

CHAUCER'S TROILUS AND CRISEYDE: A PHILOSOPHICAL ROMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Troilus and Criseyde (1380-6) examines the peak of Chaucer's artistic achievement during the Italian period of his career, during which he assimilated various European literary traditions that elevated his style by embellishing it with profundity and richness. Besides, his translation of the Philosophy of Consolation of Boethius generated the imaginative energy and vision that produced Troilus and Criseyde. It introduces a new phase of development in Chaucer's use of romance. He continually amplifies it with heterogeneous material to give it a complex pattern of implications. The philosophical, with Boethian spirit, irony, dream psychology, rhetorical devices of mythological allusions are conveyed in sublime style which turn the poem undoubtedly unique in medieval narrative, a high romance of universal appeal through which medieval romance passes out of itself.

Key Words: Chaucer, Boethius, Philosophy, medieval, romance

1.1 Introduction

Though thunderous winds resound
And churn the seething sea,
Hidden a way in peace
And sure of your strong-built walls,
And smile at the raging storm.

(The Consolation, II, m. 4)

Troilus and Criseyde was written during the last decades of the fourteenth century, probably between (1380-5), which marked the growth of Chaucer's genius to full maturity. It was the apex of the "Italian period" of his career, during which he assimilated various European literary traditions that elevated his style by embellishing it with richness and profundity. More specifically, it was his translation of the philosophy of Boethius which generated the imaginative energy and vision that produced Troilus and Criseyde. Hence

Chaucer's romance was written during a rich period which made it stand "as the focal point in his artistic career. It drew together in full development every talent shown in the early poems, and has, besides, its own new amplitude"¹.

Troilus and Criseyde has a direct source, Il-Filostrato of Boccaccio (ca. 1335) who literally invented the story of Troilo and Criseida and wrote it in a complete autobiographical poem². Boccaccio was inspired by a marginal episode in Benoît de ste. Maure's Le Roman de Troie, written about 1160³. This work was in turn based on a small incident in Homer's Iliad⁴. Besides two other forgeries: Dictys crentensis' Ephemeris Belli Troiani of the fourth century A. D., and Daretis phrygii' De Exidio Troiae Historia of the sixth century, both of which did not mention the love story of Troilus and Criseyde⁵.

Though Troilus and Criseyde follows in almost all details Boccaccio's poem, it is much richer in its essence. As usual, Chaucer interprets his source with liberty and invests it with wide implications. The poem has echoes of Boccaccio's Teseida, Dante's Commedia, Le Roman de la Rose, and above all, the clearly defined philosophical depth of conception which constitutes the backbone of the romance. Besides psychological and scientific touches and rhetorical figuration of high style dominate the whole of the poem and account for its originality. The combined force of all these elements turn Troilus and Criseyde into a meaningful romance.

1.2 Troilus and Criseyde: A Philosophical Romance

Troilus and Criseyde adopts the usual Gothic structure. It keenly preserves a high sense of variety as a source of beauty and complication to the poem rather than a confusion. Besides a high sense of ambiguity, exemplified mainly in Venus, Fortune, and the character of Criseyde.

The poem maintains a distinguished sense of linearity which Chaucer articulates through the foreshadowing, lyrical songs, soliloquies, and dreams. All these devices reveal the progress with the characters, as they move from woe to weal (and vice versa). Such linearity is a positive element in the narrative structure. It is revealed in a very complex way: through the use of circular design of romance (paradoxically enough), best exemplified in the ironical circular moving of the wheel of Fortune, from mounting to falling. This circular design is much more meaningful and progressive than the circular design of English romances.

This circularity endows Troilus and Criseyde with a Gothic scene of order which is distinctly revealed in the five books of the poem. He originally intends it to be four, but since the fourth book turns to be long,

he cuts it to be continued in a fifth book, without changing the promise to finish the poem which he gives at the beginning of the fourth book .⁶

With this clear distinction of organization, Chaucer articulates the sequential progress of the story in a gradual transition from one plane to another, dilating the stages in the course of Troilus/Criseyde love. Thus he makes the overall structure of his romance an integral, regular, and a harmonious finite whole.

Troilus and Criseyde adopts a setting which is, though remote, far from being fabulous. Chaucer's picture of the city of Troy, which reflects the flavour of antiquity, is highly medievalized, as part of a normal routine of behavior to suit the medieval system of courtly love tradition and Chivalric ethos. The picture of Troy is a lifelike picture of medieval London with its gardens and its fear of the enemy without .⁷ Chaucer intends to give his poem a "Sense of city-life⁸, i.e., of real world which he excludes from his ensuing romances.

Chaucer begins Troilus and Criseyde in an unusual way of romance: he is to tell the "double sorwe" (I, 1)⁹ of Troilus, son of king Priam of Troy. Thus, from the beginning, Chaucer indicates the outline of the story as no ordinary courtly romance, but "a romance of a tragic mode" ¹⁰. Besides, this précis (the double sorrow) is deliberately intended to be the spring source of series of irony which Chaucer heavily stresses throughout the poem ¹¹.

