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Wolfram R. Keller

Re-Novating Troy. Chrematistics, Imagination, and Hybrid Temporalities in Chaucer's Troy Stories

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Tradition und Novation in Texten des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit



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FOR 2305 Diskursivierungen von Neuem
Geschäftsstelle
Freie Universität Berlin
Habelschwerdter Allee 45
D-14195 Berlin
Tel: +49-(0)30-838 50455
mail: sabine.greiner@fu-berlin.de

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Re-Novating Troy
Chrematistics, Imagination, and Hybrid Temporalities in Chaucer's Troy Stories

Wolfram R. KELLER (Humboldt-University Berlin)

When Geoffrey Chaucer sat down to pen two Troy stories in the 1380s, he had at his disposal several versions to choose from. Besides classical Troy stories, chiefly Virgil's *Aeneid* and the Trojan episodes relayed in several Ovidian texts, Chaucer was familiar with Benoît de Sainte-Maure's Old French *Roman de Troie* (c. 1160) and, most likely, the Latin 'translation' thereof, Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287),¹ both texts drawing substantially on two presumed 'eyewitness' accounts by Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, respectively. Moreover, Chaucer also knew more recent retellings of the Troy story, especially Giovanni Boccaccio's version of the tragic love story of Troilus and Criseida, as retold in *Il Filostrato*. In fact, Boccaccio's *Filostrato* provides the rough outline for the plot of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, whereby the English poet expands heavily on the Italian text and includes material from a myriad of other sources, including (and beyond) the classical, medieval, and early humanist (Troy) narratives mentioned. Chaucer's handling of Italian *Trecento* literary culture does not stop there, however, since he also 'translates' a sonnet by Petrarch at the beginning of *Troilus and Criseyde*. This considerably complicates orthodox views of periodization, insofar as one sees a 'medieval' Chaucer engaging with the 'modern' poetry of the (Italian) Renaissance (see esp. WALLACE 1985, 1997; EDWARDS 2002; SIMPSON 2003).

Unsurprisingly, Chaucer's references to Italian humanist poetry have led to divergent evaluations of his place in English literary history, ranging from the opinion that Chaucer '(re-)medievalized' the literary accomplishments of *Trecento* humanist culture (LEWIS 1961) to the claim that Chaucer has to be seen as England's first Renaissance author. On this view, Chaucer's fifteenth-century imitators (for example, John Lydgate), given their mediocrity, had to be regarded as lamentably 'medieval', rendering the fifteenth century a 'dull' interlude in the English Renaissance as bookended by Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare (SPEARING 1985; LAWTON 1987). The debates about the 'periodization' of Chaucer are significant for my argument insofar as questions of literary innovation in late medieval and early modern culture are intrinsically related to the way in which texts construct, juxtapose, and hybridize different temporalities, including how literary artifacts—by means of different (para- and meta-)textual strategies—define their own temporalities and thus contribute to (their) periodization (for the latter, see especially JOHNSTON 2008; see further KELLER 2011, 2016; KELLER / KELLER 2014).

In line with the research agenda pursued by Andrew James Johnston, Margitta Rouse, and myself in our joint research project "Troynovant Revisited: Strategic Hybridisation in the Competing Traditions of Classical Antiquity in English Literature, c. 1380-1680", which is part of the DFG-Research Group 2305 "Discursivisations of the New" (for which, see HUSS 2016), we argue that the medieval Troy story, the most widely-circulated secular narrative of the period, is a privileged site for poetological investigations into the nature of literary innovation or, perhaps more appropriately in view of what Chaucer is doing: literary *re-novation*. Chaucer's Trojan poems, his *Troilus and Criseyde* and his *House of Fame*, are grounded in a long tradition, in which authors use Trojan materials for poetological and historiographical reflection (KELLER 2008). However, the two mentioned Chaucerian texts also stand at the beginning of two important strands of insular historiographical and poetological narratives: the

¹ For Chaucer's knowledge of the *Roman de Troie* and Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* (and references to these works in *Troilus and Criseyde*), see HAMILTON 1966: 52-66; YOUNG 1968: 105-139.



vernacular transmission of the Troy story in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (including John Lydgate's *Troy Book*, Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid*, and William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*) as well as the tradition of insular dream visions, which often take their cue from Chaucer's visionary poems, especially the *House of Fame*, thereby developing further a Chaucerian poetics of literary re-novation. More concretely, we believe that literary re-novation within the Troy story is a matter of the *purification* and *hybridization* of foregoing traditions, terms that we borrow from Bruno Latour, notably without intending to import or to 'ontologize' Latour's underlying theoretical framework (see esp. HUSS 2016: 7; and see further NELTING 2017): rather, we see Latour's terms as a useful heuristic to describe analogous textual strategies and structures within insular Troy stories.

Latour discusses the related processes of *purification* and *hybridization* precisely within the context of issues of periodization, and the so-called period divide between the 'medieval' and the 'modern' takes center stage, whereby 'modernity' defines itself in terms of a radical break with the past. According to Latour, the moderns "do not feel that they are removed from the Middle Ages by a certain number of centuries, but that they are separated by Copernican revolutions, epistemological breaks, epistemic ruptures so radical that nothing of that past survives in them—nothing of that past ought to survive in them" (LATOURE 1993: 68; and see CHAKRABARTY 2000). Temporal categorizations such as 'medieval' or 'modern' fall in line with a modern disposition toward *purification*, more concretely, the purification of phenomena that are actually *hybrid* in the first place. In the process of categorizing time, then, co-existing, overlapping, or hybrid temporalities are purified into distinct periods (LATOURE 1993: esp. 39-48). In saying that medieval Troy stories figure literary 'newness' in terms of hybridization, we would like to shift the focus away from an understanding of hybridity in terms of emergent 'newness', as it is frequently adopted in postcolonial discussions of cultural alterity (e.g., BHABHA 1994), to an acknowledgment of the temporal dynamics inherent in constructing 'innovation' on the one hand, and to the work of purification, which inevitably precedes any form of hybridization, on the other.

It is the purpose of this essay to show how, in Geoffrey Chaucer's Troy stories, literary innovation figures as temporal and categorical purification and hybridization. I aim to show that Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* implicitly stages literary innovation in terms of the textual strategies that are explicitly described and simultaneously enacted in his *House of Fame*. At the risk of oversimplification, my view of a Chaucerian poetics of literary re-novation runs something like this: The texts mentioned suggest, I believe, that poetic composition first and foremost begins at the nexus of a continuous multiplication of narratives and the concomitant necessity (and impossibility) of mapping, of distinguishing foregoing and *authorized* traditions. Categorizing narratives into traditions, however, results, at best, in an illusion of authorized knowledge. Within the fictional economy of Chaucer's works, the purification of tradition inevitably leads to hybridizations, as new poetry ultimately emerges in the construction and subsequent deconstruction of narratives from contexts, especially temporal contexts.

In order to evince this claim, I shall briefly recapitulate how Chaucer posits the problem of literary re-novation within the specific context of the late medieval English transmission of the Troy story in his longest Trojan work, the romance *Troilus and Criseyde*. Compared to continental vernacular literatures, the English transmission of the Troy story sets in rather belatedly. As mentioned above, the late medieval English adaptation of French and Latin Troy narratives, such as Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* and Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* coincides with the advent (actually: the construction) of 'modernity' in Italy, with Renaissance humanism. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* confronts the problems attendant upon such a belated position vis-à-vis the continental literary and historiographical traditions by showcasing obliquely the ways in which a late medieval Troy



poet can distinguish and conflate, purify and hybridize many of the available medieval and classical traditions.

