue lovers come from Heroides. . . .

Several other possible sources are mentioned by Robinson, but it is readily noted that the first book through line 467 has very little of the Italian influence in it. In fact, Robinson gives only one line (81 "And he that mover ys of al") as clearly from Dante. He also states that lines 141 and 142 "may perhaps be reminiscent of Dante," and that the form of the name Lavina in line 458 "may be due
to either French or Italian. Lounsbery, however, states that only four lines come directly from Dante; and they are found in the second and third books of the House of Fame. Chaucer also mentions Dante's name in line 450, but the statement shows only that Chaucer knew that Dante wrote about hell.

The most significant point in Chaucer's choice of sources in the poem seems to be that while he used Italian patterns for his last two invocations, the first one is from the French. The first book itself is based almost exclusively on French and Latin models, but the other books employ Italian writings also. The one line given to Dante in the first book, "And he that mover ys of al," could well be from some other source; for the thought may have come from Aristotle. Even if all three of the passages noted by Robinson come from Dante, the fact remains that Chaucer was hardly under the influence of the great Italian when this part of the House of Fame was written. If one book of three is almost free from this influence, while the others are filled with it, is it not very probable that this portion of the House of Fame (467 lines) is an earlier production than the rest?

Others have written articles on Chaucer's incorporation of old material in new works, and the fact that he did this can easily be seen from his works. One quotation is sufficient to prove the present point. In the G version of The Legend of Good Women, Chaucer says:
He made the bok that highte the Hous of Fame,
And ek the Deth of Blaunce the Duchesse,
And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,
And al the love of Palamon and Arcite
Of Thebes, thogh the storye is knowne lite;

And mad the lyf also of Seynt Cecile.

(ll. 405-16)

Here are two works that later become part of the Canterbury Tales; for the story of Palmon and Arcite is, of course, The Knight's Tale, while the "lyf of Seynt Cecile" becomes The Second Nun's Tale. In these two examples, then, Chaucer has put "old wine into new bottles."

Most critics agree that the story of Dido has little enough connection with the rest of the story. If this is an earlier work, even an old ending to the story of Dido can be noted in Book I.

Chaucer writes:

How, mawgree Juno, Eneas,
For al hir sleight and hir compas,
Acheved al his aventure,
For Jupiter took of hym cure
At the prayer of Venus, --
The whiche I preye alwey save us,
And us ay of oure sorwes lyghte!

(ll. 461-67)

The rime would call for one additional line, and the poem would end in a prayer as does Troilus and Criseyde.

So make us, Jesus, for thi mercy digne,
For love of mayde and moder thy benigne.

(V. 1868-69)

That this may have been the original ending of a poem called perhaps "Dido and Aeneas", in an older version, receives additional
support from subsequent lines. In line 462 the influence of Dante is readily noted, and it continues through the rest of the House of Fame. In view of the break at line 467 from the story of Dido to the transportation to the House of Fame, and the fact that there is almost no Italian influence in the first book, it seems quite likely that Chaucer joined an older, perhaps uncirculated, poem to his new work. Book I would have then been written before the Italian period began about 1373, and the rest of the poem would have been completed after the appointment to the position of Controller of Customs in 1374. If the first portion of the poem can be placed before 1374, it may also be possible to establish a closer date for the first book.

Before additional arguments for a more exact date are presented, however, it must be stated that this hypothesis presupposes that Italian influence would be noted soon after the first Italian journey. But it is altogether possible that this influence did not appear until after the second Italian visit in 1378. Others have also suggested that Chaucer knew Italian before he was chosen for the mission in 1372. Robinson says:

Shortly after his return to England in 1373, according to a writ recently discovered, Chaucer was directed to investigate an affair relative to a Genoese tart at Dartmouth. This assignment has been reasonably taken as evidence of his knowledge of Italian, but does not indicate how early he acquired it.
If Chaucer knew the language by this time, the literature would probably also be invading his work at the same period.

Although it appears very improbable, Chaucer might have written the first book without showing Italian influence even though he knew Dante and Boccaccio. This is certainly true with some of the late fabliaux included in the _Canterbury Tales_. Is it not, however, quite unlikely that this would happen in a single book of three, and just after he had fallen under this powerful spell? The most logical conclusion seems to be that this part was written before the journey in 1373.

4. Evidence from Versification

The _House of Fame_, although partially written under the influence of the Italians, still retains the old French verse form of the eight-syllable couplet. J. S. P. Tatlock writes:

Like the _Duchess_, though less so, it follows the usages and manner of the well-defined, fashionable, and quite contemporary French type of poem, the love-vision, from the thirteenth-century _Roman de la Rose_ to Froissart's _Paradys d'Amour_. For one thing, the _Book of the Duchess_ and the _House of Fame_ are the only two of Chaucer's poems which adopt the form of verse which that generally uses, the eight-syllable couplet, easy and simple and light, adapted to chatting about one's own affairs; yet with the disadvantage that the thick-falling rimes overemphasize the jingling form, especially with the diffuseness of Middle English words and style; eight syllables convey less meaning than in Walter Scott.
This poem and the Book of the Duchess are written in the same verse form. In 1913 Edgar F. Shannon published an article in which he studied the metrical usage of the two works through comparisons of licenses used by Chaucer. His purpose is to show that in the later poem Chaucer handled the octosyllabic verse with a greater skill, but he compares the frequency of usage of various licenses in the two poems. Verse patterns of this type have been used for various tests to determine authorship or position in an author's canon. Certain forms may be more prominent at one period than at another in an author's career, and Shannon's study tends to show that this is true in the poems of the Duchess and the House of Fame. If by the use of Shannon's study it can be shown that the first book of the House of Fame corresponds more closely to the Duchess than do the other two books, it will lend support to the contention advanced earlier in this paper that the first book was written prior to the rest of the poem. As has been previously mentioned, the old work probably ended at line 469; therefore, this line will be considered the close of Book I.

It must be stated, however, that this is only an effort to show that metrical evidence corresponds with the theory that has already been put forth. The case made by this evidence for an earlier date does not seem to be strong enough to warrant drawing definite conclusions about the matter. In fact, Shannon points out the poor state of all the manuscripts makes his own conclusions only tentative.
The first point which Shannon considers is the omission of the first syllable of the line. In the Duchess 10.2 percent of the lines have the omitted first syllable, but in the House of Fame the percentage is 13.6. Shannon believes that Chaucer did not consider this a defect in his poetry, for the percentage increases in the later work. In fact, Chaucer himself says the same thing in the third book of the House of Fame.

But for the rym ys lyght and lewed,
Yit make hyt sumwhat agreable,
Though som vers fayle in a sillable;
And that I do no diligence
To shewe craft, but o sentence.

(11. 1096-1100)

In the first book, however, the percentage of seven syllable lines is only 12.8. By this comparison, the first book would thus appear older than the other two.

Closely related to the seven-syllable line is the trochee at the beginning of the line. In the Duchess there are twenty-four instances of this practice; and in the House of Fame, a longer poem by about eight hundred lines, only seventeen examples are noted by Shannon. In the first book three beginning trochees are found, about the same percentage as in the rest of the poem. In this case the first book shows little variation from the rest of the poem.

Also considered in Shannon's study are trochees in the second and third feet. In the Duchess there are five instances of trochees
in the second foot and only three examples in the *House of Fame* with one in the first book. The number is here so small as to make comparisons dangerous. The usage of the trochee in the third foot, however, gives more satisfactory results. Chaucer apparently used this metrical form more and more as his art matured, for only three examples occur in the *Duchess*. In the complete *House of Fame* there are nine examples, but only one of these appears in the first book. In this case the first book closely approximates the *Duchess*.

Shannon also compares the frequency of the appearance of the extra syllable before the caesura. In the *Duchess* there are twenty-seven instances of this usage, but in the *House of Fame* there are only three examples, two of these in the first book. Chaucer seems to have largely removed these extra syllables in the *House of Fame*, but two examples appear in the first portion.

In the five metrical touchstones noted here, three of them seem definitely to favor the belief that the first book is an earlier production, and the other two do not oppose themselves to the idea. The two points which seem to be the most remarkable are the trochee in the third foot and the extra syllable before the caesura. In both these cases there is a striking variation between the first book and the rest of the poem. These metrical observations are not intended to prove that the story of Dido is an early work, but they do support this point of view, expressed earlier in this paper.
Evidence from Personal References

Another point to consider in further dating the first book is that Chaucer may have felt that some person or persons might object to the story. Objections would probably come from persons whom the poem satirized, and both Bronson and Riedel have noted the satirical nature of the poem. Bronson, as has been previously mentioned, believes that the poem is an attack on someone, but he makes no hypothesis about who this might be. Riedel, however, has worked out a thesis in which John of Gaunt becomes the butt of Chaucer's satire.

Since John is normally considered Chaucer's patron, Riedel tries to show how there may have been animosity toward the Duke. He notes first that in 1372 Chaucer's wife received an annuity of ten pounds, and two years later she and Chaucer together received an additional ten pounds. The first grant was for services rendered to Blanche, who had been dead for three years, and the second was to Chaucer's wife as much as to Chaucer. With the suggestion that Philippa was John's mistress, Riedel also brings up the old question as to whether or not Thomas Chaucer was the bastard son of John of Gaunt.

Riedel mentions the many times in Chaucer's poems in which he confesses that he is unsuccessful in love. Although he admits that this may be only a conventional sentiment, he believes Chaucer may have been revealing a true fact about himself. He connects this with the idea that Chaucer's marriage may have been only one of convenience
for John, which would date Chaucer’s grievance against the Duke as beginning in 1366.

But even if Geoffrey had no ill feeling toward Lancaster at this time, Riedel postulates it could have stemmed from Chaucer’s writing of the *Book of the Duchess*. Here he said the Duke was twenty-four years old when he must have been at least twenty-eight; and he also praised the Duke for fidelity in love, when the poet probably knew of John’s earlier affair with Marie de Saint Hilaire. Although this liaison actually took place before the marriage, Riedel mentions it to show that the Duke had not always been constant in his love affairs. Riedel concludes that this poem was an out-and-out bid for patronage from John, but Chaucer probably received nothing for his labor before 1374. If Chaucer felt no animosity toward Lancaster before this time, Riedel believes this neglect would have created it. He contends that the barbed spear of satire may have been pointed at no less figure than John of Gaunt.29

In the Invocation the poet first asks for blessings for those who read and appreciate the following lines.

