

CHAUCER'S "FEMALE PANTHEON" IN TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

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IN

TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

By

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SCOPE AND CONTENTS:

This thesis examines the four prologues and the epilogue of the Troilus and Criseyde. Chaucer opens each prologue with the invocation of a pagan goddess and concludes the epilogue with an entreaty to the Christian Trinity and a tribute to Mary the mother of Jesus. This study examines classical and medieval mythology in treatises and in literature for the purpose of determining how it shapes and directs Chaucer's selection of a "female pantheon". The influence of mythology, both Christian and pagan, is shown as the formulating principle behind the basic philosophy, the religious tenets and the poetic imagery of the Troilus and Criseyde.

INTRODUCTION

The Troilus and Criseyde by Geoffrey Chaucer is a literary creation of insuperable artistry, philosophical depth and aesthetic value. Although Chaucer himself called his "litel bok" a "tragedye" (V, 1786)¹, critics have taken the liberty of classifying it as a romance, a psychological novel and a drama; however, with its highly structured prosody and the lyrical stance of the poet, the Troilus and Criseyde must be categorized a tragic poem. The classical symmetry of its five book structure, the prefacing of each book with a proem or prologue, and the conclusion in the form of the epilogue, all give an architectural balance which must be critically appreciated from a strictly formal viewpoint. This apparent simplicity, however, must not be construed as the formulating principle of a relatively shallow work, for fundamentally, the Troilus is a profoundly moving poem involving diverse characterization, suspenseful narrative progress and a complex thematic development.

The proem to Book I of Troilus and Criseyde opens with a brief résumé of the plot of the entire poem:

The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
In lovyng, how his aventures fellen
Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie,
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye. (I, 1-5)

¹ F. N. Robinson, ed. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1933; 2nd ed., 1957). Subsequent references to Troilus and Criseyde will be from this edition.

Although twentieth century masters of suspense would flinch at such a blatant disclosure at the outset of the poem, this revelation would in no way dismay the thirteenth century audience since the story of Troy was well known from a variety of sources. An historical recounting was available either in De Excidio Trojae Historia by Dares Phrygius or in Ephemeris Belli Trojani by Dictys Cretensis; the former gave the Trojan rendition, the latter the Greek version. Another account from a medieval viewpoint was rendered by Guido de Columpnis in his Historia Trojana (1287). Apart from historical accounts, the Trojan wars had already received poetic treatment by Homer, as well as by the medievalists Benoît de Sainte-Mauré in the Roman de Troie and by Giovanni Boccaccio in II Filostrato. Therefore, the initial outline of the plot in the opening lines, is hardly a revelation but merely a brief synopsis of events already familiar to Chaucer's contemporaries.

Apart from the fragmentary details of the narrative, the introductory lines also serve the purpose of introducing the protagonist and of establishing a regal setting. "Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie" also suggests the circular movement in which the general action of the poem evolves. Since this tale involves the "aventures" of Troilus "in lovyng", Chaucer addresses himself directly to all lovers who "bathen in gladnesse" (I,22) and implores of them to recall "passed hevynesse" (I,24), "the adversite/Of othere folk" (I,25-6) and to consider the

possibility that perhaps they have "wonne hym with to gret an
ese" (I,28).² Chaucer's avowed intention is twofold: first,
to show "Swich peyne and wo as Loves folk endure" (I,34) and,
second, to pray for those "that ben despeired/ In love" (I,36).
By revealing the pain of lovers, yet at the same time bettering
their cause through prayer, Chaucer has the additional personal
hope of achieving his own salvation:

For so hope I my sowle best avaunce,
To prey for hem that Loves servauntz be,
And write hire wo, and lyve in charite. (I,47-9)

This attitude must not be construed as self-indulgence, but
simply as a manifestation of medieval Christianity. As expressed
by Robertson and Huppé: "Charity is thus an informing principle
of medieval thought, providing the inspiration for and controlling
the bent of all written attempts to set forth truth. For truth
is charity, and like charity must be approached through faith and
hope".³ True charity involves "compassioun" (I,50), the love of
the sinner but not the sin. Chaucer himself will "lyve in charite"
(I,49) but "Loves servauntz" are not to be so graced; all Chaucer
can do is pray for them to "ben at ease" (I,43) and "write hire
wo" (I,49). The cleavage between two different kinds of love,
that of charity and that of "Loves servauntz", is established
early in the Troilus and Criseyde.

