CHAUCER'S "MATERE/MATER/IA": CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL RESPONSE THROUGH AUTHORITY IN *THE HOUSE OF FAME* AND CHARACTER IN *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

by

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Introduction

> And somme of hem wondred on the mirour,
>
> That born was up into the maister-tour,
>
> Hou men myghte in it swiche thynges se. ("The Squire's Tale," 225-227)

This thesis compares Chaucer's production of the image of himself as author in *The House of Fame* to his production of characters in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In doing so, this thesis brings to the forefront an image of Chaucer as an author concerned with both the manner in which his work would be received in posterity as well as the manner in which he would be received through his work. It is my contention that Chaucer goes to great efforts to embed a complex and defined model of textual authority that is able both to resist and withstand orthodox cultural authority as a guarantor of meaning in his time and times to come. This model, which Chaucer terms his "matere," is upheld, supported, and based in the figures in and of the texts, characters and author. Implicit in this argument concerning the two productions—the production of himself as author and the production of characters in his texts—is a concomitant argument concerning the author as a character in and of the text. On the one hand, Chaucer often appears to speak directly in his texts, particularly at the ending of his texts, to an imagined audience both present and to come. On the other hand, if critics desire to understand anything about Chaucer as an author, his fictional representations of himself, which constitute the main evidence there is of him, must first be contended with: Chaucer is often, problematically, also a character within his texts. These representations—of "the author," of "characters"—are further complicated by Chaucer's repeated confluence of the boundaries commonly attributed to "author," "speaker," "narrator," "character" and such. In addition to conflating these figures, Chaucer often moves

between such personae without notice or marked shift, eliding the distinctions commonly held between the figures.[1]

Perhaps the cleanest example of Chaucer's complex views on authorship and authority can be gleaned from his *House of Fame,* which is itself not the most transparent of texts. The action in *The House of Fame* centers upon one "Geffrey," a "self-caricature" (Bevington 290) whom critics cannot fully presume to be Geoffrey Chaucer but are invited to identify in some way as an aspect of Chaucer (*self*-caricature). That is, the "Geffrey" of *The House of Fame* has been critically observed as sharing in Chaucer's identity without much consternation. The narrated action in *Troilus and Criseyde,* conversely, centers upon characters that are not explicit self-caricatures nor originally Chaucer's, but bear a definitive relationship to him. While Geffrey seems to be proximally related to Chaucer, Criseyde—for example—presents a more distant relationship to the author. Whereas Geffrey is often taken as a self-caricature of Chaucer, Criseyde is seen as a separate entity altogether, representative of a wholly other historical figure. However, it is neither so simple to establish the relationship between an author and a character that bears his name, likeness or characteristics nor so easy to distance the author from one that does not. In each case it is the treatment of the received characters that allows for the positing of referential claims about Chaucer insofar as he makes use of the characters. In both cases a historical background for understanding the character is presumed by the critic, be that Chaucer himself or the historic figure of Criseyde, only to serve as the opposition against which the image

[1] In The *Canterbury Tales,* for example, Chaucer is presented in at least three distinct ways: The Man of Law refers to him as a known author; he is a pilgrim who tells two "Tales"; and he retracts the entirety of the work (and more) at its end. The playfulness of the first two representations is undercut by the seemingly serious and grave nature of the retraction.

of the character is produced. To be clear: the image of a character, here, is not simply the perception of feelings evoked by the referent, which might more clearly be referred to as the sense of the character, but also the unity of the referent itself. While this image is often fallacious—like a flip-page book image—in the absence of a material referent for the name it takes on a nominal form.

In order to make this argument, the first chapter begins with an examination of the status of the relationship of the individual to his (in this case) self-image by considering the internalization of externalized social coding. In other words, the first chapter opens by examining the role that social codes, such as stereotypes, play not only in how an individual sees himself (the self-image), but the status that the individual places on that seeing of himself. That relationship is then contrasted with the development of the objectified relationship of the individual to others, which is an analogous relationship when those others are past authors (and authorities). In each relationship, the social determinations of the subject are the boundaries against which identity is written; the "self-image" is portrayed as singular through the accumulation and then rejection of other images (images of others). The *House of Fame* presents "Geffrey's" relationship to Chaucer as author by enacting the systems and processes by which such a designation comes to be; this demonstrates the social determinations of an author. Then, with *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer presents the relationship of other received characters, Troilus and Criseyde, to him and their authors before him; this demonstrates the social determinations by an author. In each case it is the characters in a story that are under study. However, by placing the characters under study in this manner, with a focus on their relationship not simply to Chaucer (as opposed to, say, a type or genre) but to the position Chaucer holds in the text by their virtue, Chaucer's authoritative status (or non-status) in the production of the figurative

writing itself can be examined as a socially-coded creation that is, in a manner of speaking, self-reflexive. Such a methodology, I believe, allows for a just engagement with the deep-structure of creation that is imparted by virtue of the relationship between an author and a character, the historical specificity of the author and the character, as well as the historical change that occurs across this spectrum through the text's continued existence over time.

In *Chaucer's House of Fame,* Sheila Delany suggests that, "Since art holds a mirror up to critics as well as to life, it is hardly surprising that generations of readers have found their own images reflected in Chaucer's work" (1). Indeed mirroring, its reflections and representations, doubling and distancing, has a long history as a concept in literary works; as a concept, "mirroring" has served not only as a metaphor but also as a model for art. From Socrates' cave to Narcissus seeing only himself in the pond, through Hamlet's conscience making cowards of us all and back into Prufrock's etherized patient, "mirroring" stands not only for a visualization of a place reflecting life, but also as the place from which humans reflect on life—or, at least, a certain form of life. In providing a metaphorical embodiment for the mental experience of seeing a reflective (meditative, spectral, absorbed) image, "mirroring," it has been argued, functions "to establish a relationship between an organism and its reality" (78). Lacan's formulation of mirroring as "a temporal dialectic that decisively projects the individual's formation into history" (78), though failing as a universal formulation for subjectivity,[2] succeeds

[2] "One measure of the value, truth or explanatory power of a theory is its ability to predict novel facts or at least to accommodate facts that were not taken into account when the theory was originally formulated. If epistemological maturation and the formation of a world picture were dependent upon catching sight of oneself in a mirror, then the theory would predict that congenitally blind individuals would lack selfhood and be unable to enter language, society or

if (and only if) that history is taken to be an intellectually received history, such as literary history or the art to which Delany refers, and the temporal dialectic to be a metaphorical structure (hence "mirroring" instead of "the mirror stage") with multiple forms of realization. However, Delany's problematic assertion that readers are able to find their own images—and necessarily do—presumes both a self-knowledge and singularity that will be more clearly addressed in Chapter Two when the dream-image and the production of the authoritative image in Chaucer's *House of Fame* is taken up. For now, it may be more accurate to say that "mirroring" presents a structure of engagement whereby a fictional image of the self that is not merely a metaphor is produced.

Certainly, the aforementioned literary characters are intellectually derived constructs drawn from intellectual desires and serving intellectual goals, more or less.[3] Lacking any form of corporeality, the characters exist as spectral fragmentations of these desires and goals—and yet many readers feel these characters to be in some way akin to them. The affinity that is felt by some for fictional identities may very well participate in the structure of subjectivity, but that question should be placed in abeyance. If the concern here is with images of the self, specifically

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the world at large. There is no evidence whatsoever that this implausible consequence of the theory is borne out in practice." (Tallis, 153)

[3] "To be or not to be" is not a real question as the consideration itself is already an affirmation of a particular mode of being. As Judith Butler states, "the terms that constrain the option to 'being' and 'not being' are precisely those that 'call for' another kind of response" (25). Far from being a "modern" problem, this issue was a well-argued and thoroughly debated problem (derived from Aristotle) in the medieval period. See page 35, concerning Walter Chatton's *propositio mea*, as well as the Appendix entry on Walter Chatton.

with the finding of these images, the manner in which the images are rigidly defined, that is, picked out or named must be prioritized over the sense such referents impart. Both names *Lacan* and *Hamlet* provide suitable grammatical subjects for an arguable proposition and, as such, are able to participate equally in the logic of naming, though each name picks out a different type of entity. While philosophers of language have focused intently on what differentiates non-existent from existent named entities, the critical community has only as yet a surface understanding of what brings the two together and allows readers to find images of themselves in the fiction (a facsimile, or likeness of face, will not suffice in explaining how these things that do not live, breathe or die are like us).[4] Both Chapter Two and Chapter Three take up the question of naming and examine it in regards to, first, what it rigidly structures and, second, how it calls upon those who use the name to attend to it.

The theory of interpellation states that the naming of the subject is a reductive process that functions through the concretization of abstract characteristics into the rigid name. Like Lacan's metaphor, Louis Althusser's interpellation through hailing is best understood not for its historical narrative but for what it demonstrates.[5] Althusser himself said that "every metaphor . . .

[4] Characters present an interesting conflation of metaphor and simile; the success of an identification with a character by the reader requires the character to *be like*, or at least have a characteristic (or characteristics) that *is like* (or *are like*) the reader or someone known to the reader. The experience of fiction is rationally challenged by the Aristotelian principle of non-contradiction, which seeks to distinguish between what something is and what something is like.

[5] See Butler: "If we accept that the scene is exemplary and allegorical, then it never needs to happen for its effectivity to be presumed. Indeed, if it is allegorical in Benjamin's sense, then the

suggests something, makes something visible. What?" (90); it is not just that something is visible in a metaphor, but that a well devised metaphor produces a concrete image of something that lacks visibility without the structuring of the metaphor. For Lacan, mirroring is "a drama whose internal pressure . . . turns out fantasies that proceed from a fragmented image of the body . . . to the finally donned armor of an alienating identity . . . with its rigid structure" (78). For Althusser, mirroring "is constitutive of ideology and ensures its functioning" (122). Clearly, naming is an ideological practice of individuation: it is what sets man apart from and as master over the animals and the earth in the Judeo-Christian tradition.[6] In being a practice, naming is also a part of history, indeed a constitutive part, through its repetition and recurrence. While the historical validity of both Lacan and Althusser's fictions are best understood metaphorically, what is visible in each act of mirroring is the opposition between the subject and an embodied structure that defines the subject as singular (and visible). For Althusser the subject is captured in the mirroring, that is, the individual is made into the subject that can then be referenced as "the individual" by calling it that; for Lacan, the subject is not quite captured by the mirroring, but must act as if it were through the fantasy of the donned armour and its rigid protection against an alienating identity. Whether the individual is fully captured in the image of the subject or not, what remains constant in each metaphor is the manner in which the reader identifies not only with each of the characters such that their experience is considered to be alike, but with the characters as representations of what is often (problematically) called consciousness.

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process literalized by the allegory is precisely that which resists narration, that is, that exceeds the narrativizability of events" (6)

[6] See Derrida, "The Animal That Therefore I Am," 383-387.

In "Consciousness Doth Make Subjects of Us All," Judith Butler accepts the Althussarian model of the subject as the Lacanian "rigid armour." This allows her to posit (via Agamben) a "potentiality that remains unexhausted by any particular interpellation" (Butler 26), and which "outruns and counters the conditions of its existence" (25) as a possible rebel force against interpellation (and normalization). The literary status of each metaphor is thereby restored—in that neither actually demonstrates what it is to "be"—but what it looks like to be, given a representation and a narrative (performance). If this is correct, the subject as a representation of a particular notion of consciousness is merely but profoundly a character in our lives: an authoritative self-image. It is not consciousness itself. This idea will be further developed throughout this thesis, with Chapter Two looking at the narrative production of the image (through the character of the "man of gret auctorite") and Chapter Three the historical experience of the production (through the characters of *Troilus and Criseyde*). I say "image" and "it," but, as will be shown, the singularity (and totality) of the image is itself a part of the fiction.

In *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, Lee Paterson suggests that, "As generations of readers know, Chaucer was fascinated with what literary criticism has traditionally called 'character,' and defined it as one term in an oppositional dialectic constituted on the other side by history—by which I mean both that persistent presence of the past and the pressure of social realities" (11). In taking "that persistent presence of the past" to be akin to "that potentiality that remains unexhausted by any particular interpellation" and the pressure of social realities to be interpellation's "hail," the structure for understanding "character" again follows closely that which has been used for the subject (with the reservations that have already been made). Indeed, the Chaucer referenced as the historical subject is drawn into that history, literary history, via social forces. But what is more, there is something that outruns those social forces and declares

itself in an overflowing manner. Throughout Chaucer's work, there is a continual affirmation of his existence outside literary history in his act of reproducing that history, and I utilize a nuanced definition of behabitive speech acts in order to make this demonstration in Chapter Three.

The Conclusion rounds out all these issues and makes clear the relevance of this work in its current context. For readers unfamiliar with any of the terms, concepts or figures referenced thus far or throughout this thesis, or unfamiliar with the manner in which I employ them, a concise Appendix appears at the end of the document.

CHAPTER I

The Role of the Mirroring in the Production of Authorial Identity; or, The Authoritative Appearance of the Self-Image to the Individual

> We are unknown we knowers to ourselves, we men of knowledge—and with good reason. We have never sought ourselves—how could it happen that we should ever find ourselves? . . . Present experience has, I am afraid, always found us "absent-minded": we cannot give our hearts to it—not even our ears! Rather, as one divinely preoccupied and immersed in himself into whose ear the bell has just boomed with all its strength the twelve beats of noon suddenly starts up and asks himself: "what really was that which just struck?" so we sometimes rub our ears *afterward* and ask, utterly surprised and disconcerted, "what really was that which we have just experienced?" and moreover: "who *are* we really and, afterwards as aforesaid, count the twelve trembling bell-strokes of our experience, our life, our *being*—and alas! Miscount them.—So we are necessarily strangers to ourselves, for us the law "Each is furthest from himself" applies to all eternity—we are not "men of knowledge" with respect to ourselves. (Nietzsche, 451)

Nietzsche opens *On the Genealogy of Morals* with a simple question: How could it happen that we should ever find ourselves, given that we are unknown to ourselves? "We" do not even have clear terminology for speaking of such matters: "ourselves" functions as both a grouping for the individual knowers' collective "selves" as well as a scattering within each individual knower's individual "selves." The layers upon layers of "selves" make matters even more difficult as "we" cannot get outside "ourselves" to look for ourselves. But is this all just a

nice fiction? Nietzsche's example of the absent-minded man lost in reflection only to be awakened by the bell plays elegantly upon double meaning in his question, "What really was that which just struck?"; because the man that is lost in himself and the man that asks the question are portrayed as not sharing the same temporal state, there is seemingly a multiplicity of states inside a fixed identity. Readers engaged in the fiction are meant to be "struck" by the power those church bells have to reorder consciousness into a now and then, to give to consciousness a feeling of comfort that secures the present, and to render the past state a distant and empty memory in both the representation of the character and of "ourselves" as "we" are pulled into that character. So it would seem there is not only a difference but also a distance in ourselves between ourselves, but just exactly what is meant by this is as yet unclear.

What is clear is that this image of the reflecting man presents something in which readers can identify a specific appearance: the man is like us. But of course, literary characters are not all that much like humans: they are not bound by the same physical limitations of brains, hearts, bodies and the world. This chapter develops the necessary distinctions for clarifying the difficulties present in the terminological limits of this investigation into the appearance of "ourselves" in images of "ourselves" (characters). These distinctions serve as the basis for comparing the singular image of the self (such as the "man of gret auctorite" in *The House of Fame*) and the multiple images of "ourselves" (as in the characters in *Troilus and Criseyde*).

Looking at a singular image of the self involves the process of individuation, separating out a singularity from the world around it and informing it. While modern theorists have a tendency to posit the historical point of individuation with Descartes, it is imperceptive to presume that medieval persons had no sense of an individual self—particularly those familiar to some extent with nominalism. If *cogito ergo sum* is true, then it applies universally; if it is

something Descartes made up, then it only applies insofar as the fiction is allowed to apply by the critics that reiterate it. At the very least, medieval people each possessed notions of what Elizabeth Fowler has termed "social persons." According to Fowler, "Social persons are sets of expectations built in [a person's] mind by experience, and they are notions of what it is to be a person" (3). In presenting differentiated types of persons as well as common, traditional and generalized traits of such persons, "social persons" can be taken as a euphemistic version of what is more commonly known as stereotypes.[7] The Cartesian self is itself a stereotype *par excellence*, if "stereotype" is taken to mean a commonly held opinion about a type of person, insofar as it has been utilized to differentiate "the modern man" from both "the pre-modern man" and "the animal." Like "ourselves," these social persons too come upon us in layers.[8]

Fowler explains that while the "body" of the Knight in Chaucer's "General Prologue" serves to designate the individual to be investigated, what makes up the character of the Knight is the layering of social persons that the reader recognizes in the image of the character presented through his portrait: He is a pilgrim, a crusader, as meek as a maiden, a mercenary, a man on a

[7] Fowler in all probability avoids the term *stereotypes* for its negative connotations. Her project aims to use social persons as rallying points for groups of individuals; labelling the term *woman* as a "stereotype" would impart some negativity to the grouping. Though the aim of the project is laudable, I am not certain if *social persons* is really able to elide the issue at hand (the attribution of socially normative groupings to individuals).

[8] Often, human so-called development is perceived, especially by those in the humanities, as a historical layering of new modes of humanity upon older modes, with privilege always to the more recent representation. In literature, this is denoted through classical, medieval, early modern, modern, postmodern and global periodizations.

horse, and more (she counts thirteen social persons in his portrait). Each of these social persons merges as fluttering "templates" creating "the illusion of depth" (10) in the false singularity of an image that is multiple "like a flip-page book or a film that we perceive as integral" (10). As the multiple images coalesce to a singular image, this image is continuously read back against each other image "in a kind of dialectical shuttle" (10). The dialectic creates tension between incompatible images that forces the reader to make second level choices: How can the Knight be both "as meeke as is a mayde" ("The General Prologue," 69) and a mercenary? Drawing upon the Medieval Bestiary, Fowler likens the determination of singularity from the mass of convergence to the way in which a mother cub must lick her unformed baby into shape.[9] The term she chooses for this action is *habitus*, which she defines quite simply as "the human being socialized" (12). Habitus as a process is based in the habitual recurrence of images cultivated "as a mode of making ourselves understood in the social world" (12) and "shapes character as well as the body" (11). When normalized social persons are brought into conflict in the single image of one body it forces the reader to make both judgements about that body, its gestures, poses, etc. and about the fit of those stereotypes more broadly.

But characters do not have bodies; we just say they do and imagine them as such. In extrapolating backwards from social persons to living people, it is easy to forget that the body produced through the flip-page book is only an "illusion of depth." Perhaps the issue at hand is the concept of "the body" itself. When it is said that a character has a body, there are two things that seem to be meant: that the character has a unified ontology that is uniquely and continuously present in the fiction (one) that the reader imagines or is told looks like the sorts of things that have corporeal bodies in our world (two). It is seemingly obvious that characters' "bodies" are

[9] See Arnott.

only representations of bodies, but the critical observance of this distinction is not always maintained.[10] When confronting seemingly incompatible images of a character, as in the Prioress's portrait with the lady who loves and cries and the nun who loves and cries, it must be held in mind that the Prioress cannot feel love at all, cannot cry; she can only be said to, and her being said to is done for a reason.

The embodying of characters is often comingled with the disembodying of narrators from authors. This is particularly true in Chaucer studies where the individual "Tales" of *The Canterbury Tales* are often treated as psychoanalytic sessions from which to analyze the character of the teller set out in "The Prologue." A.C. Spearing relates, "The popularity of narrative voice as a means of interpretation has been such that it has ceased to be seen as a device based on a theory and is now simply accepted by most readers of Chaucer as an obvious reality" (717). So obvious, that it is not even problematic for Delany to credit the critics' ability to find themselves in the art to a necessary condition of the art. Not only do the readers Spearing alludes to forget that the production of a character's body is an illusion of the narrative, but the "common sense" notion that stories have tellers—that speech comes before writing—creates narrative bodies that are decided to exist prior to the narrative (728). One clear example exists with "The Knight's Tale": Even though the Knight's "Tale" existed in some form or other before the character of the Knight in *The Canterbury Tales* was created, as soon as there existed a "body" referred to as "the Knight," there were critics ready to see the "Tale" as recreated by that character ("The Knight*'s* Tale"). The lines of the poem become invested with clues as to the psychological background for the utterances—what does *he* really mean when he says that—

[10] See Bynum.

whether or not that "he" preceded the lines of poetry.[11] The poem has a deeper—or at least different—meaning by virtue of the fictive body to which it is now said to have emanated from.