And to this god, that I of rede,
Prey I that he wol me sped
My swoven for to telle aryght,
Yf every drem stonde in his myght.
And he that mover ys of al
That is and was and ever shal,
So yive hem joye that hyt here
Of alle that they dreme to-yere,
And for to stonden alle in grace
Of her loves, or in what place
That hem were levest for to stonde,
And shalde hem fro poverté and shonde,
And from unhap and ech dise, 
And sende hem al that may hem plese,
That take hit wel and skorne hyt noght,

(11. 77-91)

He then, however, calls down a mock anathema, the solemn ban or curse that accompanies excommunication, against those who "mysdem" his verses.

He hyt mysdenen in her thoght
Thorgh malicious entencion
And whose thorgh presumpcion,
Or hate, or skorn, or thorgh envye,
Dispite, or jape, or vilanye,
Mysdem hyt, pray I Jesus God
That (dreme he barefot, dreme he shod),
That every harm that any man
Hath had, syth the world began,
Befalle hym therof, or he sterve,
And graunte he mote hit ful deserve,
Lo, with such a conclusion
As had of his avision
Cresus, that was kyng of Lyde,
That high upon a gebet dyde!
This prayer shal he have of me;
I am no bot in charyte

(11. 92-103)

From these lines it seems possible that Chaucer may have feared some discontent with his work. These lines, even in this mock anathema, must have conveyed a sober thought to the medieval mind.

The first book is the story of a man false in love to a woman. Not only does the poet tell the story of Dido and Aeneas, but he also illustrates the faithlessness of men to women through a number of
examples. From line 388 through line 426 Chaucer calls up six other instances in which women received the same treatment at the hands of men. It is apparent, then, that the person who might "mysdemen" this story would be somebody untrue to his lady. There seems to be little other satire in this first book, and Chaucer makes the case against men rather black. It seems reasonable to assume that this would be the point on which the author feared censure.

Perhaps the poem even furnishes a clue as to the man Chaucer had in mind when he penned the first part of the *House of Fame*, and this may lead to a more definite date for this section of the dream. Dido has this to say of men:

"Allas!" quod she, "what me ys wo!  
Allas! is every man thus trewe,  
That every yer wolde have a newe,  
Yf hit so longe tyme dure,  
Or elles three, peraventure?  
As thus: of oon he wolde have fame  
In magnyfyinge of hys name;  
Another for frenshippes, scyth he;  
And yet ther shal the thridde be  
That shal be take for delyt,  
Loo, or for synguler profit."

(11. 300-310)

Dido says that some men must have a new mistress almost every year. A man takes one woman to improve his name, a second for friendship, and a third for his own delight. In the course of about three years, he must have three different women. When a person searches for this pattern among Chaucer's associates, he immediately thinks of John of Gaunt. Consider how well Dido's statement fits the life of John.
She says that the first woman is taken to the "magnyfyinge of hys name." Armitage-Smith, probably the best biographer of John of Gaunt, states about the first marriage to Blanche:

In planning his children's marriages, Edward III kept two objects in view: that of strengthening his position abroad by political alliances, and of building up the royal power at home upon the solid basis of territorial power.

Some families owe both the beginning and the continuance of their power to fortunate marriages. That this is true of the Hapsburgs is a commonplace of history. It is equally true of the House of Lancaster, peculiarly so of John of Gaunt himself. His fate is moulded by marriage. The first made him a feudal magnate and shaped the next dozen years of his history. The second, equally momentous, converted the great feudatory into something more, making him the claimant to a continental throne.

The dynastic importance of John's first marriage was the result of the extraordinary position won by the House of Lancaster. Henry, Duke of Lancaster was the most prominent man in England. His vast wealth and power made him unquestionably the greatest feudatory of the Crown, but he had no male issue. Two daughters were co-heirs of his estates: the elder, Matilda or Maude, married to William Duke of Zealand; the younger, Blanche, whose hand he now gave to John of Gaunt.

Half of the greatest feudatal estate of England would indeed be a strong incentive even to a young prince, but the lady Fortune was to smile on John even brighter than his hopes.

The lands of Duke Henry were divided, but not for long. Matilda of Lancaster, coming to England to take possession of her patrimony, fell a victim, like her father, to the Plague, and died on April 10, 1362, and all Duke Henry's lands passed to his younger daughter, now sole heir, and in her right to her husband, John of Gaunt.
A few months later John of Gaunt, Earl of Richmond, in his own right and in the right of his wife Earl of Lancaster, Derby, Lincoln, and Leicester, and High Seneschal of England, was promoted to the dignity held by his father-in-law.32

One man, even a king's son, could hardly hope to obtain more honor and power through a marriage than did John of Gaunt. If Chaucer's account of the romance in the Book of the Duchess can be trusted, the union may have been for something more than inheritance. One could hardly expect to find, however, in a poem honoring the death of a great duchess, the statement that her husband for whom the poem was written contracted the marriage for the sake of her estate. If this marriage did involve more than position, that was undoubtedly still a consideration of prime importance in the minds of the king and John. John of Gaunt became one of the most important names in England because of this first marriage, terminated by Blanche's death in September, 1369.

The second woman, says Dido, was for friendship; and the second woman of importance in John's marital life was Constance, the displaced Queen of Castile, whom John married in September, 1371. John of Gaunt became through his wife the King of Castile. Armitage-Smith states:

Though the succour of distressed princesses might fall in perhaps with the Duke's humour—for motives are often mixed and even politicians are men—there was no pretence on either side of any motive but convenience.33

That is, John of Gaunt took his second wife "for friendship."
Exactly when the liaison with the third mistress "for delyt," Katharine Swynford, began is unknown; but the best date seems to be in 1372. It can probably be concluded that the affair was under way when Katharine began receiving additional gifts from John of Gaunt. The following list of gifts seems to indicate the approximate date that the mistress started receiving payment for additional services.

At that date [1371] the Duke's gifts and grants to Katharine are no greater than might have been made to any other member of his household; immediately after they begin to become significant. Here are the principal instances: —

(i) May 1, 1372, gift of £10; (ii) May 15, 1372, grant of an annuity of 50 marcs, on surrender of a former annuity of 20 marcs; (iii) June 20, 1372 grant of the wardship of the lands of her late husband, excepting the marriage fees and advowsons; . . .

From these gifts and preferments received in the space of a month and twenty days, it is quite likely that the liaison was established between the two by the middle of 1372. This date would also correspond to Chaucer's statement:

*Alias! is every man thus trewe,
That every yer wolde have a newe,
Yf hit so longe tyme dure,
(ll. 301-303)*

Since the facts of Dido's statement, not taken from Virgil, parallel almost exactly the affairs of John of Gaunt, it is almost unthinkable that one so intimately connected with a person as Chaucer was with John would have written these lines without having the Duke in mind when he wrote them. It must be admitted that there were other women in the Duke's life, but these seem to fit Chaucer's statement.
more correctly than other affairs.

This discussion has led to a time limit for the writing of the first book of the poem. Because there is little Italian influence in it, the first book of the House of Fame through line 467 was probably written before 1374, and probably before the close of the Italian journey in May, 1373. It must have been written after Chaucer learned of the liaison between John and Katharine, for he already knew of the new mistress when he wrote it. John probably took this new consort about May, 1372; and Chaucer's wife, Katharine's sister, would probably be the first to hear of it. If this reasoning is correct, the first book can be dated between May, 1372, and 1373 or 1374. Thus, a time limit extending from the middle of 1372 to the middle of 1374 seems to be a fairly reasonable period for the composition of the first book. It must be emphasized, moreover, that reasoning of this kind is subject to various errors; and this date is put forward only as an hypothesis. That Chaucer did piece various works together, however, is a commonly accepted belief; the Canterbury Tales is an example of this practice.

Although an exact date cannot be established for the last two books of the House of Fame, an interesting parallel may be noted between the House of Fame and the life of John of Gaunt. As has been previously mentioned, Dido's statement about the ways of men with women seems to correspond closely with Gaunt's affairs with women;
and the last woman may have been none other than Chaucer's sister-in-law. The first book of the poem may have been written with the Duke and Katharine in the mind of the author.

Many scholars have agreed that the date of writing of the *House of Fame* was within a year or two of 1380. If Chaucer began his poem with some reference to John and his sister-in-law (perhaps a warning to her) in 1372 or perhaps a little later, some event relating to this couple may have caused Chaucer to take up his old poem again in about 1380. Unfortunately, very little is known about the couple in these years, but some idea of their affairs may be obtained from facts that are known.

John became very interested in regaining the Spanish throne for himself and his Queen during this period, and he spent a great deal of effort and money in trying to accomplish this desire. It may have been that because of John's interest in the possession of Spain through his wife Constance, his interest in his mistress may have begun to fade. If Chaucer was speaking about John and Katharine in the first book of the *House of Fame*, he indicates that he fears the affair will not be of a long duration.

Perhaps Chaucer may have felt compelled to write the last two books of the *House of Fame* when he saw that his prophecy of fading love seemed to be near fulfillment. Several critics of Chaucer have placed the date of writing of the poem at about 1380. By the theory
set forth in this paper the romance would have begun in 1372, and the first book of the *House of Fame* would have shortly followed this date. When Chaucer began to see the love affair fade, he might have continued his poem, perhaps as critics say, in about 1380.

But is there ground to suppose that the romance did fade for a time? Eventually John married Katharine. Several points favor the idea that there was a coolness between the two for a time. First, as it has been previously mentioned, Gaunt's interest in the Spanish throne and, therefore, his wife may have caused him to spend less time with his mistress. Secondly, Chaucer may have warned that John would not be constant in love to his new mistress; and also Gaunt probably married her in later years primarily for the purpose of making his children by her legitimate. His relationship with Katharine would not have been greatly changed by marriage.

A final fact seems to point toward a breaking off of close relations for a time, and this point also indicates the approximate time of this separation. The birth dates of the children by this union indicate that a coolness may have existed between the two for a time. The first child by Gaunt was born to Katharine in about 1373, and three other children, one about every two years, were born to them between 1373 and 1379. When the last child was born to Katharine in 1379, she was only twenty-nine years old. The fact that no more children were born to Gaunt and Katharine indicates also that a
coolness may have existed between the two for several years after 1379, the date that several have suggested as the time of composition of the House of Fame.

