

Dream vision in Chaucer's 'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women'**Asst. Lect. Ali Khalid Almukhtar****University of Kufa/ College of Arts/ Dept. of English Language****Asst. Lect. Manaar Kamil Saeed****College of Arts\ University of Al-Imam Al-Sadiq****Hدب الرؤيا في قصيدة جوسر "مقدمة لأسطورة النساء الصالحات"**

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أدب الرؤيا هو نوع أدبي سردي يتم فيه رواية حلم لغرض معين. في حين أن الأحلام تحدث بشكل متكرر عبر تاريخ الأدب، فهي من النوع الشعري في حد ذاتها وكانت شائعة في العصور الوسطى. عادةً ما يتبع هذا النوع التركيبية التي يروي فيها الراوي تجربته في النوم، والحلم، والاستيقاظ من الحلم، الذي يشكل موضوع القصيدة، تدفعه الأحداث في حياة اليقظة التي يشار إليها في وقت مبكر من القصيدة.

يهدف البحث هو التحقق من إن قصيدة جوسر "مقدمة لأسطورة النساء الصالحات" هي نوع من أنواع أدب الرؤيا ودراسة الطريقة التي دمج بها جوسر عناصر جديدة معينة من أجل التوصل إلى نوع أدبي خاص به؛ تم تصميم هذا البحث لزيادة فهمنا لاستخدام جوسر لأدب الرؤيا أولاً من خلال وضعه في سياق تقليد الحلم، ومن ثم من خلال توضيح مساهمته الخاصة في أدب الرؤيا؛ كما أنه يلقي الضوء على الموقف الحديث لهذا النوع الأدبي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرؤيا، الشكل الأدبي، الحالم، السارد، النوم، الورد.

Abstract

Dream vision is a literary device in which a dream is recounted for a specific purpose. While dreams happen throughout the history of literature, it is a poetic genre in its own right and was popular in the Middle Ages. This genre follows a structure whereby a narrator recounts his experience of falling asleep, dreaming and waking. The dream, which forms the subject of the poem, is prompted by events in his waking life that are referred to early in the poem. The aim of this research is to examine dream vision as an essential literary genre in Chaucer's The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women and the way he included certain new elements to come up with a type which is his own. This research is designed to increase our understanding of Chaucer's use of dream vision first by inserting him into the context of the dream tradition, and then by illustrating his own contribution to dream literature. It also sheds light on the modern approach to this genre which sees it as a visual elaborate form with a huge potential for creation of expensiveness rather than a crude or naïve form of writing.

Key words: dream vision, genre, dreamer, narrator, sleep, flowers.

1- Introduction

Dream vision is a crucial and notorious medieval narrative genre. Its framework is that the perplexed narrator falls asleep and dreams, and his dream will be the major story. The dream often takes the form of allegory, mysterious, and it needs a kind of explanation on the part of the reader. After the disturbed narrator is awakened, he determines to write his dream in a poem (Ruud,191).

The date of composing Chaucer's *'the Legend of Good Women'* is generally believed to be a late one, probably after 1385. Some critics suppose that certain legends were composed Before *'The Prologue'* (Chaucer: Complete Works, 119). While Spearing believes That *'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women'* is "the last of Chaucer's dream poems, and it stands alone in his work existing in two distinct version s,F, dating from about (1385_1386), and G, a revised version which probably dates from 1394 or later. " This brings the reader to the period of Chaucer's most mature work. For Chaucer, "the dream vision poems cannot have been a simple literary artifice which appealed to him only in his early imitative period. " (Spearing, 101). *'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women'* shows the influence of Des Champs Lay de Franchise, Froissart's Paradys d'Amours, and several other works.

The legends went back to Ovid's Heroids and to Boccaccio's de Claris. Mulieribus and his. de Casibus Vivorum(Chaucer:CompleteWorks,119).

