Studies in English

Volume 2 Article 11

1961

The Poet of Love and the Parlement of Foules

Donald C. Baker
University of Mississippi

The Poet of Love and the *Parlement of Foules*

Donald C. Baker

Of Chaucer's four vision poems, the *Parlement of Foules* is, without a doubt, the most closely integrated, firm-textured, and, notwithstanding its superficial simplicity, the most complex. Lowes has spoken of it, and rightly so, as "seamless."[1] Few critics indeed, though many have regarded it as a precious trifle, have quibbled with its composition, and these have been limited for the most part to those readers who failed to find important connections between the preliminary reading of the *Somnium Scipionis* and the rest of the poem.[2] Twentieth century scholars and critics have nearly always seen the poem as tightly unified, although in many cases the reasons given for the unity were highly individual. In any case, this trend is once again indicative of the swelling theme predominating in recent Chaucer criticism, namely, that Chaucer is more than a good poet with an earthy sense of humor; he is a genius of the first order who must be read closely and with the same sort of unswerving attention required by Donne or Shakespeare, for, as Preston remarks in considering this poem, "Without distorting his lucid diction, Chaucer has written with a complexity that makes the complication of most verse today appear a child's puzzle."[3]

In examining the *Parlement* this study will attempt an investigation into the nature of this Chaucerian complexity. For, one can observe, it arises from no series of encrusted conceits as do Donne's complexities, and, at times, Shakespeare's. Although he has produced a number of beautiful lyrics, Chaucer is not primarily a lyricist nor is he a dialectical poet; he is a narrative poet, first and foremost, with a

story to tell and a theme to convey. The way in which his verse delivers this theme, tightly integrated with imagery and reinforced by this imagery translated into symbolical sub-structure, deepened and broadened by his peculiar "allusive" texture and symbolism curiously akin to that of the Augustans and to a certain aspect of Eliot and Pound, is the base of the Chaucerian complexity, lurking innocently beneath the even flow of his translucent diction. Not until the best of the *Canterbury Tales* do we encounter such a fine example of Chaucer's swift, incisive, and curiously anonymous style as we have in the *Parlement of Foules.*

As in the case of the *House of Fame,* this poem has been buried under tons of scholarly disputation, seeking to establish an historical "meaning" or application for the poem. The assumption that the *Parlement of Foules* is an occasional poem with allegorical reference to real people and events has for so long been so universal that the modern reader would be foolish indeed to assume otherwise without careful weighing of the arguments. The modern reader, schooled in *in vacuo* explicatory criticism, would, of course, like to discard such appendages, but, unfortunately, it is impossible to approach a Chaucer poem with the *a priori* assumption that one will find no allegorical or historical basis for its composition, for we have always before us the fact that Chaucer did, almost indisputably, write one such poem, the *Book of the Duchess,* and that there was no ordinance forbidding its repetition. The arguments for the *Parlement's* being a somewhat similar occasional poem are strong indeed (as a general idea, not that any specific application is convincing) and any critic's interpretation of the poem must come to some sort of terms with such a likelihood, before he proceeds beyond it (as, of course, he must, if he is to be a critic of literature rather than an historian).

The commonly accepted date of the *Parlement* is 1382 or thereabouts.[4] This is the result of the more or less general agreement that the allegorical structure of the poem is a reference to the marriage of King Richard II to Anne of Bohemia which occurred in that year.[5]

This particular interpretation is the oldest and has certainly clung to life with more tenacity than any of the others, although very cogent arguments have been presented for other allegorical interpretations. The two most important are those of Haldeen Braddy[6] and Edith Rickert.[7] Braddy would claim a date of 1377 because, as he maintains, the poem refers to the potential marriage of Richard to Marie of France which, however, did not take place because of Marie's untimely death. This would fit in neatly with the undetermined alliance of the formel and tercel eagles, and Braddy makes the most of it. The date of 1377 would place the poem a couple of years before the usually assumed date for the *House of Fame* (ca. 1379) and would upset the generally-accepted order of the chronology of Chaucer's vision poems (and revert to the order which Skeat and many other scholars of the late nineteenth century preferred). The present essay will imply, among other things, that the *Parlement* is a later poem than the *House of Fame,* though the arguments must inevitably to an extent be circular.

Miss Rickert's interpretation is that the allegory is applicable to the engagement of John of Gaunt's eldest daughter and that Chaucer would naturally have written such a poem for an important social event in the life of his greatest patron. The formel eagle, then, would be Philippa, the suitors would be Richard II, William of Mainault and John of Blois. The satire, she explains, is against the peasants, which would be particularly pleasing to John of Gaunt, but, of course, since Richard put down the peasants' revolt, it would have been equally pleasing to him, and so 'round and 'round we go. Likewise, it is not clear that the satire is directed at the lower classes.[8]

In light of this seemingly never-to-be settled problem of historical allegory, it is obviously foolish to base any thorough-going interpretation of the poem itself upon such shaky foundation. But nevertheless let us keep in mind the fact that the allegorical correspondence to persons might well have existed, and make allowances for such an eventuality.

Thus far this study has considered only one kind of historical allegory. For some time now critics of the poem have been speculating about a number of wider, more general historical applications of the allegory that nearly all except Professor Manly[9] agree is lurking somewhere in the *Parlement of Foules*. In 1937 R. E. Thackabeery, capitalizing on the apparent draw to which critics had fought,[10] one group seeing in the *Parlement* a satire on the upper classes, another on the lower classes, very shrewdly suggested that Chaucer was satirizing both classes in a bit of moral and social allegory deploring the constant strife and confusion existing in the social order of his time. This interpretation of Chaucer's attitude as objective rather than biased, and which led to the interpretation of the poem as something of a human comedy, is reflected in the comments of Bronson and Clemen.

Another school of more abstract allegorists has arisen which sees in the *Parlement's* ironic juxtaposition of the preliminary reading of Cicero and the garden of love as symbolic of a dilemma in the Poet's mind between true and false felicity, or more simply, a dichotomy between man's duty in the world and his actual pursuits which, from a serious moral standpoint, are perhaps something less than ideal. R. C. Goffin[11] first formulated the statement of this position and Lumiansky elaborated considerably on the thesis.[12] This concept accounts satisfactorily for the inconclusive feeling of the poem, indicating the *impasse* in Chaucer's own mind. But it does not take into account the full significance of love in the poem (it is treated always as simply the case in point, whereas it would seem that the problem of love itself is a central one,[13] and more particularly does the problem of the love-Poet's function seem pressing to Chaucer). Further, both Goffin and Lumiansky fail to take sufficiently into account the deep vein of humor in the poem, thus leaving the *Parlement of Foules* precisely the *tractatus* that Lumiansky claims it is. They fail to grasp the central fact of Chaucer's art which is, that though he may sing of Heaven and Earth and Hell, his Muse is Thalia. The reader of Chaucer knows

that the poet can and does treat extremely serious problems in his poetry, as in the *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*. But this seriousness is seldom direct, pedagogical, or philosophical; the seriousness is inherent in his kind of humor and in the symbolic structure of his poetry.