In the remainder of this paper, I shall then focus on Chaucer's *House of Fame*, which was composed at roughly the same time as *Troilus and Criseyde* (see COOPER 1999). The *House of Fame* is a much shorter Trojan work, and it is not usually seen as a Troy story *per se*. And yet, with remarkable narrative economy, this dream vision provides a poetological blueprint, detailing the hybrid temporal nature of historiographical and poetical re-novation.² The poem does so before the backdrop of an epistemological model that 'rationalizes' and thereby legitimizes a more subjective, relativistic handling of historical truth that the poem deems inevitable for poetic labor. The discussion of literary re-novation in the *House of Fame* simultaneously references the way in which the cognitive apparatus processes images as they progress from the imagination via the evaluative faculty to their storage in the realm of memory. By aligning and simultaneously transforming poetological and epistemological processes, the poem legitimates its model of historiographical re-novation along with a supportive cognitive set-up that is characterized largely by usurious multiplication and narrative disorder (rather than by natural gain and proper allocation of value) as well as by the purification and hybridization of narratives. As a product of the very processes it describes—poetologically and epistemologically—the *House of Fame* advances a poetics of re-novation driven by the multiplication, the purification, and the eventual hybridization of narratives. Moreover, the poem furnishes a (Trojan) model of literary re-novation that remains central to historiographical and poetological investigations well into the sixteenth century.

Unpacking this argument vis-à-vis the *House of Fame* necessitates an outline of the basic tenets of medieval faculty psychology and a plot summary of the poem with regard to the way in which the locations visited by the protagonist can be read as mental households, which ideally would be sustained by traditional practices of household management. Thus, in the second section of this paper, I shall briefly summarize common ideas regarding the structure and the functions of the human brain as they were delineated by medieval faculty psychology. Building on critical accounts that attest to the *structural* relevance of faculty psychology for medieval dream visions, I subsequently suggest that the representation of ventricular theory is important also in terms of how mental structures are organized, how they *function*. In most early and high medieval dream visions the journeys of the protagonists through their mental apparatus begin in disorder and end with harmony and spiritual enlightenment by means of annexing the practices of traditional household management (stable valuations, proportional reciprocity, moderate gain) to cognitive processes. However, in late medieval dream visions, I shall argue further, such an ideal of *oikonomia* cannot be sustained. Rather, the depicted mental household—especially in the *House of Fame*—disintegrates from disorder into utter chaos. The prevalent disorder in the *House of Fame* is squared with practices of management associated with finance and the marketplace, which is a reflection, perhaps, of the transformations of the insular economy after the plague years of the mid-fourteenth century. The second section therefore closes with a short look at the latter, before I turn to the *House of Fame* again.

In the third section of this paper, I will provide a plot summary of the *House of Fame* with a view to the concomitant representation of the ventricles of the brain. I will demonstrate that the poem flags practices of traditional household management, especially proportional reciprocity, only to subsequently subvert them. The mental household represented in the *House of Fame* increasingly emerges as mismanaged and is characterized by the transgression of the boundaries of the traditional *oikos* by means of strategies familiar from finance and the marketplace (arbitrary valuation, limitless

² The poetological dimension of Chaucer's *House of Fame* has been frequently discussed. For two recent accounts with a similar interest in literary authorship and/or processes of literary innovation/invention, but with a slightly different focus, see NOWLIN 2016: 36-68; EDWARDS 2017: 122-125.

increase, usury), practices Aristotle deems chrematistic. The unlimited increase of narratives is omnipresent and therefore appears to be one of the prerequisites of poetic labor. But the poem also yields further insights as to how the (cognitive) mismanagement of the multiplication of narratives becomes poetologically productive—and it does so specifically within the context of the Troy story.

A first indication as to the poem's explication of literary re-novation occurs when the protagonist encounters a group of statues representing the authorities of historiography, with by far the most narrative space devoted to the historians of Troy, from Homer via medieval writers to Virgil and Ovid. I shall observe in the fourth chapter of the poem, that while this list (at least up to the reference to the Roman poets) seems to reinforce an ideal of memory, according to which everything is in the right (chronological or topical) place, it actually subverts such a fiction of order, spotlighting how temporal disorder becomes poetologically productive. At a second glance, one notices that the list of Trojan authorities is non-chronological and partially fictitious. And it is, as such, indicative of the twin processes the poem frequently associates with the never-ending increase of narratives required for literary re-novation: purification and hybridization. The poem further draws attention to the construction of historiographical traditions, which are, as a short passage on the envy the dreamer notices between the authorities suggests, hybrid in the first place. With the final, also non-chronological reference to Virgil and Ovid, who are introduced by way of their oppositional 'natures' (warfare, epic vs. love, elegy), the poem emphasizes the importance of purification in the making of such traditions. Moreover, insofar as this Trojan scene recalls the explicit generation of a new narrative at the beginning of the poem (where Ovid and Virgil are similarly opposed), it also suggests that purification, the construction of seemingly non-hybrid antagonistic traditions, necessarily precedes the ensuing and strategic hybridization that is literary re-novation.

The mentioned enumeration of the 'authorities' of Trojan historiography also points forward to the end of the poem, in which the audience encounters, for a third time, the 're-novative' triad of multiplication, purification, and hybridization, here in a most condensed and abstracted form. In the fifth and final section of the paper, I shall show how, amidst a chaotic mass of unstable and ever increasing narratives, the dreamer witnesses the strategic purification of de-contextualized and de-temporalized narratives that leads to a form of hybridity which is legitimated as a poetics of re-novation. Such a poetics is exemplified by the *House of Fame* itself—and might be characteristic much more broadly also of Chaucer's poetry in general.

1

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* 'retells' a well-known love story that is integral to the (medieval) Troy story: the tragic love story of Troilus and Criseyde. Troilus, one of Priam's sons, falls madly in love with Criseyde, the widowed daughter of the Trojan traitor Calchas. (Calchas was sent to Apollo in order to find out the outcome of the war and, upon finding out that Troy would perish, defected to the Greeks). After much lamenting and with the help of the 'pandering' go-between Pandarus (who happens to be Criseyde's uncle), Troilus is eventually able to woo the initially reluctant Criseyde. After spending one night together, the lovers learn that Criseyde will be sent to the Greeks as part of a prisoner exchange. In spite of her pledge to stay loyal to Troilus, Criseyde soon accepts the Greek 'knight' Diomedes as a lover. In Chaucer's day, Criseyde's name was already synonymous with changeability and unfaithfulness (see esp. MIESZKOWSKI 1971), which leaves Chaucer's narrator little leeway concerning the depiction of Criseyde's actions and the corresponding outward manifestation of her character. And yet, the poet does portray Criseyde more sympathetically than previous writers had done, emphasizing the political and social adversities that ultimately mandate her behavior and which curtail the range of her options. When Troilus realizes Criseyde's unfaithfulness, he waxes suicidal, joins the fighting, and is eventually slain on the battlefield. At the end of the poem, he is awarded a last glimpse of the



insignificance of earthly things from the eighth sphere of the universe; what happens to Criseyde remains untold, but she had previously acknowledged already (with the poet) her (past *and* future) reputation as a fickle woman.

The main source for Chaucer's version of this episode from the (medieval) Troy story is Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*. And, as mentioned briefly above, the divergent assessments of Chaucer's encounter with Italian humanist culture—his 'medievalization' of Boccaccio and Petrarch or, alternatively, his 'modernity'—are partially due to the fact that Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is and *is not* a 'translation' of the *Filostrato*. While Boccaccio's poem provides the narrative framework for the plot of *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer frequently expands his source text, chiefly—but not exclusively—by way of many intertextual references to other classical and medieval Troy stories, including, among others, those sources used by Boccaccio. Significantly, Chaucer nowhere acknowledges his indebtedness to Boccaccio. Rather, he strategically obscures his Italian source, repeatedly invoking as the authority for the Troy story the Latin, albeit fictional historian Lollius. Dressing up the non-existent Lollius as the authoritative source for a story, the outlines of which Chaucer is largely borrowing from Boccaccio, is one (possibly not so very subtle) strategy of signaling literary innovation,³ since *Troilus and Criseyde* does offer new perspectives on the love story and the larger history of the Trojan War: on the one hand, Chaucer represents Criseyde more sympathetically than his predecessors; on the other hand (and related to the more sympathetic portrayal of Criseyde), he challenges the deterministic force inherent in Trojan history, which is important in view of the presumed Trojan origins of Britain, a staple of medieval British historiography. Put differently, instead of assuming as a blueprint for British history the deterministic tragedy of Troilus ('little Troy'), Chaucer offers a different perspective filtered through Criseyde, a perspective that sets against a dichotomous Trojan/Greek-conception of nationhood a hybrid Trojan-Greek *counter-national* perspective (see KELLER 2008: 476-511; for *counter-nationhood*, see CHENEY 1997: 19-25).