These arguments for establishing a date for the House of Fame are not meant to be conclusive, but they are set forth as a reasonable hypothesis. Evidence indicates that the poem was written at two different times, and further study shows that the first book may have been written between 1372 and 1374. In this first book, written soon after the beginning of the affair between John and Katharine, seems to be a warning as to the fickleness of men. Critics believe that the entire poem was written about 1380, and very near this date is found evidence that the affair had grown cold. Perhaps Chaucer wrote his story of Dido after the romance started in 1372; and when he saw the affair begin to fade and die in about 1379, he was moved to complete his poem -- a poem of unfortunate love.
CHAPTER II

UNITY AND COMPLETENESS OF THE HOUSE OF FAME

1. Unity of the House of Fame

Before considering the meaning of the House of Fame, we should note several points of a technical nature. Does the poem possess unity? What degree of completeness does it exhibit? These questions may be beneficial in reaching an hypothesis as to the meaning of Chaucer's poem.

Many scholars have expressed their dissatisfaction with the basic structure of the House of Fame as it stands today. Nevill Coghill praises the Book of the Duchess for its unity of mood, but he believes that the mood in the House of Fame is broken up book by book. The first and last books are based on mild and serious wonder, but the second sweeps into "full comedy." The unity of theme, he says, is also broken; and the only connecting link is the promise of love tidings. Coghill finds this work "the least successful of Chaucer's longer poems." Although this writer mentions the thread of the promise of tidings connecting the story, it must be remembered that this link actually begins only with the second book.

Percy Van Dyke Shelly feels that Chaucer "is enjoying himself hugely" as he is "reveling in this brave new world of the imagination." He finds an admirable sense of proportion and design in the use of the three books. These mechanical units agree with the subject matter, and
the author's artistic restraint is noted in the referral of the reader to Virgil and Ovid for complete accounts. Here, says Shelly, is an author with an admirable sense of composition, but one who has not fully developed his art, one who "has more matter than he can well digest."

The same discontent with the *House of Fame* is expressed by Marchette Chute, who remarks:

> What Chaucer actually was attempting to do in *The House of Fame* is open to question. There are some indications that he intended to make it a love poem, branched off on another aspect of his subject and failed to return. Or possibly he had no clear plan of the poem in his own mind and merely intended to ramble along in the easygoing medieval way on the general subject of "fame" until he was through.⁴

Neither does J. S. P. Tatlock find the unity of the poem satisfying.⁵ Only in the latter parts does he find a concentrated aim toward any goal; and even here it is "underfined and wandering," while what precedes is "more undefined and motiveless."

Many authors, then, have expressed their discontent with the unity of the *House of Fame*, but Paul G. Ruggiers has come to Chaucer's defense on this matter. He writes:

> I shall attempt to show that the first book of the *House of Fame* presents us with a love story in which Fame, much like Fortune, plays an important role in the lives of two lovers; that the second book, while maintaining both the motive power of a love-vision and the force of a quest, gives us a view of an orderly universe, of which Fame is a part, in which all things seek and find their proper resting place; that the third, satisfying the demands of the quest
and the love-vision, reveals the actual distribution or with-holding of renown in such a universe. Book II, while transitional, is of great importance because it establishes the philosophical formula for the poem; with Book III it provides a kind of commentary on the exemplum of Book I.  

Ruggiers, then, sees the poem as a united, well-planned whole; but most other writers have noted the wandering, loose nature of the work.

Perhaps Chute's remark that Chaucer may have planned to ramble along in a medieval manner until he was finished may be a partial explanation for the modern dilemma in regard to the work. Often, it seems, present day authors are too eager to push their own conceptions of unity on older works. This tendency is even noted at times with criticism of the works of Shakespeare. Whereas many writers of plays just before the closing of the theater in 1642 produced mediocre dramas which conformed very strictly to the three unities, Shakespeare often wrote masterpieces of English drama that did not conform to these rigid specifications. Evidently Shakespeare did not value these unities as highly as did later writers, but critics sometimes try to bind these principles on the greatest work in the English drama.

Some critics have also tried to bind Chaucer with their own conceptions of unity. It is quite evident that he did not try to make many of his works as unified as did conformers to unities or more modern authors. The Book of the Duchess now incorporates the story of "Coes and Alcione"; the House of Fame, witness the previously
mentioned critics, appears episodic; and the Parliament of Fowls is of
the same nature. None of these three early poems is as unified as
some modern critics might wish.

Now consider the later poems. The Legend of Good Women is
connected only by the Prologue and the fact that the stories are all
about women faithful in love. Except for this introduction, Grimm's
Fairy Tales possess about the same degree of coherence. Troilus and
Crisseyde is rudely interrupted by the long discussion of predestination
(IV, 954-1085), and the author also seems to have difficulty in bringing
the story to a successful ending at the close of Book V. What
has been said about the Legend of Good Women will apply also to some
extent to the Canterbury Tales, and especially to The Monk's Tale.
Here, however, there is a unity through certain groups of tales; and
it is almost absurd to endeavor to judge the completed whole by the
parts that exist. The point is that Chaucer never shows a profound
interest in strict adherence to conceptions of unity, although ex¬
posure to the Italians probably caused him to produce more unified
work than he had produced before the Italian journeys. Twentieth
century ideas, therefore, should not be forced on this medieval work.
Just as a critic may try to force one of Shakespeare's plays into an
eighteenth century idea of unity, the meaning of a poem by Chaucer
may be stretched or bent to make it fit a modern conception of unity.

A second point, one which has already been mentioned in
connection with dating the poem, may also be stressed at this point. Ruggiers says that "the first enigma of the poem seems always to have been the first book," and Tatlock writes that the first part is "undefined and motiveless." If these criticisms are sound, are they not another indication that the poem is really a patch-work affair? In dealing with the *House of Fame*, most writers admit that the Dido story is rather drawn out. No purpose for the entire poem is noted until the second book, when Chaucer writes:

"And therefore Joves, thorg hys grace,  
Wol that I bere the to a place  
Which that hight the Hous of Fame,  
To do the som disport and game,  
In som recompensacion  
Of labour and devocion,  

(ll. 661-66)"

The Eagle has just mentioned the fact that Chaucer has no time to hear anything about even his neighbors because of his busy life. At his destination Chaucer is to learn all the things that he misses by going home to his books. Here, for the first time, begins a thread of unity. During the rest of the poem Chaucer does not entirely lose sight of his direction, the eventual hearing of lies and tidings in the *House of Humor*. If the story of Dido is regarded as an earlier composition, and more or less parenthetical, the rest of the poem seems much more unified than it appears in its present state.

Let us speculate now as to how this story of Dido may have come to occupy the first book of the *House of Fame*. One of the most obvious
suppositions is that perhaps someone other than Chaucer inserted the story after Chaucer's death. This is actually not beyond the shadow of possibility; Caxton added a conclusion. If this is true, however, there must have been a great deal of effort expended on the poem; for the first book now has its own invocation at the beginning and its link to the meeting with the Eagle at the end. Since Chaucer's manuscripts were probably in a state of confusion at the time of his death, someone could have simply joined two poems found together.

It seems, however, that unless an ancient editor had definite reasons for doing so, he would not have taken the trouble to join two complete works.

A possibility that seems more reasonable, and again it must be emphasized that this discussion is largely speculation, is that Chaucer may have rearranged his earlier work in later years. Many of Chaucer's poems were undoubtedly composed for recitation in court, and many of the shorter ones may have been written expressly for a part of the afternoon's entertainment at the palace of the king or some other noble. After these verses were read, they had little further value to their author; and Chaucer probably kept them in some place of storage. There was always a danger that a manuscript would fall the victim of a catastrophe, and destruction would be much more likely if the work was short. After listing other longer works that Chaucer had written in the Legend of Good Women, Alcesto says that
the poet had also made many "balades, roundels, and virelayes" for
the holidays of Love (F, 423); and in his Retractions at the end of
The Parson's Tale, Chaucer mentions "many another book, . . . and
many a song and many a leccerous lay" (l. 1087). Many of these
minor works may be lost, but most of the longer works have come down
to us. Chaucer may have realized that the shorter poems had very
little chance of survival, and in his later years he may have been
trying to include these things into better known works. The Monk's
Tale, for example, is probably a composite of short works, and
several of the other Canterbury Tales were written before the
Canterbury period. It could well be that the stories found in the
Book of the Duchess and the House of Fame were added to these works
in later years with the hope that they might survive in a longer poem.
The occasional poems, such as the Book of the Duchess, would naturally
be of interest to some noble family, in this instance the House of
Lancaster. If a short poem were included as part of this work, it
together with the longer piece, would naturally pass to the royal
family at Chaucer's death; or perhaps he himself presented his
manuscript to the interested party.

A third feasible means by which the story of Dido may have
become part of the House of Fame is that the author added the older
story when he composed his new work. It must be remembered that
at least part of this poem was written during probably the busiest period of Chaucer's life, his service with the Customs House. The Eagle tells the poet that when his labor is completed, he goes home to poring over books, instead of taking rest, until he looks dazed (ll. 651-59). At this busy period in the author's life, he may have been called upon or have felt the desire to write the House of Fame. When he began the new work, or perhaps while he was writing it, he may have decided that the older story from Virgil could be used also. The poet then placed head links and tail links to the account, and with little effort the first book was completed. This would explain why the first book is connected superficially to the rest of the story, but is hardly joined thematically. That it was not an inherent part of the complete work would not seem so great a flaw to the medieval audience as to the modern reader. It seems very probable that Chaucer either added the Dido story at a later date, or may have used an older work for his first book at or near the time he began the House of Fame.

Although the House of Fame has probably received more criticism than some of Chaucer's other works for its lack of unity, many of the poet's other works also exhibit evidence of having been reworked or remodeled; and in the House of Fame, as has been previously mentioned, evidence of this reworking is found in the placing of the story of Dido in the House of Fame. George G. Williams (personal communication)
has made a study of evidence of revision in several of Chaucer's other works, and from this study it found that faulty revision is common in Chaucer's works. In the *Troilus* several scholars - Root in particular - have found evidence that the Proems to Books II, III, and IV, parts of the *Troilus* epilogue, Troilus's hymn to love, and his soliloquy on fate and free will are all later additions to the poem. In the *Canterbury Tales* the false counting of the twenty-nine pilgrims, the Man of Law saying that he will tell a tale in prose and then telling one in rhyme, the Second Nun calling herself "a son of Eve," the Knight speaking of writing, not telling, his tale, and the Shipman's reference to himself as if he were a woman may be examples of incompleted additions and subtractions to this work. Hidden in the *Book of the Duchess* is, moreover, the story of Geyes and Alciono, said by the Man of Law to have been made in Chaucer's youth; and two different Prologues to the *Legend of Good Women* still exist. Many other examples might be marshalled to show other indications of revisions, but these listings are sufficient to show that Chaucer, in other works as well as the *House of Fame*, was continually reworking his material.