While the essays of Goffin and Lumiansky are valuable for the light they throw on Chaucer's motives, the three best essays of a general nature which have been written, those of Bronson,[14] Clemen,[15] and Stillwell,[16] stress in common that important element which the more serious studies lack, which is that the poem is a human comedy. These studies are very valuable antidotes to the current trend of seeing Chaucer as a more naive and less gifted Dante.

Of the examinations of the *Parlement* in the past ten years, two are of particular interest to this study.[17] The first study is that of C. A. Owen, Jr.,[18] who undertakes a structural analysis of the poem in terms of the function of the Dreamer-Poet. He conceives of this function as three-fold: first, the Poet as Lover who desires in his dream a painless initiation into the mysteries of love; secondly, the Poet as Poet who by the intrusion of laughter into the vision framework ridicules the poetic convention he is using; and thirdly, the Poet as philosopher who, while celebrating St. Valentine's Day concludes that Man is not a slave to instinct but is "free to choose" common profit if he wishes (derived from the juxtaposition of the Ciceronian dream and the love-garden dream). Thus Owen sets up actually four levels of interpretation, the Dantean literal, allegorical, moral, and anagogical:

> Chaucer intends us to be amused by the simplicity of his persons, but he intends the amusement to be tempered by the vision of conflict and of the freedom to choose, which that simplicity finally and unwittingly presents. We can see in the poem, in addition to the probably topical references to the French Valentine tradition, an approximation of the four levels of medieval allegory. The literal is the simple story of

> the narrator's experience, the reading, the dream, and the unenlightened awaking. The allegorical is what this represents in the narrator's life, the victory of impulse and passion, frustrated though they be, over the idealism suggested by his reading. The moral level is represented by the implied criticism of the parliament in Scipio's "commune profyt" and the comment on the complicated pretentiousness of the nobler birds in the simple happiness of the matings and the roundel. The fourth level, the anagogical, is approached if not actually reached by the contrast between the two dreams in the poem and the freedom for man implied in this conditioned triumph of nature and instinct.[19]

Because this study's concern for the poem's structure will also lead to a consideration of the function of the Poet-Dreamer, this discussion will have a good deal to say about Owen's conclusions, rather more than the article itself warrants, for, of course, such a four-level reading of Chaucer is absurd.[20] For the present, however, only two comments on Owen's division of the Poet's functions are necessary. His first division, the Poet as lover who dreams the dream for his own satisfaction, "to be initiated painlessly into the mysteries of love," fails to make the point adequately clear that this function is purely as vehicle, a comic means of progression on a superficial level. Owen appears to take this function far more seriously than does Chaucer who constantly pokes fun at this figure of the Poet. The other observation is that Owen has seriously confused the second two functions. Chaucer has "ridiculed" the vision scheme before; the intrusion of reality into the framework of the dream poem has been seen in both poems previously discussed, and, as we have seen, this intrusion should not necessarily be taken as ridicule of the dream as a vehicle. Owen does well, though, to bring attention to the function of the Poet as Poet in the poem. What he has failed to perceive is that the function which he labels "Poet as philosopher" is really "Poet as Poet." For nowhere does Chaucer set up his Dreamer as

a philosopher or even as one concerned with philosophy; the Dreamer is looking for his solution, a way to "fare the bet" *as a Poet,*[21] and the reason is a very simple one. He is a Poet of love, and his concern for the "philosophy" in the poem, the philosophical problems revolving about love, is his concern for the materials of his craft. These points will be elaborated in further discussion.

Perhaps the better and more general of the two recent studies mentioned is the brief chapter in Derek Brewer's little book *Chaucer.*[22] Brewer sees the poem as Chaucer's presentation of the human comedy in which love (in a Boethian sense) is approved by Nature and enjoyed according to capacity by man mirrored in the body of fowls. But Chaucer the serious Poet remains puzzled as to the exact duty of man, and of the Poet, because, after all, there is still the *caveat* of Africanus, and in what sense is it to be taken? Because Brewer's commentary is probably the best explication yet offered of the basic conflicts which form one of the poem's themes, a few of his summarizing statements follow.

> We can now, however, at least see something of the terms of the problem. Just as the Temple of Venus represented lascivious love, so Nature represents legitimate love. The figure of Nature is the key to the latter part of the poem. She is God's deputy . . . . She knits together the diverse elements of the world by the bonds of Love, as Boethius explains in the *Consolation.* Nature here is the expression of God's creative activity. Whatever she ordains is good.[23]
>
> The poem thus presents first the major problem of the dualism of the world, then the subsidiary comment on the two kinds of love. We see these not in terms of logical conflict, but rather as masses of light and dark are balanced against each other in a picture.[24]
>
> What, however, is the total effect in the *Parliament?* Chaucer, like other medieval writers of debates, deliberately

> leaves the problem open — he is no propagandist. But the satirical humor of parts of the debate should not blind us to the genuine seriousness beneath. The strain between the two ways of life, the way of Acceptance, the way of Denial, he does not finally resolve till the end of his life, when, old and tired, he takes the way of Denial and condemns his non-religious writings. But in his fruitful period of manhood, conscious of and delighting in his powers and the richness of the world, he very strongly leans towards the way of Acceptance. Nature is good, and genuine love is good, since ordained by her — that is the overwhelming impression left by the *Parliament*.[25]

These excerpts admirably state what this study conceives to be one of the two main themes of the *Parlement of Foules*: the nature and function of love in a Boethian universe. The second theme, which has been alluded to earlier, is concurrent with the first, for it is the nature and function of the Poet, particularly the love-Poet. I have attempted to show elsewhere that this was, also, in part, the theme of the *House of Fame*,[26] except that in the *Parlement* Chaucer is more directly and pre-eminently concerned with love, whereas in the earlier poem love is basically a contributing, not a central, theme. In the *Parlement* the problem of the Poet is much more specific, though in its ramifications, i.e., the love-Poet's place in the "feyre cheyne" of love, it, too, is universal.

In the succeeding pages of this paper, Chaucer's development of these twin themes will be illustrated, not only as they appear in his explicit statements of the problems, but as the themes are adumbrated and elaborated symbolically in the imagery of the *Parlement of Foules* and alluded to by way of literary echoes and allusions.

The *Parlement of Foules* opens with a brief and somewhat abstract discussion of love, in its nature familiar to readers of the *Book of the Duchess* and the *House of Fame*. The *sententia* "The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,/Th' assay so hard, so sharp the

conquerynge," comprises the first two lines of the poem, and, if we are to trust the practice of medieval rhetoric, is in its nature an epigrammatic focusing and summarizing of certain ideas to be found in the poem. The craft he is speaking of, says the Narrator, is Love. This is certainly on the surface true. But it is also certain that the lines imply in addition the Poet's craft (which, of course, is intended by the original aphorism), the art of the Poet of love. If this be allowed, the Poet has in the first stanza of this relatively brief vision poem, consciously presented the double theme with which his work is concerned: the relation of divine love to the divine scheme and the function of the love Poet in relation to this order.