Chaucer's motive for writing the poem is mentioned. in the prologue. References are made to his authorship of Troilus and Criseyde and to his translation of le Roman de la Rose which are criticized. by the god of love and Alcestis as being "derogatory toward love and toward the female gender. " The accusation of the dreamer and the defense are so similar and indebted to Guillaume De Machaut's Jugement dou Roy de Behaingne (Ruud,158).

2- The Story of the Poem

The major story of the Prologue to *'the Legend of Good Women'* is that. one May morning. the dreamer. went out in his way, listened to the birds singing in. praises of. spring and love, and respected the daisy all day long. At night, Chaucer slept in the backyard and had a dream, in which the god of love appear s to him, accompanied by a gorgeous lady who in emergence is like a transfigured daisy, then the god notices the dreamer and scourges him, because he. has written works which are heresies against the religion of love, and which convince intelligent men not to believe in women's honesty, specially, the Romance of the Rose and Troilus and Criseyde (Spearing, 101). The beautiful "daisy-like lady" defends the narrator against. Cupid. She argues that "these Works were translation, that he had. not noticed that they were. unorthodox, that he may have been writing. under the order of some. patron, and that in any case, he is now regretful. Cupid ought to be forgiving, not harsh", and she mentions a string of Chaucer's works which the dreamer has also written, (ibid. , 102) "Al be hit that he can nat wel endyte. " (F. 414) The works she mentioned is *'The House of Fame'* and *'The Parliament of Fouls'*, *'The Knight's Tale'* and in addition to many lyrics, she also adds other works of "other holynesse" which belong to the Christianity and not to the religion of love. (Spearing 102) "And, for to speke of other holynesse,"(f. 424) Then, the lady proposes. the Dreamer\Narrator to write in the future about good women in order to be forgiven by Cupid. (Spearing, 102) "Of wommen trewe in lovinge al hir lyve,"(F. 438) he agrees and the Dreamer thanks the Lady explaining that " whatever his sources intended, his own purpose was only to blame false lovers. " The Lady tells him that he has to spend his time writing of good women and fake men, and even though he is not a lover, but he must speak well of love. (Spearing, 102) "Him oghte now to have the lesse payne;" (F. 492) cupid identifies the Lady by reminding. the Dreamer about a book Chaucer has at home. which tells the story of Alcestis, and how she is died in to save her husband, and the dreamer. must write of her too. Finally, the god returns back to. his home in paradise and the Dreamer. is left to start. his duty. His awakening. state is mentioned only in G version. Then, nine. stories of good women(Andrew 69_70) are stated most of them are taken from Ovid. The last story is left unfinished and the whole work is left uncompleted, since the Prologue. has mentioned nineteenth legends to be recounted (Ibid.).

4- The Main Motifs

There are two important narrative motifs, as Florence Percival mentions: The first one involves the poetic service of the Flower, and includes the praise of Ideal women under the figure of the daisy, and the poetic vision of

an all but ideal women from the legendary history. He is ignorant of this Lady's name, but at last comes to distinguish her true personality. While The second motif occupies cupid's allegation against the poet, Chaucer, and is made up of the charge that the poet had written poetry which defames women, his defense by the mysterious Daisy Queen, and the imposition of his penance anew poem in which he will recant his former sins (Percival, 1).

5- Dream Vision in 'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women'

Chaucer starts his prologue with a debate, not of a certain definite book, but of books and their reliable dogma, in the general terms. (Cherniss, 186_187)

A thousand tymes have I herd men telle,
That ther is Ioye in heven, and peyne in helle;
And I acorde wel that hit is so;
But natheles, yit wot I wel also,
That ther nis noon dwelling in this contree,
That either hath in heven or helle y-be,
Ne may of hit non other weyes witen,
But as he hath herd seyde, or founde hit writen;(F. 1_8)