A cursory glance at *Troilus and Criseyde* and its framework of intertextual references suggests that Chaucer's 'new Troy' emerges in the interstices of the variegated classical, medieval, and humanist Troy traditions. Once Chaucer's poem has constructed and flagged these divergent Trojan traditions, they clash productively, for instance, in their different conceptualizations of antiquity and attendant constructions of different temporalities, of temporalities that are often carefully fashioned and juxtaposed to one another in foregoing treatments of the Trojan War. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, as opposed to the *House of Fame*, the textual strategies Chaucer employs in order to tell of a 'new' Troy are rarely explicated directly, but often break through the surface, most insightfully perhaps at the beginning of the poem when the poet introduces his alleged source, Lollius, who is of interest here not so much on account of his fictitiousness (for which see KITTREDGE 1917; WINDEATT 1992: 40-42), but because of his temporality, that is, because of the way Chaucer *periodizes* his Trojan authority.

In recounting how Calchas switched sides, how Criseyde suffered on account of her father's treasonous actions, how Troilus first notices Criseyde at a religious ceremony and falls madly in love with her (as a punishment for just having ridiculed the predicament of other lovers and scorned the God of Love), and in narrating how Troilus retreats into his chamber to lament his amorous dilemma, the beginning of *Troilus and Criseyde* follows the outline of Boccaccio's version rather closely. As the poet sets out to report Troilus's lament, however, he puts *Il Filostrato* to the side and invokes 'his author' Lollius:

³ For the various conceptualizations of 'the new' as innovation or novelty within medieval intellectual (esp. scholastic) frameworks, see esp. INGHAM 2015. For an account of Chaucer's fictionalization of authorship, see EDWARDS 2011, 2017: 105-146; for a brief survey of critical assessments of Chaucer's representation of authorship, see KELLER 2013.

And of his song naught only the sentence,
 As writ myn auctour called Lollius,
 But plainly, saue oure tonges difference,
 I dar wel seyn in al that Troilus
 Seyde in his song, loo, euery word right thus
 As I shal seyn; and who-so list it here,
 Loo, next this vers he may it fynden here.

(CHAUCER 1984: 1.393-399)

As Chaucer is about to relay Troilus's lament, he slightly modifies a stanza from Boccaccio's *Filostrato* to introduce the verbatim report of Troilus's emotional outpour, which is borrowed from another early humanist Italian poet, from Petrarch, in what is sometimes billed the first English 'translation' of an Italian sonnet. Lollius's status as a fictitious, timeworn ('Latin') authority aside: when the poet introduces Lollius, the latter apparently has to stand in for *both* Italian writers; after all, Lollius is introduced as 'his' writer, meaning that the foregoing borrowings from Boccaccio's *Filostrato* are implicitly authorized as stemming from Lollius. Simultaneously, Lollius stands in for Petrarch, as Chaucer now offers his vernacular poetic rendering of *Canzoniere* 132. The meta-textual amalgamation of two Italian writers clearly *temporalizes* Lollius as a Renaissance author. The poetological relevance of this double appropriation is underlined by the doubleness that characterizes the Petrarchan sonnet, which also introduces the key poetological metaphor the poet uses in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

Petrarch's sonnet describes the pains of love in terms of a number of contradictions ('sweet torment', 'living death', 'pleasurable harm', 'shiver in midsummer', 'burn in winter'), including the poet's sense of confusion figured as a boat caught in 'contrary' winds:

Fra sì contrari venti in frale barca
 mi trovo in alto mar senza governo...

(PETRARCH 1996: 132.10-11)

...thus passed to and fro,
 Al sterelees with-inne a boot am I
 Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
 That inne contrarie stonden euere mo.

(CHAUCER 1984: 1.415-418)

When Troilus complains (with Petrarch) that the malady of love leaves him out of control of contrarious emotions in ways similar to a sailor who is unable to steer his boat as it is caught in 'contrary' winds that toss him two and fro, he expands his Petrarchan source to emphasize a well-familiar, classical poetological metaphor: the poem as a steer-less boat (see KAHLMAYER 1934; CURTIUS 1990: 128-130). In its immediate context—the amalgamation of Petrarch and Boccaccio, the posing of 'Renaissance' Lollius as an ancient Latin authority—the quoted passage spotlights the Chaucerian predicament of a belated poet confronting competing Trojan temporalities, to wit, a 'medieval-classical' tradition and an 'early humanist' tradition. In view of these Trojan temporalities, the 'simple' retelling of familiar material becomes rather difficult, insofar as the jarring temporalities necessitate decisions as to the veracity of accounts that frequently contradict one another. And yet, it is precisely the multi-layeredness and contradictoriness of timeworn narratives that clears the space for—better: *is*—literary innovation or *re-novation*. But space for literary re-novation does not open up only between the broad differentiation between 'old' and relatively 'new' Trojan narratives. The cited passages also highlight the heterogeneity of these general temporalizations, as is indicated, for instance, by the amalgamation of the two humanist works with divergent views vis-à-vis the dynamics of (courtly) love. Furthermore, Chaucer's poet often (explicitly) highlights the heterogeneity of classical tradition, which comes to light in the strategic juxtaposition of Theban and Trojan history or in the opposition of Virgil and Ovid. In



fact, the poet frequently has to navigate poetological seas characterized by contrary Ovidian elegiac and Virgilian epic winds (KELLER 2008: 355-359). The poetological relevance of this juxtaposition is underscored in the *House of Fame*, where a contradiction between Virgil's and Ovid's divergent assessments of Aeneas prompts a poetical crisis that results in the poem itself. And fittingly, the poet also finds himself without a 'steering man' throughout the *House of Fame*, as I show in the following discussion of the *House of Fame*, which elaborates relatively straightforwardly the model of a Chaucerian poetics of re-novation that is foundational for (but is only represented implicitly in) *Troilus and Criseyde*.

2

Chaucer's *House of Fame*, an allegorical and poetological dream vision, makes explicit the poetological framework that remains more elusive in *Troilus and Criseyde*. While the *House of Fame* advances a poetics of re-novation driven by the endless multiplication and the consecutive purification and hybridization of narratives, it is likewise a performance of the processes mentioned. And it is a performance that ensues before an epistemological backdrop that ultimately legitimizes a poetics driven by literary re-novation, which, within the fictional economy of the poem, is associated with those processes characteristic of the faculty of imagination, with the endless and disordered self-replication and increase of images. Notably, the *House of Fame* couches the representation of such increase within the language of commerce, undermining frequent depictions of the mental faculties as courtly households characterized by proportional reciprocity and by natural, moderate gain. Before I discuss the way in which the *House of Fame* stages the purification and hybridization of different Trojan temporalities as processes crucial to literary innovation, I shall first revisit what emerges as an important prerequisite in the poetics Chaucer advances in his Trojan works: the multiplication of narratives within the poet's imagination which are, significantly, *not* ordered as they move through the three ventricles of the brain, as delineated by medieval faculty psychology. Rather, the uncurbed proliferation of narratives leads to a wholesale transformation of the underlying psychology of image processing (to which I now turn): a transformation that puts a premium on excessive image-making.

