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DEVICES OF IRONY IN THE LATE MEDIEVAL DREAM
VISION: THE CASE OF GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S
Parliament of Fowls

One of the central features of irony is the critical distance it demands from the reader, which stands in direct contrast to all forms of encoded empathy, attachment or commitment. Approached from this angle, irony is found to permeate the poetic structure of the *Parliament of Fowls* at a deep level, emerging in various constituents of the text. It is already visible in the composition of the poem, which consists of three large sequences: the proem with the dream of Scipio and the dream proper, which is subdivided into two parts: one devoted to the garden of love, and the other to the parliament of birds presided over by goddess Nature. Each section is devoted to a different notion of love, which is grounded within a larger conceptual framework, and written in a contrastive aesthetics. The very presence of three differing concepts of love and poetics in one poem disallows easy acceptance and ready commitment to any of them. On the contrary, it generates a critical distance, one of irony's prerequisites. The ironic mode visible in the composition is further developed by a number of devices that, used consistently throughout the poem, modify all of its elements.

To begin with, irony is achieved by means of similarities and parallelisms that position the three sections along the vertical axis in order to cue comparison. For instance, the dream of Scipio and the dream of the narrator share the guide, although he appears in the second section only at the beginning. Also, the dishevelled ladies circling the temple

year by year from the second section echo the libidinous whirling about the earth from the proem. Then, harmony is said to be a musical principle binding both in heavens, presented in the proem, and on earth, described in the narrator's dream. Further, the golden inscription on the gate to the garden of love, called a 'blysfyl place' (127), repeats African's appellation of heaven as 'blysfyl place' (48); the courtly May is said to 'evere endure' (130), while in heavenly paradise there is joy that 'last withouten ende' (49). Moreover, each section contains an appropriate time reference: the Neo-Platonic dream of Scipio alludes to the cosmic temporal order of 'certeyn yeres space' (67), when every planet will come back to its original position and the history of mankind will come to an end; the natural order evokes the idea of cyclic time: the birds'mating ceremony happens year by year; finally, people break from circular time, as evidenced in the formel's year respite. In addition, each sequence contains a reference to sunset: the narrator's reading and interpreting of Cicero's text is concluded with: 'the day gan faylen, and the derke nyght, / [...] Berafte me my bok for lak of lyght' (85-7); Venus is said to lay on bed 'Til that the hote sonne gan to weste' (266), while the eagles contest 'Tyl downward went the sonne wonder faste' (490). The idea of a day elapsed is coupled with a sense of irresoluteness; just like the narrator's interpretative efforts yield no satisfactory results, the birds' debate had brought them 'nevere the nere' (619) (Bennett 1957: 174). These motifs and verbal echoes urge the reader to probe the comparability of the three passages.

Another ironic device the *Parliament* employs is undermining the three concepts of love by placing them in an adverse context, or by introducing into their presentation elements that render them unacceptable. As regards African's all-sweeping vision, the fact that it annexes elements of different orders raises immediate doubts. As Theresa Tinkle notices: 'The dream of Scipio nebulously aligns civil legality with religious virtue, hence civil with divine systems of justice, and the very ambiguity of this alignment is historically provocative' (1996: 169). She also adds that 'ambiguity (like multiplicity) is the point rather than something to be argued away' (Tinkle 1996: 170). My interpretation tries to find the reason why the perceived ambiguity appears in the first place. It seems that by presenting this doctrine as seamlessly unified, a move which was bound to create the audience's disagreement, Chaucer aimed to call into doubt the ideological firmness that characterizes the passage. Furthermore, the exposition of human love as love of public good in the

dream of Scipio is destined for distortion and gradual disappearance due to the composition of the poem, which reverses the traditional journey motif. Usually, medieval poems that utilised the *topos* (e.g. the *Divine Comedy*) commenced on earth (or hell) and depicted an ascent, from the physical to the spiritual. The *Parliament* features a descent from the heavenly realm of the dream of Scipio to the world of Nature. It comes as no surprise, then, that the spiritualistic concept of love, expounded in Cicero's text, is discarded in favour of fleshy desire. The remnants of the idea make it even more obvious, especially that it is now for the lesser birds to defend the common weal against the noblemen, who care only about their own interest. When the cuckoo says that he will discuss the matter 'for comune spede' (507), we see how dwarfish the concept have become. Indeed, later it turns out that the fowl only attends to his own welfare (Krauss 1932: 78).