Once readers have the name of a character—even a placeholder such as *the narrator* will function—they can order themselves within the fiction; the world makes more sense when somebody familiar is narrating it, everything else can be doubted. Whether this should be called the modern practice of subjectification, *cogito ergo sum*, or the medieval worldview no longer matters. The internalization of externalized social coding produces in the fiction an image that readers recognize as familiar: the character has a body; the story is being told by someone. While this might comfort the reader, worlds where everything works are not worlds that Chaucer tends to create. Chaucer challenges the reader, as detailed in the following chapters, to go beyond the "common sense" experience of the text and to focus on the production—something Chaucer takes great pains to foreground—in addition to the product.

This foregrounding of production is most evident in Chaucer's repeated utilization of the phrase "my matere" in relation to the act of storytelling. Primarily, Chaucer uses *my matere* to re-establish the narrative focus on the story being told. Often, however, the digression does not stray from the historical story but from Chaucer's contextualization of the story. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, for example, Chaucer refers to the destruction of Troy as "a long digression / Fro my matere" ("Book I," 142-3), which here refers to the love story of Troilus and Criseyde. In a sense, Chaucer's "matere" presents a habitus-like structure: *my matere* refers first to the shaping of the characters against the social context of the story.

[11] For a sustained textual examination of the ontological issues put forward by "The Knight's Tale," see Finnegan, "A Curious Condition of Being."

Alternatively, in the case of the Prioress's portrait, the Prioress seems to present two contradictory social persons, the nun and the lady. Fowler suggests, "The ideological problems of fit have a fleshly expression in her description: the Prioress somehow seems to be a character whose animal body has not been properly shaped for the two persons—nun and lady—it aspires to occupy" (15). But the "somehow" rests exactly in the falsity of the application of an "animal body," as if the character could be taken out of the context of the narrative description. As if she were really being gazed upon by someone who was telling us what she seemed to be. As if she actually had an animal body being shaped. As intellectually engaging as it might be for some readers, it is not necessary to determine which of these persons the Prioress "is," which stereotype "fits," because she cannot fully become either: she can only exist exactly how she seems to.[12]

That the Prioress "seems" to be all these things is clearly indicated in her Portrait: her appearance is described three times as "semely/semyly" (GP 123, 136, 151), meaning "seemingly" or "becoming," in the sense of proper appearance. However, her propriety or impropriety is not an objective fact of her character meant to be determined by us, but a description made in a narrative act of fictively witnessing her (thereby punning on her

[12]Imagine that instead of being presented with a short narrative portrait of the Prioress, the reader were given a long narrative in which it was revealed that the Prioress was not a nun at all but an undercover lady who had only been pretending to be a nun for all those years. How hard that would have been on Madame Egalentyne! But of course, it would not have been hard at all: *she* never had to do anything. It is only in the reader's imagination that things are difficult for her. So too, that is where the "fit" of the stereotypes succeed or fail, whether or not they are even contradictory.

seemliness). Here "matere" is not a pre-existent thing to be formed, but the forming itself. The ambiguity in her character is not in who she is, but in who she is said to be. William Orth has maintained that "the point of the ambiguity in the Prioress's portrait is to make final conclusions impossible [. . . It] is a rhetorical device employed strategically to draw our attention toward a particular subject: the possibilities and problems that obtain in the operation of performatives" (200). This drawing of our attention toward a particular subject brings forward the appearance of the character while backgrounding the one employing the rhetorical device. Thus, in the case of the Prioress's portrait, the "narrator" is a contingent product of a narrative act that seeks to hide its narratability. That is, the "General Prologue" diminishes the "I that saw" the characters so as to foreground the characters themselves as "bodies" to be investigated.

Conversely, in the dream vision *House of Fame*, the "I that saw" foregrounds the narrative character as the predominant body to be investigated. This is particularly evident during the opening of the retelling of the story of Dido and Aeneas (151, 162, 174, 193, 198, 209, 211, 219, 221). Unlike the narrative act in the Prioress's portrait, where the narrator cannot be seen outside of the description, the dream vision explicitly asks the reader through its form to presume the prior existence of the one narrating: it is always an "I" that had a dream. That Chaucer chooses to call his narrator in that poem Geffrey further establishes the appearance of priority in the one said to have had the dream to the telling of the dream itself. This presumption is called into question in *The House of Fame* through a complex disassociation of the authority and priority of that "I witness." The reader is lead to believe that this "I" not only has witnessed this dream and is retelling it to us, but is witnessing this dream in retelling it to us. This calls into question the reader's ability to separate the prior existence of "Geffrey" outside the writing from

the writing itself and creates a sense of doubt and distance in the relationship between "Geffrey" and Chaucer.

What Chaucer is able to do in *The House of Fame* by "[bringing] the process of narration into the foreground—not the peculiarities of any particular narrator, but narration itself, its artistry, its difficulties, its shortcomings, its reliance on sources that are incomplete or incompletely known, its inevitable failure to correspond precisely to the contours of reality" (Spearing 733), is elevated to the level of "tragedye" in *Troilus and Criseyde* through his sustained handling of received characters. In relating his "matere," Chaucer brushes aside the "I witness" accounts of the Trojan War offered by Homer, Dares the Phrygian and Dictys of Crete ("Book I" 146-7), choosing instead to foreground the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde. The re-contextualization of character that occurs with Troilus and Criseyde—the focus on relationships over so-called historically significant events—presents a thorough development in the process first seen in *The House of Fame* with Chaucer's handling of Dido and Aeneas. If *The House of Fame* laid out the theory for the process, *Troilus and Criseyde* is the practice.

In many ways, *Troilus and Criseyde* is a story about social context. As such, it is still very much a presentation of history, which Chaucer also makes clear in his digressions. In questioning the identity of the character outside narrative context, names become an important point of reference—indeed they are the designator of that referent. If the characters under study are fictional entities meant to serve the function of a narrative, such as the "man of gret auctorite" or the characters of *The Canterbury Tales*, that is one matter; if they are the names of historical people and the fictions are meant to serve the name, as with *Troilus and Criseyde* or Dido and Aeneas, it is another. Conceptually, as in Althusser's interpellation metaphor, Lacan's mirror or Nietzsche's dreamer, there is an individual that is said to exist first outside of some

context but that is then brought to understanding through that context. In each case, the "originary" individual is impossible to recover but demonstrably existent. Moreover, there is not even a way to call that person a person or an individual because, in doing so, that person (or individual) is contextualized within an already defined narrative. In telling the stories of Troilus and Criseyde and Dido and Aeneas, Chaucer foregrounds the role that the narrative act and its social determinations play in the reception of individuals throughout history. Examining these characters in light of the conceptual structure outlined above places a focus on the manner in which the shaping of characters through context structures the reception of the historic individual.

That Chaucer demonstrates the contingency of the narrative act through the comedic appearance of "a man of gret auctorite" in *The House of Fame* in no way diminishes the serious nature that he imparts to the act in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer's portrayal of the "man of gret auctorite" imparts upon *Troilus and Criseyde* a metaphor for making visible Chaucer's self-consciousness concerning his role in shaping the reception of characters. Chaucer does not write to "[present] himself as a dominant form of expression that claims to impose itself" (Deleuze, "Literature and Life," 225) on his subject matter, so as to subject that matter to a so-called mastery. While it is clear that Chaucer makes explicit changes to the characters, the foregrounding of the narrative and its social context and contextualization, through his repeated reference to his "matere," makes clear that he does so consciously and with reservations: his actions are not without apology ("The Parson's Tale," 1080-1090). In foregrounding himself in his writing, Chaucer is attempting to find a manner of writing that will allow him to open past stories to new forms of becoming while maintaining, in some manner, the status of the stories.

Maintaining the status of a story does not always mean maintaining the authoritative status of its author. In the case of the story of Dido and Aeneas in *The House of Fame*, while the importance of the story is maintained, its authors, Virgil and Ovid, are pulled into conflict with each other such that a definitive view of the story is not possible. The two views, in this case, are not intended to be held simultaneously; the astute reader is expected to make a choice. As the House of Rumour makes visible, stories are affected by those that hear and retell them; there is that which remains recognizable and unchanged, and that which is reshaped around it. For Chaucer, medieval Aristotelianism provided the core expository models for engaging with this phenomenon. Chaucer most closely encountered this philosophy through Boethius, whom he translated and who was also a major influence on *The House of Fame* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. The Boethian model of the world posits free will as an intrinsic aspect of the human experience of an always already given (predestined) narrative context. The human experience of rational thought is further to be considered the mirror of that narrative structure and its truth. Chaucer's poetry questions the efficacy of these rational views by giving form to his concerns, feelings and emotions that cannot be surmised by such models: the deepest meaning of his "matere."

CHAPTER II

The Role of Aesthetics in the Dissemination of Authorial Identity; or The Authoritative Development of Dido and Aeneas in *The House of Fame*

> Atte laste y saugh a man,
> Which that y [nevene] nat ne kan;
> But he semed for to be
> A man of gret auctorite. . . . (*The House of Fame*, 2155-8, ellipsis in orig.).

When Chaucer speaks of his "matere," he customarily posits a personal relationship between himself, what he is trying to say, and the complexity he finds in the story as he has received it. For Chaucer, *matere* does not refer to a monistic body, in the reductive or simple sense, pre-existent to the context of its appearance in the text. His "matere" is never simply the *causa materialis* of the work; it is more than simply the old books and authorities whom Chaucer struggles against and works from. It is a confluence of past stories, what he has found in those stories, his feelings toward them, his art, poetry in general and what he is trying to say, and the context each and all. Likewise, it appears to be the basic tenet of the *House of Fame* that authority does not possess a singular, discrete ontology. Rather, as the appearance of the "man of gret auctorite" (2158) attests, authority exists as a causal relation inhering in multiple bodies coalesced through the accumulation of intentional phenomena into an indiscernible singularity. It is unclear exactly whom the "man of gret auctorite" is. In the case of Geoffrey Chaucer, Chaucer the author is recorded in and through his literary corpus,[13] distinctively in *The House of Fame*,

[13] "The evidence for dating Chaucer's poems is different in kind from the evidence we have about many important events in Chaucer's life. The life records copiously document Chaucer's

where the dream vision form allows Chaucer to explore freely the possibilities and potentialities of authorial creation itself, and the manner in which one becomes an author.

Unlike other dream visions, which possess an overtly cyclical nature (the dreamer awakes from the dream in order to tell the dream),[14] *The House of Fame* ends at the depths of a dream. The dreamer finds himself in Venus' temple, where he encounters the story of Dido and Aeneas before stepping out of the temple into a barren desert. Lost and scared, his prayer to be saved "Fro fantome and illusion" (*The House of Fame*, 493) is followed by the slow appearance of a golden eagle, reminiscent as it is of Dante's eagle, who will serve as the dreamer's guide.[15] Grasped in the eagle's talons, the dreamer is guided by the eagle upwards toward the House of Fame, where the reader is told the dreamer will find all sorts of other love stories and "tydynges" from which he can build his literary reputation (which at this point comprises only the consumption of stories). However, the dreamer does not learn any stories in Fame's House; dismayed that people are receiving fame not for their art but at random, preferring, as he tells to the stranger he meets, "That no wight have my name in honde" (1877) as "I wot myself best how

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employment, his salary, his address, his travels, and other important milestones, occasions, and relationships. But the official documents are silent about Chaucer's literary preoccupations; they do not even guarantee the identity of Chaucer the civil servant and Chaucer the poet" (Lynch, "Dating Chaucer," 3).

[14] *The Book of the Duchess*, for example, ends with the dreamer thinking "Thys ys so queynt a sweven / That I wol, be processe of tyme, / Fonde to put this sweven in ryme / As I kan best, and that anoon" (1330-3).

[15] See Dante, *Purgatario* 9.19-20, 2.17-24; *Paridiso* 18-20. Also: Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.252-57; Ovid, *Metamorphosis* 10.155-61; *Riverside Chaucer*, Explanatory Notes 499-508, page 982.

y stonde" (1878), the dreamer heads downward to the labyrinthine House of Rumour. Having been dropped into the House of Rumour by the eagle, the dreamer watches indeterminate stories spin and turn until "fals and soth compouned / Togeder fle for oo tydynge" (2108-9) straight on up to the House of Fame. After the dreamer witnesses this, there is a great commotion and the dream ends with the dreamer looking upon "a man of gret auctorite" (2158). While the evident narrative does not suggest the structure of return (ending as it does in the depths of a dream), given the mechanizations and machinations of the House of Fame, the generic structure of return is actually reiterated in a decidedly complex manner that calls the production of the dream itself back into question.

In *The House of Fame*, Chaucer utilizes the structure and genre of the dream vision to create a space for exploring philosophical antagonisms. These antagonisms involved the growing attentiveness and scientific (Aristotelian) impartment to the notional understanding of existence and the dominant ideological explanation for events that maintained the authority of Christian doctrine, based as it was in realist (Platonic) formulations. Chaucer's concern with these antagonisms first and foremost involves the status of authorial creation. The dream vision presented to Chaucer a form through which to explore his personal literary experience, specifically as such experience is presented and understood through representational content (dreams, images, narratives, etc.). By placing philosophical concepts into a dream landscape, Chaucer is able to use literary devices in order to open these concepts to a subjective engagement. Dante, whom Chaucer was influenced by, famously creates representative structures that are based in rational and philosophical arguments as the structure for his "dream vision." These aesthetic have histories with both personal and political implications.

Drawing upon the work of Dante, Chaucer creates a landscape in *The House of Fame* that gives form to philosophical issues. However, whereas Dante aims for perfection, Chaucer overwhelms his aesthetics with their histories. In echoing the philosophical debates of William Ockham and Walter Chatton,[16] Chaucer addresses authorship from the level of elementary sounds to grand fame. Chaucer responds not only to the literary creation and tradition and the attribution of fame, but also to the possibility of personal, artistic expression under an arbitrary yet dominant authority, Fame. Utilizing the work of Pierre Bourdieu, Glenn A. Steinberg claims that "poetic tradition is the immanent history of past struggles over literary legitimacy in the field of cultural production, still present by implication in contemporary struggles and in each author's contributions of professed novelty within those struggles" (184). While Steinberg's view of this struggle is far too Oedipal to account accurately for the multipart aesthetics of *The House of Fame*, his comparison between Dante and Chaucer is highly rewarding. Steinberg is almost right when he suggests that "Chaucer seems to imply that poetic tradition persists and evolves primarily through opposition, struggle, and discord" (184), witnessed as it is in the close of *The House of Fame* (2145-54).

Chaucer certainly viewed poetry as something that transformed over time. Speaking of the changing language of love poetry he writes:

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as wel in love as men now do;

[16] See Appendix entries on Walter Chatton and William Ockham.

> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
>
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages. (*Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book II," 22-8)

However, there is little outside the *ad hominem* arguments for Chaucer's egotism to suggest that he saw poetry and its tradition as "evolving," and even Steinberg's conclusions suggest Chaucer's lack of ease with such "pretentions" (196). Further, when Steinberg suggests that, "[to] make their mark, young writers must push into the past established figures who have temporarily stopped the clock" (184), he introduces a limitation presented not by the text but by an Oedipalization of the concept of opposition: "young writers" do not push into the past "established figures" anymore than they carry them forward and push them into the future. A.J. Minnis, working with medieval literary theory, has established the presence of a countervailing desire in the period that does not impart an inherently linear understanding of the production of the text to the relationship of the author to both the text and its past.

For Minnis, drawing upon a concept advanced by Bernard de Chartres, the later medieval period was "a period in which men saw themselves as dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants, i.e., the 'ancients'" (12). These giants were known as *auctores*, and "No 'modern' writer could decently be called an *auctor*" (12):

> In a literary context, the term *auctor* denoted someone who was at once a writer and an authority, someone not merely to be read but also to be respected and believed. According to medieval grammarians, the term derived its meaning from four main sources: *auctor* was supposed to be related to the Latin verbs *agere* 'to act or perform', *augere* 'to grow' and *auieo* 'to tie', and to the Greek noun *autentim* 'authority'. An *auctor* 'performed' the act of writing. He brought something into being, caused it to 'grow'. In the more specialised sense related to

> *auieo*, poets like Virgil and Lucan were *auctores* in that they had 'tied' together their verses with feet and metres. To this the idea of achievement and growth was easily assimilated the idea of authenticity or 'authoritativeness'. (10).

The notion of an evolution in literary production privileges proximal products as being of a higher order, marked by difference with the past. "Growth" more accurately reflects the medieval position in its ability to capture a connectedness to that past without positing a directionality of development. Moreover, authority was not established against tradition, but with and through tradition. While any conception of tradition inherently holds the presence of time, and it was only through time that authoritativeness could be established, medieval literary practice had a flexible relationship to the actual process of time.

The designation of *auctor* was "an accolade bestowed upon a popular writer by those later scholars and writers who used extracts from his works as sententious statements or *auctoritates*, gave lectures on his works in the form of textual commentaries, or employed them as literary models" (10). To be selected for such use, a literary work needed both "intrinsic worth" and "authenticity" (10). "Intrinsic worth" required the work to be justifiable in accord with Christian doctrine (the deeper Truth of the work), while "authenticity" tautologically required the work to be the work of an *auctor*. The latter was easily remedied through the attribution "of currently popular works to older and respected writers" (11), while the former presented some difficulty. For medieval schoolmen, "[the] Bible was the authoritative book *par excellence*" (11) and presented the definitive Truth on all matters. Fable was "[at] the other end of the scale" and "could be dismissed . . . as lying" (10). Second to the bible in terms of authority were the teachings of the Church Fathers.

With the rise of the *philosophus*, such conventional, hierarchical axioms began to be investigated. In his prologue to *Sic et Non,* Abelard presents one viewpoint on scriptural and patristic contradictions:

> In the vast amount of writings which exist, even those of the holy Fathers, appear not only to differ from each other, but even to be contradictory. Consequently, one should not make rash judgement on those by whom the world itself is to be judged . . . We must not presume to accuse of lying, or despise as erroneous, those to whom our Lord said: 'He that heareth you, heareth me, and he who despiseth you despiseth me' [Luke 10:16]. So we must have regard to our own inadequacy, and believe that it is we who lack God's grace to understand, rather than they who lacked it in their writings" (Minnis and Scott 87).

While Abelard was able to accept a stable determination of authority, not all medieval people were so quick to accept appeals to human ignorance as non-fallacious truths. Josephine Bloomfield has made the case that rather than desiring to present himself as an *auctor*, Chaucer's "engagement with the commentary tradition [in *The Legend of Good Women*] and in other dream visions [such as *The House of Fame*] leads in exactly the opposite direction—to a destabilizing of *auctoritas* rather than a striving to achieve it" (127). While Bloomfield's dichotomy is misleading, she is right to note that the dream vision form allowed Chaucer to explore the possibilities and potentialities of authorial creation.

As the responsibility of the human agent in the writing of texts came more prominently into focus, new terminology entered into theological commentaries on *auctores* that served to designate better the extent the human agent held authority in literary matters. There was thus not only a chain of authority based on form, fable having none and scripture all, but also a chain of

authority based on the work done by the human agent in the creation of that form. At the highest authority was the *auctor*. According to St. Bonaventure:

> The method of making a book is fourfold. For someone writes the materials of others, adding or changing nothing, and this person is said to be merely the scribe. Someone else writes the materials of others, adding, but nothing of his own, and this person is said to be the compiler. Someone else writes both the materials of other men, and of his own, but the materials of others as the principal materials, and his own as annexed for the purpose of clarifying them, and this person is said to be the commentator, not the author. Someone else writes both his own materials and those of others, but his own as the principal materials, and the materials of others annexed for the purpose of confirming his own, and such must be called the author. (A. J. Minnis qtd. 94)

The scribe (*scriptor*) was seen to contribute nothing (save, perhaps, errors) to the text, and therefore had no authority. The compiler (*compilator*) was seen to add to a text by arranging it with other texts, but received next to no authority as he added nothing of his own to the text. The commentator (*commentator*) adds to a text only by explanation of the text for others. In adding to the text, the commentator could be seen to have some degree of authority, though he would not be considered an *auctor*. The author (*auctor*), in writing from himself, utilized the *auctoritas* of past *auctores* as support for his work, and because the opinions of the text could be clearly demarcated as his own, had the most authority. The chain thus ran like this: "God is the source of all *auctoritas*; after Him comes the human *auctor* who is responsible for what is actually said in a given text, and finally there is the person who compiles the sayings of the human *auctor*" (95).