Following the *sententia* and its interpretation, the Poet goes on to a brief and thoroughly conventional description of the dualism of love, that of a wondrous God who is noted both for "myrakles" and "his crewel yre." All of which the Narrator, in the familiar pose with which we have become well acquainted, disclaims any direct knowledge. These two stanzas, then, sum up the conventional attitude of medieval love poets together with the conventional attitude of Chaucer's Narrator, both attitudes being important in their bearing on the rest of the poem, as we shall see. With these two stanzas, the first section of the poem, or as Lumiansky calls it, the "outside of the envelope," concludes. They have only an implied immediate connection to the discussion, upon which the Narrator next embarks:

> Of usage — what for lust and what for lore —
> On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde.
> But wherfore that I speke al this? Nat yoore
> Agon, it happede me for to beholde
> Upon a bok, was write with lettres olde,
> And therupon, a certeyn thing to lerne,
> The longe day ful faste I redde and yerne. (11. 15-21)

The twofold purpose of his reading, "what for lust and what for lore," is reminiscent of the "lore" and "prow" which purposed his aerial journey in the *House of Fame*. But it is especially in relation

to the Poet's lore that he reads, hoping to find a "certeyn thing." The poet fails to reveal exactly what he is looking for, employing the *dubitatio* which activates the rest of the poem and which certainly creates sufficient interest if not suspense in the reader. It would appear nearly a certainty, however, that the "certeyn thing" has some relation to the twin theme implied in the *sententia* which opens the poem.

The book which the Narrator peruses is Macrobius' commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis,* a thorough neo-Platonizing of Cicero's Stoic tractate. To be brief, what the Poet learns here, via the advice of Africanus, who appears in the dream to Scipio, is that "he ne shulde hym in the world delyte" but "loke ay besyly . . . werche and wysse/To commune profit . . . ." The stoicism of the advice expressly warns against "likerousness" and delights of the flesh. The reward for those who "lovede commune profyt" is immortality in Heaven, and the punishment for those who eschew it, Hell.

According to Bronson, the Dreamer has stumbled onto the *Somnium* while searching for love material, and goes on reading because he has become fascinated by the dream, not for its relevance to his subject, but for its very irrelevance.[27] Thus the frame of the poem, with its juxtaposition of the *Somnium* to the vision of the Love-Garden, is basically ironic and the presence of Africanus as a guide to the Dreamer-Poet in the love vision sheds a "gentle irony" over the entire poem. The ironic fact is, indisputably, a fact, but Bronson's analysis of its purpose is, at least, only a partially satisfactory one. The preliminary reading serves a number of purposes. For one thing, it is a literary allusion, harking to the first few lines of the *Roman de la Rose* where "Macrobe" is referred to, thus giving Chaucer valuable literary precedence for his organization. For another, it, in introducing the concept of "commune profyt," would bring up a point which would certainly concern a poet of Chaucer's calibre, i.e., the question of what does the poet contribute to common profit, which is a moral as well as aesthetic question . . . in other words, a presentation in dif-

ferent terms of the problem with which we found Chaucer concerned in the *House of Fame*. Closely allied is the problem of the rightful place of earthly love — the material of the love-Poet — which is also propounded by the reading from Cicero and Macrobius. So, then, we shall see, if these conclusions can be further demonstrated, that there are three very definite relevancies of the introduction to the rest of the *Parlement of Foules*. But we must likewise keep in mind the shrewd conclusions of Bronson as to the humorous tone of this introduction and, in particular, the Poet's consciousness of the apparent incongruity involved.

But this is not all of the purpose of the reading from Cicero. For still another thing, the poet's abstract of the *Somnium* contains a backdrop against which the love vision is thrown into relief, the same sort of backdrop, we recall, that Chaucer used in the *House of Fame*:

> Thanne shewede he hym the lytel erthe that here is,
> At regard of the hevenes quantite;
> And after shewede he hym the hyne speres,
> And after that the melodye herde he
> That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,
> That welle is of musik and melodye
> In this world here, and cause of armonye. (11. 57-63)
>
> Thanne tolde he hym, in certeyn yeres space
> That every sterre shulde come into his place
> Ther it was first, and al shulde out of mynde
> That in this world is don of al mankynde. (11. 67-70)

Here is the medieval Christian's concept of world order and unity, drawn from Boethius and fused as well into the description of Africanus. This background of universality will be augmented to a considerable extent by Chaucer later in the poem, lending emphasis to the Poet's universalizing the garden of love and the petty squabbles in the birds' parliament.

And then, of course, still another reason, and by far the weakest,

occasions the preliminary reading, that being the convention involved with which Chaucer of course was familiar, and which he had employed in the *Book of the Duchess* and by implication in the *House of Fame.*

This second section of the poem is concluded by the following stanza:

> The day gan faylen, and the derke nyght,
> That reveth bestes from here besynesse,
> Berafte me my bok for lak of lyght,
> And to my bed I gan me for to dresse,
> Fulfyld of thought and busy hevynesse;
> For bothe I hadde thyng which that I nolde,
> And ek I nadde that thyng that I wolde. (11. 85-91)

This stanza has propounded many of the questions which puzzle critics of the poem. Just what has the poet learned from the reading that he didn't want to learn? And what was he looking for that he has failed to find? Lumiansky says, "Let us assume that the certain thing Chaucer sought in Macrobius means, as Goffin urged, a way to reconcile true and false felicity."[28] Stillwell's retort, that the assumption "is a large and very specific one indeed,"[29] aptly states what is apparently the general reaction to the propositions of Goffin and Lumiansky. However, the business of true and false felicity is, indeed, a generalization of the moral polarities of the Boethian Nature-Venus and the Venus of *amor courtois,* between good love and corrupted love, which Brewer reasonably formulates. Although these suggestions omit the social implications argued by Stillwell and Thackabeery as well as the aspects of human comedy insisted upon by Bronson and Clemen, they certainly are not necessarily in opposition to them.

To come to any conclusion about what the Poet was looking for, we have to return to his opening statement: "Of usage—what for lust and what for lore—/On bokes rede I ofte, as I yow tolde." (11. 15-16) That is, he reads for pleasure and also to enrich his mind. We must have foremost in our minds that the reader is a

Poet, and as a Poet, his mind is constantly in search for raw materials which the poetic catalyst can transform. What he has come across is a moral treatise — the *Somnium* with its commentary by Macrobius. Now, as Bronson noted, this is not exactly the sort of thing one would normally expect a Poet of love, as Chaucer always professes himself to be, to pick up and read with interest. But the Poet expressly does so, perhaps recalling the reference to Macrobius at the beginning of the *Roman,* "a certeyn thing to lerne." What certain thing could a Poet expect to learn in a moral treatise such as the *Somnium?* Surely it is not too great an assumption to think that a Poet will usually read new materials with an eye to their service to him as raw materials or otherwise. At any rate, the proof of this particular pudding is readily seen in the eating, for the Poet does make use of his reading and quite directly: "For bothe I hadd thyng which that I nolde,/And ek I nadde that thyng that I wolde."