As far as *fin amours* is concerned, treated in section two, the reader is repelled by certain unpalatable elements that transpire here and there in its description. First of all, love understood in this manner is strongly associated with irresistibility, violence and death. Desire as a compelling force manifests itself in the image of broken bows of ex-virgins, where the participle 'broken' is suggestive of physical harm. Sexual coercion is demonstrated in the choice of allegorical figures, although its introduction is gradual: 'at first we notice only what represents all that is pleasurable and innocent in love--Youth, Array, Gentillesse, Beauty, and Delight. Only slowly do the darker shades appear--Craft, Foolhardiness, Flattery, Jealousy, phallicism, death' (Bennett 1957: 105). Especially malign appear Craft 'that can and hath the might / To don by force a wyght to don folye' (220-1), which is close to the meaning of 'rape', 'Messgerye', which may mean sending messages as well as procuring, and 'Meede', reward or bribery. The centrally located god of eroticism, Priapus, is depicted the minute he is about to rape the sleeping nymph Lotus, which is a powerful tribute to the violent side of fleshy passions.

Even the seemingly angelic description of the music in the park carries menacing undertones: 'Of instruments of strenges in accord / Herde I so pleye a ravyshyng swetnesse' (197-8). Laura L. Howes comments on this passage:

Again, one adjective stands out: *ravyshyng*. Not a soothing sweetness of sound, this sound ravishes, seizes, abducts the listener. It may,

of course, be translated as "enchanting," but it seems to me that it must carry with it at least an undertone of violence. And the ambiguous nature of this space--is it paradise or is it hell?--lends, the poem some of its unsettled quality. (Howes 1997: 59)

In fact, ravishing collocates in the Chaucerian corpus with unpleasant and dangerous phenomena such as floods and gusts of wind (*Boece*, I, Meter 5, 56; II, Meter 2, 5, respectively) rather than delicate and pleasant music. The presence of this adjective is baffling and disquieting. Moreover, associations with death abound: the stories of lovers that are painted on the temple's walls unambiguously link love with death by making an explicit connection between the two: 'And al here love, and in what plyt they dyde' (294). Less direct is the language of the three eagles, who subscribe to *fin amours* in their speeches and invoke death, injury and suffering many times, usually to add vehemence to their pleas. Although this troping is thoroughly conventional, either proverbial or common in the poetics of courtly love, the sheer number of these references is telling¹. Additionally, the description is self-contradictory at parts. For instance, in the park there is supposed to be no sickness or death, yet the catalogue of trees lists the elm for making coffins 'the cofre unto carayne' (177), with the gratuitous mention of the corpse that goes into the coffin; the holly 'to whippes lashe' (178); cypress for lamenting death; as well as 'the shetere ew; the asp for shaftes playne' (180). Also, although it is said that the night never falls, the sun sets. Apparently, even when two aspects cancel each other out, the one that comes in later, and is therefore more prominent, is the one that refers to harm, injury, night or death.

Another disagreeable aspect of sensual love is its inevitable frustration. The icon of desire, Priapus, is presented with his penis in erection when he is just about to rape a nymph. The context is indicated by means of an allusion to the story narrated in Ovid's *Fasti*: the god was disturbed by the cry of an ass. Chaucer does not report the whole story: he mentions only the braying: 'In swich array as when the asse hym shente / With cri by nighte, and with hys sceptre in honde' (255-6). Interestingly, with his potential victim deleted, the god is depicted as

¹ "...to do me lyve or sterve' (420), Or let me deye present in this place' (423), 'lyve in payne' (424), 'in myn herte is every veyne' (425), 'That with these foules Ibe al torent' (432), 'do me hangen by the hals!' (458), 'Take she my lif' (462), 'I mot for sorwe deye' (469), '...possible is me to deye to-day/for wo' (471-2), 'til that deth me sese' (481).