More importantly, Chaucer's theme won't be adventurous, but an amorous one. His "woful vers" (I, 7) will portray the inner experiences of human beings, deeply examined by a set of actions, reactions, and interactions, showing in great detail and extraordinary feeling the hardships and severity of the courtly love tradition. Hence Troilus and Criseyde approximates in its celebration of love the line of French romances, since the English romance does not deal with love in depth.

Chaucer portrays Troilus as a conventional knight "fierce and proude" (I, 225), boastfully scoffing at love and lovers, calling them "fooles" (I, 202) who are lost in "lewed observaunces" (H, 198). Troilus's scoffing comes from pride and not wise experience, for he is deliberately portrayed as an inexperienced young man to enhance his goodness as a purer lover from whom arises much of the greatness of the romance ¹². Besides, such laughter is obviously ironical for he will "wax soodeynly moost subgit unto love" (I, 231) as soon as he sees Criseyde (typical of courtly love) in a religious festival in honour of Pallas, goddess of wisdom. Hence this laughter will give his sorrow its comic overtone. Moreover, Chaucer reveals his ironical treatment of mythological deities as an object of burlesque, since Troilus's love will ultimately prove to be unwise, contrary to what the goddess indicates.

In the deep psychological realism of French romances Chaucer shows himself an artist within the courtly circle as he portrays in detail the suffering of Troilus from this "wonder maladie" (I, 419), as he calls it. In a lyrical song (I, 400-34), an echo of Lorris's lyricism of Le Roman de la Rose, Chaucer vividly illustrates the exaggeration of this "quike deth" and "swete harm" (I, 411). Troilus almost loses his individuality as he indulges in conventional reactions: wailing "in salte teres dreynte" (I, 543), swooning, sleeplessness, and multiplied sorrow. Whereas Crisyde stands--as typical courtly lady--haughty, apathetic, and hard in giving her favour.

Despite the woe of love, Troilus, a typical courtly lover, is ennobled by its power "Fro day to day in armes no he apoddo,/That the crakes as the doth him droddo" (I, 1014), he thanks her which adds to the Gothic ambiguity of the romance¹³. Venus here is a source of complication for it reflects love in its interchangeable religious and erotic terms. On one hand, it is identified with carnal love since Troilus himself--according to the instructions of Andreas Capellanus--experiences the motion of his senses stimulated through the eyes and the temptation of pleasurable thought. Actually, he has tasted the wrong spring (I, 406) which will ultimately lead to his ruin. On the other hand, Venus is identified with the planet Venus, an agent of divine love. Here Chaucer echoes Boethius as he philosophizes the universal power of love, which is unlike anything in romances. Love for him is a force that dominates and purifies man of his vice that no one escapes the law of Nature¹⁴. In a veiled manner, which is typical of Chaucer during this period, he reveals his intention of "marriage's pure love"¹⁵. This actually shows him a rebel against courtly love, which many romances celebrate, as he adopts duplicity of attitude towards it, putting thus the basis for his moral message:

That love is he that alle thing may bynde,
For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde.
.....
And is a thing so virtuous in kynde,
Refuseth not to love for to ben bonde,
Syn, as hymselfen liste, he may yow bynde.

(L, 237-56)

However, Troilus, the she inexperienced youth, who fears his love to be unrequited, needs a witty go-between to get in touch with Criseyde. Hence Chaucer creates the old Pandarus, modelled on Meun's friend in Le Roman de la Rose¹⁶, to be the most original lifelike character who shows Chaucer a better creator of Characters than any romancer. Pandarus is Criseyde's uncle and a close friend to Troilus, who is socially adept, as loco parentis, to play his role in the development of the affaire as a comic character¹⁷. He is the

perpetual fountain of incessant vigor who transforms the poem's lyricism into action .¹⁸

As a matter of fact, Chaucer intends Pandarus to be a master piece of irony which adds depth to his character. Though he is an unhappy lover, he shows himself a devotee of courtly love and an active instrument of love which he considers a "grace" (I, 896), as he welcomes Troilus's conversion to love. In addition to that, Pandarus claims to be wise whereas he is in fact a pedant for he has an incomplete worldly wisdom which turns him in to "a blynd man" (I, 628). His answer to Troilus who inveighs bitterly against Fortune, which is the poem's source of philosophical reflection, calling it "my fo" (I, 837), shows this clearly: all he could say is that mutability is her meaning (I, 848-9) without. Linking between her and providential purpose or showing how to arise above her, as lady philosophy elaborately illustrates to Boethius¹⁹.