This chain of authority is most clearly present in Chaucer's "Prologue" to his *Canterbury Tales,* where he both draws upon the chain and posits a divergent but agnate notion of authenticity. In medieval scholastic practice, the texts of *auctores* were accompanied by a prologue with explicit headings under which particular literary operations were to take place. In the twelfth-century, prior to the rise of Aristotelianism in the universities, these headings would appear in the following order: "the title of the work, the name of the author, the intention of the author, the material or subject matter of the work, its mode of literary procedure, its order or arrangement, its usefulness, and the branch of learning to which it belonged" (Minnis 4). As Aristotle's influence shifted modes of engagement with texts, so too did these titles shift:

> The 'Aristotelian prologue' was based on the four major causes which, according to Aristotle, governed all activity and change in the universe. Hence, the *auctor* would be discussed as the 'efficient cause' or motivating agent of the text, his materials would be discussed as the 'material cause', his literary style and structure would be considered as twin aspects of the 'formal cause', while his ultimate end or objective in writing would be considered as the 'final cause'. (A. J. Minnis 5)

Chaucer references the Aristotelian Prologue in his claim to have "soothly" (715) laid out "[th'] 'estaat [class], th' array [arrangement], the nombre, and eek the cause" (716) of *The Tales* in a "clause" (716). However, rather than locating authenticity in an *auctor*, Chaucer places the authenticity of his text in his ability to "reherce as ny as evere he kan" ("General Prologue," 732) the words and actions of his source(s). Chaucer solidifies the parallel between "The Prologue" and contemporary prologues on *auctores* by drawing a comparison between Christ and Plato:

> Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,

> And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
>
> Eek Plato seith, whoso kan hym rede,
>
> The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.
>
> Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
>
> Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
>
> Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.
>
> My wit is short, ye may wel understonde. (739-746)

While on the one hand drawing upon the authoritative literary tradition as support for his practice, Chaucer is at the same time stretching the acceptable limits of the commentary tradition through the incorporation of his subjective position. That is, the text to which this "Prologue" applies is not a past work of an *auctor*, but a work of fiction to follow, which is produced by the selfsame person who is providing the interpretative map for determining its truth-value. Chaucer has claimed the authenticity of his source, and this source, in essence, is his own creation. There were, of course, textual sources from which Chaucer drew, but as Barry A. Windeatt has claimed, Chaucer's marked ability is to "make something personal and distinctive by realizing the *potential* of what he found in his reading" (x, italics mine).

Chaucer destabilizes received authority so as to create a space for himself within the tradition of that received authority. Rather than disassociating himself from the tradition, as well as the oppositional structures and opinions within that tradition, Chaucer, in *The House of Fame*, creates an aesthetic based in the oppositions inherent in the reception and dispersal of the

authority of tradition. Theodor Adorno has advanced a theory of aesthetics that, as Maura Nolan has argued,[17] is aptly suited to an engagement with medieval art:

> Giving form to antagonisms does not reconcile or eliminate them. By appearing and determining all labour in the artwork, they become something essential: by becoming thematic in the aesthetic image, their substantiality emerges with all the more plasticity. . . . As the nonviolent integration of what diverges, however, the artwork at the same time transcends the antagonisms of existence without perpetrating the deception that they no longer exist. (Adorno 190)

It is this complexity of existence that permeates *The House of Fame* and has beset scholarship on the poem. Chaucer does not present new material through his place in literary tradition, but a reshaping of that material, his "matere." If Donald R. Howard is right and "[the] Chaucer we know is a creation of our own response to his works" (343), then *The House of Fame* stands as the premier work to unfold the fact that we know Chaucer only through the process of creation.[18] While Bloomfield is right that Chaucer's engagement with received authority suggests a desire to destabilize that authority (which is not necessarily the antithesis to the desire to attain authority that Bloomfield posits), the personal implications, responsibilities and pride of such action would not have been—and were not—lost on Chaucer. Minnis argues that Chaucer "was not prepared

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[17] See Nolan. Nolan claims to be "reading Adorno here 'on his head' by turning to the medieval antithesis of the modernity with which he is primarily concerned" (551) and, in doing so, she is able to draw from Adorno the logic (or sub-logic) of his project and demonstrate its applicability outside of the trappings of periodization.

[18] For a detailed look at the biographical material available and the problems arising from it concerning Chaucer's historical life, see Lynch, "Dating Chaucer."

to assume the role of 'lewd compilator' to whom no blame could accrue. On the contrary, he takes the blame for the sinful material that he wrote [. . . and] holds himself morally responsible for his writings" (208). Chaucer's poetry, particularly the dream visions where generic tropes play a significant role, "represents the outcome of a poetic process that has distilled a whole range of influences, models and allusions" (Windeatt ix) and poured out blended images that reflect his feelings towards these things.

In responding to the influence of the past *auctores* and present social views on authorship, Chaucer unfolds the literary history he receives in order to rewrite it in his own name. If Chaucer, in *The House of Fame*, is destabilizing the concept of authority only to take responsibility for the work ("The Parson's Tale," 1085),[19] the hierarchical chain of authority based in the Aristotelian Prologue, its relational properties, and its structure are all being called into question. The complications that arise in the destabilization of authoritative concepts and maxims were a growing concern for medieval philosophers. An increasing number of philosophers, with the rise of Aristotelian philosophy in the universities, questioned Platonic realist philosophy, choosing instead to posit a nominalist one derived from Aristotle's work. The importance that medieval nominalism presents to history lies not in what it said but what it was able to do: while the resistance to received authority proved fruitful to both sides of the debate, the manifestation of the antagonism as a countervailing force was able to change the very conceptions that people held about what was possible. While Chaucer might not have accepted

[19] Wherfore I biseke yow mekely, for the mercy of God, that ye preye for me that Crist have mercy on me and foryeve me my giltes; / and namely of my translacions and enditynges of wordly vanitees, the whiche I revoke in my retraccioun: / as is the book of Troilus; the book also of Fame . . ." ("The Parson's Tale," 1083-5).

the fit of either ideology, he most certainly recognized each ideology's failure to provide an accurate model for his personal experience of the world.

The medieval nominalist stance dictates, among many things, that God can do anything but contradict himself; the realist stance, though agreeing that God cannot contradict himself, questions the assertion that God can do anything by maintaining the existence of real relations. Rondo Keele has examined a debate that occurred between two Oxford scholars, the nominalist William Ockham and the realist Walter Chatton, in (latent) response to the Condemnation of 1277,[20] which expressly involves the necessity of existence for causal relations. For Ockham, God was an omnipotent being able to produce any substance, be that a person, such as Geoffery Chaucer, or a poem, such as *The House of Fame*. Thus, Ockham would have argued that God could, should he so choose, produce both Chaucer and Chaucer's *House of Fame*, independently, as each maintained a distinct ontology (*The House of Fame* and Chaucer are just things, or "creatures" in medieval philosophical terminology, and it is thus reasonable that an omnipotent being able to create the one thing could also create the other). Chatton, taking a realist stance that upheld a relational nature of things, might have argued that the possessive quality of Chaucer's *House of Fame* necessitated that, while God could produce *The House of Fame*, it would be impossible for God to produce Chaucer's *House of Fame* if Chaucer did not exist. The concerned question becomes the manner in which all authority can stem from God, yet the authority of the author—and through the author the text, as "[works] of unknown or uncertain authorship were . . . believed to possess an *auctoritas* far inferior to that of works which circulated under the names of *auctores*" (A. J. Minnis 11)—is necessarily dependent upon both a human chain of traditional

[20] Specifically "Article 98: 'That God cannot act with respect to an effect of a secondary cause without the secondary cause—Error" (qtd. Keele, "Can God," 406).

attribution as well as the independent agency required to satisfy the designation *auctor*. Ostensibly, this sets up the opposition between the House of Rumour and it multiplicity of stories and the House of Fame and its determination of each tiding's name and duration (*The House of Fame*, 2110-5).

While many people are familiar with Ockham's razor, namely, "a plurality ought not be posited without necessity" (Qtd. Keele 397),[21] Chatton's anti-razor (which Chatton referred to as *propositio mea*, and is thus also known as "the Chatton Principle" [397]) tends to be a less known philosophical device:

> Whenever an affirmative proposition is apt to be made true for actually existing things, if the two things, howsoever they are present according to arrangement and duration, cannot suffice to make the proposition true while another thing is lacking, then one must posit that other thing. (Qtd. and trans. Keele 397)

The standard medieval example for this problem of *res respectivae*,[22] or "respective entities," was color (Keele, 398), and followed from Aristotelian physics.[23] For our purposes, a respective entity, in the medieval philosophical view, is akin to *esse ad* ("being toward").[24] Post-medieval philosophy, as of late, generally posits respective entities as distinct ontological existents, though by no means is this universally accepted. That is, for a respective entity such as "tallness," a

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[21] More colloquially, "The simplest answer is usually the right one."

[22] See P.B. Taylor's "Chaucer's Cosyn to the Dede" for an insight into the relationship between *res*, *dede*, and *thinges*, in relation to translation and Boethius.

[23] For more on Aristotle's view on physics and its place in the medieval scholastic community see the Appendix entry on Aristotle.

[24] See Keele, "Can God," 399.

twenty-first century philosopher might understand "Plato is taller than Aristotle" to be making a metaphysical claim for the existence of two ontologically analogous objects (Plato, Aristotle) connected by "a third 'thing'" (398-399), which is being called "tallness." While such a view shares tenets with Chatton's realist principles, it is not precisely the view that Chatton himself promoted. A medieval philosopher would generally have understood the proposition as claiming the distinct ontological existence of only two substances (Plato, Aristotle), with the respective entity (relation) inhering in each as a non-equivocal dependent being, in this case founded in an accident (height). Accidents were further understood in two ways: absolute accidents, such as height or colour, and respective accidents, such as tallness or paleness (399). Respective accidents were seen to be founded in the absolute accident and to inhere in the substance (Plato, Aristotle). Kathryn Lynch has demonstrated the presence of this philosophical problem in Chaucer's *The Book of the Duchess*, through Chaucer's representation of colour and "sadness."[25] It should come as no surprise that such an epistemology should make its way into *The House of Fame*; all literary and linguistic significations make their way into the House of Fame. What is different in the latter poem, however, is the application of this epistemology. *The Book of the Duchess* presents the model "A*R*B" ("White is whiter than anybody" or "The Knight is blacker than everybody", with symbolic implications), so as to argue for a relational comparison supporting the medieval nominalist view of respective entities, which held that no respective accidents were "distinct from absolute things (i.e., from their own foundations, accidental or substantial)" (401). *The House of Fame* instead posits the model of "A*R*B" in a less definitively nominalist manner.

[25] See Lynch, "The *Book of the Duchess* as a Philosophical Vision: The Argument of Form."

While Chatton held that respective entities of similarity followed the general understanding outlined above, "respectives associated with *causality*, which Chatton referred to as *respectus modo potentiae* (respectives of power)" were "founded directly in the substances in which they inhere" (400). The production of a piece of artwork, for Chatton, could reasonably be seen to present causation as "reflected in real metaphysical qualities in [the artist] and [the art piece]" (400-401). That means that, if it is true that Chaucer produced *The House of Fame*, then the "having produced" adheres directly in Chaucer and the "being produced" in the poem. The presence of power as a metaphysical quality explains how, for medieval philosophers, all authority can stem from God, yet the authority of the author is necessarily dependent upon both a human chain of traditional attribution (a being towards) as well as the independent agency (power) required to satisfy the designation *auctor* (the real metaphysical qualities in the artist and the art piece). Chaucer presents this situation in *The House of Fame*, again and again, as an aesthetic structure.

In Fame's hall, pillars stand with and through the classical *auctores* upon them. Each pillar groups a discourse held up by its constituents. When Chaucer presents the authors who have written about Troy—Homer, Dares Phrygius, Dictys Cretensis, Guido delle Colonne, Geoffrey of Monmouth (who traced Briton royalty back to Troy), and the fictitious Lollius (Chaucer's claimed source for *Troilus and Criseyde*)—as standing upon an iron pillar, he explains that there also exists a relational property of envy[26] between these authors:

[26] Interestingly, this term plays upon the aurally similar *envoy*, meaning emissary, which would posit the referent as a distinct ontological entity, or third thing (another person). The accuracy of this term is therefore ironically the point that holds the meaning of the pillar together as a

> And ech of these, as have I joye,
> Was besy for to bere up Troye.
> So hevy therof was the fame
> That for to bere hyt was no game.
> But yet I gan ful wel espie,
> Betwex hem was a litil envye.
> Oon seyde that Omer made lyes,
> Feynynge in hys poetries,
> And was to Grekes favorable;
> Therfor held he hyt but fable. (1471-1480)

Given that fable held no essential authority in medieval literary interpretation, this is no small charge. The ontological status (or non-status) of "envye" dictates that it does not exist "between" the authors in a distinct sense, but rather that the accident in each points toward the other. In medieval critical literary practice, Homer was unquestionably an *auctor*, one whom Chaucer attempted "to 'cash in' on" (A. J. Minnis 210) many times throughout his corpus, suggesting that Chaucer believed Homer to hold at the very least a perceived historical authority. Dictys, the person Chaucer is referring to as saying Homer made lies, was also seen as an *auctor*, as well as considered to be a firsthand witness to the Trojan War. As fable represented a non-authoritative work, there is one *auctor* claiming the work of another *auctor* to be lacking truth, and thereby authority. What is most important about this passage, however, is that the grammatical status of "hem" and the nature of "envye" extend this charge to be a property of each author, not simply a

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cohesive construct. If the term is "misheard," the philosophical reality of the piece changes entirely.

disagreement between two of the group. The relationship between historical authority and the causal power of the artists is further complicated by time-dependent qualifications of an assertoric proposition; it either is or is not the case that Homer made lies, and this determination is dependent on the construction of that historicity's interpretation as a subsequent event to the causation, or making, of the thing itself. For the Chatton Principle to hold, it must be known that the statement is true. Whether or not *this* is or is not the case is not yet the point.

The dependency on future contingents for the truth value of certain propositions was a problem for grammarians and philosophers alike. Jacqueline T. Miller has argued that "[the] nature of authority was an issue built into the dream vision frame . . . because in the Middle Ages the status of dreams was itself an unresolved matter of frequent deliberation" (Miller 96). Medieval deliberations were scholastic in nature, meaning that participants looked to an authoritative text for the substantiation of the validity of their claims. Moreover, a unique characteristic of Chaucer's dream visions is the presence of books as factors inducing a dream (*The Book of the Duchess* 44-47; *The Parliament of Fowls* 22-29). The medieval authority to consult for the explanation and interpretation of a dream, if judged through Chaucer's corpus (*The Romance of the Rose* 7; *The Book of the Duchess* 284; *The Parliament of Fowls* 111; and "The Nun's Priest's Tale" 3123), was Macrobius's commentary on Cicero's *Somnium Scipionis*. As an authoritative text, Macrobius's commentary was also the subject of many subsequent medieval commentaries, which seem to critics the more likely source(s) for Chaucer's knowledge of Macrobius. Whether Chaucer is using contemporary commentaries or the original work itself throughout his corpus is of secondary importance to his engagement with Macrobius in *The House of Fame*, where Chaucer "uses the commentaries not so much as authorities [. . . but] as tools to unsettle the idea of authority" (Bloomfield 127). The rigidity of terms for the

classification of dreams is confounded by Chaucer's ambivalent use of the terms, most clearly with the discrepancy lost between *somnium* and *insomnium* when "Chaucer translates them in lines 9-25 of *The House of Fame* as *drem* and *sweven* respectively, then proceeds, in lines 30 to 52, to use the words interchangeably" (127), thus exponentially multiplying, in the sense of medieval *amplificatio*, the significance of the classification "by types, timing, and causes" (Ruffolo 328).

John of Salisbury, with whom Chaucer was more than likely familiar, was one of the more major contemporary dream theorists to provide a commentary on Macrobius's work. John's contributions to the interpretation of dreams furthered Macrobius's postulations concerning the representational content of thought, and the presentation of truth, in his explanation of the differentiation between representation and event:

> As the work of artists who imitate nature is surpassed by the works of nature herself, so the significance of events, which is much more intricate than meaning conveyed by words, requires much shrewdness for the interpretation of dreams and the elucidation of riddles and signs. (qtd. Clifford 157)

Chaucer seems to play on the notion of this inadequacy in language through his ambivalent utilization of *drem* and *sweven*, when he has the narrator claim "But why the cause is, noght wot I . . . For I of noon opinion" (*The House of Fame*, 52-54), suggesting that while he knows all the theoretical discourse, he does not know it in such a way as to allow him access to the natural cause of the dream. Such access to material causation by grammarians echoes the concerns that medieval philosophers were having about authorial creation: the extent to which the mental affectations of the individual shaped matter at hand. This claim frames Chaucer's reference to the authoritative commentaries of "grete clerkys, / That trete of this and other werkes" (*The*

House of Fame, 53-55), suggesting a double intention of the claim to have "noon opinion": On the one hand, while he has an opinion, his opinion is not *de facto* authoritative and is therefore discounted as existent, in the sense of being a metaphysical truth; on the other hand, Chaucer's claim is to not be of an opinion that he will "now make mensyon" (55). Overall, the reader is also invited to take the poem itself as the unfolding of Chaucer's opinion not only on the meaning of this particular dream vision, but on meaning in literary works more generally insofar as authoritativeness is concerned.

Because the medieval interpretation of dreams sought to locate the origin of a dream as a determining factor in the dream's authority, the distinction between internally induced and externally induced dreams was vital, at least in theory:

> [Externally] induced—that is, divinely inspired—dreams are legitimate and valuable; those created by man himself (out of his personal thoughts and activities, his daily experience, his psychological and physical condition) are classified as meaningless and insignificant. The individual's participation in composing his dream thus immediately and necessarily invalidates it; the only sanction for a dream derives from a source extrinsic to the mind of the dreamer. (Miller 96).

For Chaucer to mention himself, his psychological or physical condition, as the cause of the dream would be to render the dream insignificant, though it would not render the dream meaningless; the dream could have no *auctoritas*, but certainly it would present something (but what?) of a meaning to the poet. This, it would seem, would be Miller's point when she claims, "When the conventional standards of order and truth are rejected, a space is opened in which the individual vision or voice can emerge, however unqualified it may be, to be tested as its own

principle of authority" (101). While it must still be questioned what that voice would sound like, it is important to note that claims to a medieval voice are not metaphorical in nature. Further, speech and sound hold a privileged place of importance in the workings of *The House of Fame*.

Speech, for medieval philosophers, was understood in two ways: mentally and corporeally. Speaking mentally, Ockham tells us, was quite simply having "a [representational] mental act of thinking" (Ockham 34). Speaking corporeally referred to vocal speech, that is, human utterances of words. Ockham draws this distinction when explaining how angels, who lack corporeality, can speak to one another. Ockham continues this line of reasoning and suggests that it is possible for an individual to will it that another individual not hear his "words," regardless of the presence of that other individual. That is, one can allow for the dissemination of vocal speech while reserving the communication of mental speech; Ockham's example is a prelude to the House of Rumour where many statements are heard, but the meaning of the statement is reserved for future realization. In the nominalist view, this is the power of God, as "every effect occurring in the created world has God as a general cause who acts with created agents to bring about their characteristic effects" (37f). It is thus that Chaucer opens *The House of Fame* by calling upon God to "turne us every drem to goode!" (1). Herein lies the core of this debate: An *auctor* is distinguished as having *auctoritas* because of what he has imparted to the work, yet *auctoritas* is not dependent upon the particularity of the work (its relation to a "corporeal" author) but rather on the "intrinsic truth" of the work, that which is revealed by the *auctor* about the world, "mentally"—insofar as God allows for such communication: "If God fails to act in this way, then no effect is produced, even if all the other conditions for the effect's being brought about are satisfied" (Ockham, 37f). It is thus possible, under this view, that two works of identical corporality and labour have non-identical authority. While God might require

Chaucer in order for *The House of Fame* to exist, the ultimate authority—and therefore meaning—of the poem does not rest with the author, according to the medieval view.