Williams lists several reasons, some of which have also been suggested by other scholars and also in this paper, for the continual process of revision which seems evident in many of Chaucer's works. His revisions may have been to perfect a work, to bring an older work up to date, to save labor by incorporating old material into new works,
or to preserve a minor poem of which he was proud by putting it into a longer piece, Williams concludes:

... Chaucer was such a persistent reviser that we have right to believe that almost any poem of his (as we have it today) may well be the end-result of a long succession of alterations, excisions, additions, and patchings, some completed before Chaucer's death, some not completed. If "Chaucer was such a persistent reviser," in the rest of his works, there is no reason to suppose that he did not also revise the House of Fame; and one of these revisions may have been the working of the story of Dido into the House of Fame.

If the Dido story is considered in this light, and if the difference between the modern and medieval conception of unity is remembered, the rest of the poem does exhibit a degree of coherence. Chaucer, the servant of Love, falls asleep in the dead of winter. As a reward for his faithful service, he is transported to a celestial palace to hear new tidings and rumors. After his journey through the air, he arrives at Fame's court, where he sees and hears wonderful things. He does not, however, hear the things that the Eagle has promised he will hear. He is then conducted to a place nearby, the noisy House of Rumor, the logical conclusion of his journey.
2. Completeness of the House of Fame

Many writers have left a bit of their work—perhaps a poem, a play, a novel, or even an epic—Incomplete at the time of death; but few authors have willed future generations as much unfinished work as has Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales as a unit, some of the Tales themselves, the Legend of Good Women, Anelida and Arcite, and the House of Fame are all left in a fragmentary state. Reasons for some of this incompleteness may easily be offered, but a complete answer becomes largely supposition.

It is, of course, highly probable that some of the works may have been complete at one time; but parts of the manuscripts may have been mutilated or lost. Although a portion of the manuscripts of the Canterbury Tales has been lost, the entire poem has all the marks of an unfinished work. Since most scholars believe that the author was working on these stories in the last years of his life, the reason for this incompleteness is obvious.

The Legend of Good Women, like the Canterbury Tales, also appears to be still in the state of composition. Some suppose that it was abandoned for the more realistic story of real people on a pilgrimage, but there is also evidence that Chaucer was still revising it during the Canterbury period.

Anelida and Arcite and the House of Fame, however, present a
different type of incompleteness; for both these poems break off almost in the middle of a sentence. Whereas the other two works appear to be unfinished by the author, it is altogether possible that the rest of the House of Fame and the Anelida were lost. One copy of these poems probably existed for several years before any others were made, and any number of things could have caused these rather minor works to have become mutilated.

Since Chaucer calls Book III, longer than both of his other books, the little last book, and he has already reached the logical conclusion of his journey, only a few lines may be missing from the House of Fame. Because only a short conclusion may be missing, another possibility presents itself as a reason for the incompleteness of this poem. At this period in the author's busy life, he may have been called upon to write a poem for a special occasion. The reason why he was to write the poem is not important at this point, but it was quite possibly a poem to be read to the court or to some other group. The following lines from the House of Fame indicate that they were written to be read.

Now herkeneth, as I have vow sayd,

(1. 109)

And tho began the story anoon,
As I shal telle yow echon.

(11. 149-50)
Now herkoneth, every maner man
That English understonde kan,
And listeneth of my drem to lere.
(11. 509-11)

Ne kan I not to yow devyse;
(1179)

Hyt nedeth moght yow more to tellen,
To make yow to longe duellen,
(1299-1300)

Now herke how she gan to paye
That gonne her of her grace praye;
(1349-1350)

Chaucer may have completed his poem except for a dozen lines or so; and as writers sometimes do, perhaps he pondered his conclusion. He may have labored over the final lines during his free minutes at his office, where he either committed the remainder to memory or jotted it down on another piece of writing material. When he read the poem, he could have easily taken his conclusion from another note or recited it. This would account for the brief missing conclusion; and if he did read the poem, and indications are that he wrote it for reading aloud, it certainly was complete at that time. The poet may have completed his work; but after he read it aloud, he had little interest in it and neglected to copy the conclusion on the other manuscript. After Chaucer had pronounced his verses, they would have probably been of little value to him if they were only written to be read.

If, as Brusendorff and others have held, this is a poem to celebrate the arrival of Anne to England, the above suggestion seems
even more likely. The arrival of Anne may have been rather unexpected, for she had been delayed several times. Instead of stopping the poem and writing something else, Chaucer may have hurried home, picked up his manuscript, and committed the last few lines to memory before reading it. Regardless of the occasion of writing, it seems likely that the poem was completed, but never recorded with the rest of the lines.

The *House of Fame*, then, may never have been completed; it may have been completed and the ending lost; or it may have been recited as a finished work, but the final lines not transferred to manuscript.

All who have written about the *House of Fame*, however, have not concluded that only a few lines are missing from the work. Manly believes that this assumption is not the truth of the matter, but he thinks that it is actually a herald or prologue to a great number of love stories. If this thesis is true, there seems to be little that can be said about the completeness of the work; for the poet discloses nothing about the number of tidings he is to hear.

W. O. Sypherd, however, takes up the matter of the completeness of the poem in opposition to Manly's thesis. He finds that the tidings which Manly believes to be stories or long narratives are rather "the flotsam and jetsam of the daily life of lovers." He states further that if one concludes that these are stories, there is no guarantee or suggestion that Chaucer meant to relate them to
the reader. In fact, he believes that there is no stronger evidence that Chaucer will tell these stories than there is in the *Troilus* (II, 81-84) where Pandarus speaks of the story which a maiden is reading to Criseyde and her ladies. Sypherd believes "that the poem is, save the necessarily brief missing conclusion which it seems to demand, absolutely complete in itself..."

The internal evidence found in the poem certainly leads one to conclude that it is almost complete as it stands. As has been previously mentioned, the thread of unity seems to run through the Eagle's promise of the visit to the *House of Fame*.

"And therfore Joves, thorg hys grace,
Wol that I bere the to a place
Which that hight the Hous of Fame,
To do the som disport and game,
In som recompensation
Of labour and devocation,
That thou hast had, loo causeles,
To cupidio, the rechcheles!
And thus this god, thorg his merite,
Wol with som maner thing the quyte,
So that thou wolt be of good chere.
For truste wel that thou shalt here,
When we be come there I seye,
No wonder thynges, dar I leye,
And of Loves fold moo tydynges,
Both sothe sawes and lesinges;
(II. 661-76)
And again in the third book he writes:

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

(11. 1884-95)

These lines show that the author is still intent on hearing the new tidings. Some stranger standing by directs the visitor to the House of Rumor. In this place are found the stories of love that the Eagle has promised; but as Sypherd points out, there is no indication that the poet has any intention of relating these things to his audience. He has reached the destination of his quest, and it is very unlikely that he would have troubled the Eagle for a return journey. In the other dream poems there is no return; some noise or commotion wakes the sleeper. In the Duchess a clock strikes, the dreamer comes to his senses, and the poem is concluded in eleven lines. In the other dream, the Parliament of Fowls, the noise the birds make with their departure ends the dream; and the poem continues for only five more lines. After Chaucer had visited the House of Rumor, some noise would have probably transferred the dreamer back to his own bed. Only a few lines would have been needed to accomplish this conclusion.
One other bit of information found in the poem also points to the fact that it is almost complete. In the last Invocation the poet writes:

O God of science and of lyght,  
Apollo, thurgh thy grete myght,  
This lytel laste bok thou gyel  

(11. 1091-93)

Chaucer did have a plan, and this was to be the "lytel laste bok."

The first and second books together contain only 1090 lines, but the third one is composed of 1068 by itself. Unless there is some hidden meaning here, the last book could not have contained a story or tiding of more than a few words. Perhaps the conclusion was lost, destroyed, or simply pronounced from memory by the reading author. At any rate, the poem seems to be practically complete.
CHAPTER III

INTERPRETATIONS OF THE HOUSE OF FAME

Earlier in this work the fact is mentioned that one of the chief objectives of the paper is to survey some of the most important theories that have been advanced concerning the meaning of the House of Fame, and to examine the plausibility of these theories. This thesis does not propose to list all conjectures concerning the meaning of the poem, but it attempts only to study some of the best known opinions of various scholars. Although the theories of some scholars are not included in this discussion, many of these tend to be only variations of the ones that are included. Though much work has been done on interpretations of the House of Fame, no definite conclusion acceptable to a majority of scholars has been reached, and no complete solution seems to be in sight at the present time.

1. The House of Fame as an Imitation or Parody of Dante

One of the earliest attempts to interpret the House of Fame was to consider it as a kind of Divine Comedy in English. The poem is generally thought to be one of Chaucer's first works in his Italian period; and it is only natural that it would show a relationship to Dante, the best known Italian author. Lydgate, in his Fall of Princes, fails to list the House of Fame in the Chaucer canon; and some critics
have supposed that his reference to "Dante in English" means the
House of Fame. A major contribution to this theory was Rambeau's
article in Englische Studien, III, 209ff. Rambeau points out many
similarities between the Divine Comedy and the House of Fame. He
notes that both of them are visions, both are in three books, and
each author has a guide for his pilgrimage. As Chaucer is borne by
the Eagle to his goal, Dante is led by Virgil to his destination.
The invocation in the third book is to Apollo in both cases, and
Chaucer's prayer is "little more than a translation of Dante's."²

These are general points of likeness, but particular similarities
are also noted in the two works. Both the poems have a reference to
an exact date. Dante's poem opens on Good Friday, 1300, while the
House of Fame is dated December 10; and there are comparisons between
the eagles and the steep rocks in both poems. Neither of the poets is
able to describe the beauty of the place to which he goes—Chaucer to
the House of Fame and Dante to Paradise. Chaucer also makes two mistakes
by using the Divine Comedy in his own work. Both Dante and Chaucer
said that Statius was born at Toulouse, "and Chaucer made Marsyas a
female (line 1229) by misunderstanding the Italian form in Dante."³

These are some of the major points of comparison drawn between these
two works; but it is readily apparent that some of them might be made
between almost any two dream poems.
One of the first scholars to take issue with this view that the poem is merely Dante in English was Lounsbury, who believes that there is little of the Italian's influence in the English poem. He states, in fact, that no more than twenty lines from the *House of Fame* can be ascribed directly to Dante. The upholders of the Dante hypothesis, however, state that it is not so much the direct borrowing that shows Italian origin, as it is the general scope and outline that come from the *Divine Comedy*. Lounsbury, in answer to this view, says that in the "whole range of imaginative literature, there are hardly two poems which exhibit certain superficial resemblances, and one of which has adopted from the other certain passages and images, that are more divergent in tone and spirit, in subject and in treatment."\(^4\)

It is also probable that Chaucer's eagle owes very little to the Italian. It is noted that Jove wished to reward Chaucer for his service to Love, and he sent his eagle after him. In the *Metamorphoses* there is also an eagle, and here the bird is Jove, transformed into the shape of his own bird. Although Chaucer may have copied his plumage and manner of flight from Dante, the eagle is probably more classic than medieval.\(^5\) The only "conclusion that can definitely be accepted, out of the theories which have been put forward about the relation between the *House of Fame* and the *Divine Comedy*, is that Chaucer must have been reading Dante with unusually close attention
at the time when he wrote the poem."