Pandarus helps to mount the wheel of Fortune from woe to weal when Troilus comes to his lady's grace as Book II shows. It opens with a rhetorical invocation to Clio, muse of history. Chaucer uses this common epic machinery not only to achieve sobriety and high style, but to be a meaningful device in the narrative structure. He translates the sense of history into a realistic courtly touch repressed in the story of Thebes, which Criseyde and her maidens were reading when Pandarus visited her, which functions as a foreshowing for the tragic doom of Troy. Chaucer intends this Book to be above all a comic piece, full of movement, colour, and bright gaiety, which elevate the poem above ordinary romances. It also functions as a sort of preparation for the tragedy of Troilus as well as a focus study on the characters of both Pandarus and Criseyde.

The conversation between the uncle and his niece is a lively humorous touch (II, 1100-7) which sheds light on Pandarus's failure in love²⁰. Chaucer intends it to be ironical as Pandarus attempts to work out Troilus/Criseyde love affair which will ultimately be a failure. Most significant is Pandarus's attempt to make Criseyde, who needs to be persuaded as she is not eager to make an affair, pity Troilus's suffering. Throughout the conversation Pandarus praises Troilus and with his proverbial spirit (sentential is ironically used to reveal his incomplete worldly wisdom) advises her not to refuse "To late Y war, quod beaute, when it paste;/And elde daunteth daunger at the laste" (II, 398-9). While Criseyde with ironical comic tone fears to put her name in danger and, as a widow, she has to seclude herself in "a cave" reading "holy seytes lyves" (II, 117-8)²¹, one knows she cannot but accept at the end. The whole situation enriches Troilus and Criseyde as a sort of "social comedy"²², a Helen. S. Corse describes it.

Notably Book II sheds light on Criseyde as "a woman of psychological actuality"²³. In a crafty

psychological analysis, which is unlike anything in English romances, Chaucer shows the inward depth of Criseyde's mind at work. In the garden scene (II, 708-804) Criseyde begins her meditation over the affair with great discretion. Her rationalization, a virtue in the courtly tradition, revealed in her weighing the threads against the joys of love, obviously indicates her practicality and maturity. It also proves, to a great extent, her responsibility for her choice and shows her surrender as conscious and voluntary, as she herself asserts "I am myn owene woman, well at ese" (II, 750).

Throughout her meditation Chaucer touches upon too highly significant moral virtues: honour and truth²⁴, which will be fully developed later on as part of Chaucer's moral abiding interest, which English romancers do not usually emphasize. She starts to suspect Troilus's (and men's) truth which would be a source of danger that threatens her honour if the affair is to be known to "wikked tonges" (I, 785). That is, she is afraid of scandal and keeping the secrecy of the affair is her haunted fear, which is typical of courtly love tradition. Essentially, Chaucer intends her speech to have an ironic and comic tone through which he consciously laughs at the artificiality and the paradoxical essence of the code, contrary to the romancers who usually praise it. It is presumably to be honourable, whereas in fact it destroys the very essence of honour as a moral virtue. The standard code cares so much for the "external social aspect" of honour in its exaggerated concern for the secrecy of the affair, while it neglects its intrinsic "internal quality"²⁵. Thus Chaucer introduces the appearance-reality motif as a source of complication to his romance.

After a long rationalization, Criseyde gives her hard decision most willingly. She is to return Troilus's love. Hence she starts to praise love as "sonne wers, of kynde right" (II, 862) and the lyrical song (II, 827-75) shows patently her emotional progress as a character. What is important is the basis on which she is to yield in Book III. She finds in Troilus, the son of a king, a sense of protection "a wal/of stiel" (III, 479-80), says Chaucer, which she needs against loneliness and hostility as a daughter of a traitor, for her father (Calkas) has left to the Greek camp to escape the inevitable doom of Troy as Apollo told him. Chaucer intends the oracle of Apollo to be a common supernatural element of romances meaningfully utilized as a generator of the tragedy.

The bulk of book III is made up of the episode of the consummation of their love as the wheel of Fortune mounts to the top. It portrays with a grand dilation the weal that follows the of love longing.

In this Book, Pandarus with his joyous machinations shows himself "a paragon of practical attainment"²⁶, a man of action in contrast to Troilus, the passive "hero of paralysis"²⁷. He is impatient to see the grief of the lovers and so obsessed with the idea of fulfilling their love--he is a "devel" (I, 623), as Troilus calls him.

Hence he arranges a meeting between them in his house where he cunningly tells Criseyde of the jealousy Troilus feels as he hears of her affair with a Horaste²⁸. Criseyde, hearing such news, embarks on a philosophical discussion of false felicity, which adds a further dimension to her character and to the romance. She says:

So worldly selynesse,
Which clerkes callen fals felictee,
Imedled is with many a bitternesse!
.....
Now if he woot that joie is transitory,
As every joie of worldly thyng most flee,
.....
Than semeth it that joie is worth ful lite...

(III, 813-33)

Her comment on the absence of true happiness in the world reveals the limitation of her worldly vision for she²⁹, unlike lady philosophy, does not say where to find true felicity³⁰. Chaucer here wants his reader to understand long before Troilus does the fact that lies at the heart of medieval philosophy and religion of the inherent insufficiency of worldly joy, which is the essence of Chaucer's moral message. Thus Criseyde's glimpses make one understand why after his surrender to love Troilus will inevitably go from weal to woe.