Moreover, in engaging with past *auctores*, the alterity of the past presents an encounter whereby, if mental speech is preserved such that the material is intelligible, the corporeal—or material—speech is undoubtedly strange.[27] In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer writes:

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages. ("Book II," 22-8)

Chaucer is speaking to the experience of reading old love poetry, which is recognizable in form, and finding the poetry itself to sound strange, that is, to have a corporeal alterity. A.C. Spearing argues that Chaucer was concerned "with the accurate transmission of his poetry to the future: he was not content that it should simply be absorbed into a body of changing and fading verses." (Spearing, *Medieval to Renaissance in English Poetry* 59). Chaucer would thus not be content with the implications that the reception of his words, as he has particularly expressed them, should be wholly and completely dependent upon an arbitrary determination. As Geffrey says to the stranger he meets in the House of Fame:

> "I cam noght hyder, graunt mercy,
> For no such cause, by my hed!

[27] This is in fact the present status of medieval literature for many readers.

Sufficeth me, as I were ded,

That no wight have my name in honde.

I wot myself best how y stonde;

For what I drye, or what I thynke,

I wil myselven al hyt drynke,

Certeyn, for the more part,

As fer forth as I kan myn art." (1874-1882)

It seems reasonable to assert that, at least for Chaucer, the particularity of speech resonated from the historically situated author; in "Chaucer's Wordes Unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn," he likens the miswriting of his words to "negligence and rape" (7). Because the medieval world was a phonocentric world, where thought was privileged over speech and speech over writing, the concern here for the written word speaks volumes to the concern for the transmission of the thought.

The relationship between the author and the scribe, as it participated in the hierarchy of authority, requalifies the position on the "grete clerkys" that opened the poem. The opening claim to be of "noon opinion", as well as the status of the author in the production of the text and its authority, is challenged by the materiality of poetry: the author must trust the scribe, thought must trust speech. Materiality is exemplified in *The House of Fame* through the workings of sound. Chaucer's explanation of the movement of speech in *The House of Fame* echoes, quite unstably, Ockham's philosophy on the mental and corporeal properties of sound. Lines 757-770 read:

Loo, this sentence ys knowen kouth

Of every philosophres mouth,

> As Aristotle and daun Platon,
>
> And other clerkys many oon;
>
> And to confirme my resoun,
>
> Thou wost wel this, that spech is soun,
>
> Or elles no man myghte hyt here;
>
> Now herke what y wol the lere.
>
> "Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken;
>
> And every speche that ys spoken,
>
> Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,
>
> In his substaunce ys but air,
>
> For as flaumbe ys but lyghted smoke,
>
> Right soo soun ys air ybroke.

Though the smoke and fire metaphor is a common one in medieval philosophy, it is also the one that Ockham uses in reasoning that an angel "can know the object . . . through reasoning, in the way that cause is known through its effect" (Ockham 37). Ockham argues that if one sees smoke, one can infer that there was a fire, even if one cannot see the flame (and thus the flame, like the author, is an unnecessary sign). Ockham claims to draw his reasoning from Augustine, and it is in Augustine that the above maxims begin to fall apart: it did not come out "[of] every philosophres mouth" that *every* speech, "[lowd] or pryvee, foul or fair", is but air. When Ockham draws upon Augustine, he quotes him as stating:

> "Thus certain acts of thinking are speeches of the heart, wherein the Lord shows that there is also a mouth. . . . But those things which proceed out of the mouth and which defile a human being come from the heart. . . . For when these things

> [viz., speaking and seeing] are done outwardly through the body, then speaking is one thing and seeing another; but when we think inwardly, then the two are one" (Ockham 35)

It is therefore not axiomatic "that spech is soun, / Or elles no man myghte hyt here": quite the contrary, as Ockham claims, "hearing mentally is nothing other than *seeing* another's act of thinking" (35, italics mine).

While the explanation of sound may, at the very least, suggest an inclination to nominalist philosophical beliefs on the part of Chaucer, it is also directly tied to a realist argument concerning causation and real relations. Interestingly, Chaucer credits the explanation to both "Aristotle and daun Platon" (759).[28] P.B. Taylor argues that "Chaucer's emphasizing of nominalist views on language are found more often in comic and satiric contexts than in serious ones, and considerations of linguistic realism occur in serious contexts. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish one from the other" (318). In fact, I believe the reduction to such distinctions limits our ability to perceive the conflict presented by these competing world views. Taylor sees in lines 739-746 of "The General Prologue,"[29] the indication that

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[28] However, this may simply be Chaucer's way of saying, "Aristotle and his teacher Plato."

[29] Crist spak hymself ful brode in hooly writ,
And wel ye woot no vileynye is it.
Eek Plato seith, who so kan hym rede,
The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.
Also I prey yow to foryeve it me,
Al have I nat set folk in hir degree
Heere in this tale, as that they sholde stonde.

> The apology as a whole moves from pleading the necessity of a vernacular and base speech to a suggestion—in citing both Christ and Plato—that the words both clothe morality and reflect in their particular references a world of universals. I should say that words *can* do these things. They fail to do so, for the most part, and Chaucer suggests this failure simultaneously with his affirmation, for the same words that affirm a realism of speech, deny it. (324)

The problem at hand is that, in a realist view, art is a production made by an individual, not by God, though the ability to create the art is itself a gift from God; in a nominalist view, the individual is unnecessary. In response to Ockham's occasionalism, Chatton claimed that "given things *a*, *b*, *c*, and proposition *p*, [. . . God cannot] conserve *c* and keep *p* false" (Keele, 407): essentially, that God cannot will it that Chaucer (*a*) generates (*c*) *The House of Fame* (*b*) if Chaucer does not exist. Chatton's position presented a real problem for Ockham and the medieval-Aristotelian belief that "even if all the other conditions for the effect's being brought about are satisfied" (Ockham, 37f) God can "usurp or override their natural functioning" (Keele, 410). However, insofar as authority is concerned, the truth of the proposition is open for debate. While the intermediary might be necessary, his status is not so certain.

The dream vision genre is fitting for expressing the issue of intermediaries in the production of art because it requires a guiding character. In medieval literary practice, there was a generic requirement within the dream vision for "an ideal and often symbolic landscape, in which the dreamer encounters an authoritative figure, from whom he learns some religious or secular doctrine" (A. C. Spearing, *Medieval Dream-Poetry* 4) intended to explain some ordering of the world. Such generic tropes allow for the positing of a relationship between dream visions

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My wit is short, ye may wel understonde. ("General Prologue," 739-746)

and authority that represents the requirement for interpretation in the literary present while reiterating the traditional structure for the determination of truth as a time-dependent qualification: The reader is brought to understanding through the process of the dream while the "meaning" of the dream can only be discovered subsequent to the end of the dream. If a dream vision is defined as a poem "whose main substance is . . . dreamt invariably by the 'I' of the poem" (1), then the guide presents a second layering of an authoritative figure. In occupying the subject position, the "I" of the poem renders the internality of the guide figure external, thereby elevating its authoritative status, so as to invariably solidify the fictive internality of the "I" of the poem. On the level of the narrative, while the reader is guided through the dream by the narrator, the narrator is guided through the poem by his guide, creating the sense of distance in the presentation of the dream: the guide already knew what the narrator learned and the reader is learning. Without reference to the proper external authority, that is the selection of the appropriate work of one of the "grete clerkys," the medieval interpreter would need to locate a "figure within [the poem] whose very appearance would sanction the dream" (Miller 97) in terms of its accord with already known truths. Just as the proliferation of dream vision commentaries multiples the possible meanings of a dream, the repetition of the symbolic figure in multiple works invests the figure with "as many meanings of other objects as it has likeness to them" (John of Salisbury, qtd. Miller 97-98). That is, the guide figure is also a character constructed through the enmeshing of social persons, stereotypical images, and generic forms.

According to medieval dream theory, the guide of a medieval dream vision was supposed to exist as an external entity to the dreamer to have authority. That is, the guide could not be a symptom of the dreamer's mental affection. The guide must have been posited through God directly, or God working through an intermediary with the ontological status of an angel. As

such, an authoritative guide would have presented a singular character in the clear form of a singular social person: a guide sent by God. Because the guide in Chaucer's dream visions comes from his readings, most notably Dante, his guide is "created by man himself (out of his personal thoughts and activities, his daily experience, his psychological and physical condition)" (Miller, 96). While the eagle in Dante's poem might have been seen to hold the metaphysical unity required of the guide figure, the recontextualization of the eagle into the guide of Geffrey in *The House of Fame* complicates the singularity of that image. It is not impossible for a guide figure to be recontextualized, but Chaucer treatment of the figure in recontexualizing the figure undercuts the authority of the figure: Chaucer represents Geffrey as sceptical of the guide's teachings, which undercuts the guide's teachings and places his imagined audience in alliance with Geffrey. Such a manipulation of identification calls to light Aristotle's *De Caelo*, widely translated in the medieval period, where Aristotle claims:

> For a single thing has a single movement, and a simple thing a simple: contrary movements cannot belong to the same thing, and a movement away from the centre is the contrary of movement to it. . . . For it is the nature of the whole to move to the point to which the part naturally moves. (Aristotle, *De Caelo* 435)

In consenting to the eagle's argument Geffrey "[concedes] only the likelihood of what is intended to sound like an irresistibly compelling argument [872–74]" (Quine 180). The argument, however, is not in itself irresistible; it only sounds like that. The divergence of the whole into parts, through the opposition between Geffery and the guide in the text's authority, and the reconvergence of those parts through the recontextualization of the text as Chaucer's brings the whole structure of narrative into the question. Particularily, the fit of the character and the author to the authority each is purported to hold or lack must be questioned. Is it the writing

that is unable to capture the authority of the originary speaker (the eagle) or is the writing supposed to establish an authority that did not pre-exist it? How exactly does this transmission of sound and thought work?

What can be said, at this point in *The House of Fame*, is that the direct linking between speech and sound by the eagle has broken down in the writing of Geffrey. In *The House of Fame*, sound follows Aristotle's principle of movement and is unidirectional—according to the eagle—as all sound is "but eyr ybroken" (*The House of Fame* 765), and therefore a corporeal thing:

> That any thing that hevy be,
> As stoon, or led, or thyng of wighte,
> Lat goo thyn hand, hit falleth doun.
> Ryght so seye I be fyr or soun,
> Or smoke or other thynges lyghte;
> Alwey they seke upward on highte,
> While ech of hem is at his large:
> Lyght thing upward, and dounward charge. (738-746)

The implication is that sound, as nothing more than the movement of air, is light in weight and moves upwards toward its "propre mansyon" (754); metaphorically this too is the manner in which mental speech is seen by God. However, this explanation of the movement of lightweight things is understood first through the positing of its opposite, the movement of heavy things. That this is the natural functioning of the world is justified through a comparison to the manner in which all water runs downhill: "That every ryver to the see / Enclyned ys to goo by kynde" (747-478); this is a metaphorical presentation of the manner in which all things stem from God.

While the explanation presents the authoritative stance toward sound as mental speech, the implications of the metaphor reverberate with the presence of another matter, the materiality, or corporeality, of worldly experience. Chaucer extends this opposition by having his guide declare there to be two types of sound, sound that comes from a pipe and sound that comes from a harp (773):

> For whan a pipe is blowen sharpe
> The air ys twyst with violence
> And rent—loo, thys ys my sentence.
> Eke whan men harpe-strynges smyte,
> Whether hyt be moche or lyte,
> Loo, with the strok the ayr tobreketh;
> And ryght so breketh it when men speketh.
> Thus wost thou wel what thing is speche. (774-781)

What the guide is intending to present is the manner in which even the smallest of sounds breaks the air, and thus is heard in the House of Fame. However, corporeal speech is exactly that sort of thing that exists in this world and of which angels do not perceive: it is an imperfect, violent and earthly form of speech. Chaucer is here playing with the manner in which one can allow for the dissemination of vocal speech while reserving the communication of mental speech; that is, he is creating a representation of sound that belies what is literally said.

As Geffrey continues the upward journey with his guide, he begins to behold the world. What he sees, he lists in an explicit fashion:

> Tho gan y loken under me
> And beheld the ayerissh bestes,

Cloudes, mystes, and tempestes,

Snowes, hayles, reynes, wyndes,

And th'engendrynge in hir kyndes,

All the wey thrugh which I cam. (964-969)

As the narrator moves upwards, he sees those "heavy things" that flow downwards, specifically those things that flow down from the "ryver to the see," as well as wind, which is the movement of air, and tempests, which are the (noisy) combination of both water and wind. The metaphor that Chaucer puts forward opposes the words that create it; the directionality that has been demarcated is swarmed together into a mass of confusion.

When a metaphor becomes overloaded it makes visible not only what it is intended to represent, but its artificiality as well. Chaucer utilizes this technique to foreground the rhetorical aspects of his narrative. In this case, Chaucer juxtaposes the overloaded metaphor with a response by Geffrey:[30]

"O God," quod y, "that made Adam,

Moche ys thy myght and thy noblesse!"

[30] "The Squire's Tale" presents a full scale exploration of this technique, where the "Tale" itself is a giant overloaded metaphor interrupted by another character (the Franklin). On the one hand, the Squire is attempting to follow (and outdo) the model set by his father, the Knight; he is unsuccessful. On the other hand, the "Franklin's Tale" demonstrates that the "terms we use . . . belong to languages we did not invent for ourselves, and their meanings are given by the communities to which we belong" (Spearing, *The Franklin's Prologue and Tale*, 37). The effort of the individual to make something in language is juxtaposed with the external structures of meaning that control the act.

> And thoo thoughte y upon Boece,
> That writ, "A thought may flee so hye
> Wyth fetheres of Philosophye,
> To passen everych element,
> And whan he hath so fer ywent,
> Than may be seen behynde hys bak
> Cloude"—and al that y of spak. (970-978)

John Fyler has suggested that the cutting of Boethius mid sentence "marks off the modest limits of [Chaucer's] own journey" (46). However, in turning to Chaucer's translation of Boethius' *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Chaucer's *Boece,* it is clear that the explanation of the interruption is not so simple, as "al that y of spak" must also be accounted for. Chaucer's (other) translation of Boethius reads:

> Whanne the swift thoght hath clothid itself in tho fetheris, it despiseth the hateful erthes, and surmounteth the rowndenesse of the gret ayr; and it seth the clowdes byhynde his bak, and passeth the heighte of the regioun of the fir, that eschaufeth by swifte moevynge of the firmament, til that he areyseth hym into the houses that beren the sterres . . . (IV.M.1)

The elements referenced in *The House of Fame* are, in *Boece,* air and fire, the metaphorical basis for the very journey that the narrator is on (sound and signification). Clearly the quotation of Boethius is meant to suggest the narrator's familiarity with *De Consolatione Philosophiae*; I am suggesting the continuance of "al that y of spak" brings with it all that Chaucer has written, *Boece* included.

Diegetically, "al that y of spak" also refers to the preceding list that begins with clouds and ends with the omitted element, air. The metaphor is overloaded with the convergence of Chaucer and Geffrey, causing the aesthetic to fold back upon the narrative. As before, this action is juxtaposed with a narratorial response:

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

The "narrator" knows he is "here," a dream vision, but does not know whether he is (t)here corporeally or non-corporeally. It is in the context of a thought that the self-reflexive action, that which has created the doubt ("were"), occurs; "poised between the divine realm of Idea and the mundane world of body, the poem's complex trajectory tends to collapse on itself and turn back inward, back into self-exploration" (Kruger 117). Chaucer is thereby questioning what status "Geffrey" has and in doing so problematizing the individuality of the characters within the dream structure.

At this point it becomes nonsensical to read Chaucer's narrator's claim to be of "noon opinion" (*The House of Fame*, 55) to be anything less than a counterfactual statement of the author's position: while the "narrator" may be of "noon opinion," Chaucer is quite clearly engaging deeply with the "grete clerkys."[31] Because the goal of clerks, of the philosophical

[31] Regardless of Piero Boitani's claim that "Chaucer would find it difficult if not, given his more traditional background, impossible, to follow [Ockham and his contemporaries, such as Chatton] on their own ground" (Boitani 215). I am not sure, exactly, what background Boitani is presuming to have knowledge of; see Lynch, "Dating Chaucer." Given the high degree of

mode, was not Truth, but truth and that "It should be noted by those who undertake to comment upon [. . . books] that [the author's] opinion is not to be concealed, even though it be contrary to the truth" (qtd. Dod 90), it should never be the case that the author is of *no* opinion. Rather, as in the discourse on *auctoritas*, it was only through the author's opinion that he could be considered an *auctor*. The contradictions inherent in attempting to engage this structure of authority provide the poem with its theoretical impulse. In "giving form to antagonisms," Chaucer "does not reconcile or eliminate them," and even though he claims to be of no opinion, Chaucer's aesthetics present a highly personal, political and ethical response to his subject matter, determinable in the presentation of his characters.[32] In *The House of Fame*, Dido and Aeneas present found the role that the particularity of the version of the story being told plays, as well as Chaucer's concern for the perception of that particularity in relation to its literary history. This foundation is laid aesthetically through the story of Dido and Aeneas in the Temple of Venus—the only love story presented to us in *The House of Fame*—where the dreamer encounters an Augustinian landscape where images and words blend into stories, and speaking and seeing are one.

In roaming the halls of the temple, the dreamer encounters on a wall the opening lines of Virgil's *Aeneid* written on a tablet of brass. Immediately, these words flutter into images and the

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sophisticated analysis of nominalism in both this text and *The Book of the Duchess*, it is clear that, in whatever form and however removed from Ockham and his contemporaries' original texts, Chaucer had a sufficient understanding of the workings of the philosophy to not only respond in kind, but to heighten that response through artistic expression of the limits of its concepts.

[32] This is more clearly stated in the next chapter's analysis of "matere" and *Troilus and Criseyde*.

dreamer proceeds to relate, through the repeated refrain of "I saw," the fall of Troy, Aeneas' flight from Troy with Anchises on his back, and so forth up until Aeneas' encounter with Dido. At this point, the story shifts, marked by a more reserved utilization of "I saw."[33] Chaucer omits parts of Virgil's justifications of Aeneas' actions and posits a more Ovidian telling of the story, serving to balance the portraits of Aeneas and Dido. This balance is then tipped, however, through Dido's lament, which compels sympathy for the heroine. This lament is almost entirely Chaucer's own invention, which further establishes the subjective experience of the dreamer in the creation of what is "seen." The dreamer narrates Dido's suicide, and then steps back from the subjective position in suggesting that one who wants to know more can go read Virgil's *Aeneid* or Ovid's *Heroides 7*. While it is uncertain where the dreamer got this information, the comment directs the reader to an external authority, creating instability in the authority of what is "seen." The reader is forced to make a choice in confronting the open subjectivity of the telling of the story, and that choice that is not as trivial as the dreamer makes it seem as each story presents differing representations of Aeneas.

The differing representations of Aeneas collected into the Aeneas presented in *The House of Fame* present antagonistic elements in the artwork and places the stable determination of authority through recourse to tradition in question. In placing this opposition in the presentation of a character, Chaucer is able to examine the opposition between the rigid designation of an historical identity and the subjectivity of the one so named. This was of interest to Chaucer

[33] Lines 151-224, from the beginning of the story up until Aeneas reaches Carthage, contain nine instances of "I saw" in variation. Lines 225-383, from Carthage to the end of the story, contain only one instance: "Ther sawgh I grave how Eneas / Tolde Dido every caas / That hym was tyd upon the see." (253-5)

because it was through the name that the *auctor* carried *auctoritas*. The difficulty in engaging with a character received through narrative, such as Aeneas, is that the fictional identity does not provide a stable referent for the name, as the identity itself is fabricated—and "fabric-aided"—by the network of extensive characters in the narrative. The extensive characters in the narrative are in and of themselves already extensions of the multiplicities of the person creating the text, and thereby do not have a fixed physical historical referent, in the sense that *Virgil* does. The interplay between historical and fictional identities raises epistemological and ontological problems. The concern here is with that which can be "philosophically" interrogated.