Then, he describes the incident of his risk into the meadow in May to worship the daisy. A sort of non-literary study which replaces the stories retold in the earlier poems "But hit be seldom, on the holyday;" (F. 35). (Cherniss,187). In the opening lines of 'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women', the Chaucerian studious character seems somewhat satisfied and clear headed. Cherniss states that "this persona. is not conscious of having any. problem in so far as his books. are concerned. " Rather he is conscious as he says that there are. things like " joy in hevne and peyne in helle" which no living man can prove "by assay" For by assay ther may no man hit preve. (F. 9) (Cherniss, 186_187). In cases like this, where knowledge cannot be verified by direct experience, one must agree to the authority of the books, which he himself entirely affirms:

Than mote we to bokes that we finde,
Through which that olde thinges been in minde.
And to the doctrine of these olde wyse,
Yeve credence, in every skilful wyse,
That tellen of these olde appreved stories,
Of holinesse, or regnes, of victories,
Of love, of hate, of other sundry thinges,
Of whiche I may not maken rehersinges.
And if that olde bokes were a-weye,
Y-loren were of remembraunce the keye.
Wel oghte us than honouren and believe
These bokes, ther we han non other preve. (F. 17_28)

He gives "full credence" and heartfelt "reverence" to books, and though he has little knowledge (Cherniss,189)

And as for me, thogh that I can but lyte,
On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And to hem yeve I feyth and ful credence,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence
So hertely, that ther is game noon
That fro my bokes maketh me to goon. (F. 29_34)

This kind of encouraging, self-assured manner is hardly what one expects from a Boethian narrator previous to his vision, but, as in earlier poems, "these opening lines do. reflect the central. preoccupation, with books and their doctrine, which will be the focus. of the narrators vision. " (Cherniss,187) The relationship of 'The Prologue' to 'the Legend of Good Women' to the Boethian vision is challenging. Cherniss explains, "it is clearly a vision of the participatory sort; its narrator. visionary is the central figure in the poem, and his vision addresses itself to his waking. life and waking preoccupations. " This narrator does not just survey the phenomena within his vision; he enthusiastically participates and comes. away with new insight. (Cherniss,185) The Dreamer shifts the subject matter from "his diligent devotion to books to his equally diligent devotion in May to the daisy. " (ibid.) "Farwel my book and my devocioun!" (F. 39). The narrator. moves from Books to daisies, literally and figuratively, and. the enigmatic language in which he. describes the flower. of his relationship to it suggests that it bears figurative meaning (Cherniss187).

The vision opens with Cupid and his Queen impending the dreamer: (Cherniss189)

Me mette how I lay in the medew tho,
To seen this flour that I love so drede.
And from a-fer com walking in the mede
The god of love, and in his hande a quene;
And she was clad in real habit grene. (F. 210_214)

Cherniss mentions that "the narrator's direct identification of the god of love strikes one as abnormal in Boethian vision; Chaucer might indicate this recognition to imply that the visionary already knows the conceptual matter embodied in the god, but it seems more likely that. this is an oversight. " Although the narrator does not distinguish Cupid's Queen, but his description of her "daisy-like appearance " enables the reader to "anticipate the revelation of the. poem's. imagery through the visionary merging of the. daisy symbol and. the figure of this. lady. " The narrator is as rapt by the. appearance. of the. lady. as he had. been by the flower. (Cherniss,189)

And by the hande he held this noble quene,
Corowned with whyte, and clothed al in grene,
So womanly, so benigne, and so meke,
That in this world, thogh that men wolde seke,
Half hir beautee shulde men nat finde
In creature that formed is by kinde.
And therfor may I seyn, as thinketh me,
This song, in preysing of this lady fre. (F. 241_248)

The narrator says a ballade in. her commend. in which he names. nineteen other ladies. famed. for their. beauty. Throughout this balade, the gorgeousness of the. ladies, "truth," and. virtue. are praised, but none of them can be compared with. the Queen, from whom the narrator. from the outset calls "my lady" (Cherniss,189).