One of the most effective arguments against this theory of imitation or parody of the Divine Comedy was published by Margery L. Brown, although she did not intend her work to combat the other position. Brown draws parallels between the House of Fame and Boccaccio's Corbaccio that are so convincing they tend to lessen the influence of Dante in the general theme. She summarizes the Corbaccio as follows:

The poet falls asleep thinking of his mistress. He dreams that he enters a pleasant path, so pleasant that his feet seem to take wings as he hastens forward. His progress is arrested by a cloud, which soon disappears, leaving him in a thorny desert. Here he is so terrified by lamentations and groans that he fears to be torn by wild beasts. Unable to find any way in or out of this solitude, he is giving himself up for lost, when he sees a man approaching. So dignified is the man's bearing that the dreamer thinks him the proprieter of the place, and dreads being treated as a trespasser. The man reassures the poet who now considers him heaven-sent. In a long dialogue the dreamer is horrified to discover that not only is this man a shade, but the departed husband of his mistress. The shade takes pity on the dreamer's youth and zeal for learning, and disillusionizes him as to the character of this woman. He follows with a long invective against the sex; and he closes the tirade by urging the dreamer to give up the pursuit of love and confine himself to his studies. The dreamer resolves to follow this good advice, whereupon the shade disappears and the dreamer awakes.

Several points of likeness are noted at once between these two works. Both works are visions; the dreamers are students, having poor success in love; both the guides promise to tell love-tidings; both of the poets move as though they had wings; there is a great
desert in both poems; Chaucer may not, like Boccaccio in the desert, enter or leave the House of Tidings unaided. Several other comparisons are also drawn, but these will serve the present purpose. If so many comparisons may be drawn between the House of Fame and a work that Chaucer may not have known at this time, it is not surprising that there are points of likeness between his work and a poem that he almost certainly knew.

Brown is even able to develop a good conclusion for the House of Fame from the Corbaccio. She says:

While it is unlikely that Chaucer's English mind would have elected to follow the Italian poet's long tirades against woman, he may easily have intended some sly fun at the expense of the sex. With such tidings of woman's unworthiness the poet dreamer could return to his studies with complacence, feeling that he had not missed much after all. By such an ending, Chaucer would fulfill the promises of the eagle and conform to the general tone of the poem without unduly lengthening his "litel laste book."

It is significant to note that Baum reaches almost the same conclusion in a different form of reasoning about the poem. This article further limits the influence that may be definitely claimed by Dante; and, in fact, most scholars have rejected this theory.

2. The House of Fame as an Allegory

After having rejected this poem as an imitation or parody, a very likely interpretation may now be examined. A great deal of medieval literature is known to be allegorical; and since the meaning
of this poem is not clear, many critics have tried to prove it an allegorical work. Because the poem is felt to be a love vision, there has been an effort to relate it to a marriage or a love affair.

Professor Inselmann believes it to have been written to celebrate the arrival of Anne of Bohemia, when she came to be married to Richard II; but Koch thinks that it is an allegory celebrating the marriage of John of Gaunt's daughter, Philippa. The poem stopped because the marriage was never carried out. Neither of these interpretations has been generally accepted; and Baum is probably correct in saying, "That Chaucer was preparing for the announcement of Richard's betrothal or Anne's arrival in England, or the betrothal of John of Gaunt's daughter Philippa to Charles VI, as some have held, is unthinkable."

Those who have regarded this poem as being written for a marriage have been faced with the long story of Dido. Not only does Chaucer tell a story of a false love, but he also adds to Virgil's account in such a manner that the story is even more unfit for a marriage celebration. Mercury almost forces Aeneas to leave Dido in the Latin story. Virgil says:

Goddess-born, can you go on sleeping at such a crisis? Are you out of your mind, not to see what dangers are brewing up Around you, and not to hear the favouring breath of the West wind? Being set upon death, her heart is aswirl with conflicting passions. Aye, she is brooding now some trick, some desperate deed. Why are you not going, all speed, while the going is good? If dam finds you still here, delaying by these shores,
You'll have the whole sea swarming with hostile ships, there will be
Firebrands coming against you, you'll see this beach ablaze.
Up and away, then! No more lingering! Woman was ever
A voering, weathercock creature.
He spoke, and vanished in the darkness.
Then, startled by the shock of the apparition, Aeneas
Snatched himself out of sleep and urgently stirred up his comrades:

Compare this warning with what Chaucer says about the matter:

But to excuse Eneas
Fullyche of al his grete trespas,
The book seyth Mercurie, sauns fayle,
Bad hym goo into Itayle,
And love auffrikis regioun,
And Dido and hir faire toun.

(ll. 427-32)

These lines are actually very skeptical and they rob Aeneas of all
goodness in the matter. Virgil says that he could not help himself;
but Chaucer, who has been telling the story without hesitation, has to
stop here and say that the book said this divine intervention happened
without fail. The statement is as much as to say, "You can believe
this if you want to. After all the book does say it."

Not only does Chaucer berate his source, but he also goes into
a long discussion on the side about various men who have been untrue
(ll. 388-425). If this were to be a marriage poem, it is hardly
possible that he would have stressed these untrue love affairs. An
allegory, then, of an approved marriage is not to be found in this
poem.
Various writers have noted this satire on false men in the work, and Frederick Carl Riedel has written a long article on the subject. He rejects the theory that it was written in honor of Queen Anne's arrival in England; and since he feels that the poem stresses the infidelity of men to women, he purposes an allegorical interpretation to fit this theme. He believes that the work was written about the year 1379, and "that Chaucer was led to write the poem on account of an unfortunate incident in the career of John of Gaunt, namely, that of outraging decency by appearing in public with his mistress, Catherine Swynford, during the summer of 1378." The House of Fame is moreover, "a covert attack upon John of Gaunt under the slight guise of a well meant warning as to the possible results of questionable love affairs such as the Duke conducted."16

As has been previously mentioned, John of Gaunt is usually considered a patron of Chaucer; therefore, Riedel must establish animosity between Chaucer and the Duke. This ill-feeling is thought to have come about because of a relationship between Chaucer's wife, Philippa, and John. He concludes that "Chaucer's peculiar relationship to Gaunt alone, namely, that of illegitimate brother-in-law, and possibly that of foster father to Gaunt's child, Thomas Chaucer, would... have been sufficient cause for resentment; at least it would have been reason enough for the poet to attempt a pointed satire upon his much-vaunted patron through the means of a keenly ironical
love poem. The "man of great authority" was to have been John; but "on reaching the name of the very man he was covertly addressing in Book III, Chaucer found it wiser— and perhaps more artistic— to stop abruptly."

This theory accounts for Chaucer's treatment of unconstant men, but it does not consider some other points of interest. Even if the affair between John of Gaunt and Philippa were true, would it have made Chaucer hate John? This poem stresses the affairs of men, but Chaucer's wife and sister-in-law would have been as much to blame as John, unless he forced them to do his will. No one usually thinks too much about a man having affairs today, but a woman may be more severely criticized. In Chaucer's day the king had a mistress; but if the queen had a lover, she might be tried for treason and executed. If Riedel's account, then, is true, why did the women receive no condemnation? Surely, if Chaucer wanted to satirize John, he would not have left his own house untouched. Chaucer was probably happy to have his sister-in-law a mistress to a duke. Although Riedel has an interesting conclusion, it "involves a series of arbitrary interpretations and hazardous conjectures."

The fact that a portion of this poem may be a warning to Katharine has been discussed in an earlier chapter in this paper. That Chaucer may have had John and Katharine's affair in mind when he wrote the work seems logical, but present evidence does not seem
sufficient to establish the House of Fame as an extended allegory of this affair.

3. The House of Fame as a Frame Story

Since there has been little success in establishing the House of Fame as an allegory, various writers, looking for other interpretations of the poem, have concluded that the ending was to be a story or group of stories. The most important statement of this view was expounded by J. M. Manly in 1913. He says that after all the years of study on the subject, still nobody knows what the poem is about. It is not allegory, and (he states further) the only clear case of allegory in Chaucer is his "Complaint unto Pity."

As there is no good interpretation for the work, Manly believes that he has discovered one in the frame-story idea. The framework of the House of Fame is very simple. Venus wishes to reward her servant; and because she has no messenger capable of the feat of taking him to the House of Fame, she asks her father, Jupiter, to transport the poet there by means of the Eagle. Here the writer is to hear love stories. The rest of the poem is only decoration, the work being badly proportioned. Lines 133-143 and 164-191 of Book II are the important parts of the poem for Manly's theory. He believes that Chaucer will hear tales at the House of Tidings, and they will be told to the reader. He concludes:
I am therefore disposed to believe that this poem was intended to herald or announce a group of love stories and to serve as a sort of prologue to them. As the attachment between the poem and the stories announced was loose,—looser perhaps than between the legends of good women and the prologue to them,—the poem might well be cited in L G W as a complete poem although it lacked the stories it was to introduce. 21

Manly's interpretation seems to have been no better accepted than most of the other theories. W. O. Sypherd says:

The tidings which he hears are not stories or tales such as Chaucer would have in mind if he had used the word "tydyngs" as a synonym for "stories." These tidings constitute what I may call the flotsam and jetsam of the daily life of lovers. They are the current news of the servants of Love. I find in the foregoing lines no support for the argument that the author is referring to anything so formal or articulate or unified as "love stories." Furthermore, even if we grant that Chaucer uses "tydynges" in the sense of stories, we have no positive evidence in the lines themselves implying that the poet will tell these stories which he hears in Fame's house. In Chaucer's account of the tidings of the house of Fame, there is no stronger implication that he will tell these stories than there is in the Troilus where Pandarus speaks of the story which a maiden was reading to Crseyde and her ladies. . .22