The Poet has, then, got at least two things from his reading. Cannot this be rather readily examined by seeing just what the Poet tells us of his reading? The things he learns are quite explicit:

> . . . Know thyself first immortal,
> And loke ay besyly thow werche and wysse
> To commune profit, and thow shalt not mysse
> To comen swiftly to that place deere
> That ful of blysse is and of soules cleere. (11. 73-77)

Likewise Africanus issues a warning against "likerous" folk, threatening them with the fate of Paolo and Francesca. The first thing, that he should know himself immortal, was simply what any Christian should have known, so we may safely dismiss this as something the Poet learned that he did not know. The necessity of working for common profit and of eschewing earthly love remains as the thing that he "nolde." Now comes the difficulty. Obviously the Poet did not want to learn that one must eschew earthly love in order to achieve Heaven, for that would strike at the love-Poet's function. This would also, by implication, include the Poet's un-

willingness to accept Africanus' definition of common profit, for such a concept, in light of Africanus' views on love, would find the Poet contributing nothing to the common good, rather, damaging it. If this is not what he did want, may we not assume that he sought the contrary? We have seen how Chaucer has been concerned with a justification for the Poet, and it would not be illogical for the Narrator to read "faste" and "yerne" in hopes of finding, in a moral treatise, just some such justification? Instead, he finds, by implication, the opposite. This would, indeed, leave the Poet "Fulfyld of thought and busy hevynesse."

The ostensible purpose of the *Parlement of Foules* is recognized, without question, by most commentators as a St. Valentine's Day poem in celebration of Love. What better such poem could Chaucer write than one justifying love and, by implication, the writer of such a poem? And how better could the justification be presented than as a commentary on a typical stoic denunciation of love? And how more ironical and suitable could the answer be than in the form of the established vision framework with Africanus himself as a guide in the journey through the Garden of Love? Seen in this light, the *Parlement of Foules* becomes as much a work of genius in design as it is, by common consent, in execution. Further, the work as executed, though perhaps not entirely by intention, becomes universalized as do most poems by creative genius; it expands, encompassing social satire and commentary upon humanity in general. And, resting atop this imposing structure, may well be, as many have argued, a polite compliment to a royal or noble couple!

This is, then, in part, the impetus provided by the preliminary reading of Cicero.

The final stanza of the second section of the poem (11. 85-91), which has already been quoted, contains, interestingly enough, two imitations, one, roughly the first two-thirds of the stanza, imitated from Dante (*Inferno* II, 1 ff.) and the second, comprising the last two lines, from Boethius (*Consolation*, III, *prosa* 3). These come to

the poem naturally, and without any pretentiousness. They fit the purpose and mood of the stanza beautifully, catching up at once the sense of Dante's twilight mood:

> Lo giorno se n'andava, e l'aer bruno
> toglieva gli animai, che sono in terra,
> dalle fatiche loro; ed io sol uno
>
> m'apparecchiava a sostener la guerra
> si del cammino, e si della pietate,
> che ritrarra la mente, che non erra.

and the patient resignation of Boethius' lament. It is curious that once again, as in the *House of Fame,* Chaucer freely uses significant allusions to and quotations from these masters. Could it be that once again he is dealing with much the same theme that he pursued in the *House of Fame* and that these two great informing sources of his thought once again symbolize the clash of medieval Platonism and Aristotelianism in their concepts of love as well as of poetry? For, as we have seen, the undercurrents of Boethius (opposing the Muses as a moral force) and of Dante (extolling the Christian Poet and his function) have the effect of reflecting or catching as in an echo the confused and undecided thought of Chaucer on the value of his avocation in the medieval Christian scheme of things. The pronounced influence of Boccaccio throughout the poem contributes perhaps to this "debate" between the sharply divided attitudes within Chaucer. Very likely, not far in the background of his reading prior to writing the *Parlement* are the concluding books of Boccaccio's *De Genealogia Deorum* in which Boccaccio expounds upon the function of the poet in society. But primarily we have Boethius and Dante — these two germinal forces of his thought representing divided medieval attitudes toward love. Boethius' urging man to eschew that which is ephemeral (his fair chain of love which binds the universe is the love of God, though it extends to human, productive love, the idea of Nature, perhaps) and Dante's elevating the idealism of courtly love to the gates of Paradise. It is altogether

fitting that they should appear juxtaposed in the same stanza following one of the more eloquent denunciations of human love, mirroring the confusion in Chaucer's mind and his concern for the twin themes of the poem, the place of love in the universal plan, and the place of the Poet, particularly the love-Poet. It seems that the two imitations derive organically from Chaucer's concern for the problem; it is not, certainly, to say that Chaucer carefully and consciously picked these adaptations as if to say, "Aha! That sums it up!" But the effect is such a beautiful dove-tailing of ideas that he might well have.

Beginning the dream proper, the Poet relates how Africanus appeared to him as he had done to Scipio. The Narrator apparently feels some necessity to explain this phenomenon, so he borrows from Claudian a passage which explains the matter in some detail:

> The wery huntere, slepynge in his bed,
> To wode ayeyn his mynde goth anon;
> The juge dremeth how his plees been sped;
> The cartere dremeth how his cartes gon;
> The riche, of gold; the knyght fyght with his fon;
> The syke met he drynketh of the tonne;
> The lovere met he hath his lady wonne. (11. 99-105)

Further, Africanus, as if realizing a strangeness in his presence in the Poet's dream, carefully explains to him his reasons:

> But thus seyde he, "Thow has the so wel born
> In lokynge of myn old bok totorn,
> Of which Macrobye roughte nat a lyte,
> That sumdel of thy labour wolde I quyte." (11. 109-112)

This sounds suspiciously like the eagle's accounting for himself to the Poet in the *House of Fame*. The Poet has labored and is to be rewarded, specifically, as Africanus states later, by being shown "mater of to wryte."

Africanus, then, is going to reward the Poet for reading his book, perhaps with the answer to the questions that were pressing upon the

Poet, the "certeyn thing" which the Poet wanted to learn, but could not discover from the book.

But that the narrative should not get too far from the main path, Chaucer inserts here an invocation to Cytherea, who "madest me this sweven for to mete." Venus is, after all, the governing force of the poem; it is in her honor that the St. Valentine's Day vision poem is being written. But Chaucer is more specific than this; Venus is not only responsible for the poem generally, but for the dream itself. It does not seem at all likely that the invocation is a part of a later revision, nor is it an excrescence on the poem;[30] if it were not a part of the original scheme, it should have been, for it is needed to avoid confusion. Further, the invocation to Cytherea adds emphasis to what have been described as the twin themes of the poem; she is, of course, the goddess of love and as such controls the scope of the love-Poet's activity. Also, Venus was in the Middle Ages associated with rhetoric and considered the patroness of that art; the distance from rhetoric to poetry being quite short in the Middle Ages, it does not seem too unlikely that Chaucer, as a Poet and a Poet of love, could have seen a double function and appropriateness in his calling for the assistance of Cytherea, the heavenly body overlooking his labors.