This balade may ful wel y-songen be,
As I have seyde erst, by my lady free;
For certeynly, alle these now nat suffyse
To apperen with my lady in no wyse.
For as the sonne wol the fyr disteyne,
So passeth al my lady sovereyne,
That is so good, so fair, so debonaire;
I prey to god that ever falle hir faire!(F. 270_277)

The dreamer is naive for Cupid's assault since he thinks of himself as a love poet and as Cupid's faithful servant. Cherniss affirms "Chaucer has retained the persona he created in his earlier poems, and expected his audience to recognize his fictional Chaucer. " Cupid's attack is honestly gone to the point that he is dependable for those earlier poems which have driven people away from love. thus, cupid

judges Chaucer undeserving to reverence the daisy, which he insists "myn ounne floure". (Cherniss,190)

Cupid is very hostile and irritated with Chaucer, addressing him as "my foo" and accusing him of severe crimes against love (Williams, 175). cupid may have problems with Chaucer, but it is the Queen Alceste, the daisy who calls the shots. "Widely considered to be a veiled and complimentary allusion to Queen Anne. " (Williams 175). Alceste is not considered both a queen and a daisy, but it is used as a literary character, one to whom Chaucer has failed to do sufficient homage. Finally, although Chaucer does not write very well, but he has attempted to serve Cupid in his earlier works (Cherniss,192). *'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women'* resembles the Boethian sort of vision insofar as "the preoccupations of the waking narrator are developed and clarified for him within his. vision. He undergoes a procedure which brings him to a new understanding of his waking life, and his new understanding is closely bounded up with the theoretical identities of the figures of vision. " (ibid. , 195). The dreamer learns, in the vision, the features between Cupid and Alceste, love in general and the sort of love to which he is devoted. The dreamer does not confess his remorse rather he asserts his earlier period and ongoing devotion to that aspect of cupid 's law embodied in Alceste. Cherniss mentions that "the narrator cannot possibly break completely with Cupid, since that would necessarily entail the rejection of Alceste as well, but he does not accept him completely and uncritically, either. " (ibid. , 196) The apology of the dreamer/narrator enables him to persuade the god of love without illuminating his own loyalty to reliability and asset, so he has to write stories of good women and fake men: (ibid.)

Thou shalt, whyl that thou livest, yeer by yeer,
The moste party of thy tyme spende
In making of a glorious Legende
Of Gode Wommen, maidenés and wyves,
That weren trewe in lovinge al hir lyves;
And telle of false men that hem bitrayen,
That al hir lyf ne doon nat but assayen
How many wommen they may doon a shame;
For in your world that is now holde a game. "(F. 481-489)

Spearing thinks that *'the Prologue to the Legend of Good Women'* fits in to the type established by Chaucer's previous dream works, and it develop certain possibilities inherent in that category. Like "the opening debate of experience and the influence of books is from one opinion of a simplification of issues which are raised in the earlier poems. " Each one of them began in a story from book like Ovid, Virgile, Ceciro. (Spearing, 102). "And to the doctrine of these olde wyse," (F. 19) And every one of them had gone on to counterpoint the adventures of an inexperienced dreamer / narrator in opposition to the authority encountered in his dream (Spearing, 102).

The structural outline of the Prologue is similar to that of earlier dream visions works by Chaucer, "which starts with their narrator's ruminations upon their various waking preoccupations, then recount a story read in an old book and finally recount the vision itself. " Some critics notice the waking portions of these poems which appears to make a kind of dialectic between life and books, experience and authority. (Chaucer: Complete Works 126-127).