Even if one accepts Manly's argument, the question of the meaning of the poem is still far from being settled. Manly says that Chaucer felt the work to be almost complete in itself without the stories. Manly's theory only changes the wording of the problem. Instead of saying, "What is Chaucer's House of Fame?" one must now say, "What is the 'Prologue' to Chaucer's House of Fame?" Although this is a very simple and pleasing explanation for the problem, it actually leaves the same problem in the reader's mind.
4. The *House of Fame* as Completely Meaningful in Itself

In modern literature the author usually makes his work meaningful enough in itself for the reader to understand it without a knowledge of current events or other matters. Since the reader of today is accustomed to this type of literature, there is a strong temptation to regard allegorical writings in the same light. A number of scholars have decided that the meaning of the *House of Fame* is to be found only in the poem itself; and, in fact, this theory is one of the arguments Manly uses to prove his theory. Sypherd accepts Manly's belief in this matter, but he rejects the idea of a story to follow. He thinks that the meaning is a little too clear to be readily grasped; and he states "that the poem is, save the necessarily brief missing conclusion which it seems to demand, absolutely complete in itself and that it has no other meaning or purpose than that which is more than once definitely expressed in the words of the eagle and of Chaucer himself." As a reward for Chaucer's service to Love, Jupiter, has made possible the journey to the House of Fame. The poet is here to learn of love tidings that he misses by his busy life. The journey reaches its natural conclusion at the House of Tidings, "the legitimate goal of his journey and the logical end of the poem"; and the poem exists only "for the sake of these wonderful experiences." Schoeck believes that it was written primarily for the purpose of entertainment at the Christmas
Revels of the Inner Temple. By this view of the work, it is to be read only as a dream.

Paul G. Ruggiers also believes that the poem is completely meaningful in itself, but he gives the poem a highly religious significance. He sees Book I as an introduction to Book II. Dido cries out against Fame in this book, and the things she speaks about here are shown in the third book. Chaucer equates to some extent Fame, Love, and Fortune. After seeing the love that Dido experiences, Chaucer needs an answer to the equation of this love with the divine love of Boethius and Dante, which "orders the stars and binds men and women in sacred ties." The eagle comes to lead him to the answer.

Book II is a transitional insertion, giving a view of an orderly universe. All things, even Fame, are a part of this order; and everything here seeks and finds its proper resting place. The book also serves to state the purpose of the journey, "the quest for tidings."

The last book forms a kind of commentary on the exemplum of the first book. The company of petitioners illustrates that man should fasten his hopes on something more stable than worldly fame or fortune, and the House of Rumor is a fulfillment of the eagle's promise to the poet. Ruggiers feels that the "great man" may have been Boethius. Since the Knight's Tale is brought to a close by a part of a Boethian
love song and Boethian philosophy, he thinks Chaucer may have intended for Boethius to appear at the close of the House of Fame. The philosopher could have answered the question of the relationship of fame, love, and fortune to man and God in a universe where even the personal tragedy of Dido had meaning. This theory is also plausible, but the tone of the poem does not seem to correspond to the interpretation. This calls for a highly religious and philosophical reading of the poem; and as Lounsbury has pointed out, the tone of the work does not seem to convey this high sentence.

Another of the self-sufficient-poem theories is offered by Paul F. Baum. He rejects all allegorical or hidden interpretations to the work, and considers it to have "sufficient unity, if not proportion"; and he even suggests that the work is entirely complete. Baum says, "While we are not to suppose that Chaucer had planned a complete hoax and ended deliberately almost in the middle of a sentence, still there can have been little to add." The poet had reached his climax, and perhaps "he felt there was no occasion to go further." Little good could come from "such a state of uproar and tumult, men trampled under foot and climbing over one another." He summarizes his article as follows:

He represents at the outset that he is in search of news—news of the actual quotidian affairs of love such as are not to be had in his books. He goes to the place where all the news of the world is concentrated. He finds all fame a travesty, renown fickle, and rumor a mockery. The ultimate
tidings of love from the man of authority would have inevitably been a similar disappointment and disillusion. He returns to his book, with the conclusion that in love, if not in all life, the poetic dream is preferable to the earthly reality.29

Of the theories put forward by the scholars, the interpretations which view the poem as being complete in itself seem most plausible. No one has shown convincingly that the poem is an allegory; and although Kenly thought he had the answer to all the problems, he seems to stand almost alone in this belief. Also the lovers of "high seriousness" have failed to show that Chaucer is any more in debt to Dante in this work than to several other sources.
CHAPTER IV

"DECEMBER 10" AND THE MOOD OF THE HOUSE OF FAME

In almost all Chaucer's major works, one problem receives more attention than most of the others. In the House of Fame the dating of the poem has drawn most speculation from the critics, and is second only to the problem of the "man of great authority." Those who wish to establish a relationship to Dante have compared it to his date of Good Friday, and critics of the allegorical school have tried to find a great event related to that day. They have not been successful; and although their view seems quite plausible, there may have been another significance in that date. No one seems to have considered this date in relation to Chaucer's other works. A study of this type might throw some light on the problem.

The poet actually gives few exact dates, but he does make several references to the time of year. In the Parliament of Fowls Chaucer tells the reader:

For this was on seynt Valentynes day,  
Whan evry foul cometh there to chese his make,  
Of every kynde that men thynke may,  
And that so huge a noyse gan they make  
That erthe, and eyr, and tre, and every lake  
So ful was, that unethe was there space  
For me to stone, so ful was al the place.  

(309-15)

Here the poet gives an exact date, and he is letting us know that it is the spring of the year, the birds ringing out the joy of the season.
Chaucer also uses the date of May 3 in the Knight's Tale (I, 1462 ff), in the Nun's Priest's Tale (VII, 3187 ff), and in the Troilus (ii, 55 ff). This date is probably used, in part at least, because it was thought to be an unlucky day.

The Book of the Duchess shows the same spring scene, but here there is a juxtaposition of happiness with sadness. The book opens with a sad note. The poet says that for a long time he has been unable to sleep, and all the world knows that a creature cannot live and not sleep. The author says he does not know why he cannot be normal, for he has had this sickness for eight years. It immediately appears, however, that his sickness is that of love; and his one physician will not cure him. To heighten this scene of sadness, he reads the tragic story of Ceyx and Alcyone. (This story was probably not in the original work, but it fits the general tone in its present position.) After reading this work, the poet falls asleep; and as is often the case with a sad heart, he meets a very pleasant dream. The dreamer believes it is May, and he goes to great pains to express the happiness of the dream. It is the dawn, and a number of birds sing in harmony. While the person is in this state of great bliss, he hears the sound of a hunter's horn. Immediately the dreamer goes on the merry hunt, and all seems well until the door is lost.

Thorneyth the hunte wonder faste
Blew a forloyn at the laste.
(394-85)
Here the note of sadness begins to return, and, in fact, during this whole pleasant scene the reader has been aware of the underlying note of sadness by continued references to heaven and the doomed Greeks and Trojans.

A status quo of mood is maintained during the next few lines, the enchanted forest holding the reader in a state of suspense. This suspense is broken, and the former despair returns with the lines:

I was war of a man in blak,
    That sat and had yturned his bak
To an ock, an huge tree.

(445-47)

In this work, then, the use of the spring of the year intensifies the effect of the scene of sadness. The poet, trying to escape his sorrow in a dream world of spring, is thrown back into the world of death. To make the sadness more effective, Chaucer has juxtaposed spring, the time of birth and happiness, with the time of death—Blanche died in September, 1369.

In Chaucer's early work, therefore, he used the seasons of the year as symbols of mood, and the same thing is seen in his later works. The Legend of Good Women is also set in the spring of the year; and although the work is about women disappointed in love, the tone seems to be, on the whole at least, joyful. This is especially true in the "Prologue." The poet has offended women by his Troilus, and here he is forced to redress the wrong. The women of the legends may not have
been happy in their love affairs; but by being constant in love, they, like Troilus, have gained happiness in the next life. The following lines show the relationship between the joy of the season and the poetry.

As I seyde erst, whanne comen is the May,
That is my bed ther daweth me no day
That I nam up and walkyng in the mede
To seen this flour ayein the sonne spred,
When it upryseth erly by the morwe
That blisful sighte softneth al my sorwe,
So glad am I, whan that I have presence
Of it, to doon it all reverence,
As she that is of alle floures flour,
Fulfilled of al vertu and honour,
An evere ilyke faire, and fressh of hewe;
And I love it, and ever ylike neve,
And evere shal, til that myn herte dye.
Al swere I nat, of this wol nat lye;
Ther loved no wight hotter in his lyve.

(Text F, 45-59)

This shows the relationship of the season of spring to the happy tone of the work. The poet receives an easy penance instead of death.

In his masterpiece this same symbolism is noted. Probably the best known of all of Chaucer's lines are the first lines of the Canterbury Tales, and here is still seen the contrast between the seasons. The time is the spring of the year, but there is still the remembrance of the past winter. Chaucer gives us the picture of the merry, fun-loving pilgrims on their adventures; but they are going to the shrine of the one who "hath holpen whan that they were seeke."

Here again is the time of joy after a time of sadness.

This pattern of symbolizing the mood of the story may also
exist in Troilus, and probably a good case could be made for the idea in that work. In fact, an article has been published on the use of seasons as images in the Troilus. The author of this paper, Henry W. Sams, writes:

There are in the poem two concentric and contradictory time-schemes; one of them is based upon the formal dating of the books, the other upon a proportionately spaced series of seasonal images.\(^1\)

Sams notes that early spring imagery is used at the first of the Troilus, and this spring season progresses as the affair between the two lovers grows toward its climax. In the third book Troilus is at the apex of his felicity, and the season of the year is also at its prime—the month of May.

In the fourth and fifth books, however, Troilus becomes unfortunate in love; and the spring season no longer fits the condition of the lover or the purpose of the author. As the love between the two begins to fade and die, the happy spring and summer of the image world also begins to change to fall and winter. The seasonal imagery and the tone of the poem are always congruent.

From his study Sams concludes:

There are, then, two complete and concentric time-schemes in Troilus and Crisseyde: the one is the actual, basic time-scheme of three years; the other is the practical, artistic scheme of one year, or the coming and departure of one summer.\(^2\)

In the Troilus, therefore, is probably found another of Chaucer's uses of the seasons of the year as images to convey certain emotions
and assist his plot. A clinching example of this use, however, is found in the *Merchant's Tale*. Here January and May are not only characters, but their names also symbolize their nature. January is an old man, while May is a young, fresh maid. The same pattern of mood is exhibited by them. January, a disillusioned person, receives little happiness in life, although he tries with all his might; but May, despite the restrictions January imposes on her, is a lively, happy woman.