But back to the question of the relation of the invocation to the role of Africanus in the dream. Since Venus "madest me this sweven for to mete," she must, in the eyes of the Dreamer, have been responsible also for the appearance of Africanus, and, thus, for the original search that led deep into his book, for that "certeyn thing." Professor Bronson perceptively points out the broad irony involved in having Africanus himself, the old stoic, lead the poet through a garden of medieval courtly love. But, it does not seem that the irony sufficiently justifies itself as irony; in other words, it is not Chaucer's custom to deliver himself of an ironic *tour de force* without some broader, deeper meaning involved beneath the irony itself. Basically, as Brewer maintains, the juxtaposition throws into relief two ways of life, the

way of Denial, represented by Africanus, and the way of Acceptance, the way of love, of the full life, represented by Nature.

If, as has been suggested earlier in this essay, the poem is designed as a justification of love and, by implication, of the love-Poet, things come into a clearer focus. If we consider that Cytherea has caused this dream in order to reveal to the Dreamer-Poet the great scope of her power, we realize that she is, in her broader powers, Nature herself. Cytherea is here obviously not considered as equivalent to that langorous Venus who appears in the courtly garden; Cytherea is the planet, the Greater Venus, the Sixth Daughter of the Sky and the Day, whose love on an earthly level is part of that fair chain that binds Boethius' universe.[31] She is related only by extremity to the lascivious mother of Cupid who appears in the Temple of Love.

Considering this view of Venus, the Cytherea who commands the allegiance of every true Poet, it is not inexplicable that old Africanus is chosen to guide the Poet into the Garden of Love in which, presumably, if all goes well, love is to be justified morally and philosophically. The choice is, of course, ironic; Africanus is to show the garden in much the same way as he showed the universe and the harmony of the spheres to Scipio. May we not assume that the implications are roughly parallel? That the love garden is a microcosm, man's earthly garden, the community to the profit of which every man is expected to contribute? But this we shall pursue at greater length.

The stanza following the invocation brings Africanus and the Dreamer-Poet to the celebrated gate of the park which is walled with "grene ston." Because it will be necessary to make some comments on the wonderful inscriptions of the gate, these two stanzas will be quoted in full:

> "Thorgh me men gon into that blysful place
> Of hertes hele and dedly woundes cure;
> Thorgh me men gon unto the welle of grace,
> There grene and lusty May shal evere endure.
> This is the wey to al good aventure.

Be glad, thow redere, and thy sorwe of caste;
Al open am I—passe in, and sped thee faste!"

"Thorgh me men gon," than spak that other side,
"Unto the mortal strokes of the spere
Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
Ther nevere tre shal fruyt ne leves bere.
This strem yow ledeth to the sorweful were
There as the fish in prysoun is al drye;
Th' eschewing is only the remedye!" (11. 127-140)

Now, of course, it is obvious that the sentiments of both these stanzas are conventional wordings of the courtly language of love, praising and blaming the god of "myrakles" and "cruel yre." They are ironically appropriate as Dantesque introductions to the Garden of Love. But they are appropriate as well in the broader sense of the love theme as this study has defined it. The two inscriptions represent, then, the way of Acceptance and the way of Denial ("Th' eschewing is only the remedye!"). The Poet is bewildered, unable to make the decision to enter:

Right as, betwixen adamauntes two
Of evene myght, a pece of yren set
Ne hath no myght to meve to ne fro —
For what that oon may hale, that other let —
Ferde I, that nyste whether me was bet
To entre or leve, til Affrycan, my gide,
Me hente, and shof in at the gates wide . . . (11. 148-154)

This inability to come to a decision symbolizes generally the dilemma facing the thoughtful Christian and would particularly symbolize the dilemma facing the medieval love-Poet who was too much of a realist to follow Dante's path of idealism. But literally, of course, we have once again Chaucer's hesitant, timid Narrator dismayed in part by his sense of inadequacy. Africanus, seeing the cause, upbraids the Narrator for his temerity in hesitating, for the sign does not even apply to him — but only to him "who Loves servaunt be."

Again Chaucer's Narrator is in character: he sees, reports experience, he is the Poet — but he stands outside experience. This is, as we have seen in the earlier studies, a humorous device by the oral artist to achieve irony — either irony by contrast or by representation of reality only too clearly — which, we have no way of knowing. But always, in jest or seriousness, the Narrator is the Poet, and Africanus regards his own function as that of providing materials for the Poet! "And if thow haddest connyng for t'endite/I shal the shewe mater of to wryte."

Then Chaucer launches into the description of the garden, humorously introduced by the Poet's being shoved through the gate. The garden, we learn through the descriptive catalogues, is a conventional love-garden — with a significant difference.

The first thing that strikes the reader upon entering with the Narrator into this eternally May garden is the all-pervading greenness:

> For overal where that I myne eyen caste
> Were trees clad with leves that ay shal laste,
> Ech in his kynde, of colour fresh and greene
> As emeraude, that joye was to seene. (11. 172-175)

This color has been mentioned before, we recall: "Ryght of a park walled with grene ston," and "There grene and lusty May shal evere endure." Now, of course, there is nothing startling about a garden's being green, together with its surroundings. But the greenness is a part of the broad significance of the garden itself, that is, life, "lustyhed," productiveness generally. Its conventionality does not destroy its function; rather, in this instance, it would seem to tend to increase the significance of the function. The greenness or fruitfulness has application in two different directions; it is a part of the picture of Nature, sovereign of true love, and is symbolic of love generally as it has always been. Secondly, it has implied significance in the general problem of the productiveness of the Poet in this world-garden of life.

Chaucer's description of the Garden of Love has struck several critics of the poem as being a microcosmic figuration of the world and of man's life. This it is. Much of the Poet's description of the garden is utterly conventional, but it has been noted that the oft-criticized catalogue of trees in the midst of its outward conventionality (a standard rhetorical landscape topic treated by medieval rhetoricians) in a remarkable way illuminates the fact that the garden serves as a microcosmic symbol. For the trees are not just trees, idle objects enumerated to fill in the details of the Poet's canvas; they are significantly described in their relation to man, and the realism derived therefrom adumbrates the Chaucerian "naturalness" of the climactic parliament itself. Let us look at this stanza for a moment:

> The byldere ok, and ek the hardy asshe;
> The piler elm, the cofre unto carayne;
> The boxtre pipere, holm to whippes lashe;
> The saylynge fyr; the cipresse, deth to playne;
> The shetere ew; the asp for shaftes pleyne;
> The olyve of pes, and eke the dronke vyne;
> The victor palm, the laurer to devyne. (11. 176-182)

Each tree is accompanied with an epithet describing in a word or so its function in the life of man; in other words, man's activity is epitomized in a catalogue of trees. In the borrowed catalogue there are the usual olive of peace and victory palm and the laurel, the "piler elm, the cofre unto carayne" and the "shetere ew." Chaucer does the same thing essentially in the description of the Parliament itself.

