Annotated Bibliography

Baum, Paull. "Chaucer's 'The House of Fame.'" *ELH*. 8:4 (Dec. 41): 248-56.
    Baum's article is often quoted by scholars in their discussions of *House of Fame*. He investigates the structure of the poem and points out that though the poem is divided into four parts, those parts are, contrary to what other scholars say, complete, balanced, and finished. He states that "there could be no better climax . . . he had reached his climax and proved his point, and it is likely enough that he felt there was no occasion to go further. The whole has sufficient unity, if not proportion" (255). This article makes the case that *House of Fame* is not disorganized, nor was it created to make an announcement of a court event. Baum's discussion will be useful in helping to support the idea that Chaucer did not leave *House of Fame* unfinished.

Bevington, David. "The Obtuse Narrator in Chaucer's *House of Fame*." *Speculum*. 26.2 (April 1961): 288-98.
    Bevington discusses the narrator Geffrey as he relates to the ending or lack thereof of *House of Fame*. The author contends that scholars have decided that the piece is unfinished, but have not offered any textual proof to support their claims. Instead, they rely on the condition of the MSS, which are inconclusive in a number of ways, not least of which is that we do not have the poem in Chaucer's hand and the MSS we do have appears to derive from a lost parent MS that may have had a conclusion. Nevertheless, Bevington operates on the assumption that Chaucer's ending is finished and his brevity was intentional. He uses evidence from the text and the development of his narrator to support his contention.

Joyner, William. "Parallel Journeys in Chaucer's *House of Fame*." *Papers on Language and Literature*. 12:1 (Winter 76): 3-19.
    Joyner's thesis is "the division of *The House of Fame* into three books, however, has caused readers to miss the carefully worked-out parallel relationship in this poem between the summary version of Aeneas' voyage to Carthage and Italy and the dreamer's account of his own journey to the halls of Fame and Rumor" (3). Joyner points out many other parallels in *House of Fame* and other works that Chaucer used as sources. One of the most interesting points Joyner makes is when he quotes lines 109-14 as it appears in most printed copies of *House of Fame*. He then changes the punctuation given by Skeat and Robinson and quotes the passage without the break. The result is a much different reading of the passage. In addition, the formal three book division of the poem was not Chaucer's, though he does mention his "lytel last booke." The MSS does not show the titles and colophons "at the points of the invocations to Venus and Apollo . . . since there are no such interruptions in the manuscripts and since Chaucer does not mention the term "book" until his third invocation . . ." (18), the reader would have understood the "tripartite design only *after* he had perceived the deeper structure of the juxtaposed narratives" (18). This article will be useful in looking at the poem as a whole and to show that the work is indeed "complete," based on the structural aspects Chaucer used to make his point.

Koonce, B. G. *Chaucer and the Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in the House of Fame.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1966.

Koonce ties *House of Fame* to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, which was certainly a source for Chaucer, but it is questionable whether Chaucer relied upon the *Comedy* to structure his poem, with the three books of *House of Fame* corresponding directly to *Inferno, Purgatorio,* and *Paradisio*. Koonce's intention for the book is to establish, or as he states, re-establish, the background of the poem so that it is as clear to the modern reader as it would have been to the reader in the Middle Ages. There are some interesting ideas in the book, so it will prove to be somewhat useful, but I will have to take great care not to fall into the *House of Fame=Divine Comedy* mindset.

Russell, J. Stephen. *The English Dream Vision: Anatomy of a Form.* Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1988.
Russell's book is not specifically about Chaucer's dream poems, though it does include chapters that are applications of deconstruction to Chaucer's three major dream poems. The majority of the book sets up the ending chapters by providing a detailed study of dreams, dream theory, and the sources that would have been known in the Middle Ages that concerned dreams. Russell is very meticulous in providing the background information, and the chapter on *House of Fame* is interesting in that Russell states that in the end, *House of Fame* is a "series of failed attempts to locate the fruit amidst the chaff, truth within the welter of authorities and, throughout, Geffrey has been the naïve, troubled but always intrepid searcher for these" (193). This book has been helpful in setting up a lot of the background material for Chaucer's dream poems.

Simmons, J. L. "The Place of the Poet in Chaucer's *House of Fame*." *MLQ*. 26:2 (June 66): 125-53.
Simmons explores the role of the poet and poetry in *House of Fame* and contends that perhaps Chaucer wrote the poem as a plea for patronage, since, according to *House of Fame*, it is only the poet who can give a person enduring fame. Simmons also emphasizes the narrator's reliance on *auctorite* rather than experience. The narrator is not uninterested in experience, he just knows that *auctorite* is more reliable. Chaucer used the debate between learning and experience in several works (*Wife of Bath's Tale*, for one) and Simmons states that "the debate is at least thematically decided: the truth of the auctores endures the test of both experience and time. In a very real sense they offer the only truth available on earth, a fact which Chaucer recognizes explicitly in the Prologue of the *Legend of Good Women*" (131). This article will be useful in the discussion of the narrator, poetry, and whether *House of Fame* was finished or not.