As Kathryn Lynch has shown, medieval allegorical dream visions usually depict the protagonists' journeys through unfamiliar territories and strange locations as voyages through the brain as it was described in medieval faculty psychology. In other words, the dreamer-protagonists of high medieval visionary poems literally journey through representations of the—often *their*—cognitive apparatus, ultimately with the goal of harmonizing a mental disturbance suffered by the protagonists at the outset. What the audience thus witnesses, especially in high medieval dream visions, is a re-ordering of what initially appears to be a malfunctioning brain. Put differently, the journeys through the brain become visionary travels toward (Boethian) spiritual enlightenment (see esp. LYNCH 1988).

Since the cognitive framework underlying medieval dream visions is borrowed from faculty psychology, it is first necessary to briefly recapitulate how medieval thinkers described the brain and its functions. According to classical and medieval philosophical and medical theories of the brain, the 'inward wit' was divided into the three interlinked cells of imagination, logic, and memory which were, in turn, associated with different functions. The theory of the three ventricles was *the* model of cognition in the Middle Ages, and it remained the standard model until the sixteenth century. Short accounts of faculty psychology were widely disseminated in reference works, including, for instance, in Bartholomaeus Anglicus's popular *De proprietatibus rerum*. An English translation of Bartholomaeus's encyclopedia by Chaucer's contemporary John Trevisa defines the three cells of the brain as follows:



The innere witte is departid aþre by þre regiouns of þe brayn, for in þe brayn beþ þre smale celles. þe formest hatte *ymaginatiua*, þerin þingis þat þe vttir witte apphendip withoute beþ i-ordeyned and input togedres withinne, *vt dicitur Johannico I.* þe middil chambre hatte *logica* þerin þe vertu estimatiue is maister. þe þridde and þe laste is *memoratiua*, þe vertu of mynde. þat vertu holdip anfd kepip in þe tresour of mynde þingis þat beþ apphendid and iknowe bi þe ymaginatif and *racio*.

(TREVISA 1975: 2:98, italics in original)

Following Bartholomaeus and other philosophers, the cell of imagination primarily received sensory input and retained it momentarily, so images could be further processed in the cell of *logica*. Here, the images furnished by the imagination were compared, (re)combined, and evaluated before they were stored in the appropriate locations within what was often thought of as the treasury of memory, the most important cell in this system (BUNDY 1927; WOLFSON 1935; HARVEY 1975; and see summary in LOBSIEN / LOBSIEN 2003: 11-35).

Chaucer explicitly discusses or uses the three ventricles in several of his works, for example, in his translation of Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*, his *Boece* (CHAUCER 1987: 5, pr. 4), and in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, in which the poet lists the faculties in a Trinitarian framework: "Right as a man hath sapiences three, / Memorie, engyn, and intellect also, / So, in o being of divinitee, / Three persons may ther right well be" (CHAUCER 1987: 8.338-341). Moreover, Chaucer references ventricular theory implicitly elsewhere, too. Scholars point out, however, that Chaucer's various allusions to or discussions of faculty psychology are not necessarily consistent with one another. Thus, J. D. Burnley's study of *Chaucer's Language and the Philosopher's Tradition* is usually cited to the effect that Chaucerian poetry does not point to—much less elaborate—a consistent theory of cognition (BURNLEY 1979: 99-115). This necessitates a case-by-case evaluation of how references to faculty psychology are 'emplotted' in the respective works.

Little noted in studies of the literary representation of the faculties, but relevant for my argument, is that the ventricles were often thought of and depicted in terms of architectural spaces (gardens, temples, cathedrals, etc.) and the way in which the latter are managed. Specifically, the architectural spaces representing the three cells in high medieval dream visions are frequently managed in ways familiar from the administration of aristocratic and ecclesiastical households. That is, they are characterized by *oikonomia*, by the household arts associated with proper and stable allocations, with proportional reciprocity, with acceptable bounds and with natural gain, as opposed to the disruptive and seemingly arbitrary mechanisms of the marketplace, of commerce and finance (ARISTOTLE 1932: 1254b; for the 'economy' of the faculties, see LOBSIEN 2015: 149-156). However, in late medieval dream visions, which generally take Chaucer's dream visions (and especially his *House of Fame*) as a reference point, mental households are *mismanaged* rather than managed.⁴ That is, instead of depicting or generating mental order, the architectural spaces in these poems are associated with arbitrary valuations, with improper allocations, and, most importantly perhaps, with unlimited increase. These are financial practices that, according to Aristotle's theory of the household (as developed in the *Politics*), are opposed to *oikonomia* and belong to the realm of chrematistics, to the dubious arenas of wealth-getting and money-making (ARISTOTLE 1932: 1256b, 1257-1258a).

The chrematistic transformation of the mental worlds depicted in late medieval dream visions is hardly surprising in view of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century economic developments, which can only be sketched briefly at this point. After the dramatic hiatus in economic growth on account of the plague years in the middle of the fourteenth century, trade and finance were rapidly expanding, and commercial values penetrated and transformed all areas of daily life in the late fourteenth century

⁴ See KELLER 2014, 2017; for an account of Chaucer's commercial poetics with different emphases, see esp. SHOAF 1983.



(BRITNELL 1996; KAYE 1998; WOOD 2002). Notably, Chaucer was intricately familiar with the workings of the marketplace given his employment as a customs controller in the office responsible for the wool tax, the export of wool being the backbone of the English economy at the time. Through his job, Chaucer was personally acquainted with the key merchants in the City of London, while he was likewise familiar with the practice of exchange predominant in the courtly world, in which commercial practices (unnatural gain, usury) were roundly condemned and which, accordingly, extolled the virtues of proportional reciprocity, stable allocations of values, acceptable bounds, and natural gain wherever possible—notably and ironically while being increasingly sustained precisely by the commercial practices thus indicted.⁵ This is not the place to recount in detail how fourteenth- through sixteenth-century dream visions recalibrate mental households along the lines of commercial and financial practices and how the latter is situated within the kind of *oikonomia* cherished by the English aristocracy (see KELLER 2017). What is important is that the chrematistic challenge to traditional forms of household management is the prerequisite for the poetological negotiations of the ‘new’ as it emerges in the purification and the hybridization of multiple temporalities in Chaucer’s (Trojan) narratives.

3

Several scholars have emphasized the relevance of ventricular theory for Chaucer’s dream visions, not least because Chaucer’s dream poetry is frequently based on (or repeatedly references) high medieval dream poetry, which, as mentioned above, usually depicts visionary experiences as journeys through the ventricles of the brain. Whether one reads Chaucerian dream poems as literally representing the cells of the brain (e.g., HOFFMAN 2004) or as using the faculties as topoi for literary invention (esp. EDWARDS 1989), there is wide agreement on the importance of faculty psychology for understanding Chaucer’s ‘visions’. In this section, I shall give a short account of the plot of the *House of Fame* with a view to how the poem stages the protagonist’s journey through what is clearly a representation of his own brain; the protagonist journeys from the cell of imagination via logic to the ventricle of memory, a set-up observed (albeit only in passing) by Kathryn Lynch (LYNCH 2000: 62; for different accounts, cf. HOFFMAN 2004; KLARER 2010). In so doing, I shall also draw attention to the commercial transformation of the mental households that ideally should be characterized by *oikonomia*, by order and moderation.