The time in which the act happens is May when Chaucer meets with the mysterious figure Black Knight in the Book of the Duchess, and when the Romance of the Rose was showed before him. The narrator's "eulogies on the daisy, the suggestion of the controversy between flower and the leaf were subjects familiar to medieval literature, as was the idea of the palinode which is the theme underlying the whole." (Chaucer: Complete Works 126-127). The form of the work is identical with that used by Chaucer except of

the addition of a more elaborate prologue. The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, from the inventive and fictional point of view, is far more significant than the chief body of the work. It is a severe autobiographical depiction of the poet as the lover of books and study, but as a greater lover of nature. (Chaucer: Complete Works 127). Mehl states ' *The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women*' once more harks back to the earlier love -visions, but it is even more personal and free from the restraints imposed by the traditional genre." (Mehl, 98). The method in which the new theme is introduced is what makes the prologue so special from the earlier dream visions. The Narrator views himself and is viewed by others as a poet with a highly regarded number of works to his glory, not as an ineffective lover. (ibid. , 100). In his absolute claim that "there are things we will never see with our own eyes but in whose existence we should nevertheless believe because the poets testify to their reality, Chaucer goes beyond his earlier poems. " (ibid.).

According to Cherniss, '*The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women*' is "a self-contained dream poem that serves as a travesty of Boethian vision; in it, he identifies typical elements of the genre. " (Lambdin and Lambdin, 195) The dreamer is a lover, but he is more closely identified with the author than the others. Cherniss argues that "Chaucer splits the Boethian guide into two figures, Cupid and Alceste." (ibid.). *The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women* forms the first of his narrative decasyllabic couplet that he was to employ for most of his Canterbury Tales. Concerning the dialogue among the god, the poet and Alceste, it owes more to literary convention than to any actual event. (Shaner, 587). William Quinn considers only The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women as a dream vision." It is an independent presentation, its length is comparable to The Parliament of Fowls" (Shaner, 587). But the F version of the prologue is regarded as a unique one in that it neglects to mention that the dreamer ever awakes; the G version revises this flaw. Quinn concludes that "whether the correction should be considered authorial or scribal or even a corrigendum for that matter remains in question." (William, 299-300). The narrator is considered the major character and his encounter with the angered Cupid makes it necessary for him to demonstrate that he is innocent of the charge of holding antifeminist views (Palmer, 184).

Huriye Reis Summaries the most important critical views about The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women; Cherniss considers it. "the most personal even autobiographical of all of Chaucer's poem," while Jordan dismisses The Prologue as least congenial to Chaucer's objectives as a poet for the same autobiographical implications. Moreover based on the citation of Chaucer's works in the poem, critics recognize an awareness for a poetic evaluation in The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women. Robert Payne's approach to the poem's importance on the author and his work is celebratory for, Payne suggests, " The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women represents a poetic analysis with implications for the direction. " Chaucer's poetic career takes after The Legend of Good Women. Delany states, "The Prologue's narrative is about the trial, defense, and expiation of a poet." similarly Percival mentions that the imaginary dispute about women is only a justification to discuss the poetic craft, which has enabled Chaucer to draw attention to his poetic output. (REIS, 141). Chaucer does not only

supports but also exercises in his writing. So, The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women keeps on Chaucer's disquiet with the fiction and nature of writing itself. (ibid.).

REIS explains the essential of screening the trail in '*The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women*' where "the narrator is hold responsible for producing allegedly offensive works about love's doctrine in the light of the narrator's claims about the nature of poetic creativity. Important to the narrator's trail is his position in the trail. " He also comments on the fact that the narrator/ dreamer is charged with betrayal on account not of his adoration of the daisy or for his uncomfortable thoughts as a lover, but significantly as a writer. (REIS, 144). The narrator is allowed to defend himself in the trail, his view of the problem complicates the subject. He defends his translations as " works serving the god of love's doctrine. " The Dreamer\ Narrator makes two significant points, but it is notorious and unacceptable to his accusers. The first view is that he claims that his works do in fact transmit the

"sentence" of his authors. As a reader, his contention is that his source books or authors support love's teaching and aim to further love's cause by stopping people from committing any possible wrongs against love. His second view is regarded as a consequent to the first: his justification declares that both the god of love and Alceste are misunderstanding his works. (ibid. , 146).