On the one hand, there is the epistemological concern of how readers come to know a character (through Ovid, through Virgil, through Chaucer). On the other hand there is ontological question of "who" the character is (hero, unfaithful lover, confluence of social persons). These two questions are compounded in the question, "How do we know who this character is?" The fact that fictional characters do not exist outside language suggests that the answer to this question is related to authorial construction. The fact that historical identities are received through the use of a contingent name suggests that any name is itself a form of authorial construction. As the character's name passes through history, it collects the identities of all who use it, serving to weave together a history that becomes multiple and not singular. Whereas the "body" referred to by *Aeneas* is rigidly designated, any notion of the character of Aeneas is always already a contingency. Current conceptions of Aeneas are indebted to both Ovid and Virgil, whose conceptions (and contextualizations) of Aeneas are not identical. Aeneas can thus be referred to as "Ovid's Aeneas" and "Virgil's Aeneas," with the possessive denoting the separation of the multiple into the singular. In presenting the conflicting identities in the image of Aeneas, Chaucer self-consciously exhibits the manner in which this action is determined by the

author, the one attending to the name, and not by the authority who has, in essence, first baptized the name. Thus, Chaucer has Dido lament:

> "O wel-awey that I was born!
> For throrgh yow is my name lorn,
> And alle myn actes red and songe
> Over al thys lond, on every tonge.
> O wikke Fame!—for ther nys
> Nothing so swift, lo, as she is! (345-50)

The investigation "philosophically" of the author's opinion proves to inform more than just the truth of the story in that it also exposes the manner in which the story is false. Chaucer is able to subvert past authority by tapping into this structure, which allows him to shift the focus from the historical events to his "matere," the presentation of the characters and the social context that surrounds them. Bringing the concern over the contextualization of characters together with the concern for authority and authorial production, situates the ending of the poem—where the dreamer, having watched "fals and soth compouned / Togeder fle for oo tydynge" (2108-9) toward Fame, confronts "A man of gret auctorite" (373)—as a self-reflexive moment: Chaucer brings to the foreground the processes and social practices that underlie the reader's ability to make an interpretative judgement concerning the text and its authority.

Chaucer's "man of gret auctorite" recuperates the external designations of authority that are temporally denied to the text on behalf of the presented text. The external designations of authority that posit the text as a product of an already given authority are challenged by an indiscernible "auctorite." The intrinsic truth of the text no longer functions as a metaphysical property of the text, but becomes a material operation of the text, eternally returning in the

literary present. Because this action occurs on the level of understanding the text and at the literal level of narrative action, many critics have suggested that the poem is unfinished (the ending of a dream poem should circle back to the narrator awakening and beginning the writing of the dream; the reader should be told who the "man of gret auctorite" is so she can determine if he is seriously an authority or not). Chaucer is thereby turning the common philosophical conventions upon their head: because the causal relationship of power dictates that authority must inhere in the substance and point to itself in another substance,[34] and does not exist as a third, distinct metaphysical property, the text is always in need of another (recognizable) body; it has no authority without people. However, whereas people are supposed to have authority over the text and causation is supposed to run from the author to the text, the text's role as subject to that authority is able to subvert the structure of authority by positing its own necessity in the equation. The "man of gret auctorite" is the identity of the text, who, in the coalescing of multiple characters into his image, is singularly subjectless: "The House of Fame (the thing, the dream, and the text) explores the *terra incognita* between an objective signifier and a subjective determination of the signified, between the perception of a *res* and the interpretation of its *signum*" (Quine 173).

In exploring the world(s) between representation and meaning, in the hopes of understanding the existence of a thing, medieval theorists often relied upon the grammatical and philosophical status of sentences to provide a structure for processing the production of signification from a sign. Medieval grammarians broke down sentences (philosophers, propositions) into two components:

[34] Authority is always an authority over something.

> [The first was] the subject, the whole of "that part of a proposition which precedes the copula and of which something else is predicated"; and the other [was] the predicate, that "which is the extreme of a proposition and not its subject." William of Ockham, who thus defined "subject" and "predicate," reasoned that in a categorical proposition either the subject or the predicate must have personal supposition. Ockham meant by this that either of the extremes must take the place, in a fashion, of "the thing it signifies, whether that thing be an entity outside the soul, a spoken word, an intention of the soul, a written word, or any other thing imaginable." . . . (Harwood 344)[35]

In order to understand fully the subjectless position of the "man of gret auctorite," the intratextual production of this identity must be located as well. Production, in *The House of Fame*, necessarily goes through the House of Fame and the House of Rumour. As Britton J. Harwood has argued, "The two dwellings oppose each other because the castle is stocked entirely with subjects, the house of Rumor entirely with predicates" (345). The subject of a sentence picks out a referent, while the predicate signifies something of that referent. In Fame's House, subjects approach Fame to have their significance predicated. A subject that receives fame, as Dido has lamented earlier in the poem, receives a "magnyfyinge of hys name" (*The House of Fame*, 306); some receive this, for better or worse, and some do not. Contrary to Fame's House, the House of Rumour is full of subjectless tidings, which are "only predicates,

[35] Harwood continues: "In Frege's terms, that is, a proposition must have not only sense (*Sinn*) but reference (*Bedeutung*). Or as John Searle has revised Frege: "The distinction between subject and predicate is one of function. The subject serves to identify an object, the predicate . . . serves to describe or characterize the object which has been identified.'" (344).

time-bound actions and states that must fly off somewhere else to get a 'name' or subject (2110-13)" (Harwood, 345). It is in this House, out of a collective body of "men of love-tydynges" (*The House of Fame*, 2143) that the "man of gret auctorite" appears.

In existing as an emergent property of this group, the "man of gret auctorite" recuperates the internality of authority that is being dispersed throughout the Houses by providing a sense of an identity. At the same time, this sense exists without a definite referent (outside the descriptive name), which disassociates the rigidity (singular identity) of the subject by positing in its place multiplicity of possible subjects. Critics have claimed the "man of gret auctorite" to be Chaucer, Dante, no one, and so forth. In that he is no one, the "man of gret auctorite" is subjectless except that, in existing as such, he renders the text the authority on the determination of the subject: the "man of gret auctorite" is the man who appears at the end of *The House of Fame*. The identity of the man is therefore a relational property adhering in the text that does not allow for the reduction of that identity to a proper name, but instead invests the authoritative identity with the multiplicity of identities fabricated throughout the text; this quite clearly anticipates *The Canterbury Tales* and its narrative acts.

Such an action is not simply a philosophical frivolity, but has real political and ethical consequences. In focusing the understanding of the text and its characters into the material product and its relations with other bodies, Chaucer puts forth an ethics of not only reading but also life that forces those who encounter his work to look deeper into the production of authority. In Chaucer, the dispersal of authority to the multiplicity of identities fabricated throughout the text denies the surface recognition of authority as it concerns the definition of those identities (interpellation, normalization, stereotyping). In creating a space for this action, Chaucer suggests that the scholastic engagement with philosophical antagonisms arising from an opposition in a

duality of worlds has provided only "the discovery of more subtle and more sublime means to make [difference] atone, or to redeem it and subject it to the categories of representation" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 263). It is thus that Chaucer uses art to explore a divergent pattern of experience that draws from the authoritative past the power of its creation against its control. The next chapter addresses the pains with which Chaucer exercises this ethic in his treatment of Criseyde and the discourse of the authoritative Troy story. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer refers to these pains again and again as his "matere."

CHAPTER III

The Role of Behabitive Speech Acts in the Actualization of Authorial Identity; or The Authoritative Becoming of Geoffrey Chaucer through *Troilus and Criseyde*

> For gret power and moral vertu here
> Is selde yseyn in o persone yfeere. (*Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book III," 167-8)

If in *The House of Fame* Chaucer explores the status of the author in becoming an author, then it is with *Troilus and Criseyde* that Chaucer steps into this role so as to demonstrate the political implications of the act. Whereas in *The House of Fame* Chaucer creates a narrative persona as a character that is revealed as a comedic double for the author, Geffrey (and by extension the "man of gret auctorite"), in *Troilus and Criseyde* there is no clear delineation between narrative persona and author, and the poem ends overtly in Chaucer's voice. It is thus quite difficult to determine the narrative boundaries between personae and author, as the critical work on *Troilus and Criseyde* makes clear.[36] Because of the inseparability here between the narrator and the narrative act that suggests his existence, our understanding of the "authority" of the text becomes an important informing structure for how the text is read. If it is to be said that one point of a text presents Chaucer speaking to the reader, another the narrator, another a character, another Chaucer through a character, whosoever says such a thing in fact performs the social contextualization of the appropriateness of speaking that itself structures the conflict of this story. When determining the "fit" of a character to the narrative, the reader does not identify only the name (*Criseyde*, etc.) but also the characteristics of the character, which exist as

[36] See Waswo 1-9.

contextual judgements on the part of the reader as much if not more so than they do on the part of the story.

Chaucer's Criseyde, for example, calls social judgments into question by her very appearance. A good example of this occurs in the scene where Criseyde appears at the spring festival. At this point, the reader has just been told that Criseyde is the daughter of Calchas, a traitor to Troy who has prophesized its fall and fled to the Greeks. Alone and widowed in Troy, she is looked down upon until, having fallen upon the mercy of Hector, Hector tells her he will ensure that she is protected and spoken of well for as long as she resides in Troy. Now, at Athena's temple, she and the rest of the city are amassed around the Palladium. This is where Troilus encounters her for the first time:

> To Troilus right wonder wel with alle
> Gan for to like hire mevynge and hire chere,
> Which somdel deignous was, for she let falle
> Hire look a lite aside in swich manere,
> Ascaunces, "What, may I nat stonden here?"
> And after that hir lokynge gan she lighte,
> That nevere thoughte hym seen so good a syghte. ("Book I," 288-93)

The same piteous figure who was just dressed "In widewes habit large of samyt broun" (109) and crying at Hector's feet is now up and moving haughtily dressed "In widewes habit blak; but natheles" (170) amongst the celebration. Her question, which is not really a question but a look "Ascaunces" ("as if to say"), is not simply directed at the character Troilus but at a wider audience as well. The reader is asked to make a judgement or determination of the "fit" of her actions within the context of her social role and history, howsoever perceived by the reader. As

opposed to Boccaccio's presentation of Criseida, Chaucer's Criseyde challenges social judgements.

That Criseyde *does* this is a complicated claim. Clearly, her character is created and situated through the complexity of social relations that inform our judgements of her. That Chaucer so extensively develops these relations—through changing her age, casting a shade of doubt upon her not having children, etc.—has led many critics to posit a "psychology" of not just Criseyde but many of the characters of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Our concern, however, is not for perceived psychological dynamics, such as Troilus's flaw (cf. Kearney and Schraer), Criseyde's heroism (cf. Behrman) or Pandarus' intention (cf. Rowland), and the "mind" to which that psychology might refer. Rather, the concern here is for the manner in which the characters present actualizations of enmeshed social contexts. That readers are able to impart "consciousness" to these characters solidifies the use-value of these characters for sites of investing personal feelings towards those social contexts. The narrative as a whole, and its seeming narrator, are then able to take form against these feelings. Chaucer's "tragedye" presents the complex ontological status of individuation as a relationship between language as the system for the creation as well as erasure of the individual and the desire inherent in its employment against or upon said systems. While art may mirror reality, the story of Troy has a well known and predetermined end. Working within a predetermined structure, Chaucer creates the appearance of characters that destabilize the teleology of the narrative. At the beginning of the story the reader is given these two lines, "Of Troilus in lovynge of Criseyde, / And how that she forsook hym er she deyde" ("Book I," 55-6), but closer to the end there is but one line, "For how Criseyde Troilus forsook" ("Book IV," 15). Whereas the grammar of the first appearance of this claim is controlled such that the action is clear, the latter claim has no such structural guarantee.

It is as if the entire text could be unravelled in that one look of Criseyde: "What, may I nat stonden here?", in this text, in this context, that bears my name. That readers "hear" Criseyde—in the medieval sense of seeing her—is not to be disembodied from the fact that that too is Chaucer.

Such textual experience of women in Chaucer's work has led Elaine Tuttle Hansen to insist that "[in] Chaucerian fictions, we cannot hear directly women's voices in Chaucer . . . but we can hear 'men's concern'" (288). Such a claim does little to assuage the complexity of the social relations that bear down upon the presentation of the character and determine the parameters of "fit." The gendering of the concern already posits—perhaps necessarily in particular contexts—an historical form from which to delineate the "appearance" of what is "heard" in the poetry.[37] Subsequent critics, then, are forced to contend with a representative "we" in Hansen's claim that has already posited an exclusionary set as its structural model. Who is able to "speak" under such a model then takes privilege over the presence of the social problem itself, which is what is really calling out to be addressed.

In a similar manner, Evan Carton draws upon William Faulkner and argues for a marriage between "speaker" and "hearer." In order to make this argument Carton rejects the notion of *Troilus and Criseyde* as a tragedy of predestination, whereby the end is always present. Carton instead suggests, "[Even] when we know or suspect the future, we cannot but act as if we were free, because from a human standpoint—the only one available to us and the only one from which Chaucer presumed to write—we are" (49). The contract put forward for speaker and

[37] There are two things being discussed in Hansen's claim: the inclusion of texts written by women in the study of feminist concerns and the inclusion of texts that address feminist concerns. Obviously, the two do not always align.

hearer does not initiate an assent "for now," but a constant consent; the process of continuing hearing the poem is a process of affirming that relationship and is thus not teleologically bound to the end of the narrative. Carton locates Pandarus as the intermediary between Troilus and Criseyde and extends this role to represent "all participants in the narrative" (50), masculinising the text. Carton believes that "Pandarus, through his and others' language, creates a community that overcomes spatial, temporal, moral, and intellectual differences among the individuals it comprises" (59). Pandarus becomes the organizing principle for designating the "insidious resistance of all strict categories and complacent certainties" (59), which Carton sees as "the perpetual task of Chaucer's language" (59). While this designation of Pandarus allows for the structuring of the text (following the logic of the *and* of *Troilus and Criseyde*), which locates a space between opposing characters in the text (*Troilus* [*nor*] *Criseyde*), and provides an interesting reterritorialisation of the text centered on Pandarus ([*Pandarus*]), allowing another story to emerge from that which predominates the text, the reduction to a tripartite structure (*Troilus* [*and Pandarus and*] *Criseyde*) misconstrues the complexity of the created "community" ([*and*]). Re-centering the text on Pandarus characterizes it in a particular way and in a particular voice. Were it so simple as unveiling the manner in which Chaucer acts as an intermediary between "speaker" and "hearer," taking the story as presented in his sources and retelling it in his own voice, Carton (and Tuttle Hansen, too) would be correct in seeing "the perpetual task of Chaucer's language" to have been "a beautifully easy task . . . sure of achievement" (59-60).

Instead of locating the authority of the story in a singular "body," such as "a man of gret auctorite," Chaucer calls upon the reader of *Troilus and Criseyde* to attend to the role that social forces play in the determination of the "fit" of that authority. J. L. Austin uses *behabitive* to group utterances that "have to do with attitudes and *social behaviour*" (italics mine, 151),

including "the notion of reaction to other people's behaviour and fortunes and of attitudes and expressions of attitudes to someone else's past conduct or imminent conduct" (159). A behabitive speech act involves putting one's emotion towards a social context into words. To be clear, while "[there] are obvious connexions with both stating or describing what our feelings are and expressing, in the sense of venting our feelings, . . . behabitives are distinct from both of these" (159). Austin found the grouping of behabitives troublesome because it was "too miscellaneous" (151). Part of Austin's problem lies in his recourse to, and dependency on, the words themselves to explain explanations.[38] Furthermore, in that behabitive speech acts are distinct from descriptions of feelings, the notion of control is itself tenuous; there is always that potentiality that remains unexhausted. Language, according to Ludwig Wittgenstein, is a game; Freud saw this in the *fort-da* episode. Moreover, it is a "fixed"[39] game: "once we have a sign-language in which everything is all right, we already have a correct logical point of view" (Wittgenstein 4.1213). Wittgenstein's point is not that such an explanation sums up language (as a static unchanging entity), but that recourse to the system of language fails to account for what is in excess to that language (which is nonlogical and can only be "shown"). Readers most certainly "hear" women's voices in *Troilus and Criseyde* if they see the social conditions that oppose them. If the medieval view of the metaphysics of speech demonstrates anything clearly, it is the informing presence of a controlling agent on what can be seen.

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[38] See Derrida, "Signature Event Context", *Limited Inc.*, 1-23; Derrida, "The Father of Logos", *Dissemination*, 75-84; Searle, "Literary Theory and Its Discontents", 637-639; *Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book II", 22-8.

[39] With all of the implications of Freudian "fixation," a permanent structure, a central point, as well as a controlled and corrupted outcome.

The danger in centering the text on Pandarus thus lies in the manner in which this characterizes the text. Carton's recourse is to reiterate Robert Jordan's "eternal simultaneity of the divine vision" as his conclusive stance:

> "The eternal simultaneity of the divine vision" is the ultimate authority because it constitutes a perspective above and beyond the flux of human relationships and language. For this reason, it is a perspective that no writer or reader, no speaker or hearer, ever attains. The problem for the Christian storyteller is to avoid being paralyzed by this knowledge, to make himself give free and serious play to the only 'matere' he has—his experience of language and the world. (60)

Carton is absolutely right to suggest that the only "matere" the author has is his experience of language and the world.[40] However, Carton is wrong as to the limits of that language: in viewing the ultimate authority as the divine vision he posits a spectral nature to authority that misses the materiality of the experience of language and the world, and thus misconstrues the authority of that world and, more importantly, the process that creates it. Carton focuses on attainment rather than creation and, hampered by a teleology he set out to denounce, fails to maintain the manner in which, for Chaucer, "it was never a question of 'breaking-out' of the world that exists, but of creating the right conditions for the expression of other possible worlds to 'break-in,' in order to introduce new variables into the world that exists, causing the quality of its reality to undergo modifications, change, and becoming" (Lambert, 137). The "divine vision" is not only an unattainable endpoint; it is also the first fiction from which all literature in its tradition attempts to escape.

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[40] Carton seems to be suggesting that there is an experience outside this world that is present but unavailable to humans.

Just as readers cannot suspend the realization of a teleological end and presume to have done away with the control it presupposes upon the understanding of that which has been determined to point toward that end, critics cannot presume a designation of a stereotypical role, as Carton does when he declares Chaucer a "Christian storyteller," and presume to do away with the multiplicity of registers pointed toward by the author that do not conform to that typological structure of determination. This is especially true of a genreless story such as *Troilus and Criseyde*.[41] While Chaucer references the work as his "tragedye," the poem itself does not take the form of tragedy, a romance, an epic, or a Boethian consolation. Chaucer borrows from these forms but no one form provides an authoritative type for the work. As with types in the characters, genre-as-type enmeshes multiple forms so as to create a false singularity of the image, here the image of the story as a whole.

It is the opposition between the individual's position toward the contextualization of the world and the overflowing inadequacy of that context to define singularly that individual that forces not the individual to submit to the context (interpellation) but the context to submit to the individual as a form of critique. Just as the participants in the discourse of the Troy story have between them "a litil envye" (*The House of Fame*, 1476), "all participants in the narrative" (Carton 50) point toward one another, presenting a relational property which coalesces into a new becoming when the deviation that each makes from the other is attended to. These deviations (call each the directionality of the pointing) do not coalesce in the sense of a merging toward a realization of a divine position that can attune to an "eternal simultaneity." Rather, each time a critic selects a character (or genre) as an authoritative image from which to structure (or center) a critique, the critic does not in fact isolate a "pure" entity but folds all the other pages of

[41] See Wimsatt.

the flip-page book image into that singular image, creating the illusion of an individual. That is, the attribution of the story to a narrator, the selection of a character as "main," the determination of the form of genre of the story, etc. all present choices that are not intrinsic to the work itself, but to the social contexts of the work as it is received. The story of Troilus and Criseyde has been told; Chaucer has no need to tell it again except to express his feelings towards such social contexts. For Chaucer, this was a material process and he thus refers to his folded coalescence as his "matere".