solitary, and his desire as forever unfulfilled. Jane Chance points out that also '...Venus does not consummate her dalliance with the porter, so reproduction halts' (195: 99). I must disagree with her on the issue of reproduction. As I do not see the slightest mention of it in the entire poem, I do not consider it vital for the meaning of the scene. Neither am I sure that Venus is supposed to enter into a sexual relation with her porter, Wealth, who seems to have been introduced to bring out the mercantile character of female lasciviousness. However, the description of Venus, half-naked and stretched on a bed, definitely stresses her sexual availability and immediate allure, while her solitary dwelling in a corner of the temple suggests that no satisfaction can be expected in the foreseeable future. The feeling of abandonment is strengthened by the narrator's off-hand comment: 'but thus I let hire lye' (279). Frustration continues wherever *fin amours* spreads, even under the auspices of goddess Nature herself. The three eagles, who use courtly love rhetoric and express its sentiments, are doomed for sexual frustration, which acutely marks their difference from other fowls. First, it is due to simple mathematics: with three suitors and only one chosen lady at least two males are going to remain alone. Secondly, the formel's request for a year's abstinence in fact keeps all three eagles in abeyance, without any guarantee that their individual situation will improve the following year. At the end of the debate the aristocratic birds proclaim their social/cultural difference, which is prolongation of suffering (Tinkle 1996: 176). Thus, sensuous love is inevitably doomed for failure.

Finally, putting *fin amours* into practice, as the eagles wooing might be called, is ironically evaluated. Wolfgang Clemen typifies a reader sensitive to the ironic interplay. He notices that the first eagle's protestations to die on the spot and, if unfaithful, to be torn in pieces produce an effect of delicate satire and subtle irony (1963: 158). Further, Nature's soothing words that follow the declaration of love and service: 'Doughter, drede yow nought, I yow assure' (448) testify, somewhat comically, to the frightening character of the plea (Clemen 1963: 159). The second eagle, of a lower kind, differs from the first speaker in terms of straightforwardness. Bennett reads this character as 'a rebel against the code' (1957: 165.) Also, his certainty about his worthiness earned by the length of his service contrasts with the royal eagle's 'ful humble cheere' (414) (Clemen 1963: 159). The emphasis on merit is, in turn, called into doubt by the third eagle's speech.

For his avowal 'Of long servyse avaunte I me nothing' (470) sounds like a criticism of the whole system of 'long service' due to one's lady. They seem indeed to place the second eagle's protestations in an ironic light. It has been mistakenly supposed that Chaucer intended these three eagles to be faithful representatives of a single ideal and social rank, a similar attitude; he depicts them however with slight differences which set up ironic contrasts between them (Clemen 1963: 159).

Thus, *fin amours* as a coherent system is undermined by those who claim to practice it. More than that, it is negatively appraised and slightly derided by other fowls, which call its realisation a 'cursed ple-tynge' (495) and yell 'Have don, and lat us wende!' (492). The realistic cacophony of avian sounds comes 'as an anticlimax to the fine chivalric phraseology' (Clemen 1963: 160). The refined longing and readiness to die seem to the goose and the duck totally absurd. When this thought is said out loud, the reader must admit that the lower birds have a point: couched in less elegant terms, the *fin amours* concept proves to be plain silly. On the whole, courtly, sensual love is ironically questioned by the direct and indirect criticism in the Nature scene as well as by the grisly features it is said to possess in the garden/temple sequence.

As for the concept of natural love, its relevance is called into question in a number of ways. First comes a problem with the self-contradictory presentation of Nature herself. She is supposed to stand for orderliness in creation, as implied in the praise that she 'hot, cold, hevye, light, moyst and dreye / Hath knyght by evene noumbres of accord' (380-1). The number of the elements mentioned is even; the phrase also stresses the evenness of harmony. These principles are also replicated in mating and marriage. However, the number of aristocratic suitors is odd: three, which, taking into consideration that there is only one lady, constitutes the heart of the problem. Interestingly, Chaucer, just like he did with Palamon and Arcite in the 'Knight's Tale', blurs the suitors' individuality, so the only problem is, in fact, their number. There is not enough evidence to blame this situation on Nature; yet it is clear that in the case of people she fails. Additionally, the fact that the eagles do not abide her laws and leave the assembly alone testifies to her ineffectiveness. What is more, harmony and symmetry expressed in lucid pairing should leave nothing to chance, yet it is not so: Nature says the birds will be successful in mating 'as youre hap is' (402), that is by

accident. Finally, Nature says nothing about procreation; her only concern is the birds' pleasure: 'fortheryng of youre need' (384); and she talks about choosing partners in one context: 'as I prike yow with pleasure' (389). As for 'the vicaire of the almighty Lord' (379), is not the task somewhat limited?