The next several stanzas concern themselves with purely traditional descriptions of the medieval Garden of Love. Surrounded by the various allegorical personifications of medieval romance, including Cupid beneath a tree, the Poet sees a temple of brass. Before the temple the Poet sees Dame "Pes" with a "curtyn," and Dame Patience sitting on a hill of sand, apparently symbolizing the unstable foundation of a life devoted to the fleshly Venus. About the temple danced

"women inowe" in disheveled attire, appropriately adumbrating the appearance of the lewd Priapus. Inside the temple are Priapus and Venus herself, both of whom are described at some length. Priapus is presented in the following terms:

> The god Priapus saw I, as I wente,
> Withinne the temple in sovereyn place stonde,
> In swich aray as whan the asse hym shente
> With cri by nighte, and with hys sceptre in honde.
> Ful besyly men gonne assaye and fonde
> Upon his hed to sette, of sondry hewe,
> Garlondes ful of freshe floures newe. (11. 253-259)

In other words, in the midst of the idealistic convention, at the heart of it so to speak, the God of Lust is a governing force. This is, of course, the aspect of courtly love which had bewildered medieval writers, causing the recantation of Andreas the archpriest of courtly love, as well, in part, as the retraction of Chaucer himself. There follows the description of the earthly Venus and of her attendants. It was long ago pointed out that Chaucer somewhat tarnishes the glowing picture of Venus found in his sources. Chaucer nowhere in his works is an enthusiastic glorifier of Venus. Although he devotes two stanzas to her and three more to her followers, and these occupy fully one third of the garden passage, let us note that this section serves simply as a prologue to the climax of the poem, the appearance of Nature in the garden, and the subsequent debate. Let it suffice to say simply that Chaucer suppressed Venus, the mother of Cupid, because it is his purpose to emphasize and glorify the Greater Venus, or rather, the entire concept of earthly love, of which Cupid's dam is only one element. This is simply another argument for the existence in Chaucer's design, probably derived from *De Genealogie Deorum*, of two different Venuses, for it would be singularly incongruous for the Poet to slight the mother of Cupid if she, in fact, had caused the dream in the first place. But if one considers the Cytherea of the invocation to be the greater Venus, the incongruity vanishes.

Further, the contrast between the "Cypride" and the Natural patterns of love is emphasized by a sort of Brooksian "light-dark" opposition of the imagery in the descriptions. For Venus, as the Poet tells us, resides "in a prive corner" and "Derk was that place." Further, we remember, Dame "Pes" sat before the temple with a "curtyn" in her hands. In contrast with this we find "this noble goddesse Nature" residing "in a launde, upon a hil of floures."

But one thing must here be kept clearly in mind, and that is Chaucer in describing the Garden of Love presided over by Venus is not necessarily critical of courtly love *per se*. Its trappings are those of the court of love, but the lewdness explicit in the Poet's description attacks the excesses of and the hypocrisy in courtly love as usually practiced, that is, the unproductive and immoral adultery; the idealism of courtly love as a basis of a marriage of "gentilesse" is, of course, important in the scheme of the debate, and the opinion of critics generally is that under the auspices of Nature this concept of courtly love is no more being satirized than is any other species of love, all of which are presented wtih gentle irony.

But the journey through the garden is, first of all, an investigation of the nature of love; the love represented by Priapus is a part of the whole and so is included. Cytherea, the Greater Venus, is hiding nothing; her purpose, apparently, is to justify the greater good notwithstanding the lesser evil.

Following a brief catalogue of those unfortunates who "dyde" for love (i.e., the variety of love he has just described), the Poet moves on "myselven to solace," obviously troubled even further by what he has just seen. He then comes to an open place where resides a queen who surpasses by far any other creature he has ever seen. This is, of course, Nature, but this sort of description is usually reserved for Venus. It seems excusable, then, to make again the suggestion that perhaps Nature is here at least partially equated with the Greater Venus in what she, as Nature, is represented as doing —binding the universe as Boethian Love. She is here sanctioning

and assisting human or earthly love as a part of the higher love which moves the spheres in harmony.

The subsequent catalogue of birds, suggested as the Poet acknowledges, by Alain de Lille, emphasizes the wide scope of the garden; it is, indeed, under the guise of a parliament of birds, a universalized depiction of humanity. Whether the classes are so ordered and enumerated as Miss Rickert and others have thought, is of little importance; that the basic allegorical fact has been perceived by most of the poem's critics is all that is needed for our discussion. Lines 323-371 are a perhaps too lengthy and detailed description of the various birds, and, although they contain some very fine poetry occasionally, they would not repay elaborate comment, so we will go directly to the commencement of the debate itself.

> But to the poynt: Nature held on hire hond
> A formel egle, of shap the gentilleste
> That evere she among hire werkes fond,
> The moste benygne and the goodlieste.
> In hire was everi vertu at his reste,
> So ferforth that Nature hireself hadde blysse
> To loke on hire, and ofte hire bek to kysse. (11. 372-378)

Nature, the "vicaire of the almyghty lord," then proceeds to announce the occasion of the gathering, and, in particular, to present the formel eagle to the suitors, actually to the chief suitor, the tercel eagle who first appears and who begins the courtly avowal. Nature sees the match between the formel and the first tercel, the royal fowl, as the more fitting and "natural," and implies to the formel that he is her best choice. But Nature also recognizes the principle of individual choice and makes it clear that the final word is that of the formel herself, as, indeed, it is with all the chosen birds; "This is oure usage alwey, fro yer to yeere," says the goddess. Concerning this passage, Professor Owen certainly has a point when he remarks that it perhaps represents the Poet's conclusion that the individual has ultimately free choice between the way of Acceptance and the

way of Denial, that the poem is not deterministic, that men are not compelled by their natures to live lives of selfish indulgence.

The first tercel makes his bid, but we are surprised to find another and still another tercel in the field. The quick and easy choice that Nature foresaw has been thwarted. Though the royal tercel's personal superiorities are recognized, at least implicitly, by the other two tercels in that whereas they do not dispute Nature's evaluation, they maintain their suits on the strengh of their love and service. This is an extremely important passage in the poem, which has been unduly neglected. The notion that the two inferior tercels are in reality rivals of Richard for the hand of Anne may be correct (however unflattering to Richard since the formel is unable to, or at least does not, choose among them!). But the real significance of the impasse, and the significance of the general debate on the subject, is in the universal power of love which recognizes no social barriers;[32] Love is the common denominator of the parliament; the merits of the three suitors must be balanced out in the scales of love. Nature, though recognizing the superiority of the first tercel, realizes well the necessity of the choice's being made on the basis of love alone. The tercels compete for the formel on the basis of their love only, not their social position. This perhaps accounts for the symbolic refusal of the formel to choose among them.