Understanding the authority presented through the text thus involves going beyond the produced text to "the deeper logic of production from which the relations or *sense* of the text emerge" (Parr 1, italics mine). The focus on "matere" in *Troilus and Criseyde* can be traced back to E. Talbot Donaldson.[42] More recently, Richard H. Osberg has argued for "the solidarity of audience and narrator in a conspiracy of feeling against the *auctoritee* of heartless old books" (265). In contrast to Carton's determination of Pandarus as the embodiment of all participants in the narrative, Osberg claims that "Pandarus proves only a tyro, and once the game has been moved to an end beyond the one he fashioned, he is powerless" (262). The opposition between these two critical responses demonstrates how the characterization of the text emerges through a centering of the critique upon a character. Whereas Carton views the text as open to a final determination that is always deferred, Osberg views the text as an artifact. The determination of the structure of the text is therefore connected to the characters that are seen as upholding that structure, as the House of Fame in *The House of Fame* demonstrates. However, rather than having characters stand as allegorical figures (cf. Dante) upholding the rules and logic of received authority (*The House of Fame*), Chaucer expresses the power of creation as a force of

[42] See Donaldson.

will against the authority of "the fixed game." Amidst the proliferation of characters and identities is Chaucer's "matere" as an emergent process. What matters is not some transcendent realization at the end of the poem, but a bodily affirmation that is intimately bound to the moment of creation, constantly affirmed through the hearing/seeing of the poem as a performative act.

In "Toward a Visual Stylistics: Assent and Denial in Chaucer," Spencer Cosmos argues that "the forms of assent and denial in Chaucer's poetry are distributed in a pattern that suggests nuances of meaning beyond propositional affirmation or negation" (408). The belief in the intentionality of such nuances is extended to locate these distinctions "in the outlying areas of stylistic nuance, encountered for the most part only by those who haunt such places" (413). Cosmos then states that "Chaucer was clearly such a man" (413). Cosmos differentiates the stylistic nuance inherent in Chaucer's utilization of *yis* and *no*' and *yea* and *nay*, concluding that it is "quite clear that **yis** and **no** are more restricted than **yea** and **nay**, and contextual analysis shows unmistakably that the forms are reserved for expressing behabitive involvement of stylistic significance" (423). While there is no great discovery in detailing an example of Chaucer's sensitivity to linguistic nuances, the expression of behabitive involvement points us toward a deeper understanding of Chaucer's desire to put his view toward a given social context into words, here not only the discourse of the Troy story, but also the authoritative literary tradition that it upholds; I take Chaucer's "my matere" to be signalling his deepest feeling towards his artistic production, in both product (as idea) and process (as actuality).[43] Accordingly, Cosmos writes, "The particular contours of thought traced from his expressions for

[43] Cosmos's detailing of the representational affect of the words *yea* and *nay* on the page is suggestive of the relationship between the written words and speech as outlined in Chapter II.

'yes and 'no' are perhaps less significant in themselves than illustrating the extent of detail to which he carried his effort to be understood through visible means" (427). Provided that the medieval position concerning "visibility" not solely in the corporeal sense but also in the mental sense is allowed for, these images call upon the critic to look deeper into the text's production.

Of primary concern in an investigation into what informs our understanding of Chaucer's texts are the *causae materialis* of Chaucer's work. Determinations of the completeness or incompleteness of a work tend to be based upon comparisons to generic models and motifs as well as sources and analogues of and for the text. While the main literary source for *Troilus and Criseyde* was Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato,* in focusing on authority, the classical and pseudo-classical sources carry more weight. Little of Troilus and Criseyde can be found in Homer, Dares the Phrygian, or Dictys of Crete, and while it is possible-to-probable that Chaucer had not read any of their work, it is clear that he knew of them in some manner. Chaucer refers to these auctores in *The House of Fame,* and in *Troilus and Criseyde* states:

> But how this town com to destruccion
> Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle,
> For it were a long digression
> Fro *my matere*, and yow to long to dwelle,
> But the Troian gestes, as they felle,
> In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
> Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write. (italics mine, "Book I" 141-7)

The last line of that stanza is often taken to suggest that Chaucer was not able to read, because of language or attainability, Homer, Dares or Dictys.[44] As seen in *The House of Fame*, these authors have differing things to say about the war. In situating himself in a discourse that is contested, Chaucer avoids making claims about the veracity of their stories, choosing simply to posit his "matere" as divergent. It would seem, here, that "my matere" refers to the story of Troilus and Criseyde, as received through Boccaccio, but as later credited in the text to Lollius. Lollius is, in fact, not a source at all, but a fictive source. As it is clear, at least to us, that Chaucer's main source is Boccaccio, this accreditation (Lollius-in-place-of-Boccaccio) destabilizes the authority of the text(s) in a demonstrably clearer way than was argued for Pandarus by Carton.

According to Richard J. Utz, not only does Lollius-in-place-of-Boccaccio destabilize the text, but Lollius serves as a "playful hint at [Chaucer's] own absolute powers of free literary creation" (143),[45] demonstrably declaring a nominalist authorial presence in the text for Utz. Utz sees Lollius as introducing "the nominalist concept of divine omnipotence as a structural analogue" (129) for the *potentia absoluta* "Chaucer wields as the author of *Troilus and Criseyde*" (128). Such theoretical postulation concerning a medieval philosophical view rebukes concerns[46] with the applicability of Carton's method to the medieval text, but does not necessarily make this situation the case. Even Utz concedes that:

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[44] *Dite*, is used for Dictys, so as to rhyme with *write*. Chaucer's continuously differing words for Dictys though curious, follows his practice with other names in regards to rhyming.

[45] See Paterson, "'What Man Artow?' Authorial Self-Definition in The Tale of Sir Thopas and The Tale of Melibee" for more on "the playful hint."

[46] See Smith, Nathaniel B. and Evan Carton.

> Postulating such a correspondence seems far-fetched, as high and late-medieval authors almost never presented their work as a free creation *ex nihilo* or *de potentia absoluta*. Rather, readers are assured that texts are based on pre-existent material, that the author is part of a well-established and clearly defined tradition of literary production and reception. (129)

However, Utz sees the dedication of *Troilus and Criseyde* to "moral Gower," "philosophical Strode" ("Book V," 1856-7), and "Crist" (1860) as undermining such an authorial tradition because these are "presumably three authorities who would have known immediately that the search for Lollius or his book would lead nowhere" (Utz 143).

While it is possible that Chaucer used *Lollius* to "sound" Latin, he most certainly embedded in the figure its falsity. This position varies the view of the marriage between speaker and hearer posited by Carton and leads Utz to conclude:

> While his general audience was made to believe the intuitive cognition of a non-existent (i.e., the creation of the linguistically authenticated apprehension of Lollius as a physically real master source), his informed readers must have recognized the invention and parodic insertion of Lollius as representing the most manifest verbal marker of their friend's *growing self-consciousness as an author*. (italics mine, 144)

The key nominalist tenet in this action for Utz involves the role of belief, namely "that God cannot create the actual perceptual apprehension of a nonexistent in human beings; he can only create the *belief* or *conviction* that something absent is present" (144, in 57f). Whereas Utz takes Chaucer's creation of Lollius to usher in a nominalist stance of the author based on "free creation," and suggests that a "search for Lollius or his book would lead nowhere," given the

premises that the three aforementioned authorities were "in the know," to posit that Lollius presents an empty, or nonexistent, referent is, in Utz's own terms, "far-fetched": Lollius is no more a nonexistent referent than any other historical character. This action does not state that Chaucer is suggesting that he is creating his story out of nothing, but that he is deliberately misnaming the author he is drawing upon (Boccaccio).[47] As such, Chaucer is not "free," but intimately connected to some "thing."

Utz[48] claims to draw the key nominalist tenet stated above from Ockham's "Quodlibeta IV q. 14" (144, in 57f). This *Quodlibeta* concerns the Eucharist, namely, "Is Christ's soul able to move Christ's body in the Eucharist?" (Ockham 303). In *Quodlibeta* IV q. 14, Ockham argues that Christ's soul is able to move the host. For Ockham, as for Aristotle before, it is a "fact that when two things are related in such a way that one of them has a mode of being that is appropriate to a moveable thing and the other has a mode of being that is appropriate to a mover, then it is possible for the one to move the other and for the other to be moved" (304).[49] It is of no

[47] For those concerned with the metaphysical "fit" of such a naming, see Kripke.

[48] Utz's bibliographical work on nominalism is unparalleled. However, it is unclear what edition of Ockham he is using. It is therefore most likely that we are here talking about two separate questions, as I cannot see how he arrives at the determination he does from the question he cites. It is more likely that he has *Quodlibeta* IV, q. 16 in mind ("Does every act of assenting presuppose an act of apprehending with respect to the same object?"). I have chosen to follow his line into the question he cites because it concerns "bodies" and determination based in ideological "fit."

[49] In terms of Christ's body this can happen two ways: organically and non-organically. In the organic sense—provided that God does not suspend the action—Christ's soul can will it that

small consequence that Ockham makes clear the subservience of Christ's organic body to God's will: "Christ's sentient soul can move his body under the host through such powers, as long as God does not suspend their action" (305); "And it is in this way that the soul can move the body through its organic powers—and this, I say, unless God miraculously suspends the action of the natural causes" (306). Likewise, when Christ's soul moves his body through the nonorganic powers, it is only by "conforming itself to the divine will." In the same way, conceptualizing a singularity out of the natural world—what a nominalist would call drawing a type distinction—requires that the instance conform to the intellect, the identity to the ideology. Given the role of social context in *Troilus and Criseyde,* it is likely that not only was Chaucer exploring the nominalist notion of *de potentia absoluta* and his growing "self-consciousness as an author," as Utz argues, but Chaucer was likely taking such notions beyond theological import and exploring dualism so as to "substitute the laws of matter for God's will" (Delany 17). To be sure, while many[50] of the tenets of nominalism are agreed upon, there is still considerable debate surrounding Ockham's nominalism.

Christ's body move (or not) "for the sake of something beautiful or pleasing" (Ockham, 305). In the nonorganic sense, Christ's soul moves Christ's body when the host is moved "by understanding and by dictating that the body is to be moved . . ., by willing efficaciously that its body move when the host is moved . . . and . . . by conforming itself to the divine will, which is the principal cause in every such motion" (306). Reductively, we have two modes of moving the body with the host, the first of which is independent and emotional (corporeal), the second of which is conformist and intellectual (mental).

[50] Certainly not all the tenets of medieval nominalism are agreed upon. Part of the problem lies in the manner of presentation, as the philosophical texts are written in Medieval Latin shorthand(s)

Ellie Ragland, an influential Lacanian, has argued that Lacan's work answers questions raised by Ockham. This, perhaps, allows for a theory of how critics can detect, "based upon a non-synchronic view of intellectual history" (Ragland 92), psychoanalytical structures of control (mirroring, interpellation) in a medieval text developed against the opposition of the nominalist/realist debate. Ragland states:

> Indeed, not before Lacan is binary predicate logic actually challenged by a viable explanation for what constitutes the excluded middle. In valorizing the "matter" in the intersection, or the product between the space of either/or, neither/nor, Lacan added a third truth-functional category. This category (the object *a*) denotes the objects that cause desire, thus joining thinking to the living being. An excess is placed in knowledge itself, giving it an enigmatic aura that, on closer scrutiny, reveals an interrelatedness among contradictory elements. These objects cause the desire around which the particular conditions of *jouissance* begin to be constituted in the concrete meanings given by the identification linking images (the imaginary) to words (the symbolic) to the flesh (the real). (95)

This object *a*, for Chaucer, is not just a source for his desire, but literally his source: the excess of experience bound up in his feelings towards the texts and contexts he draws upon. Utz suggests that "Strode to whom *Troilus and Criseyde* is dedicated, has been presented as a probable source

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that makes translation laborious and specialized. More of the problem lies in the fact that the philosophical development of the ideas occurred through constant oral debate, which led to remarkable inconsistencies (and changes) in the recording of philosophical arguments over time. That such difficulties were coupled with intermittent papal intrusions has resulted in texts that are difficult to now study as philosophical works.

from which Chaucer might have gleaned basic epistemological and theological concepts propagated by fourteenth-century nominalists" (Utz 129). However, it should be noted that the Strode to whom Utz refers, which may or may not be the same "philosophical Strode" referred to by Chaucer (*Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book V," 1857), was not himself a nominalist but a philosopher of the middle (Thomism), a philosophical position that entailed bridging the differences between nominalism and realism so as to create a "middle" position.[51] While the nominalist or realist position of Chaucer cannot be conclusively determined, the "psychological" importance of the debate cannot be underestimated; Chaucer's thinking was certainly influenced by the tensions that these philosophies brought out in orthodox thought. Furthermore, though it is of great interest to trace the philosophical systems and dichotomies of the text, it is of a greater importance to work through such a network to encounter the "matere" of its construction, this productive object *a*. The mere location of this middle, or structuring-destructuring agent, as was argued concerning Pandarus etc., does little to explain the existence of this dilemmatic space if it is then reduced to a singular representation: how it comes to be perceived as singular is equally important. What this "middle" does provide is model for theorizing Chaucer's "matere" as a personal response to the opposition between the "material" and its "authority."

Thus, while lines 141-7 of "Book I" present the "matere," of greater significance in these lines is the utilization of the possessive *my*: "Fro *my* matere, and yow to long to dwelle" (italics mine). As was seen in the last chapter, there was a growing philosophical as well as literary concern for the autonomy of the author. While a linguistic study of the occurrences of self-affirming propositions is bound to be infinitely labour intensive—the utilization of *my* alone

[51] See Delasanta.

numbers in the thousands and calculation of the number only begins to investigate the subject—the utilization of *my matere* provides a more manageable grouping.

According to *The Compendium, matere* and its variants—*mateere*, *matiere*, *mater* and *matyr*—occur at total of 158 times, with a distribution of ninety *matere*, thirty-eight *mateere*, eighteen *matiere*, eleven *mater*, and one *matyr*. *Troilus and Criseyde* boasts only the common *matere* (thirty-four) and less common *mater* (four).[52] *Romaunt of the Rose* boasts two occurrences of *matere* against three occurrences of *mater*, while "Treatise on the Astrolabe" presents one *matere* and one *mater*. *The Legend of Good Women* contains the single occurrence of *matyr* as its first employment of the term, before turning to *matere* seven times and *mater* once. *The Parliament of Fowls* presents three occurrences of the term, with one *mater* occurring between the two instances of *matere*. Chaucer's *House of Fame* contains five occurrences of *matere*, *The Book of the Duchess* two, both without variation. The variant *matiere* occurs only in *Boece*, where there are fourteen occurrences of *matere* and two occurrences of the variant *matiere*, and in *The Canterbury Tales*. *The Tales* present three variants of the term—*matere*, *mateere* and *matiere*—twenty-four, thirty-eight, and sixteen times, respectively. This distribution would be even more anomalous were it not for "The Parson's Tale," which boasts ten of the twenty-four occurrences of *matere* and only three occurrences of *mateere*. Perhaps of some

[52] All four occurrences are followed by a word beginning with *o*, suggesting that the variation may be scribal. However, there are also occurrences of *matere* followed by a word beginning with *o*.

consequence, "The Parson's Tale," "The Tale of Melibee" and "The Clerk's Tale" contain thirty-six of the seventy-six occurrences of the term in variation, or roughly one half.[53]

Given the medieval notion of *causa materialis*, the focus on "matere" in the context of historical poem such as *Troilus and Criseyde* seems evident. However, *material* never occurs in the text and occurs only five times in all of Chaucer's work[54]: once in "The Book of Melibee," twice in "The Parson's Tale," and twice in *Boece*. Clearly, the correlation between material and matere can be shown through the presence of both terms, *material* and *matere*, in Chaucer's overt translations, while the absence of *material* in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the presence of *matere* suggests a nuanced application. That Chaucer abandons *material* in *Troilus and Criseyde* fits well with the implications of Lollius-in-place-of-Boccaccio, as suggested by Utz. However, Chaucer's utilization of the possessive *my* in concert with *matere* complicates the notion of creation *ex nihilo* proffered by Utz,[55] which has already been seen to be "far-fetched" in its application. It is precisely the binary notion that if something does not stem from God (or a lesser authority) it then stems from nothing that is being queried by the text.

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[53] "The Parson's Prologue," 28, 33; "The Parson's Tale," 119, 137, 144, 333, 348, 355, 491, 533, 550, 933; "The Tale of Sir Thopas," 958 (transition to "Melibee"); "The Tale of Melibee," 1010, 1019, 1022, 1025, 1031, 1209, 1267, 1356, 1360, 1536, 1603, 1741, 1785, 1787, 1864; "The Clerk's Prologue," 55; "The Clerk's Tale," 90, 99, 175, 322, 341, 591, 1175.

[54] Curiously, *matires* occurs five times in Chaucer's work, all in "The Canon's Yeoman's Tale" (770, 779, 811, 814, 815). *Materes* occurs once, in *The Legend of Good Women*, "The Seintes Legende of Cupide" (Text G, line 279), and is in response to *Troilus and Criseyde*.

[55] Other instances of *matere* are distinguished by *this, that, thy, swich, heighe, deep* and a few others, all of which *my matere* stands in opposition to.

Of the occurrences of *matere* in *Troilus and Criseyde*, only three are referred to through the possessive *my matere* (I.53, I.144, III.1409), with an additional occurrence (IV.17) [56] that is of note. Throughout the corpus, there are an additional eight occurrences—once in "The Miller's Tale," twice in "The Man of Law's Tale," once in "The Physician's Tale," once after "The Tale of Sir Thopas," and three times in *The Legend of Good Women* ("The Legend of Dido," "The Legend of Ariadne" and "The Legend of Phyllis"). "The Tale of Melibee" contains a significant variation, as it presents the only instance of a reference to "oure matere" (1741).

What makes the lone occurrence of "oure matere" so intriguing is that the statement is made by a group of characters; all of the other instances of a possessive *matere* are more ambivalent between the fictional possibility of a singularity for the possessive. What is certain in this context is that though this is one of "Chaucer's Tales," Chaucer is not overtly present in the "they":[57]

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[56] IV. 17 reads: "For how Criseyde Troilus forsook— / Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde— / Moot hennesforth ben matere of my book, / As writen folk thorugh which it is in mynde."

[57] "[The] Melibee's semantic doublets address a historically specific problem—the absence of a functional civic community in late fourteenth-century England—by means of an aesthetic form both social and semantic: that is, the patterned repetitions to whose augmentation Chaucer calls our attention when he apologizes for the way "I varie as in my speche" (VII 954). Forging a new vocabulary for civic deliberation out of collocated variations, the doublets knit together a linguistic community of English speakers. In so doing, they reverse the usual metaphorical role played by linguistic variety in the *Canterbury Tales*: to represent other (often pernicious) kinds of social fragmentation as well. The metaphor of a society fragmented by language depends, in

> "Certes," quod they, "we putten oure dede and al oure matere and cause al hooly in youre goode wyl/ and been redy to obeye to the speche and comandement of my lord Melibee./ And therfore, deere and benygne lady, we preien yow and biseke yow as mekely as we konne and mowen/ that it lyke unto youre grete goodnesse to fulfillen in dede youre goodliche wordes,/ . . ." (1741-4)

These characters are giving over their power to move their body to the will of their lord. This is, most certainly, not the ethic that Chaucer's work puts forward.[58] It also provides another example for investigating the aforementioned Ockham-Chatton debate. Most importantly, it sets up the duality of worlds dichotomy centered on individuated authorial presence, which does not necessarily break down into the diegetic/mimetic opposition (which, like the Chaucer/Narrator strict and exclusive dichotomy, is too porous to be a determinate guide for understanding the representational content).

While it is clear that the occurrence of "oure matere" is not overtly Chaucer, all occurrences of *my matere* require a more detailed investigation. At the end of "The Tale of Sir Thopas," the pilgrim Chaucer responds to the stinting of his tale by the Host and introduces "The Tale of Melibee":

> Therfore, lordynges alle, I yow biseche,
> If that yow thynke I varie as in *my speche*,

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turn, on two fundamental premises: first, that any language communicates by means of social agreement within a community of speakers; and second, that linguistic variety was a fact of Chaucer's social world, and registered a multiplicity of speech communities" (Taylor, K., 300). See also Kuczynski.

[58] See Finnegan, "She Should Have Said No."