Spearing, A. C. *Medieval Dream-Poetry.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976.
Spearing's book is not specifically about *House of Fame*, but it does provide a very detailed background of the dream vision in literature and the science of dream analysis as it was in the Middle Ages. In a long section on *House of Fame*, Spearing admits that any conclusions he might draw about the poem are incomplete and he offers a number of approaches to help what he says is a "work which seems ready to fly apart when touched" (73). Spearing believes that the poem is unfinished and states that "it is rather unlikely that the incompleteness was a planned part of the poem's effect, and that Chaucer had intended all along that the "man of gret auctorite" would have nothing to say. On the other hand, he evidently put it into circulation in its incomplete form, and, at least for subsequent readers,

its incompleteness may make it all the more telling" (88). This work will be most useful in helping to sort out the idea of the dream vision in general and the relationship between the tidings found in Book I and those in Books II and III.

St. John, Michael *Chaucer's Dream Visions: Courtliness and Individual Identity.* Studies in
        European Cultural Transition. Ed. Martin Stannard and Greg Walker. Vol. Volume 7.
        Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000.
        This is the book I reviewed and the chapter on *House of Fame* is very useful in looking at the poem carefully for references to other texts, Chaucer's structure, and purpose in the poem. Though some scholars have stated that St. John's book omits some references to important scholarship on the topic, I believe that his intention was to focus on the poem and its analogues to produce his own readings rather than to rely upon the well-known scholarship on the topic. I will use his analyses to help me in my own close reading of *House of Fame.*

Stevenson, Kay. "The Endings of Chaucer's *House of Fame." English Studies.* 59:1 (Feb. 78):
        10-26.
        Stevenson discusses the potential endings of *House of Fame* and whether Chaucer intended to continue with the poem with what the "man of gret auctorite" might have to say. The author states that she feels "he [Chaucer] did not need to go on" (12). She analyzes the proposed endings (love tidings, patronage, the poem as it is a prologue to a set of tales, and the man as Virgil or Boethius. Careful analysis of the parts of the poem as they relate to each other and the end leads the author to believe that Chaucer intentionally ended the poem before the man of authority could speak. She states that "in his most carefully completed poems Chaucer avoids, or undercuts, 'resolution'" (25). In addition, she reminds us that "twice the dreamer contemplates the falsehood of a world controlled by capricious forces, and twice he is rescued" (25). She also uses Boethius to show not only that Chaucer drew upon *Consolation of Philosophy* as an influence, but he modeled his "conclusion" after it: in the end, all things have a natural order, but unlike Boethius, who expresses disapproval of things of the earth, "what Chaucer suggests is zest for things as they are" (24). This article will be helpful in my paper because I, too, believe that Chaucer was finished with *House of Fame* and he leaves the important part of a conclusion to us. He does not want to give us an answer, as Philosophy provides Boethius, but to let us decide for ourselves the importance of Fame and Rumor as he has shown them to us.

Winny, James. *Chaucer's Dream-Poems.* New York: Harper and Rowe, 1973.
        Winny's book is often quoted by scholars interested in Chaucer's dream poems. The purpose of his book is to "enable us to grasp something of that imaginative world and to reach a limited understanding of the private concerns which Chaucer pursues and presents to himself through the dreamer's experience" (43). The chapter on *House of Fame* is long, detailed, and the poem is thoroughly and carefully analyzed. Winny contends that the authority figure of the Eagle best parallels Harry Bailly in his role as "governor" of the pilgrimage to Canterbury. The difference between the two figures lies in the fact that Harry actually gets to exert his authority; the Eagle does not. Winny also discusses the role of poetry as it relates to Fame and Chaucer's potential meaning in the poem. Winny considers the poem unfinished, yet Winny states Chaucer "made *House of Fame* express his awareness of

this crucial process in a manner typical of his art:  through metaphors of celestial flight, a whirling house, a gabbling multitude, and the figure of authority who arrives at the point where Chaucer finds it impossible, or unnecessary, to continue the exploration of his creative consciousness" (110). It will take a while to fully appreciate all of Winny's chapter, as it is quite detailed and one should have a firm understanding of the poem itself (if such a thing is realistic without years of study) before taking on detailed analyses of the work.