The first tercel states his case thus:

"And syn that non loveth hire so wel as I,
Al be she nevere of love me behette,
Thanne oughte she be myn thourgh hire mercy,
For other bond can I non on hire knette." (11. 435-438)

The second:

"And if she shulde have loved for long lovynge,
To me ful-longe hadde be the guerdonynge." (11. 454-455)

And the third:

"But I dar seyn, I am hire treweste man
As to my dom, and faynest wolde hire ese." (11. 479-480)

These speeches initiate what is in a sense a *dubitatio,* creating the need for a decision and postponing that decision by the subsequent debate. Everything here is beautifully motivated; the speeches are idealistic in the best vein of courtly love, but they are not being made by fools. Each, to an extent, is realistic; the speaker recognizes in each case the practical matters involved, that is, that nothing matters without her consent. And, further, the third speaker, while determined, is quite realistically aware of the annoying effect that the debate he is helping to prolong is having on the other birds, assembled and impatient to choose their mates. The ironic effect inherent in the predicament of courtly love thus seems to be recognized by the participants, particularly by the third, whose speech rings with the dogged determination of an orator last on the program of a political convention:

> "Now sires, ye seen the lytel leyser heere;
> For every foul cryeth out to ben ago
> Forth with his make, or with his lady deere;
> And ek Nature hireself ne wol not here,
> For taryinge here, not half that I wolde seye,
> And but I speke, I mot for sorwe deye." (11. 464-469)

And, so, to some extent, those who argue that Chaucer is satirizing the courtly code of conduct here are quite right. But they fail to realize that the treatment accorded the courtly lovers is gently satiric, and is of the same variety of gentle irony that Chaucer casts over the entire picture of the squabbling birds.

The Poet's own reaction to the initial statements of the tercels is typically that of Chaucer's Narrator. He reports, and is, as usual, full of admiration:

> Of al my lyf, syn that day I was born,
> So gentil ple in love or other thyng
> Ne herde nevere no man me beforn, . . . (11. 484-486)

Directly juxtaposed to this admiring report, however, we have the reaction of the parliament itself which breaks into the speeches which,

says the Narrator, continue to the setting of sun. "The noyse of foules for to ben delyvered/ So loude rong, 'Have don, and lat us wende!'" (11. 491-492)

Nature quickly restores order and casts around for a way out of the confusion. She decides to let the birds choose an arbiter who will in turn choose a method of settlement. The fowls of ravine elect the first tercel who slyly suggests that the only way of avoiding out-and-out combat on the issue is to let the formel choose the most eligible suitor from the point of view of qualifications, and who this will be, says the tercel, "it is lite to knowe."

The parliament of birds takes over the discussion in a full-scale debate. The problem of love centered in the triangle is then reflected against the varying scale of human opinion and practice, setting courtly love in its proper place against the background of all classes of English civilization. In the course of this, Chaucer's satire flicks at all types of humanity, and, further, the subject no longer is courtly love but love in general, sufficiently justifying the title of the poem in several manuscripts, "The Parlement of Foules Reducyd to Love."

The rich imagery employed by Chaucer during the course of this brief but lively debate reinforces and emphasizes the comprehensiveness and universality of the world figured in this microcosm of the debating parliament.[33] The duck, the goose, the cuckoo, the turtle dove, the merlin, all argue back and forth, the charges growing louder and the participants becoming more and more indignant. The general disorder of the debate may well justify such observations as those by Stillwell and others who see the disorder as Chaucer's satirizing society for failure to work together in harmony. However, such an implication would not seem to be Chaucer's chief intention. More than likely it is intended to represent the scale of human attitudes toward love.

After most of the varying points of view have been expounded, Nature calls a halt to the proceedings, seeing that nothing is going to come from further discussion. She then re-states, and with more

pertinence this time, her previous declaration that the final choice must rest with the formel herself. Again, however, Nature puts in a "plug" for the royal tercel:

> "But as for conseyl for to chese a make,
> If I were Resoun, certes, thanne wolde I
> Conseyle yow the royal tercel take,
> As seyde the tercelet ful skylfully . . ." (11. 631-634)

The formel, who had earlier exhibited bashfulness and some reluctance, takes full advantage of this out offered, and asks a respite of a year. "I wol nat serve Venus ne Cupide,/ Forsothe as yit, by no manere weye." (11. 632-633) Nature accepts the decision and advises the tercels to bear their disappointment in good part and persevere in their service:

> And whan this werk al brought was to an ende,
> To every foul Nature yaf his make
> By evene acord, and on here way they wende.
> And, Lord, the blisse and joye that they make!
> For ech of hem gan other in wynges take,
> And with here nekkes ech gan other wynde,
> Thankynge alwey the noble goddesse of kynde.
> (11. 666-672)

Before the fowls leave, however, they sing a customary roundel in gratitude for the bliss that Nature has given them.

> "Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,
> That hast this wintres wedres overshake,
> And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!
> Saynt Valentyn, that art ful hy on-lofte,
> Thus syngen smale foules for thy sake:
> Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,
> That hast this wintres wedres overshake.
> Wel han they cause for to gladen ofte,
> Sith ech of him recovered hath hys make,
> Ful blissful mowe they synge when they wake.

Now welcome, somer, with thy sonne softe,
That hast this wintres wedres overshake,
And driven away the longe nyghtes blake!" (11. 679-692)

This roundel, in the French manner as the Poet ingenuously claims, is a high point in the poem, acclaiming love as a regenerative, creative, universalizing, equalizing, liberating, harmonizing force. It is, in effect, the climax of the poem, the triumphant conclusion of the vision sent by Cytherea to justify earthly love. The picture has been full-scale; the artificiality and voluptuousness of courtly love excesses, the lewd prurience, are not slighted, but are treated as peripheral to the domain of Nature who is, in respect of love, the Greater Venus, all-pervading and all-informing. The roundel declares lyrically that love is basically good. As Brewer comments, "Nature is good, and genuine love is good, since ordained by her — that is the overwhelming impression left by the *Parliament*."[34] And, by implication, since the final justification of love (in the dream, however, be it noted) is in the form of a poetic manifesto, the roundel, it would seem that the Poet's two-fold quest has been rewarded to his satisfaction.

But, this is a dream. And the Poet must awaken to reality, and with reality returns the disturbing concern for a problem that has not been fully solved by Cytherea's dream. The Poet must continue to muse and speculate. And so the Poet does: "I wok, and others bokes tok me to/ To reede upon, and yit I rede alwey./ I hope, ywis, to rede so som day/ That I shal mete som thyng for to fare/ The bet, and thus to rede I nyl nat spare." (11. 695-699)