As thus, though that *I telle* somwhat moore

Of proverbes than *ye han herd* bifoore

Comprehended in *this litel tretys* heere,

To enforce with th'effect of *my mateere*;

And though I nat the same wordes seye

As *ye han herd*, yet to yow alle *I preye*

Blameth me nat; for, as in *my sentence*,

Shul ye nowher fynden difference

Fro the sentence of *this tretys lyte*

After the which this murye tale *I write*.

And therfore herkneth what that *I shal seye*,

And lat me tellen al my tale, *I preye*." (italics mine, 953-66)

The "I write" of line 964 complicates our ability to differentiate Chaucer as an author and as a narrator within the frame of the author's construction. This is specifically complicated by the "my speche" of line 954 and the "I shal seye" of 965. The "my matere" occurs, for the last time in *The Canterbury Tales*, with the address to "lordynges alle," which, given the difficulty in delineating the speaker, can only be taken as a universal address, not specific to the pilgrims, and which sets up the transference into "our matere" by placing Chaucer as exterior to the "alle." This transference demonstrates the manner in which the multiplicity of identities folds back into the singularity; it is these characters, after all, that we refer to when we speak of Chaucer-as-author.

This moment is also anticipated by the first occurrence of "my matere" in *The Tales*, when the narrator of *The Canterbury Tales* proffers this defence of his telling of "The Miller's Tale" at the end of "The Miller's Prologue":

> And therefore every gentil wight *I preye*,
> For Goddes love, demeth nat that *I seye*
> Of yvel entente, but for I moot reherce
> Hir tales alle, be they bettre or werse,
> Or elles falsen som of *my mateere*.
> And therfore, *whoso list it nat yheere*,
> *Turne over the leef and chese another tale*; (italics mine, 3171-7)

Michael P. Kuczynski offers a recapitulation of many of the various modes of interpretation for these lines, and it is commonly considered that Chaucer lets his narrative persona slip here. Still, while this passage has been connected to both the one following "The Tale of Sir Thopas" and "The General Prologue,"[59] little has been done to connect it to *Troilus and Criseyde*. I believe there is a direct connection between "Or elles falsen som of my matere. / And therfore, whoso list it nat yheere" (3175-6) of "The Miller's Prologue" and *Troilus and Criseyde*'s:

> Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle,
> . . . . . .
> Fro my matere, and yow to long dwelle,
> . . . . . .
> Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write." ("Book I," 142-7)

[59] "But first I pray yow, of youre curteisye, /That ye n'arette it nat my vileynye, / Thogh that I pleynly speke in this mateere, / To telle yow hir wordes and hir cheere," (725-8).

In each case, Chaucer is suggesting that if the reader does not like his "matere" then that reader can choose another work. However, whereas the implication in "The Miller's Prologue" seems to be that the reader can choose another of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, the suggestion in *Troilus and Criseyde* is that if the reader does not like Chaucer's "matere," then that reader should choose another "bok," entirely—presumably Homer, Dares or Dictys, perhaps Boccaccio, Guido delle Colonne, or Geoffrey of Monmouth .

Following "The Miller's Prologue," the next reference to "my matere" occurs in "The Man of Law's Tale," twice. The first occurrence in the tale is during the long passage between lines 288-322. Here, the Man of Law is, for all intents and purposes, telling the story of Criseyde.[60] When he finally addresses Custance, we recieve this curious passage:

> Ther nys namoore, but "Farewel, faire Custance!"
> She peyneth hire to make good contenance;
> And forth *I lete hire saille in this manere*,
> And turne *I wole agayn to my matere*. (319-22)

The "I lete hire saille" is a difficult statement to reconcile with a view that this is a constructed narrator speaking. To this end, A. C. Spearing's reading of the tale is the most beneficial:

> Chaucer's ["Man of Law's Tale"] is a work of astonishing ambition and accomplishment, not only in its elevation of style but in its sustained attempt to find a meaning beyond traditional narrative pattern in the story it tells. And the questions it asks become all the more disturbing in a world ruled not by Mars, Venus, and Saturn, but by a God we are required to think of as just. To attribute

[60] The passage begins: "I trowe at Troye . . ." (288), then "That crueel Mars hath slayn this mariage" (301).

> the tale in which such probing questions are asked to the blindness and errors of the Man of Law is to refuse to plumb the metaphysical depths that Chaucer was prepared to contemplate. I hope it has emerged from this study that to read the Man of Law's Tale as spoken in the voice of a fictional narrator is usually to avoid reading it all. (741-2)

To best understand the "I lete hire saille," the "narrator" of *Troilus and Criseyde* provides a striking model through Criseyde.[61] However, the "narrator" of *Troilus and Criseyde*, in such estimations, is too often taken to be a successful construct, separate from Chaucer. The famous line 1786 of "Book V," "Go, litel bok, go, litel myn tragedye," should serve as sufficient evidence for destabilizing a strict dichotomy between the narrator and Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In these instances, the attempt to create a "rigid armour of identity", the appearance of an individual response, falls apart when the emotional response to the social circumstances that delineate the relationship between that individual and another outweighs the control that the singularity attempts to place upon the matter. Chaucer's utilization of his "bok" as a metaphor for this issue is telling of his feelings both toward the issue and books.

The second occurance of 'my matere' in "The Man of Law's Tale" echoes the language of the first: "But turne I wole agayn to my mateere" (581). The relationship between the Man of Law and books is another well developed theme in Chaucerian criticism. In this case, however, my primary concern is the relationship between "turne" and "my matere." One cannot help but notice the echo to "The Miller's Prologue": "Turne over the leef and chese another tale" (3177). Not only does the Man of Law strike Spearing as a counterexample to the notion that the one who says "I" is himself an "I," but he is also concerned with the two examples of violations of

[61] See Ross for a view of the text as de-centered on Troilus.

"dramatic propriety" (qtd. 715) drawn from Kittredge: the Physician and the Pardoner. Perhaps it is thus no surprise that the other occurance of "my matere" is in "The Physician's Tale":

> Under a shepherde softe and necligent
> The wolf hath many a sheep and lamb torent.
> Suffiseth oon ensample now as heere,
> For I moot turne agayn to my matere. (93-104)

Critical interpretations of these lines have always focused on the context of "The Physician's Tale" (cf. Lianna Farber). However, the movement from "The Miller's Tale" to "The Man of Law's Tale" to this "Tale" and then into Chaucer's "Tale of Sir Thopas," which leads to the creation of a universal consent in "The Tale of Melibee" provides a much more informative, and self-reflexive—in that Chaucer-at-large is now being considered—structure for investigation. The suggestion is thus not that this example is sufficient for now and another example will come later in *this* "Tale," but rather, another example will come later in *The Tales*. Rather than mapping the difference between narrator and author, "matere" presents the moment when the individuation between the one telling the story and the one desiring the story to be told breaks down, allowing a clear pattern to emerge that is both difficult to contain and that speaks to the difficulty of containment.

It must now be stated that Chaucer's "matere" in *Troilus and Criseyde* is intimately bound up in his "bok," which is itself a construction not yet fully realized in actuality but related in the act of referencing it. This personal investment in the work creates an ethic of responsibility that Chaucer unquestionably saw as individual: "my matere," "litel bok . . . litel myn tragedye." Not surprisingly, the two major works, *The Canterbury Tales* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, contain this concern; interestingly, the other text that contains this concern is *The Legend of Good*

Women. Purportedly written in atonement for *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Legend of Good Women* is the last of Chaucer's dream visions and is unfinished (*Riverside,* 587). As was stated above, within *The Legend of Good Women*, "my matere" occurs in "The Legend of Dido," "The Legend of Ariadne" and "The Legend of Phyllis":

> And sayleth forth with al his companye
> Toward Ytayle, as wolde his destinee.
> But of his adventures in the se
> Nis nat to purpos for to speke of here,
> For it acordeth nat to *my matere*.
> But, as I seyde, of hym and of Dido
> Shal be my tale, til that I have do. (italics mine, "Legend of Dido", 951-7)

Just as Chaucer alludes to the Trojan War only to denounce it in favour of the story of Troilus and Criseyde in *Troilus and Criseyde*, and echoing the concern for Dido previously witnessed in *The House of Fame*, in this passage Chaucer denounces Aeneas' "adventures" in favour of "hym and of Dido." The other examples in *The Legend of Good Women* also demonstrate a concern for love stories, and especially for the heroines of these stories:

> Wel maystow wepe, O woful Theseus,
> That art a kynges sone, and dampned thus.
> Me thynketh this, that thow were depe yholde
> To whom that savede thee from cares cold!
> And if now any woman helpe the,
> Wel oughtestow hire servaunt for to be,
> And ben hire trewe lovere yer be yere!

But now to come ageyn to *my matere*. (italics mine, "Legend of Ariadne", 1952-9)

By preve as wel as by autorite,
That wiked fruit cometh of a wiked tre,
That may ye fynde, if that it like yow.
But for this ende I speke this now,
To tellen yow of false Demophon.
In love a falser herde I nevere non,
But if it were his fader Theseus.
"God, for his grace, fro swich oon kepe us!"
Thus may these women preyen that it here.
Now to the effect turne I of *my matere*.
Destroyed is of Troye the cite; (italics mine, "The Legend of Phyllis", 2394-404)

In "The Legend of Ariadne," Chaucer blasts the unfaithful Theseus; In "The Legend of Phyllis," Chaucer blasts Theseus' son. In each case, *my matere* is presented in opposition to the authoritative historical telling of the story. Each, in their own way, serve to destabloze that authority: "The Legend of Ariadne" is written "for to clepe ageyn unto memorye" (1889) Theseus' "untrouthe of love" (1890); "The Legend of Phyllis" reduces the Trojan War to one line (2404).

While the notion that every instance of *my matere* is intentionally invested with the dynamics I have been outlining remains dubious, that the phrase serves as a rigid designator[62] for

[62] See Kripke for the basics of rigid designation (also known as anti-descriptivism).

fixing Chaucer's view towards the social context of each story provides a workable model for explaining the recurrence of the statement, and the intentionality that the culmination of all the recurrences invest back into each instance. Moreover, through Lollius-in-the-place-of-Boccaccio, Chaucer has embodied the complex multiplicity of authority: the personal response of the individual and the social orthodoxy that defines an individual. In investigating the effect of names as concerns the major characters of *Troilus and Criseyde,* Michael Delahoyde has suggested that "[many] instances of name usage are clever and effective poetic moments attributable to Chaucer's intentions" (369). He concludes:

> But unless every detail in the treatment and use of names was calculated, which certainly seems unlikely, many of these matters were instinctual. Thus we can discern real human attitudes on the part of the poet towards his characters. Subliminally, we are "Heryng th'effect" not merely of technique, but also apparently of the poet's own emotional investment in the characters he has so impressively created" (369).

While all of the usages of *Troilus*, *Criseyde* and *Pandarus* in *Troilus and Criseyde* might be too difficult to track and explain, *Lollius* appears only three times in the entire Chaucer corpus. Of these three appearances, one comes at the beginning of *Troilus and Criseyde* ("Book I," 394), one at the end ("Book V," 1653) and one in "Book III" of Chaucer's *House of Fame* (1464-72). Delahoyde highlights the manner in which Chaucer changes names not only in order to fit rhythmic structure but also in order to draw particular connections within the text. For example, Pandarus is initially referred to as *Pandare,* with three of the first four instances of the name being attached "through rhyme . . . to the condition that has attracted his interest—Troilus's 'care' (I, 548-50, 587-88, 610-12)" (352-3). It is perhaps telling, then, that in the two instances of

Lollius in *Troilus and Criseyde*, *Lollius* is rhythmically attached to *Troilus*. The sole other occurrence, in *The House of Fame,* also occurs at the end of a line, this time being rhythmically attached to *Tytus*. While the footnotes to the *Riverside* edition suggest that *Tytus* refers to Dictys, this might not so clearly be the case. Livy is refered to as Tytus both in the earlier work *The Book of The Duchess* (1083) as well as the later work *The Legend of Good Women* ("The Legend of Lucrece," 1873). If the attribution in the *Riverside* is correct and *Tytus* refers to Dictys, then Lollius is connected to both the losing hero and winning teller of the battle. It is more likely, however, that *Lollius* is intended to sound Latin in origin, connected to both Troilus and Livy, as alluded to earlier.

Through *The Legend of Good Women*, as well as Dido's lament in *The House of Fame,* the connection between names and social contextualization becomes clear. In the case of "The Legend of Dido," there is Aeneas the false lover; "The Legend of Ariadne" has Theseus, the false lover; "The Legend of Phylis", Demophon, who is second only to his father Theseus, as far as false lovers go. Each of these individuals—Theseus, Demophon and Aeneas—have their connections to the Trojan War. [63] By focusing on the falsity of their love over and above their heroic actions, Chaucer establishes a pattern that can then be read back into *Troilus and Criseyde*. Indeed, that these names occur in such close proximity to Chaucer's "matere" reaffirms what Chaucer was doing in *Troilus and Criseyde*: these stories do not "atone" for *Troilus and Criseyde*, but further demonstrate Chaucer's concern for the social relations and the contexts that construct and define the characters in this history over and above the historical event itself.

[63] See Anderson. Also see Bellamy.

While Boccaccio is a deeply important source for the story of Troilus and Criseyde, there are two other sources, each of a greater importance, to Chaucer's version of the story. These two sources are Statius and Boethius. While the plotline of the story and the characters are directly indebted to Boccaccio, the historical genealogy that drives the tragedy of the story is indebted to Statius' *Thebaid* and the poem's structure and philosophy are indebted to Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy*. This all gets folded into Chaucer's "matere." Given that Lollius-in-place-of-Boccaccio serves to destabilize the text, it could be argued that Boccaccio represents a non-authoritative source. In opposition to the non-authoritative standing of Boccaccio, determined by his absence—though this again is not to suggest that there is nothing there—from the text, Statius is present in two quite authoritative ways. The first of what I am calling the "authoritative presences," but by no means the first time that the *Thebaid* is present, occurs following line 1498 of "Book V." Directly in the text of almost all of the manuscripts occurs the "Argument of the 12 Books of Statius' Thebaid." What is important, in this case, is that Chaucer has not directed the reader to turn to a source available to "whoso that kan may rede hem," but deliberately included a summary of that source, in the language—or at least a medieval approximation of that language—of that source. This is nothing if not the digression that he would not afford the works of Homer, Dares and Dictys. At the very least, the inclusion of the summary of the book fits neatly with the manner in which "matere" plays out in *The Canterbury Tales*, particularly "The Man of Law's Tale."

While Chaucer's "matere" is not the historical context of the Trojan War as related by Homer, Dares and Dictys, but the love story of Troilus and Criseyde, taken from the non-authorial source of Boccaccio, the Theban War, as presented by the authorial source Statius, provides a historical genealogy that directly imbues the relationship between Troilus and

Criseyde in history.[64] Chaucer is here stylistically situating a behabitive involvement in the social context of the story, his "matere," as opposed to the heartless old books of Homer, Dares, Dictys, etc., through the historical context that creates that history. Chaucer destabilizes the historical reception of the Troy story by giving that history a history. Likewise, while Boccaccio's purpose for narrating the story is described in the opening of his version of the story, that being the love for a women that has compelled him to tell the story, Chaucer invests his "purpos" in a much more nuanced manner, to the extent that it can be located as his purpose, and not solely the rhetorical purpose of a disembodied narrator.

This focus on "matere" is important for discerning Chaucer's attitude towards not only his sources and historical position, but textual posterity as well. At the close of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer lists the five poets he takes to be the great *auctores*: "Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (V.1792). While the ordering of this listing is most likely derived from either Dante or more probably Boccaccio,[65] one might also discern a pattern further pertinent to Chaucer's work. The most respected of *auctores* was Virgil, while the final *auctor*, Statius, carries the most weight, in that his work is an authoritative source, materially present in most manuscript versions of *Troilus and Criseyde* ("Book V," 1498) through the inclusion of a Latin synopsis of Statius' *Thebiad*. The presentation of the *auctores* on steps suggests a gradation of authority, yet the grammar of "And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace" ("Book V," 1791) does not easily allow for an understanding of the subject of the movement: On the one hand the book can be regarded as passing authors standing on a series of steps; On the other hand, the book can be regarded as seeing the *auctores* "pace" about on the steps. The directing of the book

[64] See Anderson.

[65] See Dante, *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, 4.88-90); Boccaccio, *Il Filocolo* (2.376-78).

creates a sensation of movement in the authors, which is likewise a destabilizing of their concrete position in literary tradition. The inclusion in the stanza of "But litel book, no makyng thow n'envie / But subgit be to alle poesye" (1789-90) reflects Chaucer's illustration of the Troy pillar in *The House of Fame* and its "envy". Chaucer is asking his book not to vie with, but also not to envy, the other poetry. In a sense, Chaucer is asking the book to pay its respects to the authoritative tradition and the structures that uphold it, and also to pass such things by; such is the case, says Chaucer, of writing in English:

> And kis the steppes where as thow seest pace
> Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace.
>
> And for ther is so gret diversite
> In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge,
> So prey I God that non myswrite the,
> Ne the mysmetre for defaute of tonge; ("Book V," 1791-6)

Chaucer is praying that the scribes who copy his work will not change the words and meter so much that he will not "be understonde" (1798), and yet with the exception of the insertion of a synopsis of the twelve books of Statius' *Thebaid* in twelve lines of Latin, Chaucer chooses to write in an unstable language, English.[66]

There is thus an opposition in the text between the creolized-Lollius-in-place-of-Boccaccio text and the authoritative step(s) of Statius et al.'s Latin (with Homer, if read at all, being read in Latin). Out of this antagonism comes *Troilus and Criseyde*, as Chaucer's "tragedye," within which Chaucer has invested his "matere," from which his book can "pace" the

[66] Presuming the inclusion of Latin to be authorial and not scribal.

others and become, if not an *auctore*, its own authority. Were he in actuality a character like Criseyde, the distance between himself and his work could be reduced to the image of himself as author by such contextual measures: Chaucer as an author like these other authors. Yet as much as Chaucer is "like" these authors he is not. Richard Waswo relates:

> All that we know of Chaucer's actual life amounts to the situation he assumes and shares with Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde:* he served the royalty to which he did not belong; he did its business, arranged its marriages, transacted its trade agreements, managed its property, and entertained it with recitations of his poems. And he never wrote about its ideology, its heroic codes of love and war, with anything but ambivalence. (14)

Noting this ambivalence does not elide the personal experience and attitude toward that social context that Chaucer does express. It is not that Chaucer did not care for social context, but that he cared deeply for it and what it produced. Such ambivalence "transcends the antagonisms of existence without perpetrating the deception that they no longer exist" (Adorno 190), so as to allow for "the conception of something other than a literature of masters" (Deleuze 17).

Chaucer's transition from Latin authority to English literature, a further folding of his "matere"—the creation of English literature as a politically viable literature, in all its "gret diversite"—of *Troilus and Criseyde*, took not only the form of building on and off literary tradition (*translatio*), but also, quite literally, involved a translation from Latin to English, Chaucer's *Boece*. In terms of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Boethius presents the *causa formalis* of the work, the basic tenets of which can be found in Theodore A. Stroud's "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's 'Troilus'." While the structural format of *Troilus and Criseyde*'s "Books" replicates the structural format of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, with a certain amount of irony, there is

an even more important difference in the telling. This difference concerns the *causa finalis*, or the particular moral or philosophical significance of the text—its "gret power and moral vertu" (*Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book II,".167). In *Boece*, the "hero," Boethius, is able to find happiness within. As a contemporary example Dante, as the "hero" of his *Comedia*, comes to realize the glory of God, making for a positive ending as well. Dante is able to craft expertly a hero in such a way as to display the passage from unknowing to knowing in the hero, and there is never any doubt as to the ability of Dante to control his text, its poetry and its language. Dante, presumably, further saw himself in control of the interpretation of his text.[67] Likewise, in writing both sides of the dialectic, Boethius is in control of his text, his poetry and his logic, such that he can be seen as demonstrating a path to a conclusion. In both cases, the hero and "narrator" are conflated. In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, not only does Troilus, the closest thing there is to a parallel hero, understandably not understand what is going on in the beginning, but one can argue that he never comes to that moment of realization. Indeed, the centrality of any one character to the text is problematic. Given the role of "forsook" in the text, one can argue that the presumed narrator is unable to determine clearly the absolute morality of the actions (generated as he is by the confluence of those actions), while the text structurally and grammatically disallows such a determination. There is quite simply no way to follow the philosophical model of Boethius or the allegorical model of Dante toward a demonstrable and clear moral virtue in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

In *The House of Fame*, Chaucer opens with the syntactically complex "God turne us every drem to goode" (1)—whether this is a command, request, statement of truth or critique of moral interpretation is unclear. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer says, "Go, litel bok, go, litel

[67] See Dante, "From Letter to Can Grande Della Scala."

myn tragedye" ("Book V," 1786), which the reader can infer to be both a plea and a command. The positioning of present existence in relation to a future determinant of truth in *Troilus and Criseyde* situates Chaucer's "bok" as a metaphorical image for his concern about the philosophical (Boethian) structures of determination. According to Boethius, some things "descendith of the nature of thinges (as the sonne arysynge); and some descendith of the power of the doeris (as the man walkynge)" (*Boece*, V.6.229-232).[68] If Chaucer is following the growing concern for the human characteristics of the author and the material existence of stories, then the author and the man walking share a bond; whether or not the final destination provides a comfort depends not simply on a duality of worlds, but on the ability to escape the first.