Despite Nature's benign character, violence and murder enter the depiction of the bird hierarchy: in fact some birds are identified by specific acts of violence: the royal eagle is said to 'pierce' the sun (331), whose primary meaning in this context is to look, but it also means to cut; the goshawk does harm to other birds out of greed (335-6); sparrow hawk is a quail's foe (338-9); the marlin hunts larks (339-40). Death is evoked in the case of the swan (342), the owl is an omen of death (343). The jay is 'scorning', the heron eels' foe (346), the lapwing is doubly 'false' and 'ful of trecherye' (347) as is the starling (348). The pheasant is a destroyer of the cock (357), while the drake kills his own kind (360). In fact, the avian world is permeated with hostility and vice:

Thieving, jealousy, treachery, hatred, deceit, cowardice, bloodthirstiness, drunkenness, and much else is mentioned in connection with individual birds, while the turtle-dove's 'true heart' and the 'wise' raven are much less in evidence. This is a far from peaceable and harmonious company that we meet with here; it is a world of creatures full of antagonism and rivalry (Clemen 1963: 153).

Clearly, the ideals offered by Nature are unacceptable for humans because of the close connection with vice, violence and general inadequacy of the natural for human beings. In summary, the various ironic devices used in the three major sections influence the three basic concepts of love: spiritual, sensual and natural, and make it impossible for the reader to wholly embrace any of them.

Another tool that the *Parliament* employs to prohibit facile commitment to one idea of love is the dissolution of clear-cut boundaries between the sets of ideas that make up the three images of love. Instead of remaining confined to one section, some of their aspects sprawl horizontally. The effects of this device are opposite to those of parallelisms and shared motifs that position reading along the paradigmatic axis. The latter are used to indicate discrepancies between the sections, hence their function is heuristic (inviting comparison), whereas overlapping elements themselves constitute similarities that testify to the underlying

continuity of the ideas discussed. Let us first concentrate on the elements shared by two sections only, where the flow of ideas is most frequent, that is the courtly and the natural conceptions of love.

First, in spatial terms, the temple of Priapus and Venus and the glade of Nature are enclosed within the same walls. This, according to some critics, confirms the identity between Nature and Venus (Steinberg 2006: 27). It seems to me that given the episodic character of medieval poetry, we should be careful not to put too much weight on this fact; yet, still, there is no boundary between the two realms and the narrator moves freely from one to the other.

Yet between Chaucer's park and his temple precincts there is, as we have noticed, no clear division. Nature's glade is not precisely located, Cupid's well seems to be under one of the sempiternal trees, there are doves roosting on the temple as well as the forest branches. (Bennett 1957: 115).

And, in fact, *fin amours* has spread from the temple to the glade where it is represented by the three eagles, and, transcending even class restrictions, by the dove. The royal eagle encapsulates in his speech the ideal of courtly love: he talks about service, asks for the lady's mercy and grace and promises to serve her forever, even if his love is not reciprocated. The excessive nature of passion and its subsequent idolatry that we encountered in the temple make their way here in the form of total subjugation of the suitor to his beloved.

I chese, and chese with wil, and herte, and thought,
The formel on youre hond, so wel iwrought,
Whos I am al, and evere wol hire serve,
Do what hire lest, to do me lyve or sterve (417-20)

The third suitor also offers himself to love:

til that deth me sese
I wol ben heres, whether I wake or wyne,
And trewe in al that herte may bethynke (481-3)

The second sacrifices his property along with his life: 'Take she my lif and al the good I have!' (462). The totalitarian inclination of *fin amours* goes hand in hand with its frustration: but what in the temple

was presented as a devastating, sterile aspect of passion, is here exalted as a feature of 'true' love: 'Ne nevere for no wo ne shal I lette / To serven hire' (438-9), 'til that deth me sese / I wol ben heres' (481-2) and the dove's:

'Nay, God forbede a love should chaunge!'

[...]

'Though that his lady everemore be straunge,
Yit lat hym serve hire ever, til he be ded' (581-5).

However, not only the eagles perpetuate some aspects of *fin amours*: Nature resorts to courtly love idiom as well: 'But which of yow that love most entriketh, / God sende hym hire that sorest for hym syketh!' (403-4) as if in continuation of the sighs and groans of the temple. Finally, the formel eagle's refusal to serve Cupid or Venus suggests that in the case of people (figured by the birds of ravine), following the dictates of nature may, in fact, lead to embracing the *fin amours* ideology.