However, Criseyde meets Troilus, who is supposed to be out of town as Pandarus has told her, when a deluge of rain, a foreshadowing for their tragic end³¹ which Chaucer describes with astrological touch, compelled her to stay. The poet intends the meeting of Troilus and Criseyde to be a "comedy of situation"³² with which he enriches his romance. Troilus's helplessness creates laughter: He behaves like a paragon of courtly love as he kneels reverently beside her bed in religious gesture, weeping sorely for causing her such pain (because of Pandarus's lie), and ensures her that "jalousie is love" (III, 1024). Pandarus, on the other side, shares Troilus the crying--while Criseyde tries to comfort them--and proves himself to be an incipient clown when he tries to push Troilus to Criseyde's bed (III, 978-80).

As a consequence, Troilus let his desire overcome his rational perspective, as he substituted Criseyde's grace--an uncertain bliss--for providence which foreshadows his end, especially he is left with no freedom with which to avoid the ensuing adversities³³, as Book IV shows.

Book IV is a transition to a new phase, contrary to the calm joy in which Book III ends. It gives a detailed display of the hero out of joy. The wheel of Fortune turns down and changes Troilus's wheel into woe, as he hears of Criseyde's departure to the Greek camp on the demand of her father: she is to be exchanged with the traitor Antenor, the Trojan knight³⁴, to spare her the impending doom of Troy. Thus

Chaucer makes the fate of the lovers bound with the inexorable doom that hangs over Troy.

Throughout Book IV Chaucer skillfully portrays the inner conflict within his characters through a series of lyrical monologues. Criseyde, who is struck by the news of her departure, starts to blame the "coursed constellacioun" (IV, 745) which separates her from Troilus and turns her life into hell, as her serious lyrical song reveals (Iv, 764-98). Troilus is thrown into a panic and becomes so blinded by grief that he can understand nothing beyond the waywardness of Fortune. Chaucer seizes the opportunity to enrich the Troilus with further philosophical and moralizing dimensions. Hence Troilus laments pathetically:

Fortune, allas the while!
 What have I don? What have I the agylt?

 To ben to me thus cruwel and unkynde?
 Allas Fortune! If that my lif injoie
 Displeased hadde unto thi foule envye,

 To preve in that thi gerful violence.
 Thus am I lost, that helpeth no diffence...

(IV, 260-87)

Once again Troilus blames Fortune (as he did in Book I where he calls her "my fo") and claims it to be responsible for his woe, without realizing that inconsistency is her very essence. Chaucer deliberately intends to emphasize the blindness of Troilus to see the bare truth of Fortune. Besides, he does not make him elaborate on how to prevent its every changing circle by stressing reason³⁵, as Boethius suggests.

Elsewhere, Chaucer vividly illustrates the actual turmoil in Troilus's mind: the question of Destiny occupies his thought, hence his philosophical argument on predestination and Free will (IV, 958-1082). Chaucer does not intend this soliloquy to be a mere romance digression, irrelevant to the situation in which it occurs, as some critics observe³⁶. Rather, it is closely and meaningfully related to what precedes and follows. It is, as G. L. Kittredge notices, "as pertinent and opportune as any of Hamlet's soliloquies"³⁷.

Throughout his soliloquy Troilus logically discusses the opposite poles of human free choice and external compulsion represented by necessity. He states that whatever comes is predestined by necessity "Fo al that comth, comth by necessitee:/ Thus to be lorn, it is my destinee" (IV, 958-9). But a few lines later, Troilus shows himself aware that free will is not an ideal dream, particularly in temporal things:

That fallyng of the thynges temporal
 Is cause of Goddes prescience eternal.
 Now trewely, that is a fals sentence,

That thing to come sholde cause his prescience.

(IV, 1061-4)

However, the essence of his wisdom is incomplete as he does not emphasize the impact of reason on the free will of man³⁸ which turns necessity into a "conditional" one³⁹. That is, man mainly acts according to his nature (and to some extent his circumstances) which shapes his destiny and reflects his limited vision. This is quite evident in the way Criseyde and Troilus behave: Criseyde is to leave to the Greek camp believing that she could return within ten days after persuading her father to help her escape; while Troilus is torn between a desire to keep her and escape out of Troy and let the matter be known to all, and "reason" to let her go, believing that he thus retains her honour safely by maintaining the secrecy of the affair (IV, 572-4). At length Troilus chooses "reason" (as he believes) and lets her leave to Troy, proving thus to be submissive to circumstances that turns Book IV to end in sorrow.

With the turning of the wheel of Fortune further down, Troilus and Criseyde are actually separated and Book V portrays with psychological depth their great sorrow.