The first of the three books of Chaucer’s *House of Fame* begins with the narrator’s musings about the multiple causes and ambiguous nature of dreams by way of prefacing the ensuing account of his specific dream. The dream narrative proper opens with the dreamer, whose name is Geoffrey, finding himself in a temple that he quickly identifies as dedicated to the goddess Venus. In the narrator’s description of the topological layout of the temple, processes of sense perception are heavily emphasized. Moreover, in the Middle Ages Venus is traditionally associated with the flesh and with desire and, therefore, also with imagination, since both phenomena are equally associated with infinite and uncurbed increase (see, e.g., ELLIOTT 2013: 11-12). On several levels, then, the Venus temple in the *House of Fame* stresses visual, and later on, aural perception, underlining the analogy between the temple of Venus and the cell of imagination.⁶ The main objects of the protagonist’s gaze are brass tablets depicting the destruction of Troy and its aftermath, a visual narrative that appears to closely follow Virgil’s *Aeneid*. And yet, after a while, the narrative diverges from the familiar story of ‘pius Aeneas’, thus confusing dreamer-poet Geoffrey. This cognitive disturbance arises as the narrative turns

⁵ For court *oikonomia* see HEAL 1996; KENDALL 2008: 1-27. For Chaucer’s knowledge of the worlds of the court and of the merchants, see e.g. CARLSON 2004; BERTOLET 2013.

⁶ For the way in which dream visions use representations of Venus and the Judgment of Paris as illustrating ventricular work, see ELLIOTT 2013; see further ROBERTSON 1962: 126.

on Dido and offers a different evaluation of Aeneas's behavior toward Dido: The story pits a more critical view against Virgil's ultimately rather positive assessment of Aeneas's actions (empire building), which highlights the emotional trauma Dido suffers on account of her abandonment, a view corresponding with Ovid's evaluation of Aeneas as offered in the *Heroides* (for the shift from Virgil to Ovid, see FYLER 1979: 37-39). At this moment, a completely new narrative is generated, one for which Geoffrey knows no source. The new narrative, offered by Dido, engages with the male need not for one, but for three women per annum:

Allas, is every man thus trewe,
 That every yer wolde have a newe,
 Yf hit so longe tyme dure,
 Or elles three, peraventure?
 As thus: of oon he wolde have fame
In magnyfyng of hys name,
 Another for frendshippe, seyth he;
 And yet ther shal the thridde be
 That shal be take for delyt,
 Loo, or for *synguler profit.*

(CHAUCER 1987: 301-310, my emphasis)

The narrative takes on poetological significance, not only because it is a new narrative in the sense that an audience familiar with the Dido episodes in Virgil's and Ovid's works would know that they could not find this lament there, but also because Geoffrey explicitly emphasizes that this is a new narrative: Geoffrey cannot point to a source, much less an *authoritative* source for the monologue, which—in keeping with the work of imagination—“mette [him] redely”: “Non other auctour allegge I” (CHAUCER 1987: 1.313, 314). With its reference to *profit* and the increase of Aeneas's fame (*magnyfyng*) associated with women, especially Dido, this new lament also brings into play chrematistic economic processes, or rather, it is generated by forces familiar from the worlds of finance and the marketplace. Dido's argument appears to be that the male interest in women has to be seen in terms of a male investment in the predicament and subsequent ill-repute of abandoned women, which yields as interest a ‘magnification’ of male reputations: to the degree that Aeneas and the male writers after him gain heroic and authorial ‘value’, her reputation is devalued by “wikke Fame” (incidentally the topic of the poem), leaving her unable to “rekever” her worth (1.349, 354). This point is further underscored poetologically, since Geoffrey immediately provides a list of many abandoned women (chiefly from the works of Ovid) who ‘made’ male reputations (CHAUCER 1987: 1.388-426). Abandoned women would also have contributed to the gaining of authorial reputations; after all, ‘Geoffrey’ Chaucer himself builds his reputation partially on the (alleged) ill fame of women, for example, in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

That the household of the imagination depicted at the beginning of the *House of Fame* is not characterized by order and moderation, but rather by the excessive multiplication of (contradictory) images and by the increase of male (authorial) fame is not surprising. After all, it is the job of the faculty of imagination to deal with a naturally disordered plethora of images. The images that ‘impress’ on the imagination are merely fixed for the moment, so that the higher cognitive functions can process them; subsequently, the images are evaluated and ordered by the faculty of logic, before they are stored in the treasury of memory. For the time being, the strange Ovidian-Virgilian narrative obviously sticks with the dreamer (and the audience). And what Geoffrey and the audience desire more than anything is an explication as to what the confusing images might mean. Geoffrey's loss of authoritative guidance is anticipated already as the depicted story moves into familiar territory again, and the plot of the *Aeneid* following the Dido episode is quickly summarized. And within this summary, a minor episode of Virgil's epic is highlighted, namely, Aeneas's loss of “hys sterisman” Palinurus (CHAUCER 1987: 1.436;

KELLER 2008: 335-339). Geoffrey's inclusion of this episode at the beginning of his resumed narration of the *Aeneid* also carries poetological weight, since the loss of authorial guidance is represented on the plot level in terms of a ship caught in contrary winds (conflicting Virgilian and Ovidian accounts) that the poet has to navigate—in Geoffrey's particular case: *fails* to navigate.

In an effort to (literally) find his bearings, Geoffrey leaves the temple. Outside, however, all he sees is sand: the temple is located in a desert, and little information is provided as to the protagonist's whereabouts. Suddenly, though, the surprised Geoffrey is picked up by a gigantic, talkative eagle, which travels upwards with the frightened protagonist and his 'baggage'—that is, the strange Ovidian-Virgilian imagery—in its claws. Geoffrey thus leaves the realm of imagination and enters the ventricles of logic (evaluation) and memory (allocation, recollection), which is indicated also by the proem to Book Two:

And ye, me to endite and ryme
 Helpeth, that on Parnaso duelle,
 Be Elicon, the clere welle.
 O *Thought*, that wrote al that I mette,
 And in the *tresory* hyt shette
 Of my brayn, now shal men se
 Yf any vertu in the be
 To tellen al my drem aryght.
 Now kythe thyn *engyn* and myght!

(CHAUCER 1987: 2.520-528, my emphasis; and see 1.468-472)

In Book Two of the *House of Fame*, Geoffrey provides an account of his flight in the eagle's claws, focusing, inter alia, on the eagle's judgment of Geoffrey's (Chaucer's) poetic works, a judgment in keeping with the processes associated with the cell of logic. Furthermore, the eagle prepares Geoffrey for what he will encounter in the domain of Fama (the destination of the flight), as relayed in Book Three of the poem. Geoffrey's *Himmelsschau* everywhere alludes to other journeys of spiritual enlightenment, chiefly, Scipio's epiphanic journey to the heavenly spheres in the last book of Cicero's *De re publica*, known widely in the Middle Ages through Macrobius's *Somnium Scipionis*, and Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy*. The overabundance of references to the latter indicates already that a different kind of enlightenment is at stake. The same goes for the eagle's assertion that Geoffrey will experience the heavenly spheres and obtain complete knowledge of love on account of his service to Cupid, a passage that momentarily evokes the courtly household practice of proportional reciprocity:

*In som recompensacion
 Of labour and devocion
 That thou hast had, loo causeles,
 To Cupido the rechcheles.
 And thus this god, thorgh his merite,
 Wol with som maner thing the quyte...*

(CHAUCER 1987: 2.665-670, my emphasis)

And, indeed, one could argue that Geoffrey's poetic service, which the eagle had just characterized as lacking, does not merit the promised enlightenment that he, after all, does not receive. The point, however, appears to be precisely to offer a form of enlightenment that is appropriate for and characteristic of a secular vernacular poetics (for a similar argument regarding musical harmony, see ZIEMAN 1997; and cf. KELLER 2018). The eagle's lecture on the nature of sound and the universe ultimately amounts to no more than a series of pseudo-philosophical *non sequiturs*, which are in keeping with that which Geoffrey is supposed to witness in the realm of Fama: the multiplication and strange combination of narratives. Within the realms of logic and memory, poetical and

historiographical narratives are referred to as *tidings* (narratives, ‘news’), and they are personified, that is, they take on the appearance of the speakers who ‘created’ the narratives in the first place.