By way of summary, let us examine some of the problems we have traced through the poem. The Poet writes an occasional love vision for St. Valentine's Day. It revolves, then, quite naturally, about two themes, the nature and justification of love, and, consequently, of the justification of the love-Poet. Since the question is, to an extent, a philosophical one, Chaucer uses, for the conventional book introduction, a philosophical treatise dealing with the problem from a typically medieval point of view. The purpose of this is both for

irony and contrast. The answer that the Poet finds in the *Somnium* itself is, of course, unsatisfactory. His reading and thinking on the subject cause Cytherea to grant him a dream in which the problems are to be resolved. As they are to be resolved (again, to an extent) in philosophical terms, and as the Poet has just read of Africanus, the elder Scipio himself is ironically elected to lead the Poet to the gates of the resolution. Love, in terms of the garden, is presented to the Poet against a backdrop of universalized human experience. It is presented in all its colors, in the stylized adultery of courtly love, as wantonness, as married love sanctioned by Nature-Venus (where there are, of course, many varieties, among them courtly love in an ideal sense), ranging through many degrees to the selfishness of the cuckoos. The burden of the dream is the justification of love by Nature, God's vicar, as the basic fact of existence. This would also, of course, justify the Poet who sings of love. This is the solution that the Poet would wish and one which he would like very much to believe; but, on waking, the Poet once again finds himself, like every medieval Christian, between the horns of his dilemma. There is the fact that Christianized Platonists like Macrobius, backed by much tradition, demanded that man eschew earthly love; what is the love-Poet to do? Even Boethius, while singing of the universal love, has Lady Philosophy require man to eschew love. The dilemma is represented in the Poet's avocation itself, as has been shown in discussing the contrast between Boethian and Dantean elements in the poem, Boethius execrating the Muse of Poetry, and Dante elevating the Poet to the highest.

Those who have seen the *Parlement of Foules* as a direct influence on Chaucer's subsequent struggles and reconciliation of these conflicting elements in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale* are, I believe, quite correct. And the Poet, although he is far from resolved in his own mind, has reached a synthesis, in which the Dantean concept of the Poet is transposed into a Boethian frame of universal harmony, which serves him, with few alterations, for the rest of his

poetic career — until the Retraction at the end of the *Canterbury Tales*.

FOOTNOTES

[1]*Geoffrey Chaucer* (Oxford, 1934), p. 118.

[2]For a modern example of this view, see J. S. P. Tatlock, *The Mind and Art of Chaucer* (Syracuse, N. Y., 1950), p. 66.

[3]*Chaucer* (London, 1952), p. 44.

[4]Though B. H. Bronson, "The *Parlement of Foules* Revisited," *ELH*, XV (1948), 247-259, argues convincingly that there is really no basis for such a specific date.

[5]This theory has been called "the Koch-Emerson theory." The principal sources are: J. Koch, "The Date and Personages of the *Parlement of Foules*," *Essays on Chaucer, Chaucer Society*, 2nd ser., 4, 1877, and *The Chronology of Chaucer's Writings, Chaucer Society*, 2nd ser., 27, 1890; O. F. Emerson, "The Suitors in Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*," *MP*, VII (1910), 45-62, "The Suitors in the *Parlement of Foules* Again," *MLN*, XXI (1911), 109-111, and "What Is the *Parlement of Foules?*" *JEGP*, XIII (1914), 546-582. In addition, May E. Reid in her "The Historical Interpretation of *The Parlement of Foules*," *University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature*, XVIII (1924), 60-70, generally supports this theory, as does T. O. Wayland, "What Is *The Parlement of Foules?*" *MLN*, XLIII (1928), 378-384.

[6]"The *Parlement of Foules* in Its Relation to Contemporary Events," in *Three Chaucer Studies*, ed. Carleton Brown (New York, 1932). His contentions were elaborated in his book *Chaucer and the French Poet Graunson* (Baton Rouge, La., 1947).

[7]"A New Interpretation of the *Parlement of Foules*," *MP*, XVIII (1920), 1-29.

[8]For example, D. Patrick, "The Satire in Chaucer's *Parlement of Birds*," *PQ*, IX (1930), 61-65, thinks that it is directed against the upper classes.

[9]"What Is the *Parlement of Foules?*" *Studien zur englischen Philologie*, L (1913), 279-290, claims it is simply a conventional love debate. D. Brewer, however, in a recent article, shows that the *Parlement* differs from the conventional love debate in more ways than it resembles it ("The Genre of the *Parlement of Foules*," *MLR*, LIII (1958), 321-326).

[10]"Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*," unpublished doctoral dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1937.

[11]"Heaven and Earth in the *Parlement of Foules*," *MLR*, XXXI (1936), 493-497.

[12]"Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*: A Philosophical Interpretation," *RES*, XXIX (1948), 82-89.

[13]D. Betherum, "The Center of the *Parlement of Foules*," *Essays in Honor of Walter Clyde Curry* (Nashville, Tenn., 1954), pp. 39-50, has this as a main argument.

[14]"In Appreciation of Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*," *University of California Publications in English*, III (1936), 193-224.

[15]*Der junge Chaucer* (Koln, 1938), pp. 115-183.

[16]G. H. Stillwell, "Unity and Comedy in the *Parlement of Foules*," *JEGP*, XLIX (1950), 470-495.

[17]Several studies have appeared on the *Parlement* in the past six years, one, J. A. W.

Bennett's *The Parlement of Foules* (Oxford, 1957), being the first full-length work on the poem. Others, C. O. McDonald, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*," *Speculum*, XXX (1955), 444-457, and R. W. Frank, Jr., "Structure and Meaning in the *Parlement of Foules*," *PMLA*, LXXI (1957), 530-539, are valuable analyses of methods and points of view, but with quite different approaches from that of the present essay. All are concerned with love and nature as the central themes. In addition, G. H. Stillwell has supplemented his earlier interpretation with another essay, "Chaucer's Eagles and Their Choice on February 14," *JEGP*, LIII (1954), 546-561.

[18]"The Role of the Narrator in the *Parlement of Foules*," *College English*, XIV (1953), 264-268.

[19]*Ibid.*, pp. 267-268.

[20]For a sane discussion of such deeply analytical readings of medieval literature, see M. W. Bloomfield, "Symbolism in Medieval Literature," *MP*, LVI (1958), 73-81.

[21]P. V. D. Shelly, *The Living Chaucer* (Philadelphia, 1940), p. 77.

[22]*Chaucer* (London, 1953).

[23]*Ibid.*, p. 84.

[24]*Ibid.*, pp. 84-85.

[25]*Ibid.*, p. 86.

[26]See my article, "Some Recent Interpretations of Chaucer's *Hous of Fame*," *University of Mississippi Studies in English*, I (1960), 97-104.

[27]"In Appreciation of the *Parlement of Foules*," pp. 195-197.

[28]"Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules*: A Philosophical Interpretation," p. 83.

[29]"Unity and Comedy in the *Parlement of Foules*," p. 474.

[30]B. H. Bronson, "The *Parlement of Foules* Revisited," sees this as an argument for a hypothetical revision of the poem.

[31]This distinction is clearly outlined by Boccaccio in the *Genealogia Deorum Gentilium*, Bk. III, Ch. 13-23. The distinction between the two Venuses is also made in the *Teseide* (Bari, 1941), pp. 417ff.

[32]This does not imply, however, that Chaucer, or the medieval man generally, would have argued that it is natural for one to marry out of one's class; this notion is largely a product of modern romanticism.

[33]Clemen, *op. cit.*, p. 184, argues that the parliament is a lively and realistic representation of the English Parliament of Chaucer's day, with its divisions into the various classes.

[34]*Chaucer*, p. 86.