In an ironical exaggeration Troilus starts to contemplate upon her desolate dark house which stands as a symbol of her: a shrine whose saint is absent, a sun that illumines (V, 540-53). "O pale is, whilom crowne of houses alle,/ Enlumyned with sonne of alle blisse!/ And farwel shrine, of which the seynt is oute!" (V, 547-53)

Furthermore, Troilus who deeply feels this renewed "grievous maladie" (V, 1231) within him, starts to have dreams which show Chaucer's lively interest in dream psychology as a means to reflect the emotional progress of his characters. One important dream of Troilus foretells his approaching death⁴⁰; whereas the other in which a boar holds Criseyde signifies her untruth, and foreshadows Troy's destruction as Cassandra, Troilus's sister, relates the boar to Diomedes (the Greek knight who accompanies Criseyde to the camp) ancestors, the destroyers of Thebes⁴¹.

On the other side stands Criseyde, who lives in grief for being away from Troy and Troilus. Chaucer gives much stress in this Book on her character which is of psychologically valid complexity. He portrays her in a completely different and profound way than any English romancer would do. Criseyde, who is alone among strangers, feels torn between two desires: Troilus and Diomedes. Diomedes is a foil to Troilus, he is "an old hand at love's stratagems"⁴², compared to Pandarus "in his power of speech and in his tactical sense"⁴³, who insists on courting Criseyde. Actually, he is "a dangerous woor"⁴⁴, who fills her ears with disappointing news of the inevitable doom of Troy and the peril awaiting the Trojans, and advises her

to "drif out that bitter hope" (V, 913). As a woman who is Circumspect, she starts her blatant rationalization: since Troy must fall, therefore Troilus signifies death for her, while Diomedes signifies life and protection (a reminder of Troilus),⁴⁵ "His grete estat, and pevel of the town,/ And that she was alone and hadde need/ Of frendes help" (V, 1025-7)

Hence, she chooses what she thinks best for her which turns to be the wrong choice. She actually yielded to the interminable attempts of this "Sodeyn iomedes" (V, 1024), whose insistence and experience justify her quick surrender to him when it is compared to the long rationalization she spends in giving her love to the inexperienced Troilus. To examine her character as Chaucer portrays her, one finds her a woman "wel neigh out of her wit for sorwe and fere" (I, 108) and weak "Tendre herted, slyndyne of corage" (V, 825). These traits account for her uncontrollable weakness in the face of danger, hence her need for friends and love to feel protected against loneliness, hostility, and death. C. S. Lewis in The Allegory of Love (1958) describes her character, saying: "Chaucer has so emphasized the ruling passion of this heroine, that we cannot mistake it. It is ...fear of loneliness, of death, of love, and of hostility, ... from this fear springs ... the pitiable some strong and stable thing that will hide her away and take the burden from her shoulders."⁴⁶

Seen from this perspective, her vulnerable state is represented in her fearful weak nature which helps in making her "drift with circumstance" and fall a prey to an "indecent haste" and a complete degradation with Diomedes,⁴⁷ despite her previous love and loyalty to Troilus. Nevertheless, this does not make her wholly responsible for her choice in which fate has no hand,⁴⁸ as some of her detractors believe. Rather her infidelity, which one cannot but be infuriated by, is the result of both fate and to a great extent her voluntary choice.

However, Chaucer himself acknowledges her guilt as he tells her desertion with pain and reluctances:

Ne me ne list this sely woman chide
 Forther than the storye wol devyse.
 Hire name, allas! Is punysshed so wide,
 That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.

(V, 1093-6)⁴⁹

Simultaneously, he, in an attempt to extenuate her guilt, sympathizes with her as a weak human being: he is stirred by her grief as she has conscience and upbraids herself for proving false to Troilus "For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,/ I wise, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe". (V, 1098-9). Obviously, this shows Chaucer's flippancy towards courtly love of many romances. Criseyde's falling into the "blackest crime ... of faithlessness"⁵⁰ is a proof of Chaucer's increasing non-conformity to the demands of conventional love

for such ignominy is a vice in the courtly code.

With Criseyde's change of allegiance (compared to the fickle Fortune), Chaucer conveys a realistic fact about human love, that it is subject to change. Hence Chaucer does not present her typically as an ideal romance heroine, but a character with strong relation to the realistic world. She is "a sort of feminine Everyman", as D. W. Robertson, Jr. describes her⁵¹. This is how Chaucer portrays her and this is how he wants his reader to view her, a human being, not an ideal lady or a goddess. She is not

among love's saints. She is not
the stuff of which martyrs are made.
There is no heroism in her. But
there is much that is human, ...⁵²

Nevertheless, Troilus idealizes her, calling her "Lady sovereign" (IV, 316) or compares her to a goddess "brighte Latona" (V, 655)⁵³. It is this idealization which makes him unable to understand her unpardonable offence and decides to be killed as soon as he sees the brooch (which he once gave her as lovers usually do in romances) on Diamode's coat, which he considers "a sacramental sign of treachery"⁵⁴ and a hard evidence of Criseyde's inconstant passion. Accordingly, Troilus was killed at war and with his death Chaucer finishes the "picture of Hell on earth, the Hell which results from trying to make earth a heaven in its own right"⁵⁵.