As the eagle is about to drop Geoffrey off close to the palace of Fama, the noise of the tidings that all travel toward the palace of Fame becomes overwhelming. As such, Geoffrey is *not* privy to the “great and pleasing sound that fills” Scipio’s ears as the latter travels through the heavenly spheres in the *Somnium Scipionis* (MACROBIUS 5.3), but rather experiences nothing but noise, which is explained by the eagle as stemming from the endless multiplication of narratives and the ethically problematic mingling of falsehood and truth:

“What?” quod I. “The grete soun,”
 Quod he, “that rumbleth up and down
 In Fames Hous, *full of tydynges*,
 Bothe of feir speche and chidynges,
And of fals and soth compounded.
 Herke wel; hyt is not rounded.
 Herestow not the grete swogh?”

(CHAUCER 1987: 2.1025-1031, my emphasis)

The chaotic and endless multiplication as well as the mingling of narratives in the realm of Fama intimates that the dreamer’s hope for a ‘sound’ explication regarding the strange occurrence of the hybrid Ovidian-Virgilian narrative witnessed at the outset will be frustrated. And as the dreamer steps into the palace of Fama, where logic and memory do their work, the cacophonous increase and the comingling of tidings only gets worse.

The palace of Fama, as several critics have noted, resembles a Gothic cathedral and thus can be—and has been—read as representing a formal memory system, embodying “the metaphor of musical harmony in its architectural proportions” (EDWARDS 1989: 114; see also ROBERTSON 1962: 121). The cathedral represents the work of artificial memory, a systematic mode of remembering or storing images by placing images into hierarchical grids, for example, architectural spaces, like cathedrals, churches, temples, houses. And given the importance of memory, it was often described in terms of spaces for the storage of wealth, for instance, treasuries, purses (YATES 1966: 63-113; CARRUTHERS 2008: 89-98, 396-397; and see Chaucer’s and Trevisa’s references to memory as *tresory* and *tresour*, cited above). Unsurprisingly, then, the palace of Fama is also likened to a treasury in Geoffrey’s description of it, since the latter cannot help but notice that the walls, floors, and ceilings of the palace are amply decked out with gold:

Ne of the halle eke was nede is
 To tellen yow that every wal
 Of hit, and flor, and roof, and al
 Was plated *half a foote thikke*
Of gold, and that nas nothyng wikke,
 But for to prove in alle wyse,
 As fyn as *ducat in Venyse*,
Of which to lite al in my pouche is...

(CHAUCER 1987: 3.1342-1349, my emphasis)

While the dreamer has thus arrived in his own memory, as it were, the brief hope that this realm represents a well-ordered mental household, in which everything is in its place, is quickly dashed. This is anticipated by a rather haphazard, disorganized, and excessively long list of musicians the dreamer spies outside of the palace of Fama, who all use their instruments at the same time (CHAUCER 1987: 3.1214-1258), exemplifying the problems of increase and multiplication as

cacophony. The description of the gold-plated interior of the cathedral, however, is likewise subverted by a problematic influx of chrematistics. The gold, the dreamer specifies, is as fine as Venetian ducats, by means of which the poet-dreamer references a much sought-after *commercial* currency, which is then related immediately to the poet's purse, approximating poetic labor and the marketplace. (Perceptive audiences are actually prepared for the lightness of Geoffrey's purse, since the eagle has commented earlier already on the lightness of Geoffrey's brain: "Although that in thy hed ful lyte is" [CHAUCER 1987: 2.621]).

The mental disorder increases even further from here on: not only is the place itself highly disorganized, the ordering mechanism by means of which tidings are allocated their places within the poet's memory is likewise messy, meaning the dreamer's faculty of logic is malfunctioning. This is depicted on the plot level when Geoffrey witnesses how Fama evaluates and allocates the respective reputations to the tidings, which throng toward the goddess in groups. At a first glance, everything appears to be well: Geoffrey sees how several groups of tidings approach Fama, from whom they expect to be awarded their reputation, that is, their well-deserved location in (collective) memory. As one would expect from a courtly household like this, the tidings request proportional reciprocity, a form of compensation that does justice to their (historiographical and poetic) labor: "In ful recompensioun / Of good werkes, yive us good renoun" (CHAUCER 1987: 1557-1558). However, Fama is a fickle authority when it comes to awarding reputation, and she does not necessarily give credit where credit is due. In a sense, the dreamer and the tidings should have known better given Fama's strange (but ultimately Virgilian) fluctuations of size, from the "lengthe of a cubite" to a giant goddess with feet on the ground and "hed touch[ing] hevene" (CHAUCER 1987: 1375). While some tidings receive the reputations they deserve, most do not, which leads Geoffrey, quite appositely, to compare Fama's *modus operandi* to Fortuna's: "they were dyversly served; / Ryght as her suster, dame Fortune, / Ys wont to serven in comune" (CHAUCER 1987: 1546-1548). As relationships of proportional reciprocity are time and again subverted by excessive increase, instability, and re-valuation, the chrematistic chaos furnished by the imagination is by no means remedied in the cells of logic and memory, but rather exacerbated in ways that inevitably affect the work of memory in the process of recollection as well.

That processes of evaluation and, therefore, memorial allocation are ultimately arbitrary is underlined at the end of the poem, when Geoffrey, after leaving the palace of Fama, is privy to an exemplification of the recollection of images/tidings for the purposes of history writing. Exiting the palace, Geoffrey comes across a wicker structure filled with tidings evidently bent on escaping back into the world. As in the palace of Fama, the tidings whirl around quickly and noisily, continually shifting their positions and increasing in size—an increase again described in the terminology of finance and the marketplace rather than orderly courtly households. The usurious multiplication, purification, and eventual hybridization, which the dreamer witnesses (and which I will discuss in detail in a moment), is the most abstract representation of literary-historiographical re-novation in the poem—one that could not spell out more clearly the unreliability of what presumably is *authorized* knowledge.⁷ Consequently, the protagonist and audience's bewilderment about the strange events recounted in the dream is not resolved satisfactorily. Where high medieval dream visions eventually lead to some form of re-ordered mental household, even to spiritual enlightenment, the *House of Fame* ends with yet another frustration of the dreamer's hope for an explanation of what he has witnessed. Turning away from the wicker structure, Geoffrey sees "A man of gret auctorite..." (CHAUCER 1987: 2158). Instead of reporting the man's arrival and his explanation vis-à-vis the witnessed chaos, however, the man

⁷ While there are, to my knowledge, few late medieval English poems that quibble so explicitly the veracity of the historical record, Chaucer is hardly the first to make the point. For a recent critical account, see, for instance, Patricia Ingham's discussion of Roger Bacon (INGHAM 2015: 48-72).

remains visible only in the distance. Before the dreamer can approach this authority, the poem breaks off unfinished, most likely intentionally (see discussion in BURROW 1991).

4

As the foregoing reading of the *House of Fame* illustrates, Trojan materials are central to the poem, insofar as disordered sense impressions, including a poetologically central episode of the Troy story, prompt the plot of the poem. Notably, amidst all the chaos, noise, and incessant chrematistic movement within the poem, there are a few moments that seem to offer a momentary stay against confusion. One such moment occurs when the dreamer wanders through the commotion in Fama's palace in Book Two, and where he describes the architectural space that represents the co-operation of the faculties of logic and memory. As the poet stumbles through the disordered contents of his memory, he comes across a group of statues that apparently represent the authorities of history writing. This is one of the longer enumerative passages that seem to suggest a topical and/or chronological order otherwise absent from the poem. The dreamer first sees the authorities of Jewish and Biblical history. Then he notices Statius, and

[...] by him stood, withouten les,
 Ful wonder hy on a piler
 Of yren, he, the gret Omer [Homer];
 And with him Dares and Tytus [Dares and Dictys]
 Before, and eke he Lollius,
 And Guydo eke de Columpnis [Guido delle Colonne],
 And Englyssh Gaufride [Geoffrey] eke, ywis;
 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.

