

Abstract – The Portrayal of “Love” in Chaucer’s Dream Visions

It is often assumed that medieval authors engaged very little with classic literature and mythology and that this movement and this rediscovery of ancient texts did not come up before the Renaissance. However, when we read Chaucer’s dream visions, in which he discusses the complex theme of Love amongst other things, we can observe that this does definitely not apply to these late medieval texts. Chaucer’s dream visions are indeed very much informed by his reading of and giving reverence and credence to ancient mythology. Through studying the old books and learning from them, seeing them as an inspiration, engaging with the ancient tales of Love, using them to introduce his main concern, retelling them and contributing his own opinions about them, contemplating and creating something new, portraying and exploring Love in his own ways, Chaucer and his (dream) narrators manage to depict Love in an exceptional way. All of these processes, which have just been mentioned, form recurring patterns that we can find in each of the different dream visions that were analysed in this essay and this engagement of his with classic literature and mythology is really quite remarkable. It has, indeed, enabled Chaucer and his (dream) narrators to create something new and to depict Love in all its different forms with all its complexities and entanglements. Analysing *The House of Fame*, *The Parliament of Fowls* and the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women* in this light has proven that Chaucer and his (dream) narrators can, in fact, be regarded as Love’s servants, who manage to present Love adequately through thoroughly studying the ancient tales about Love. In the future, it could be interesting to do some further research in order to find out whether we can also find this engagement with Love and classic literature in Chaucer’s other dream visions or even in other texts of his or even in writings of other authors.

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