

**Abstract: Seeing, Hearing, Reading and Writing: Constructing Authority through Structure in Chaucer's *House of Fame***

When scholarship on Chaucer's dream vision *The House of Fame* addresses the issue of its structure, the first of its three books, which recounts the story of Dido and Aeneas, is often regarded as an extraneous narrative, unconnected to the rest of the poem. However, there is little in Chaucer's work that isn't deliberate, especially when it concerns the establishment of his own authorial identity. Rather, I would argue that, far from being incidental to the poem, Book I shares close similarities in language and structure with Book III, and that they should be read together as part of a coherent whole. This consideration is not only aesthetic, but also thematic; Dido's romantic relationship with Aeneas serves as a model for the way fame operates, as well as a lesson in deceptive appearances. Her story both provides a means of understanding the narrator's position and serves as a point of departure from it. In particular, the acts of seeing and hearing provide Chaucer with a means of establishing the *auctorite* of his narrator, and ultimately his own. Thus, not only should Book I should be read as an integral part of *The House of Fame* and seen as essential to its structural integrity and its construction of meaning, but when read as such, it connects this enigmatic, unfinished poem thematically to Chaucer's other works in its ultimate concern with the establishment of his own poetic authority.

Christina M. Carlson, PhD  
Department of English  
Iona College  
cmcarlson[at]iona.edu.