(CHAUCER 1987: 1464-1474)

At a first glance, this appears to be a rather conventional, chronological listing of the writers of Trojan history, that is, an enumeration of those Troy texts available to a late medieval English writer like Chaucer: the great Homer (who was merely a name in the Middle Ages), followed by the presumed eyewitnesses of the Trojan War, by Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, the already mentioned Lollius, followed by Guido delle Colonne and one English "Gaufride" [Geoffrey]. Traditionally, "Gaufride" has been taken to be Geoffrey of Monmouth, whose *Historia regum Britanniae* opens with a very short account of the Trojan War and relates the presumed Trojan foundation of Britain with London as the "New Troy". Given that Chaucer was simultaneously at work on his longer Troy story, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Helen Cooper suggests that one could also read the reference to 'English Geoffrey' as referring—rather immodestly—to Chaucer himself (see COOPER 1999, 2003). This introduces, almost imperceptibly, a temporal and, concomitantly, generic confusion: does the mentioned "Gaufride" refer to a twelfth-century historical narrative or to a late fourteenth-century romance. This temporal ambiguity surrounding "Gaufride" already points up problems with the list, problems that, at a second glance, are hard to miss.

If one looks at the list more carefully, the dreamer's chronology seems less and less chronological. While the presumed eyewitnesses of the Trojan War, Dares and Dictys, would, from a medieval point of view, have been contemporaneous with or even *older* than Homer, Lollius appears to be in the wrong place entirely, both topically *and* chronologically. As for the former, Lollius is a fictional authority, unlike the other mentioned writers. What is more, Lollius is a fictional authority invented by Chaucer as the source for *Troilus and Criseyde*, standing in and veiling the actual source(s) for the plot,

Boccaccio (and Petrarch). As for chronology, Geoffrey's memory re-positions the *Trecento* Italian poets in late antiquity here—a temporal repositioning that opens and simultaneously highlights a gap in this particular construction of a Trojan tradition: the cited list does not include any Troy stories written between Guido delle Colonne (1287) and Geoffrey Chaucer (1380s), thus omitting, notably, Boccaccio.

Aside from this slight chronological hiccup—Boccaccio's new chronological position between Dares/Dictys and Guido delle Colonne—there are other problems attendant upon the Troy tradition as represented in the poet's memory. The alleged glimpse of temporal order as a mainstay against the historiographical confusion that afflicts Fama's palace (and the *House of Fame* generally) is further undercut by the 'social' dynamics between the authorities mentioned. The list of Trojan authorities closes not only with the observation that upholding and transmitting the history of Troy is serious 'business' ("no game"), but also with the dreamer noticing jealousy between the pillared historians:

But yet I gan ful wel espie,
Betwex hem was a litil envye.
Oon seyde that Omer made lyes,
Feynyng in his poetries,
And was to Grekes favorable;
Therfor held he hyt but fable.

(CHAUCER 1987: 1475-1480)

The passage implicitly highlights the discomfort a late medieval poet like Chaucer would easily have felt vis-à-vis the veracity and historiographical usefulness of the construction of Trojan genealogies for the legitimation of rule or in the formation of collective identities, as it is more explicitly formulated in early sixteenth-century English/Italian historiography, for instance, Polydore Vergil's *Anglica Historia* (see BUTTERFIELD 1955: 205-206; BIRNS 1993: 71-74). Moreover, the Troy authorities' allegation that Homer tells lies, because he is biased in favor of his own people, the Greeks, calls into question historiography's general capacity for offering veracious accounts of events. This point is underlined by yet another temporal inconsistency, since the dreamer next witnesses two further historiographical authorities at the end of the line, as it were: Virgil and Ovid. As far as chronology is concerned, the two Roman poets should obviously precede the mentioning of Guido delle Colonne and Chaucer. But the two authorities are introduced here in a way that explicitly recalls the 'summary' of the *Aeneid* the dreamer witnessed in Book One—and thereby explicitly also brings into play again questions of historiographical truth.

Closing the non-chronological list of Trojan authorities, Virgil is depicted as standing on an iron pillar, bearing up the fame of "Pius Eneas". The iron underscores the generic association of Aeneas's martial prowess with *the* epic of the empire without end. Ovid is placed next to Virgil, but on a copper pillar. The choice of copper as material underscores the changeability associated with the ancient, elegiac love poet, with "Venus clerk" (CHAUCER 1987: 1485, 1487). The slightly non-chronological list of Trojan writers leads to a statement regarding their jealousy which in turn leads to a juxtaposition of Virgil and Ovid—here primarily: love and war—that can be seen as an abstracted version of what the dreamer witnessed at the beginning of his dream in the temple of Venus.⁸

Since the juxtaposition of Ovid and Virgil is introduced by the opposition of Homer and other Trojan authorities with regard to the question of historical truth, the passage recalls the prior juxtaposition of Ovid and Virgil at the outset of the poem. Put differently, the dreamer's confusion resulting from Ovid's and Virgil's divergent perspectives on Aeneas in the realm of imagination

⁸ For the medieval and early modern juxtaposition of Virgil and Ovid (as well as the concomitant abstraction of Virgilian and Ovidian career models), see esp. CHENEY 1993, 1997; HARDIE 2007; KELLER 2008.

reoccurs now in the realm of evaluation; significantly, however, the higher cognitive functions are not able to resolve the dreamer's (and audience's) confusion at this point, but rather exacerbate it. At the same time, the juxtaposition of Ovid and Virgil highlights the very processes by means of which the *House of Fame* itself is constructed, that is, it elaborates a Chaucerian model of literary re-novation. At the beginning of the poem, the unlimited increase of images led to the implosion of a retelling of the *Aeneid*. A new version of the latter was constructed by the strategic juxtaposition of Virgilian and Ovidian traditions (squared with the 'opposition' of hearing and seeing), by their purification: Virgil and Ovid had to be first constructed in terms of antagonistic traditions, before this opposition enabled the hybridization that is literary re-novation, that is, the *House of Fame*. In the palace of Fama, the focus falls on the process of purification: the way in which antiquities or temporalities are constructed—and how such constructions, for the purposes of poetic labor are not really 'pure' to begin with. In other words, the poem highlights a historiographical relativism and de-temporalization that enables poetic re-novation. At the end of the poem, the processes of purification and subsequent (temporal) hybridization are represented a third and final time.

At the end of the *House of Fame*, Geoffrey witnesses a scene that represents, in a nutshell, the model of poetic re-novation that the poem has been elaborating from the beginning. It is a double (and inevitably circular) poetological performance: On the one hand, Geoffrey and the audience increasingly 'comprehend' the principles of the advanced poetics; on the other hand, the poem itself performs the central axioms of the poetological argument advanced on the plot level. As I have shown above, in Book One, within the realm of imagination, the poet used the Dido episode in order to purify Virgilian and Ovidian traditions. At the interstices of these purified 'old' traditions, a 'new' and unauthorized narrative emerged; this narrative reflected—in poetologically productive ways—on the ethically problematic practices of multiplication/usury, investment, and arbitrary evaluations, which become structural analogues to what is ultimately a desirable transgression of limits (households, traditions) in the realm of writerly work. Subsequently, the poem discussed the reception of images emerging from the related operations of purification and hybridization in the realm of logic and memory. Time and again, the poem circles back to (episodes from) the Troy story, prominently so in the representation of the pillared authorities of Trojan history, which only seem to appear in purified form in the poet's memory at the beginning of Book Three. And yet, as I hope to have demonstrated in the last section of this paper, the temporal succession and textual homogeneity of the Troy tradition, which is exhibited by means of the chosen mode of representation, is actually caught in a process of dissolution: the list of authorities emerges not to be ordered chronologically, thematically, or by way of relevance—and the authorities find themselves divided on historical veracity. This mnemonic representation of Trojan history culminates with the opposition of Virgil and Ovid, which emphasizes the work of purification of traditions that are already hybrid to begin with. The juxtaposition of Virgil and Ovid highlights that processes of purification necessarily have to precede the further (temporal) hybridizations that, in turn, mark poetic re-novation. That these hybridizations can—and often do—ensue with and across several temporalities is implicit in the discussed passage, but it is highlighted more explicitly at the end of the poem.