From these examples it may be seen that Chaucer did not use the seasons of the year haphazardly; they almost always seem to have a related meaning to the tone of the character or story. This practice was also sometimes used by other writers of that period, and it continues into present literature.

In all the above references, there is a correlation between the time of the year and the mood. Why overlook that fact in this poem? The dream poems, excluding the *Book of the Duchess* with its special-purpose date, are in a happy vein; but the winter season in this poem may be the herald of another tone. This may be a tone of melancholy, skepticism, and disillusion.

Not only does it seem probable that the month has a symbolical significance, but it is also reasonable to assume that the day may have had some special meaning for Chaucer and his contemporaries.
Days, months, and years as signs are not normally of great importance to most modern, educated people; but even today many of the old beliefs and superstitions remain in vogue. The *Old Farmer's Almanac*, a guide to rural pursuits by days of the moon, continues to have a wide circulation among many people. Certain days are deemed good for various activities, but other days are sure to bring defeat or hardship. The daily astrological column appears in almost all large papers, and evidently it commands a rather large audience. If certain astronomical phenomena cause astrologers to predict wholesale good or utter destruction for the peoples of the earth, all news media are sure to feature the forecast. If there is still so much interest in days of the month and other astronomical matters, it is quite natural that people of Chaucer's day, born and bred by days and signs, would immediately suspect any given day as being symbolic of events in the poem or plot.

It has long been noted by those who read the *House of Fame* that the poet is eager for the exact date of the tenth day to be noted. This has been the foundation stone for many arguments concerning the poem, and it has been made by critics to refer to things as widely separated as the day of Jove and the coming of Queen Anne to England. These critics, of course, have tried to find some meaning for this day because they can see its importance to the mind of the author.
Critics and writers on this subject believe that the mentioning of this day would be of some special benefit to the reader or hearer of the poem, but it is not known for whom the work was intended. It is almost certain, however, that the day was of no great historical importance, or there would have been some record of the event. A second possibility is that the date was of no great importance to the majority of the people, but perhaps a certain individual for whom the poet intended his work would immediately realize that this was the day on which something of importance had happened to him. Since no one has been able to establish definitely that the poem was written for a certain person or persons, it is impossible to find a meaning for the tenth day.

There is, however, another possibility that seems to have been largely overlooked, and in this case it is still possible to arrive at Chaucer's meaning. If a modern writer informed us twice in a matter of a few lines that a wedding took place on the thirteenth day of June, some readers would conclude that the marriage might not work out successfully; but if the author added the word *Friday* to the dating of the marriage, almost all readers would watch for complications to arise from that date. In Chaucer's period almost any day mentioned by the author would be recognized by many people as having certain properties, for a number of rules of thumb for various days could readily be applied by many common people. Perhaps the tenth
day was not a historical date or even a special day to an individual, but rather it may have been an astrological symbol which thousands of people of England would have recognized.

If, as this paper has suggested, December is used as a symbol of an unfruitful winter love, the tenth day may also contribute to the pattern of imagery built up by the author. To establish the feeling that the medieval mind had for the tenth day, it is necessary to turn to material contemporary with the writing of the poem.

In 1923 Willard Farnham made a study of a manuscript called *The Days of the None*, and along with his notes about the work he also published the manuscript. He believes that it was written no later than the early fifteenth century or perhaps in the fourteenth, and the work was evidently owned by a person living in the same area in which Chaucer lived. The writing deals with the synodical month, which astronomers compute as 29.53059 days. It is a kind of poetic reader's guide to folk astrology, for it contains more folk knowledge than medieval scientific knowledge. The manuscript is a rule-of-thumb guide for the common man of Chaucer's London; and it may be concluded that many people of this period, steeped in astrological lore, would realize the significance of a given day without turning to a written work of this kind.

The reading for the tenth day, the one to which Chaucer refers in his poem, seems to coincide very closely with the tone exhibited
by the **House of Fame**. The *Doves of the Lone* states:

> The X day of the mone  
> I shal the say what ys to done.  
> That day was Lameth y bore  
> That day ne ys gode ne ylle,  
> But kepe the wel bothe loude and stylle,  
> I warne the by fore.

What place that thu be ynne,  
Loke no workes the be gynne  
Upon the X day,  
But thy file whydernard,  
Thu schalt scape happys harde  
Wyth oute any delay.

If thu that day sekenes take,  
Hyt schal the longe worke wrake  
Be dayes and be nyght.  
The chylde that day bore ys,  
A rycheman schal be he noght, y wys,  
Ne wel pore y plyght

The dreme yn the same wyse,  
I holde hyt on the mene assyse  
Be twixt bothe to,  
Hyt tokenyth nother evyl ne good.  
The X day let the noght blode,  
For hyt wol do the wol.\(^5\)

While the tenth day is a day of no good, the ninth and eleventh days are both exceptionally favorable days. A dream on either of these days is expected to come true by the third day. The eleventh day is favorable for every activity, and the ninth day is only lacking in the fact that one should not let blood on that day.\(^5\)

It is especially noteworthy that Chaucer’s discourse on dreams even parallels the reading for the tenth day. The *Doves of the Lone* relates the fact that a dream on this day is not to be accepted as either good or evil, and in the "Proem" to the *House of Fame* Chaucer
discourses at length on this same subject. Chaucer says that some
dreams may come true, and some may not, and the cause is not known.
If anyone can tell more about dreams than he can, Chaucer will leave
the task with him. He, like the author of *The Days of the Lone*,
concludes that a dream on this day may or may not come true. This,
however, is not always the philosophy of the poet; for in *The Nun's
Priest's Tale* the cock, who believes that dreams do come true, wins
the argument on this point. Since Chaucer and the reading for the
tenth day closely correspond on the matter of dreams, this point
seems to lend support to the theory that perhaps the tenth day is to
be recognized by the reader as an astrological sign.

The rule-of-thumb for the tenth day indicates that it is a day
in which no good is to be expected, but it is also a day in which can
conclude nothing for a truth. Both December and the tenth day may be
part of the pattern of imagery that Chaucer is wishing to build up for
his poem.

When one begins to read the "Proem," the tone heralded by the
day and month image begins to assert itself. Almost at once the
author begins his lecture on dreams, which, as has been previously
mentioned, is similar to the conclusion reached by the author of the
astrological work. He concludes his discourse on the subject by
saying that he himself has had a dream that he is going to tell; and
by the discussion just before this, the effect of his words are,
"I am going to tell you a dream, but I do not know whether or not to believe it."

When the author begins his dream, he continues his tone of cynicism. He enters a temple of glass; and although he makes no further comment on its structure, he may have had the passing nature of it in mind. He said of the House of Fame on the ice:

Thoughte I, "By seynt Thomas of Kent!
This were a feble fundament
To bilden on a place hye
He ought him lytel glorifye
That hereon bilt, God me save!"

(131-35)

He might well have said the same thing of the glass temple.

In this temple he sees an example of distress in the story of Dido. In this long account of the Queen is found the forecast unhappiness of the seasonal image, and the poet heightens Dido's disillusionment by his cynical remark on Virgil's excuse for Aeneas. In this temple is found none of the joys of love, but only the sorrows.

This first book is completed by the poet's discovery of the great desert. This place has received a great deal of critical attention as a symbol, and it is hard to suppose that the barrenness of December does not foreshadow this forbidding desert.

The second book seems to change somewhat in tone, but the same skeptical mood remains. Whereas the first and last books exhibit the tone of cynicism and melancholy, the mood of the second book seems to be that of comic boredom. After the Eagle's long, scientific speech,
he says, "Wast thou not well this"? Chaucer answers with a simple, "Yes." The Eagle then begins to brag on his teaching ability. These lines are probably a play on words. The Eagle means, "Have you not well discovered this" (from the Eagle's teaching); but Chaucer answers the question as meaning, "Do you not know this well." The poet's boredom with the Eagle is proved when he tells the bird that he does not want to learn about the stars. The trouble is that the Eagle, a celestial being, is only telling the author old philosophical ideas.

The reader has actually been prepared for this unnatural turn of events by the invocation in the second book. In a dream poem the things which are encountered on the journey should be a revelation; but by making the invocation to Venus, the poet has told his audience to "watch for curves." The invocation should have been to Apollo, the god of science and light; but when Chaucer wants to tell of the rumors, tidings of love, and fickleness of Fortune—all things which would be in the realm of the goddess of love—the prayer is to Apollo. By this ironical use of the gods, the poet has again called attention to the fact that this work is not a normal love poem.

The last book seems to continue the rather melancholy, cynical mood of the first book. Not only does Apollo seem out of place in this unpredictable world; but if Chaucer had a plan for the work, his mention of the "last little book" goes along with this ironical
slant. This "little book" is longer than the rest of the poem. The people's names which were carved on the ice remained only by chance. Neither do the grants made to the petitioners show any semblance of mentality, but the benefits are given by a whim. Even the House of Tidings is a part of this misguided world. Chaucer had gone there to hear tidings; but it is impossible for him actually to learn anything, because there are as many lies as truths in the place. Here one sees the continuation of the cynical attitude in the poem.

When one tries to interpret this work as a normal dream poem, he is forgetting several important points. In the first place, Chaucer gives the discourse on dreams, which has the effect of telling the reader or hearer that the following story may be only a day dream or an air castle. In the Book of the Duchess and the Parliament of Fowls there is no prelude of doubt cast over the entire poem by the author's doubts about the validity of dreams. These first few lines are enough in themselves to cause the reader to ponder the meaning of the following revelation. Surely Chaucer would not have placed this speech before a dream that he wished to be accepted at face value.

Secondly, the poet places his dream in the wrong season of the year; and he gives a date that may also be a medieval Friday the thirteenth. Chaucer himself gives another clear winter love image in the story of old January and young May. In the beginning of this other poem, January is depicted as a fool; for he will not listen to
the sage advice of his brother, who tells him all the dangers that a
winter lover must encounter. Although January takes all possible pre-
cautions to insure his felicity, the outcome is still the same. His
love is a barren, senile, unfortunate affair that, like the last leaves
on a tree in winter, must soon blow down to the ground. A winter love
poem, possibly conceived on a day of bad luck, cannot be expected to
be the gay account of a young love in May.