The "tragic" end of Troilus and Criseyde is obviously unromantic. Chaucer preconceivedly intends his romance to be a tragedy of "double sorwe" as he remarks at the beginning. He adopts the Boethian concept of tragedy which he summarizes in "The prologue of The Monk's Tale" as

Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
As olde books maken us memorie,
of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of heigh degree
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly⁵⁶.

However, this sad ending does not mean that Chaucer has a pessimistic view towards love, rather he deliberately intends it to be a means to convey his more optimistic moral view. He, paradoxically enough, believes that there is "no final tragedy for a good man"⁵⁷, hence the death of Troilus is inevitable and "must come to release his spirit for the flight that permits him to scan his own career and see its meaning"⁵⁸.

Chaucer shows himself a different romancer with a distinct voice as he stresses the moral speculation

in his epilogue (V, 1786-869), which marks the transition to the religious view of the action which he hinted at through-out his five books. This epilogue is not a mere romance digression which constitutes "a poor performance" ⁵⁹, as W. C. Curry suggests. Rather it is of an integral vitality that it "no more contradicts the mood of the poem than various tendencies of human nature in one person contrast one another" ⁶⁰. It really embellishes the romance with a "cosmic structure", revealing its divine perspective, which parallels the apex of Gothic creation that aims at articulating the viewpoint of God ⁶¹.

The epilogue intensifies the tragedy as it transform the poem's ironic tone into a bitter one. It illustrates conspicuously how serious Chaucer is toward the morality of courtly love which makes his message exceed Boccaccio's simple one, that women are fickle.

As he flies high into the eighth sphere, Troilus flies above the realm of fickle Fortune. He "achieves the vision which comprehends morality. He moves from involvement to detachment, from passion to understanding, from temporal life to eternal life." ⁶² Hence Troilus realizes how "litel hertes reste" (V, 1749) earthly joy may offer. Despite his truth, which is "as stiel in ech condicioun" (V, 831), he could not reach true happiness and his truth proves a waste as it serves a "false good", as Boethius calls it, for he places his hope for perfect felicity on that which is not permanent ⁶³. Actually he idealizes worldly passion which deprives him of his free will which is itself a virtue. The result is that he is put at the rim of Fortune which has led to his ruin and turned him to be a victim of his own failure ⁶⁴.

This realization makes him laugh at the woe of those who follow "The blynde lust" (V, 1824) ⁶⁵, and advises young people to cast their eyes up to God, for the world is transient "that passeth soone as floures faire" (V, 1841) when it is compared to heavenly bliss where the "wrecched worldes appetites" die (V, 1851). Here, then, lies the heart of medieval philosophy as represented by Boethius. The partial satisfaction of earthly joy which is the false direction to true happiness that lies in true in true good which is represented in God, the source of goodness (love), who makes man love for he implanted in his soul a tendency to strive to get a complete heavenly bliss. What he loves, believes Boethius and Chaucer, should resemble the love of God. That is, a virtuous kind of love that leads to true felicity ⁶⁶.

What Chaucer virtually says is that, love within marriage and not outside is the true kind of love. Though Chaucer as a courtly poet does not say it plainly, one can see that is his message. Thus Chaucer is revolting against what romances usually celebrate. Nevertheless, this does not mean that he rejects "human love", but he invites to a new kind of love by "redefining" human love within the context of religion ⁶⁷, trying to achieve an order against the disorder of courtly tradition ⁶⁸.

Conclusion

In sum, Troilus and Criseyde introduces a new phase of development in Chaucer's use of romance. He continually amplifies the poem with heterogeneous material to give it a complex pattern of meanings and implications. Hence he enriches it with multiple perspectives of a profound sense of enigma. The philosophical with its Boethian spirit encompasses a divine perspective, sets man's quest for the moral laws of the universe, as it sees the imperfection inherent in earthly joy. This moral quest elevates Troilus and Criseyde above conventional medieval moralizing. In addition to that, a courtly perspective embellishes the romance with a complex dimension which reveals Chaucer's duplicity of attitude: on one hand, it shows the poem as a supreme accomplishment of courtly love tradition, as it celebrates its ideals with deep psychological analysis of emotions. Whereas on the other hand, it shows the reality of Chaucer's view as he questions the worthiness of its system of values. All these perspectives reveal Chaucer's careful creation of characters who are touched with realism which Troilus and Criseyde shares with the novel (though it is not a novel) ⁶⁹.

Furthermore, Chaucer's use of irony, humour, dream-psychology, and epic features which are exemplified in invocation, rhetorical devices, and mythological allusions, and conveyed in a sublime style turn the poem undoubtedly unique in medieval narrative. As a matter of fact, it is a high romance of universal appeal through which "medieval romance passes out of itself" ⁷⁰, as W.P. Ker notices.