After Geoffrey has witnessed the odd distribution of (literary) reputation at the hands of Fama and the dissolution of seemingly stable allocations of value and temporalities in the representation of the Troy tradition(s), he leaves the palace of Fama. A little to the side of the palace, he notices a wicker structure, which is teeming with tidings. In this structure, which is not rooted and consequently moves around freely, the tidings are again multiplying and continually increase in size (*encres*). As in the palace of Fama, the tidings lack stable allocations and whirl around arbitrarily. Recalling the dreamer's approach to the palace of Fama, here, too, Geoffrey first notices the cacophony resulting from these proceedings: had the structure been located in Paris, one could have easily heard the noise in Rome, Geoffrey

observes (CHAUCER 1987: 1927-1934). What Geoffrey experiences is the management, or rather lack of management of the house of Rumor, yet another household in which the traditional guidelines of household management do not apply. As Lee Patterson has demonstrated, the house of Rumor is based on Orosius's labyrinth of history writing (PATTERSON 1991: 101). Within the epistemological framework of the poem, this dwelling can thus be read as a representation of the act of recalling historiographical materials, of retrieving narratives from the realm of memory for the purposes of writing (historical) poetry. And the latter is characterized by a somewhat troubling consonance emerging from the 'intermeddling' of falsehood and truth, "fals and soth" (3.2108), which, this—and the foregoing description of Trojan authorities—suggest, problematically affects each and every narrative.

As the tidings multiply, they eventually wish to exit the wicker structure. The dreamer is particularly struck by two tidings—one described as being 'false', the other one as 'true'—which concurrently arrive at an opening in the wicker structure. Both want to exit the labyrinth, but they do not fit through the opening simultaneously. Unable to decide which of the tidings should leave the house of Rumor first, they strike a deal, so that neither will trump the other. The tidings agree to leave the structure at the same time, but combined into a *single tiding*:

I shal never fro the go,
 But be thyn owne sworn brother!
We wil medle us ech withother,
That no man, be they never so wrothe,
Shal han on [of us] two, but bothe
Atones...

(CHAUCER 1987: 2100-2105, my emphasis)

Ultimately, then, the two tidings, which are radically opposed to each other as truth and falsehood, leave the wicker structure as one tiding, making it impossible to distinguish one tiding from the other: "fals and soth compounded / Togeder fle for oon tydyng" (CHAUCER 1987: 3.2108-2109).

In many ways this 'meddling', which by means of the metaphorical framework also recalls the process of combining different metals (as, for instance, in the production of bullion), fits into the circular argumentative logic the poem has been advancing. If literary-historiographical narratives are always already inherently simultaneously true *and* false as suggested here, then Fama's evaluation of such narratives cannot be anything but arbitrary. As, one last time, the poem represents the poetics of re-novation it has been elaborating, however, the question of truth and falsehood emerges to be only secondary to the other processes mentioned, processes resulting in poetic 'newness': temporal purification and hybridization.

In the house of Rumor, the poetics of re-novation is initially driven by the increase and instability of images, of narratives. Secondly, the 'restless' narratives in the house of Rumor (unlike in the non-chronological list in the palace of Fama) are completely de-contextualized: they are stripped of any thematic identifiers. More importantly, the tidings cannot be identified as to their respective temporalities, except for the fact that they must be co-temporal in the sense that they are simultaneously available to the dreamer and audience. The 'meddling' of the two tidings further suggests that a presupposition for the act of hybridization is that the respective narratives need to be suspended momentarily in some form of juxtaposition or purification, here falsehood vs. truth; earlier the poem purified Ovidian and Virgilian traditions and opposed Homer to other Roman and medieval Trojan 'authorities'. Only then can a 'new' narrative emerge as a hybrid tiding made from decontextualized narratives. Significant in this abstraction of the already represented ways of poetic re-novation is that within the wicker house of Rumor 'new' stories may be fashioned from tidings

stemming from any time. While the hybridized ‘new’ narrative obviously and inevitably will be made from two foregoing, ‘older’ narratives, the depicted hybridization does not specify that the ‘older’ narratives are different Roman Troy stories (Virgil, Ovid) or one Greek versus several Roman and/or medieval Trojan narratives (Homer, ‘Lollius’, Guido delle Colonne). Rather, this passage and the *House of Fame* as such appear to suggest that what matters primarily is the juxtaposition of specific aspects of images or narratives and not their temporalities.

Eventually, the structure of the house of Rumor demonstrates that there is one temporal aspect to this poetics of re-novation that cannot be foregone: the simultaneity of discrete temporalities in the act of writing. Insofar as the *House of Fame* is a product of the poetical strategies it describes, what Geoffrey sees as he (re-)produces his visionary experience is the simultaneity of Orosius’s labyrinth of historiography *and* the figuration of a contemporary poem along with a vernacular poetics. This momentary convergence does not follow from any *directed* recall of orderly stored images. Rather, the clash of different temporalities is the result of those processes associated with the *undirected* work of the faculty of imagination. As mentioned above, the imagination is, at best, able to momentarily fix images in order for the higher-order cognitive functions to evaluate, combine, and subsequently store them. It now becomes clear why the superabundance and excessive, infinite increase of images characteristic of the imagination, which the poem everywhere squares with the dissolution of traditional households on account of the disruptive forces of the marketplace, has been systematically adopted for the description of the work of logic and memory. Once imagination impresses structurally on the *modus operandi* of logic and memory, the simultaneity of temporally and thematically decontextualized but juxtaposed images becomes poetologically productive and leads to the temporal hybridizations that are the mainstay of a Chaucerian poetics of re-novation.

The vernacular poetics of re-novation Chaucer offers in his *House of Fame* remains influential and is frequently evoked in post-Chaucerian insular dream visions. Late medieval and early modern dream poems often reference Chaucer’s *House of Fame* directly and continue its epistemological and poetological discussion. And although fifteenth- and sixteenth-century insular dream poetry, such as John Lydgate’s *Temple of Glass* or Gavin Douglas’s *Palice of Honour*, seems to prefer order and harmony, literary innovation in these poems also figures in terms of a chrematistic, cacophonous, and transgressive (Chaucerian) poetics of re-novation. That is to say, these works may project the appearance of order and harmony, but they ultimately derive their ‘newness’ from the disorganized household management discernible in Chaucer’s visions (see KELLER 2017, 2018). The poetics explicated in the *House of Fame* is also productive, however, for Chaucer’s Trojan romance *Troilus and Criseyde*, as I hope to have indicated at the beginning of this essay. And as such, Chaucer’s poetics of re-novation reverberates also throughout the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century English and Scottish reception of the Troy story, in ways that yet need to be charted.

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Zum Autor

Wolfram Keller studierte Anglistik an der Philipps-Universität Marburg von 1993 bis 1999. Er wurde dort 2006 mit einer Arbeit über das Verhältnis personaler und kollektiver Identität in der britischen Rezeption des Troja-Stoffes promoviert, die ein Jahr später mit dem Dissertationspreis des Fachbereichs für Fremdsprachliche Philologien ausgezeichnet wurde. Seit 2008 ist Wolfram Keller Juniorprofessor für Englische Literatur und Kultur der Frühen Neuzeit und ihrer Vorgeschichte an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. Seine Arbeitsschwerpunkte sind Konzeptionen literarischer Autorschaft im Mittelalter und der Frühen Neuzeit, die Transformation der Antike (insbesondere im viktorianischen Roman) und die zeitgenössischen Literaturen Kanadas und Schottlands.



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