Although the author may not have originally placed the Dido story
in the *House of Fame*, it does serve a useful function in its present
position in the poem. It is an example of a love affair that has no
hope of success. From the beginning it is an impossible romance, one
that cannot possibly bring enduring happiness to its participants.
For, although Aeneas is a prince, he has nothing to offer the great
and powerful Dido except himself and his men. He does not have even
food for the men of his wrecked navy; and, in addition, the gods have
said that he must go on to create a new race in Italy. When neither
gods nor men smile on a love affair, it cannot be expected to bring
felicity.

The other examples of false loves mentioned by Chaucer in the
*House of Fame* are of the same nature. They are the cold, dead affairs
that have created frost on the hearts of the lovers. They are very
widely separated from Chaucer's spring love poem in which three great
male eagles vie for the love of a magnificent female.
Neither is the heavenly journey in accord with a normal dream poem, for the Eagle does not fulfill the normal duties of the celestial guide. He does not carry his charge in a romantic boat, or journey side by side with him, or even carry the poet mounted on his back. Chaucer's guide must dangle him through the air, a rather undignified position for a poet or lover, complain about his heavy burden, berate his burden for lack of success in love, and discourse to his charge about how sound travels, something that the poet could imitate by throwing a stone into the water. When the Eagle desires to tell the author more of his knowledge, the poet declines the offer.

Again, the invocations are out of place in the books in which they stand. The poet says:

\begin{quote}
Now faire blissfull, O Cipris,
So be my favour at this tyme!
And ye, me to endite and ryme
\end{quote}

(11. 518-20)

The book that follows should, then, be an account of lovers, or at least of something from the realm of Venus. The flight is made, to be sure, because of Venus; but the things that follow are the dusty philosophies of the followers of the god Apollo. No one could suppose that Venus would feel at home in a discussion of the manner in which sounds travel.

And in the third book the invocation is as follows:
0 God of science and of lyght,  
Appollo, thurgh thy grote myght,  
This lytel laste book thou gyet
(ll. 1091-93)

But the things that follow hardly show any of the attributes of the god of truth, knowledge, science, and light. The first thing that catches the poet's eye is the fact that someone has founded the Castle of Fame on ice, and all the names that are included in Fame's roster are carved in melting ice.

In the House of Fame is found the little Goddess of Fame, a rather grotesque sight; for she is less than a cubit high, has as many eyes "as fetheres on foules," and as many ears and tongues "as bestes heres."

When this little goddess passes out fame, she shows no semblance of any reason whatever; for she gives her favors without any thought of what the person has done in life. This, of course, is perhaps symbolic of the way Chaucer sees earthly fame granted; but it does not belong under the guidance of the great Apollo.

When the pilgrim reaches the House of Rumor, Apollo is still out of place as a patron; for in this whirling, giddy house none of the things he loves are to be found. There are so many people in the place that each has only "a fote-brede of space," and each tells all the others what he hears. As the tales go from ear to ear, they grow, as ordinary rumors do; and it matters not at all if the rumor is "soth or fals"; it will be told anyway. Chaucer says of the
And, Lord, this hous in alle tymes,
Was ful of shipmen and pilgrimes,
With scrippes bret-ful of lesinges,
Entremedled with tydynges,
And eek allone be hemsolve.
O, many a thousand tymes twelve,
Saugh I eke of these pardoners,
Currous, and eke messagers,
With boystes crammed ful of lyes
As ever vessel was with lyes.

(11. 2121-30)

In the entire place there is little truth, and that cannot be distinguished from the lies. If Chaucer had wished to write a straightforward poem, Apollo would have ruled over the book of philosophy; and Venus would have had dominion over the book of giddy lies and love tidings.

After Chaucer has wandered around in the house, he says:

I horde a gret noyse withalle
In a corner of the halle,
Ther men of love-tydynges tolde,
And I gan thiderward beholde;
For I saugh remynge every wight,
As faste as they they hadden myght;
And everych cried, "What thing is that?"
And sommo sayde, "I not never what."
And thon they were alle on an hepe,
Tho behynde begunne up lepe,
And clamben up on other faste,
And up the nose an yen kaste,
And troden fast on others hele,
And stampen, as men doon aftir eles.
Atte laste y saugh a man,
Which that y nevone nat ne kan;
But he semed for to be
A man of gret auctorite.

(11. 2141-58)
Who was this great man? Chaucer himself says that he does not know the man. What was he to have said? This fact, too, is unknown, but several things seem rather certain. In the first place, the noise and confusion made by this rush may have been only the prelude to the end of the dream. This noise may have been the thing that was to have brought the poet back to reality. Secondly, if he had said anything, it might have been impossible for the author to understand him in the confusion made by the great crowd of people. In the third place, if he had made a profound statement, how could one know whether or not to believe it. Against the background of lies told in the House of Rumor, this might have been only another lie or rumor. And last of all, the remark the great man would have made could not be expected to be more than a cynical remark or a disillusionment. The man of great authority would probably be as out of place as Venus in the book of philosophy, or he might have been as fickle as Fame herself. Since he would have been telling his truths against the background of distrust of dreams and the lies of the House of Tidings, it would be impossible to accept his speech at face value.

What is the meaning, then, of the House of Fame? Of the theories examined in this thesis, those that hold the poem is complete in itself seem to be the most nearly correct. Since allegory is so common in medieval literature, there is a strong possibility that it is here involved; but until an allegorical theory is put forward that fits the
facts of the poem, this hypothesis must be rejected. The discussion of the mood and date in the poem tends to indicate that the work does not admit a normal ending; and the conclusion that the poem would end in further disillusion, and the poet would return to his studies seems quite in keeping with the rest of the poem. The House of Fame is probably not a happy spring poem; it is a winter disappointment.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Let us now briefly sum up some of the conclusions that have been drawn in this paper. These conclusions, however, are not set forth as facts; they are merely theories that seem to be logical to the present writer.

The poem may have been written at two different times in the author's career. The theories expressed in this paper indicate that the first book may have been written between 1372 and 1374; but the last two books—and this is only an acceptance of opinions of other writers—were probably written near 1380. The verse of the work is indicative of an early date, and comparisons with its verse and that of the Book of the Duchess indicate that the first book may be an earlier production than the other two books.

The poem in its present state is fairly unified by medieval standards. The discussion on dreams introduces the cynical mood of the poem itself, and the story of Dido and the mention of other false loves are examples of winter love affairs. The second book pictures the cynical, comic trip of the author to the House of Fame, and the last book gives a view of the fame and fortune that winter loves can expect. This book may have ended as a complete disillusionment.

The degree of completeness exhibited by the poem is vouched for by internal evidence in the work itself, and it must be almost
complete as it now stands. The author may have committed the ending of the work to memory, and it may or may not have been written.

Many interpretations, most of which fall into four general categories, have been put forward for the *House of Fame*. Those that try to make the poem an imitation of Dante or find in it a high degree of seriousness seem to be reading thoughts into the author's work that are not always present. Allegorical theories concerning the work have failed to relate satisfactorily many elements in the poem to the critic's ideas concerning the meaning of the poem, and the belief that the *House of Fame* is a frame story does not correspond to internal evidence of the poem itself as to its degree of completeness. Theories that hold the poem to be completely meaningful in itself seem most nearly in accord with a close reading of this dream.

The date of the tenth day of December may be related to the poem in two ways. The day of the month may be an astrologically unfortunate day of the month, and December may symbolize the barrenness of the poem itself. Although present evidence is not sufficient to indicate the poem is an allegory of the poet's own love affairs, it is significant that the mood of unfortunate love in the *House of Fame* is in accord with Chaucer's many remarks about his own life.

Another great English writer, Shakespeare himself, has this to say of a winter story in his *Winter's Tale*:

A sad tale's best for winter: I have one
Of sprites and goblins.

(II. i. 25-6)
NOTES

INTRODUCTION


2Quoted from Robinson, Textual Notes, p. 901.

3Ibid.

4Ibid., p. 899.

5John H. Manly, "What is Chaucer's Houe of Fame?," Kittredge Anniversary Papers (Boston, 1913), p. 73.

6(Seattle, 1955), pp. 266-71.

7Manly.
CHAPTER I

1Lines 63, 111, and 652-653 are important in dating the poem. They will be quoted later in this chapter.

2John Livingston Lowes, "The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women Considered in its Chronological Relations," PMLA, XX (December 1905), 862.


6Ibid., p. 54.

7Rudolf Imelmann, "Chaucer's Haus der Fama," Englische Studien, XLV (November 1912), 397-431.

8Manly, p. 79.


11Brusendorff, pp. 158-63.


14"The Date of Chaucer's House of Fame," Delaware Notes, XIX (1946), 47-55.

15"The Date of Chaucer's House of Fame," Modern Language Notes, XXXI (December 1916), 507-8.


17Sec. ed., p. xxix. Unless otherwise stated, subsequent references are to the sec. ed.

18Ibid., p. xxi.

19Ibid., p. xxii.


21Robinson, p. xxi.

22Ibid., pp. 782-84.

23Ibid. pp. 779-81

24 Ibid.


26Introduction, p. xxi.


30 Probably the anathema best known to the modern reader is found in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. See James A. Work, "Echoes of the Anathema in Chaucer," *PMLA*, LXIX (June 1932), 419-30.


35 See George G. Williams, "Who Were Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus?" *Rice Institute Pamphlet*, XLIV (April 1957), 135. Williams concludes that the liaison probably began in early May, 1372.
CHAPTER II


2. The Living Chaucer (Philadelphia, 1940), pp. 84-85.


6. Ibid.


8. I am indebted to George G. William's oral discussion of the Chaucer cannon for this possibility.


10. Ibid., p. 8.

11. Manly, pp. 73-81.

CHAPTER III


3 Ibid., p. viii.


5 Ibid., p. 246.


8 Ibid., pp. 412-4.

9 Ibid., p. 415.


12 Rudolf Imelmann, "Chaucers Haus Der Fame," Englische Studien, XLV (November, 1912), 397-431.


14 Baum, p. 255.


17 Ibid., p. 443.

18 Ibid., p. 468.

19 Robinson, p. 779.


21 Ibid., p. 81.


23 Ibid., pp. 65-8.


26 Ibid., p. 23.

27 Ibid., 25-9.

28 Baum, p. 255.

29 Ibid., 255-6.
CHAPTER IV

1 "The Dual Time-Scheme in Chaucer's Troilus," Modern Language Notes, LVI (February 1941), 95.

2 Ibid., p. 100.

3 "The Dayes of the Mone," Studies in Philology, XX (January 1923), 70-82.

4 Ibid., pp. 76-7.

5 Ibid.

6 Brown and Baum reach approximately the same conclusion as is stated in this paper about the ending of the poem.
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