Seen from this perspective, Troilus and Criseyde with its depth of conception shows Chaucer the translator of Le Roman de La Rose and The Consolation of philosophy, yet not the poet of The Canterbury Tales, for the Troilus lacks to a full extent the realism of his later works.

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NOTES

¹Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1964), 124.

²Il-Filostrato is a story of young people. Boccaccio expresses through Troilo's sorrow his own feelings about lady Maria d'Aquino, the illegitimate daughter of king Robert of Naples and the countess of Aquino, a provençal lady. Maria was placed in a convent after her mother's death where she was loved by Boccaccio whom she soon left for another man.

³Benoît shows Troilus as a hero second only to Hector. He tells only the second part the tale which deigns with the separation of the lovers and the departure of Criseyde and stresses the love between her and Diomedes.

⁴Homer presents Briseis, the beautiful slave girl for whom Achilles and Agamemnon (GK. Heroes) fought. The main difference between her and Criseyde may be drawn here. Briseis was a passive victim of fate and could not be held responsible for her outcome, unlike Criseyde. Homer makes a reference or two to pandarus as a wealthy nobleman.

⁵Daretis of the sixth century mentions Briseida among other women: Hecuba, Polyxena, Andromache, and Cassandra, and emphasizes Troilus's valour as the equal of Hector. Whereas Dictys does not mention Criseyde or Troilus, but he mentions Calchas as a Greek seer.

⁶D.S. Brewer, An Introduction to Chaucer (London: Longman Group Limited, 1984), 117.

⁷ Brewer, Chaucer, (London: Longman Group Limited, 1973), 96.

⁸Ibid

⁹The works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed., by F.N. Robinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979. The poem is written in the flexible royal stanza (an uncommon form in English romances) which needs padding. It suits the multiplicity of dimension which characterizes the poem.

¹⁰G. T. Shepherd, "Troilus and Criseyde", Richard Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, eds., Chaucer criticism vol. 2 (Notre Dame, Notre Dame University Press, 1961), 86.

¹¹Corsa, Helen Storm. *Chaucer: poet of Mirth and Morality*. (Toronto: Forum House Publishing Company, 1970), 45.

¹²Boccaccio describes Troilo as an experienced youth. See The Filostrato, trans. N. E. Griffin and A. B. Myrick (New York: Biblio and Tannen Booksellers and publishers, INC., 1967), I, 20-5.

¹³According to Medieval science, the planet Venus is warm and moist. Hence those who are born

under it (like Troilus) possess certain qualities such as, attraction to women, elegant form, inclination to passionate love, great refinement, fair speech, delicacy of feeling, kindness of the heart, rejoicing in the companionship of friends, and relying upon others to the point of being deceived, See W. C. Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", Chaucer Criticism, vol. 2, 44; James Winny, "Chaucer's Science", in An Introduction to Chaucer, by Maurice Hussey, A. C. Spearing, and James Winny (Cambridge: The University Press, 1968), 163-4.

¹⁴Boethius says "love promulgates the laws". See The Consolation of Philosophy, trans., V.E. Watts (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1969), II, m. 8.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶See Le Roman de la Rose, in F.N. Robinson, ed., The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 11. 5201-810. Meun's friend, who moralizes about true friendship, shows the best qualities of love. Love, he says, should be pure of any greed or wickedness. At the end of his speech he shows his view against adulterous love which drives women to hell. Here he is unlike Pandarus who pushes the two lovers to commit sin.

¹⁷In Boccaccio's story he is Criseida's cousin who is as old as Troilo.

¹⁸See Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 142.

¹⁹See Boethius, IV, Pr. VI. Fortune will be touched upon in a more effective way in Book IV of the poem.

²⁰See also 11. 1164-8 where Pandarus's humorous spirit is shown.

²¹There is a scriptural allusion to the state of widows which Medieval people were acquainted with: "But she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, let her trust in God, and continue in supplications and prayers night and day. For she that liveth in pleasures, is dead while she is living". Quoted by D. W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), 483. Chaucer used this realistic touch ironically.

²²Helen Storm Corsa, Chaucer: Poet of Mirth and Morality (Toronto: Forum House Publishing Company, 1970), 54.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Honour and truth are two important ingredients of "gentillesse" which will be fully discussed in the Franklin's Tale.

²⁵Brewer, An Introduction to Chaucer, 134. Though Brewer was talking about Criseyde, yet his words could be applied to the courtly love tradition in general.

²⁶Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 146.

²⁷Piero Boitani, English Medieval Narrative in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries, trans. John Krakover (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 210.

²⁸The first meeting is also arranged by Pandarus in, Deiphebus's (Troilus's brother) house. This meeting, which Chaucer originally adds to the poem, shows the paradoxical nature of the romance: realism-- as they discussed Criseyde's abuse of security among nobles - and idealism of the personal relationship of the lovers.

²⁹Cf. her comment in Book IV, 834-6.