Algate, god wot, hit was myn entente
To forthren trouthe in love and hit cheryce;
And to be war fro falsnesse and fro vyce
By swich ensample; this was my meninge. "(f. 471_474)

Still the Narrator, as in Chaucer's other dream vision poems, is insufficiently knowledgeable about the Implications of writing from reading. REIS states concerning the narrator:

" In The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women, the narrator is confronted with blunt truth not only that texts are open to misinterpretation but also that he, as a reader\ writer, has equal responsibility in the generation and dissemination of such interpretations. By subscribing to the role of a reader\writer, one opens a platform of disputable. when the god of love sends the narrator back to his books and orders him to produce books of his doctrine, he also prescribes a certain type of reading. " (ibid. ,148).

Chaucer's Prologue to the Legend of Good Women discusses the conditions which led him to start writing his tales which follow, and also functions as an introduction to the work as a whole. It is begun after Chaucer has finished Troilus and Criseyde in the mid 1380s. (Cherniss, 185). The relative merits of The Flower and the Leaf were a subject of poetic debate in Chaucer's time, Robinson states that:

When the poem entitled The Flower and the Leaf was composed, the ladies and gentlemen of the court, The Prologue to the Legend indicates divided themselves into two orders, devoted one to the leaf and the other to the flower. Similarly, there is evidence in both France and English poetry of the existence of a cult of the marguerite. Both these courtly fashions are reflected in The Prologue. (Robinson, 565).

Chaucer refuses to take sides in the argument of Flower against the Leaf. But he proclaims his loyalty to the daisy and in his festivity of this queen of flowers, "he invents a happy metamorphosis, worthy of the old mythologies ,and represents the flower as a transformation of the queen Alceste, the leader of his good women, who appears in his vision as an attendant of the god of love. " (Robinson 565). *The last action of 'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women'* focuses on Alceste's identity: (Kruger 85)

The god of love gan smyle, and than he seyde,
"Wostow," quod he, "wher this be wyf or mayde,
Or quene, or countesse, or of what degree,
That hath so litel penance yiven thee, (498_501)

Then, the Narrator concludes The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women by touching on to the making of his legend: (Kruger, 85). "And right thus on my Legend gan I make. "(579) Such complex poems confess " complex and even contradictory readings, and the centrality of dream experience in each enables their exploration of the full range of experience to which dreams might be connected, from the somatic and psychological to the transcendent, even the divine. " (ibid. , 85).

Mehl argues that " any reader will distinguish that the purpose of the poet's enjoyment the daisy, is not some exacting flower, but a picture of love, of unconditional loyalty to virtue and honor, and the poet's wish to admire it with all the metaphorical gifts at his command. " (Mehl,101) Even after he has left his books, the Dreamer\ Narrator at once returns to literary considerations and to his poetical efforts. Mehl mentions that the narrator's references to the poets and to chivalrous poetry _game of the flower and the leaf must have meant more to his current audience than it can probably mean to the

readers, but it is still obvious that he is discussing about his own situation as a love poet in this chivalrous society and wants to initiate his own stories, taken from old books, as a subject of at least as much relevance and authority as the new- fangled conventions of love - poetry (ibid.).

Conclusions

'The Prologue to the Legend of Good Women' represents the result of Chaucer's dream visions. It includes all of the traditional structures of reading, dreaming, and supernatural encounters: the studious narrator and his classical reading material; the royal dedicatee; the extensive continental influences (both French and Italian); and most important, a self -consciousness about and affirmation of the potential of English.

Chaucer uses dream vision in a modern way especially in his work " the prologue to the legend of good women ", he mixes reality with fancy in this work by talking about famous historical characters. Chaucer rediscovers the idea of English authorship. He moves between imitation and innovation, carving out a piece for Chaucer's unique contribution to the genre and confronting the radical idea of using the English language as a medium for courtly poetry.

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