What would, then, be a reason, other than contrast, for placing representatives of human beings under the law of Nature? It appears that her dictates affect humans to some degree. As Bennett points out, some unwelcome aspects of sensuous love evade the noble suitors, such as jealousy, flattery or bribery. 'Instead of the feverishness of the temple there is restraint, fixity, humility' (Bennett 1957: 163). Neither is their presentation explicitly overridden with burning carnal desire. It seems, though, that gross vices that accompanied the gods and goddess of erotic passion are relegated to the lesser birds. To quote Bennett again:

Some of the other birds remind us of different aspects of human passion as portrayed in or around Venus' Temple. Thus the swan recalls to us the 'Jalousye' depicted there as 'the bitter goddess'; the sparrow, Venus' own son, is here as elsewhere the symbol of her sensuality, the peacock 'with his aungels fethres brighte', of the 'Aray' who stood outside the temple; whilst the meek-eyed doves, the same that flutter round Venus' statue in the Knight's Tale and in the Fairfax miniature, we have seen already sitting on her temple walls. Finally, as if to emphasize these correspondences, Nature herself soon speaks in just such terms of sympathy for lovers as Chaucer uses in the *Troilus* when he prays for love's servants 'That god hem graunte ay good perseveraunce / And sende hem mighte hir ladies so to plese...' (Bennett 1957: 155-6).

Thus, Nature's role is far from being clear: definitely allowing reprehensible behaviour in her creatures and supporting *fin amours*, she nevertheless positively influences the royal birds. The reason how and why this happens is not treated in the poem, so it becomes pure speculation. The main significance of the Nature section rests in formulating the question of the influence of nature on people's sexual conduct, rather than giving any definite answers. Thus, we see how the device of shared elements creates interpretive questions that probe issues reaching behind the poem.

Another issue that reappears at the outset and at the coda of the poem is the rationality of love. Its firm declaration in the *Dream of Scipio* gives way to doubts, questions and wishes in the natural realm. The contending eagles intermittently invoke and dispute the predictability of love, especially its dependence on long service, strength of emotion, or suffering of the pining lover. Interestingly, as their use of rational arguments is subservient to their need, they loosen the relation between the merit and the reward even more. The task of imposing (or revealing) some rational arrangement in love is taken up by the falcon, the spokesman for the nobility, and Dame Nature. He admits that love accepts no rational arguments; his first proposal is therefore to solve the contention by fight, to which the lovers eagerly agree. However, he continues, since no rational choice can be made, the decision should belong to the formel, who should choose according to the criteria of nobility and chivalric value. Now, it seems that the rejection of fight as a means of settling a love dispute is a reasonable choice; yet, still, the falcon does not explain the connection between chivalry and love. His solution is class-oriented: in the absence of rational arguments, the suitor's social status should be decisive. Although Nature calls this thinking 'reasonable' (634), the link between merit and reward is arbitrary. Moreover, Nature herself tries to 'rationalize' love. Advising the formel which suitor to accept, she says: 'If I were Resoun, thane wolde I / Conseyle yow the royal tercel take' (632-2) and repeats the falcon's arguments. This statement reveals that Nature is not reason, so we should not expect strictly rational behaviour on her part. Also, it shows that rationality is desired in the sublunary world, though it is difficult, if not impossible, to be achieved in love.

Another handful of phrases that link up the sections is formed by Africanus's description of the 'wel ithewed' (47), 'rightful folk' (55) that

go to heaven, and the description of the formel eagle as virtue's resting place: 'in hire was everi vertu at his reste' (376). Interestingly, it is the meaning that gets repeated, not the phrasing itself, and it is the affiliation with virtue, attributed to nobody else in the section, that equals the female heroine with those clear souls that are shown in the proem as worthy of heaven. It seems that the purity of souls is somewhat linked to the virginity of the formel, who decides to postpone sexual activity. This decision is contrary to nature, and constitutes an exercise of will that is denied to unthinking beasts. It seems to suggest that because people can control desire they should not follow their natural inclinations blindly. Thus, true virtue is found not only in heaven but also on earth. The reoccurrence of this element in two sections helps to show that righteousness is attainable down on earth and invites speculation about how it can be achieved.