³⁰See Boethius, II, pr. 4, and IV, pr. 2-4.

³¹The storm is a literary reminiscence of the one that sent Aeneas and Dido in Virgil's Aeneid to a cave. See IV, 92-4.

³²Corsa, Chaucer: poet of Mirth and Morality, 61.

³³This point will be fully developed in Book IV with Troilus's digression on predestination and Free will.

³⁴This exchange serves as a foreboding for her coming betrayal.

³⁵See Boethius, IV, Pr. 6. Boethius sees Fortune as good when one understands its providential purpose.

That is, providence, which is at the hub, is the one that turns its wheel. Hence the more one is near the hub, the less he feels the motion. And this is done by cultivating reason which makes one near providence and far from the mutability of Fortune. Troilus does not seem to understand this. He is thus compared to Pandarus in Book I. See pr. 7.

³⁶T. R. Launsbury, studies in Chaucer, vol. 3, 372 says of Troilus's monologue "It utterly intervenes with the movement of the story. It is tacked to it by the flimsiest of fastenings". Quoted by W. C. Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", 53.

³⁷G.L. Kittredge, Chaucer and His poetry (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 115.

³⁸See Boethius, IV, Pr. 4-6.

³⁹Corsa, Chaucer: poet of Mirth and Morality, 46.

⁴⁰See V, 316-22.

⁴¹See V, 1235-42. The story of the boar as Cassandra recites it is based on Statius's Thebaid. Diana, goddess of hunting, sent the boar to the Greek for not doing their sacrifice upon her altar. But Meleager, the Greek king, was able to slay the boar who is supposed to destroy their corn and vines. From his descendent, Tydeus, the Greek leader who made war upon Thebes and from him descended Diomedes. Hence the link between the destruction of Thebes and Troy. See Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", 60.

⁴²Robertson, A preface to Chaucer, 497.

⁴³Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 163.

⁴⁴Lewis, The Allegory of Love, 1800.

⁴⁵cf.11,631-7.

⁴⁶ C.S.Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in medieval Tradition(London: Oxford University Press,1948), 184.

⁴⁷R. K. Root, The poetry of Chaucer: A Guide to Its study and Appreciation (Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1962), 113-4.

⁴⁸See, for example, Root, The poetry of Chaucer, 112-4.

⁴⁹Cf. The House of Fame, I., 335.

⁵⁰R.K.Root, The poetry of Chaucer: A Guide to Its Style and Appreciation(Boston:Houhton Mifflin Company,1962), 104.

⁵¹Robertson, A preface to Chaucer, 498.

⁵² Sherman B. Neff, "Troilus and Criseyde", in Elizabethan studies and other Essays (Boulder: University of Colorado studies, 1954), 50.

⁵³Latona (Gk Leto), mother of Apollo and Diana by Jupiter. She is famous for her wondering, probably because of the jealousy of Juno, Jupiter's wife. It is worthy to mention that Caxton emended Latona to Lucina, Diana's rôle as a helper of women in childbirth. See Robinson, The works, P. 833, note. This seems appropriate if one bears in mind that Chaucer does this deliberately to show Troilus effeminate that only Lucina could cure his pains. It is an uncourtly remark on a typical courtly lover.

⁵⁴Shepherd, "Troilus and Criseyde", 66.

⁵⁵Robertson, A preface to Chaucer, 496.

⁵⁶Fragment VII, 1973-7; Cf. Boethius, II, Pr. 2 where he defines tragedy as "the overthrow of happy realms by the random strokes of Fortune".

⁵⁷ Brewer, Chaucer, 94. Though Brewer was talking about The knight's Tale, yet his words could be applied to Troilus and Criseyde.

⁵⁸H. R. patch, "Troilus on Determinism", Chaucer criticism, vol. 2, 81.

⁵⁹Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", 66.

⁶⁰Patch, "Troilus on Determinism", 81. Also See Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition, 162; Schlauch, 39 who sees the epilogue's relation to the poem as "Shakespeare's juxtapositions of tragedy with comic relief".

⁶¹ Robert M.Jordan, Chaucer and the shape of creation: The Aesthetic Possibilities of Inorganic

Structure (Cambridge : Harvard University Press,1969), 95-6.

⁶²Ibid., 105-6.

⁶³Boethius, III, pr. 2.

⁶⁴Ibid., I, pr. 5.

⁶⁵Cf. Dante's Paradiso, Ix, 103-8.

⁶⁶boethius,11,m.8,111,pr.7,1v,pr.2-4.

⁶⁷ Jordon, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation, 106.

⁶⁸corsa, Chaucer: poet of Mirth and Morality, 70.

⁶⁹The novel as we know it today is much advanced in creating the characters who are the generators of events, unlike medieval narratives which give the priority to story (plot) according to which characters are created; besides, the much space that is given to realism in novels, all of which mark the disparity between Troilus and Criseyde and the novel.

⁷⁰W.P.Ker, Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature (New

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