In "Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*," Harold Kaylor suggests that there is an opposition between emotive and stoic response drawn into *Troilus and Criseyde* from Boethius. He surmises:

> Book I of the *Consolation of Philosophy* consists in seven metrical passages that alternate with six prose passages, and Meter 4 stands at the pivotal center of Book I. In the central meter, Lady Philosophy contrasts two types of people who have faced both good and ill fortune: there are those who respond emotionally, hoping that the first will prevail and fearing that the second will recur, and those who respond stoically, accepting each as it comes. (112)

Chaucer's behabitive response coincides with the first type of Lady Philosophy's characters. Kaylor accordingly argues that "[throughout] the story of Troilus loving Criseyde, Chaucer, too, seems to associate tragedy with an emotionally charged, as opposed to a rationally accepted,

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[68] A modern translation echoes exactly Chaucer's translation: "[some things] result from the necessity of things, and some of them from the power of those who do them" (Boethius, 136).

response to a sudden reversal of fortune" (113). But of course, the focus on "fortune" contextualizes "the story of Troilus loving Criseyde," picking out the matter in a particular way. To this end, Chaucer's concern with the stability of language (*Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book II," 22-8) unsettles the stability that he seeks to create through the employment of classical forms and genres. As Chaucer states:

> Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge
> Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
> That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
> Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
> And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
> Ek for to wynnen love in sondry ages,
> In sondry londes, sondry ben usages" (*Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book II," 22-8).

While older forms of poetry present models of success, changes in time and custom disassociate readers from the context of the stories as much as they create that context for the future. Chaucer's use of types and characters drawn from other contexts demonstrates both the control that each individual structure presents on its ability to subject the matter to its form, thereby demonstrating success over time. The stability metaphorically offered by the "steppes"—and the pillars in *The House of Fame*—is a false image denied to Chaucer by the materiality of his language and text. Kaylor suggests:

> The difference between the circumstances of Troilus and that of Dante is this: Troilus will not pass from the hollowness that contains the elements of space and time into the eternal realm beyond, but Dante will. Thus, Troilus inhabits a pagan universe and Dante inhabits a Christian universe, and the experience of the

> universal, love, ends for Troilus where the experience of the universal, Love, seems really to begin for Dante. . . . As the preface to *The Legend of Good Women* notes, revealed truth is defined by a more limited authority: his own developing *experience* of the universal, *love*, within his still pagan universe. (116)

This "developing experience," with a focus turned back on the "developing," formulates not only the passage for Troilus, but the becoming-author for Chaucer through the antagonism in the image of the steps and the metrical and material limits of the English language. When the movement is made to trespass the duality of worlds, it becomes impossible to divest fully the primary matter of the "human standpoint—the only one available to us and the only one from which Chaucer presumed to write" (Bloomfield 49). Chaucer cannot place himself within the authoritative structures, and he knows fundamentally that these structures do not present his position. In a sense, *he* cannot climb the steps to stand with the greats, and while he can hope that his "bok" can, it must do so in its own language, which threatens to erase his presence through its dominance.

Instituted through a behabitive act, in its directive toward social context, is the production of a discernable individual-towards-the-world who, in being initiated through an excess of desire, as a power against authority, fractures the false stability of that social context through his emergence. This fracturing of the social context does not fully disseminate the structure of the social context; rather, the social context is reinscribed in, folded back into, the individual and made personal. Chaucer's fear for social context and the changing of languages is therefore to be seen as an antagonism of his "matere." Just as Chaucer confounds Aristotle's directionality of causation, where "contrary movements cannot belong to the same thing, and a movement away from the centre is the contrary of movement to it" (Aristotle, De Caelo 435), Chaucer

demonstrates his act of becoming an author as contrary to the centralization that occurs in the term *auctor*. Chaucer is not simply attempting to "mirror" reality, and in so doing establish an "intrinsic truth" in the fiction that upholds the authority and moral virtue imparted to it by social context; he is attempting to create with that social context the perceptible means for destroying its control. This, then, is not best seen in vertical transcendence of the stairs, which is denied in the same way that corporeal stones fall away from the House of Fame, but in the creation of other worlds on the human level, like the ripples across the pond that blur what they reflect. Perhaps it can now be said that it is hardly surprising that generations of readers have lost themselves in Chaucer's work.

Conclusion

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, borrowing from them names, battle slogans, and costumes in order to present this new scene in world history in time-honored disguise and borrowed language. (Marx)

Chaucer's engagement with philosophical antagonisms through literary form demonstrates the difficulties inherent in using language to express feelings toward the world. That Chaucer is able to create a mode of response that is both personal and able to withstand time derives from his deep engagement with the epistemic structures of his time. Assuredly, Chaucer's creation of complex images was no easy task of "his language," to borrow Carton's phraseology, but a laborious process. This process involved not only distilling a whole range of influences, models and allusions" (Windeatt ix) but epistemologies as well. According to Hugo Keiper:

> [Any . . .] thinker's position on universals is indicative not only of his fundamental epistemological and ontological tenets but, most importantly, will also reflect his general semiotic orientation. In many respects, then, it can be regarded as the keystone of his entire thinking, and therefore as paradigmatic of his system at large. (11)

With Chaucer's attitude toward universals binding itself as it does to social context, it would be wrong to find in Chaucer this essence requiring expression in matter to be an intrinsic truth metaphysically present in suplication to the historical context of the material object. While such an action would embody the medieval practice of reclaiming past (pagan) *auctores* in light of Christian orthodoxy, Chaucer's engagement with history and its authors suggests no such similitude.

Rather, Chaucer offers "his position in the social reality of the past that generated the text and his position in that text as apprehended in the present reality of the reader" (Waswo 22), with the point of differentiation between this and the medieval reclaimation of past *auctores* being that of generation, as the antagonism of his "matere". In his first reference to his fictive source Lollius, Chaucer "writes":

> And of his song naught only the sentence,
> As writ myn auctour called Lollius,
> But pleinly, save our tonges difference,
> I dar wel seyn, in al that Troilus
> Seyde in his song, loo, every word right thus
> As I shal seyn; and whoso list it here,
> Loo, next this vers he may it fynden here. (I.393-9)

Waswo explains that the "'As I shal seyn' can function as both a rhetorical identification of the poet with his authority (I say it as Lollius wrote it) and an assertion of his independence from that authority (you hear every word as I say it)" (Waswo 17). By enmeshing an authority who is not really an authority but only sounds like one (Lollius) with himself, Chaucer forces the reader to consider his own perceived authority. Moreover, "the ironic result of all the ambiguities is that

what follows comes neither from Lollius nor from Troilus but is the poet's own (unannounced) translation of a sonnet of Petrarch (Rime 132)" (Waswo 17), the first "Canticus Troili." The importance of the irony is not in the intrinsic truth (*sentence*) of the source, but the manner in which the poet's feeling toward a social context that privileges the Latin sounding names of *auctores* is put forward, in the "solas" of the present speaker.

Troilus and Criseyde thus hinges upon the ability of the individual to express his feelings toward a received social context—specifically as such a context is instituted by authority. Whereas *solas* in *The Canterbury Tales*, at first blush, refers to the entertainment value of a tale and *sentence* to the meaning, as characterized through "The Tale of Sir Thopas" (solas) and the "Tale of Melibee" (sentence), in *Troilus and Criseyde, solas* seems first to refer to "solace" and "joy":

> And preieth for hem that ben in the cas
> Of Troilus, as ye may after here,
> That Love hem brynge in hevene to solas;
> And ek for me preieth to God so dere
> That I have myght to shewe, in some manere,
> Swich peyne and wo as Loves folk endure,
> In Troilus unsely aventure. (I.29-35)

This is carried into the introduction to the second "Canticus Troili" of "Book III" ("That it up rong unto the yate of hevene; / And, as in love, he was in swich *gladnesse*" [III.1725-6, italics mine]) and to the final "Canticus Troili" of "Book V":

> Men myght a book make of it, lik a storie.
> . . . . . .

> And to hymself ful ofte he seyde, "Allas,
>
> Fro hennes rood my blisse and my solas!
>
> As wolde blisful God now, for his joie,
>
> I myghte hire sen ayeyn come into Troie!
>
> . . . . . .
>
> And here I dwelle out cast from alle joie,
>
> And shall, til I may sen hire eft in Troie." (V.585-616)

It is clear here that *eft* means "again" and not "immediately." Troilus' comment that "Men myght a book make of it, lik a storie" is reiterated by Cassandra in her interpretation of Troilus' dream through Satius' *Thebaid*, "as men in bokes fynde" (V.1463). If the trend concerning the "Cantici Troili" is followed, where the words of Troilus shift into the words of Chaucer and not the source "book," the shift from seeing Criseyde come back into Troy to seeing Criseyde again in Troy redoubles the literary present of the text. *Solas*, too, undergoes a shift in its application, no longer meaning simply "solace" and "joy," but also "is exposed as part of a [literary] jargon not too precious to be turned to irony" (Chiappelli 92).[69] The initial pronouncement that heaven will bring to Troilus "solas" (*Troilus and Criseyde*, "Book I," 31) is played off through the text of the non-sententious (from *sententia*) standing of solas as a literary determination.

That solas is neither found in the intrinsic truth of the story nor the authoritative source or the Latin-sounding name but the writing of the human author is doubled with the existence of the literary present (as with the "man of gret auctorite"). This doubling not only demonstrates the contextual authority of the human author, but the social process of his emergence. Chaucer's

[69] Chiapelli finds this action in lines 459-62 of "Book II", in Criseyde's response to Troilus' threat of suicide.

point is not to show the ease with which such speech can take place, but to map painstakingly out the difficulty in conveying his attitude toward social context, given the control that that context exerts upon his labours; indeed, if his work is meant to comfort him, Chaucer seemingly fails ("The Parson's Tale," 1080-1090). The most prominent moment in *Troilus and Criseyde* for witnessing this difficulty occurs in and after the parliamentary scene of "Book IV" (141-220).[70] The Greeks have offered to trade the Trojans Antenor, whom the Greeks have as a prisoner, for Criseyde, parliament is convened, and only Hector speaks out against the trade.[71] For Hector, Criseyde "nys no prisonere" (179) and ought not to be treated as one. Troilus is silent; Stuck between a responsibility to the parliament and to his personal relationship with Criseyde, Troilus is unable to put his feelings toward the social context into words. The parliament's discussion serves to mirror the experience of the dreamer in *The House of Fame*, with the Troy pillar and its discourse, with Fame, with the House of Rumour, and ultimately with "A man of gret auctorite" that unseats our ability to provide a judgement upon the poem due to our inability to discern the subject that that man is.

In the end, Troilus is unable to ascend to Christian heaven, and is placed by Mercury somewhere between the moon and stars in "the holughnesse of the eighthe spere" ("Book V," 1809). Heaven was never going to provide Troilus with solas, just as English was never going to

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[70] Diane Vanner Stieinberg has taken up Hector's speech to parliament to demonstrate the difference, or lack thereof, between the Trojan and Greek social spaces.

[71] Presumably it is Criseyde and King Thoas, though Thoas is never confirmed in the text as part of the trade. In that the narrator proceeds to announce that Criseyde was swapped for Antenor, it is curious as to whether or not Thoas was indeed included. That the subsequent narrative focus is on Criseyde is understandable but not explanatory.

allow Chaucer to stand with Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan and Statius. Through Troilus' laughter on through the rejection of the earthly world, the reader encounters the poet's concern for social status that both *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The House of Fame* express, "the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce" (Marx).

Appendix

Althusser, Louis (1918-1990 CE)

Born in Algiers in 1918, Althusser was a structuralist philosopher and Marxist. One of his most influential students was Michel Foucault (1926-1984 CE), whom Althusser both mentored and introduced to the French Communist Party. There is considerable controversy surrounding Althusser's life: in 1980 Althusser murdered his wife, was deemed mentally unfit to stand trial, and confined to a mental asylum. Althusser's most well known contribution to literary theory involves his conceptualization of subjectivity, which he derives from a concept he terms interpellation. Interpellation is a structuralist concept, meaning that it presupposes a deep-rooted universality of the subject. This renders the concept widely applicable, but highly susceptible to historical critique, challenge and change. For Althusser, a subject is created through a process of "hailing", whereby an authoritative figure calls out to and individual that recognizes himself as subject and subjected by that authority. As Althusser puts it, "I shall then suggest that ideology 'acts' or 'functions' in such a way that it 'recruits' subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or 'transforms' the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the lines of the most commonplace everyday police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'" (Althusser, 118). For Althusser, the individual unquestionably submits to the authority of the State and in doing so becomes a subject of the State, allowing its ideology to structure the individual's subjectivity.

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Aristotle (384–322 BCE)

Born in Stagira in 384, Aristotle's proto-nominalist philosophy is derived in response to his teacher Plato's realism (429–347 BCE). Aristotle is also well known as the teacher of Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 BCE). Aristotle's research interests were broad, ranging from botany and biology to ethics and theology and to music and literary arts. Aristotle had such an important place in medieval philosophy that he was quite simply known as "the Philosopher" during that time. Though not necessarily readily available, and in most cases not at all, "[all] of Aristotle's works were translated into Latin in the Middle Ages", with most of those that were readily available being "intensely studied" (Dod 45). In 1210, an edict was issued in Paris "forbidding any lectures (public or private) on Aristotle's books of natural philosophy" (48). While the edict "was only local and did not prevent the work of translation from continuing" (48), such ecclesiastical action suggests a growing interest in, as well as examination of, Aristotle's philosophy in the educational institutions (Paris signifying the precursor in scholarly movements). By the mid-thirteenth century, the production of translations had progressed at such a rate that what might be considered the equivalent of an "Aristotle Reader", known now as the '*corpus vetustius*', circulated to such an extent that there survive "nearly one hundred

manuscripts (mostly from the thirteenth century)" (50). By "the second half of the thirteenth century . . . a 'new edition' of the works of Aristotle" (51) was developed out of the translations by William of Moerbeke that is now known as the '*corpus recentius*'. This new collection "rapidly gained ascendancy in the late thirteenth century and retained it until the Renaissance" (51), with over one hundred seventy manuscripts surviving today. The *corpus recentius* was comprised of a number of Aristotle's works and treatises (or significant parts thereof) as well as scholastic glosses. In every case it would have contained a version of his *Physics* and *Metaphysics* as a major component of the text. In his *Physics*, Aristotle takes up nature and the natural causes of things such as change and motion in things. The *Metaphysics* is intended by Aristotle to go beyond what is known to people of the natural world to what can be known of the world itself, its "first causes" or "being *qua* being". Both works presented a useful set of philosophical guidelines for medieval scholastics interested in both this world and a world beyond. Of particular influence to the medieval scholastics were the Aristotelian definitions of substance, essence and accident, which Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274 CE) used to explain the Eucharist, and Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction, which governed philosophical pursuit. For Aristotle, substances are combinations of form and matter (kind and composition) that make up a thing, which then has essential (what it is) and accidental (what it seems like) properties. In the Eucharist, the essence of the bread and wine changes in to the body and blood of Christ, while the accidents remain unchanged; this is also known as transubstantiation. Likewise, Aristotle's principle of non-contradiction, $\neg(P \wedge \neg P)$, which states that two statements of opposing truth values cannot simultaneously be true, was utilized by scholastics as a first principle for dealing with

God's ability to act: Because God was in all ways true, God could not contradict himself. Given that God's teachings were known to man through the Bible (as well as the Church Fathers), such a belief led to many interesting conversations.

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Chatton, Walter (1290 – 1343 CE)

Born in England sometime between 1285 and 1290, Walter of Chatton was a Scotist-realist philosopher who studied at Oxford University. While Chatton's philosophical work tends to be less known than his more popular contemporary William of Ockham, with whom Chatton frequently debated while both were at Oxford, Chatton was well respected in his time and had a successful ecclesiastical career. While Ockham is well known for his views toward ontological commitments—commonly referred to as "Ockham's razor"—Chatton's contrasting view, which has come to be called as the "Chatton Principle", tends to be less known. The Chatton Principle essentially states that if a proposition is known to be true, yet the *res* (things) present do not suffice to establish that truth, then another thing must be added such that the establishment of the truth of the

proposition is sufficient. Such a view perhaps suggests why Chatton had such a successful ecclesiastical career, serving as an advisor to two popes and earning a bishopric in Wales. Ockham was fundamentally opposed to Chatton's argument, and while Chatton's argument was ultimately unsuccessful, it is of value for the influence it had in refining Ockham's positions.

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Nominalism

Nominalism is a branch of metaphysics that has held an important position in the history of philosophy since its rise to prominence in medieval Europe. Medieval nominalism is characterized by the rejection of universals. It is thus in direct philosophical opposition to realism. Nominlists believe that the only things that exist are particulars, and that a particular (substance, quality) has a discrete ontology.

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Ockham, William (1287-1347 CE)

Born in just southwest of London sometime in late 1286, early 1287, William of Ockham was a nominalist philosopher who studied at Oxford University. Ockham is best known for his views toward ontological commitments—commonly referred to as "Ockham's razor"—though he himself neither put forward nor defined so clear and simple a definition as *entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem* (a plurality ought not be multiplied beyond necessity). While at Oxford, and through the challenges of his contemporaries, notably Walter Chatton, Ockham composed many important philosophical and theological works. Because of the nature of scholastic debate and the rate of change, modification and development throughout his corpus, it is hard to surmise a concise explanation of Ockham's philosophy. What can be said for certain is that, for Ockham, the only truly necessary entity that existed was God; everything else was a contingent upon that reality. Ockham's philosophy drew great attention, and he was well regarded, but he never completed his studies toward becoming a master of Theology. Instead, Ockham found himself hauled before the Papal Court at Avignon—which presumably felt itself quite necessary—to answer to charges of teaching heresy in 1324 and never returned to England (whether that was his choice or not is unclear). While at Avignon, Ockham continued his writings on philosophy and theology, but found himself pulled deeper into controversy when Michael of Cesena (1270-1342 CE), the chief administrative officer of the Franciscan order (to which Ockham held ties), requested Ockham's philosophical help in an argument between Michael and Pope John XXII (1249-1334 CE). Ockham studied the Pope's arguments against earlier papal statements (including some by John himself) and found the Pope to be not only wrong and in

contradiction to those statements, but an outright heretic. In preaching heresy, Ockham argued, the Pope had abdicated his papacy. Such a pronouncement meant that it was no longer safe for Ockham to stay at Avignon, and he fled (with Michael of Cesena and some others) during the night of May 26, 1328 to Italy. Ockham would later be excommunicated for fleeing Avignon, calling into question the terms of his stay there. Ockham's work during his exile and up until the time of his death turned away from philosophy and theology and instead focussed on political matters.

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Realism

In medieval philosophy, realism was a derivative form of Platonism and held to the existence of universals and real relations. Realism was the predominant philosophy of ecclesiastical teaching, and therefore presented the characteristic viewpoint of the Church. Realists believed that universals exist prior to their expression in substances, and that this existence was in the mind of God. All things, then, existed in relation to God, and so realists also believed in the existence of relational properties.

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