The need for rationality and presence of virtue shows that the celestial and natural realms are not wholly separate. In fact, in the light of the Neo-Platonic doctrine, they constitute two ends of the fair chain of love. This is best illustrated by means of music.

And after that the melodye herde he
That cometh of thilke speres thryes thre,
That welle is of music and melodye
In this world here, and cause of armonye (60-3).

The heavenly music that Scipio listens to down on earth is paralleled by and multiplied into three different pieces of music:

On every bow the bryddes herde I synge,
With voys of aungel in here armonye (190-1).

Of instruments of strenges in acord
Herde I so pleye a ravyshyng swetnesse,
That God, that makere is of al and lord,
Ne herde nevere beter, as I gesse (197-200).

But first were chosen foules for to synge,
As yer by yer was alwey hir usaunce
To synge a roundel at here departyng,
To don Nature honour and plesaunce.
The note, I trowe, imaked was in Fraunce,

The wordes were swiche as ye may heer fynde,
The nexte vers, as I now have in mynde (673-9).

These three quotations show how the concept of music changes whilst descending the ladder of creation, though it is still based on the same principles of harmony. Africanus says explicitly that the music of the spheres is the cause of harmony in the sublunar world, and this idea is replicated in the description of the birds song by means of the allusion to angelic voices. Further, one step down, we arrive at instrumental music. Here, the reference to celestial harmony is executed in a jocular manner, that is in the remark that God had never heard anything better. Although human agency is hidden (we do not see the players, but we know they must be there as the instrument just do not play themselves), we are half-way between heavenly and earthly music, and the tone betrays a light-hearted and slightly disrespectful attitude to things celestial. Finally, the farewell song grounds music firmly in the world of human art of poetry. Technical terms such as 'roundel' and 'note' appear; the piece is clearly an artificial creation: it was 'imaked', and is of a recognizable school of poetry: 'in Fraunce'. Moreover, for the first time the melody is accompanied by lyrics: music becomes combined with language. It is, actually, a poem sung to a tune, a poem that the narrator may 'have in mynde' and might be written in a book: the narrator says the words the birds sung are to be found 'the nexte vers'. Thus, the example of music shows the identity of the principles responsible for the phenomena at top and bottom of the hierarchy of creation as well as the their dissimilar realizations. Are these speculations about music to be applied to love? Is spiritualistic and rationalistic conception of love to be complemented by its terrestrial, physical forms? The answer is beyond the critic's scope. All I can say is that the poem's network of signification formulates this question and leaves it there.

To conclude, the *Parliament* achieves a full ironic effect by means of various devices. It presents three conflicting perspectives on love and inserts parallel expressions and images to sharpen the contrast between them. These correspondences also align the three attitudes along the paradigmatic axis and stimulate comparison. The first two presentations are undermined by unacceptable elements or unfavourable context. Finally, the division between the concepts of love is obscured and, as some elements overlap, uncertainties emerge. Thus, an even further distance to the presented material is created, generating questions, rather than

giving answers. It is clear, however, that each of the attitudes is rendered insufficient on its own, yet their presence in one poem gives it an air of completeness. The poem overcomes their individual deficiencies by comprising them all. Should a reader avoid identification with any of them in order to build a compound concept of love? Surely, the poem provides the materials while the ironic mode prods the reader in this direction.

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CHWYTY IRONII W PÓŻNOŚREDNIOWIECZNEJ WIZJI:
PRZYPADEK *PARLIAMENT OF FOWLS* GEOFFREYA CHAUCERA

Streszczenie

Późnośredniowieczna senna wizja jest gatunkiem opierającym się w dużej mierze na ironii, jeśli idzie o jej sposób tworzenia znaczenia. W tym artykule do ironii podchodzi się używając pojęcia krytycznego dystansu, którego ona wymaga od czytelnika (w odróżnieniu od zakodowanej empatii i zaangażowania emocjonalnego). Ten efekt dystansowania osiąga się w *Parliament of Fowls* Chaucera dzięki licznym chwytom takim jak paralelizmy i podobieństwa (na przykład wspólne szczegóły ikonograficzne, powracające motywy i echa słowne w każdej z trzech części wizji), które inicjują proces porównania, przyczyniając się tym samym do osiągnięcia ironicznego dystansu. Ten sam dystans uwidacznia się w niemożności interpretacji trzech niekompatybilnych pojęć miłości, obecnych w tej wizji.