² A variety of opinions are extant as to the identity of the
narrator. Some critics assume that the speaker is Chaucer; others
deny this, alleging that the narrator has his own separate identity
quite distinct from that of Chaucer the poet. For the purposes of
this thesis, the narrator will be regarded as Geoffrey Chaucer,
the poet.

³ D. W. Robertson & B. F. Huppe, Piers Plowman and
Scriptural Tradition (Princeton: 1951), p.12.

The prologue concludes with a reminder of the "double sorwes" (I,54) of Troilus, the introduction of Criseyde and the prediction of how "she forsook hym er she deyde" (I,56). The Troilus and Criseyde is ostensibly another rendition of the story of Troy, although Chaucer himself denies any concern for historical fact:

But how this town com to destruccion
Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle;
For it were here a long digression
Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle.
But the Troian gestes, as they felle,
In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write. (I.141-7)

For the historical background, Chaucer directs his audience to Homer, Dares or Dictys; but his own "matere" involves something more urgent, something far more fundamental than mere dates and events. Yet his avowed intention not to discuss "how this town com to destruccion" is not to be too readily accepted at face value, for although historical fact is not Chaucer's prime interest, the "aventures" of Troilus "in lovyng" are nevertheless inextricably interwoven into the crisis facing Troy and the eventual downfall of the once great city.

The one aspect of this prologue intentionally bypassed until this point is the invocation of Thesiphone:⁴

Thesiphone, thow help me for t'endite
Thisse woful vers, that wepen as I write.

To the clepe I, thow goddesse of torment,
Thow cruwel Furie, sorwyng evere yn peyne,
Help me, that am the sorwful instrument,
That helpeth loveres, as I kan, to pleyne. (I,6-11)

⁴ Also spelled: Tesiphone, Tisiphone

The invocation of a deity is a classical device described by Daniel C. Boughner as an element of epic grandeur used extensively by the poet: "Chaucer enhances this epic dignity by means of the invocations, another device of classical epic."⁵ The prologue to Book I is the introduction not only of the first book, but also of the entire poem; therefore, although Thesiphone is invoked for Book I, her influence prevails throughout the action of the entire work. Of equally vital significance is Chaucer's invocation of a different deity in each ensuing book: Cleo for Book II; Venus for Book III; Fortune for Book IV. In each case, the deity invoked controls or affects the action of the immediate book; yet the sphere of influence extends outside the limits of the book concerned and can be perceived as permeating the atmosphere of future as well as anterior events. Modern critics tend to treat these invocations either as quaint decorations or as superficial embellishments, dismissing them summarily without a full penetration of the depth or range of meaning inherent in the role of each deity. It is the purpose of this thesis to study each invocation, the characteristics of the deity and her scope of influence both in the relevant book and in the poem as a whole, with the aim of shedding new light on the major themes of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde.

⁵ Daniel C. Boughner, "Elements of Epic Grandeur in the Troilus", ELH, VI (1939), 200-10. Reprinted in Chaucer Criticism: Troilus and Criseyde & The Minor Poems, Vol. II, eds. Richard J. Schoeck & Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame: 1961), p. 191.

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THE SIPHERNE

Traditionally, the style of opening a classical or medieval literary work is with the invocation of a deity. A few examples will illustrate that the convention is a common one: "I pray for inspiration" (Virgil: The Aeneid); "My spirit is touched by Pierian fire" (Statius: The Thebaid); "O Muses, O high Genius strengthen me!" (Dante: The Inferno). The divinities invoked may be referred to either generally as in Virgil and Statius or specifically as in Dante; nevertheless, the purpose remains constant--namely the entreaty for divine guidance in artistic creation.

This convention is introduced and elaborated upon by Giovanni Boccaccio in the opening lines of Il Filostrato:¹

Some are wont to invoke the favour of Jove
in their pious beginnings; others call upon the
strength of Apollo. It was my way to pray to the
muses of Parnassus when I had need, but of late
love has made me change my old and fixed custom
since I have been enamoured of thee, my lady. . . .
Thou art my Jove, thou art my Apollo, thou art my muse;
this I have proved and this I know. (Canto 1)

The full implication of this rejection of the traditional deities can only be fully appreciated in view of their respective roles. The ruler of the gods is Jove, the supreme deity; his son is Apollo, the god of music and poetry; Apollo's companions

¹ R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus (New York: Dutton, 1964), p.31.

are the nine muses, deities of the various manifestations of poetry and music.² Jove, Apollo and the Muses are the usual deities invoked for poetic inspiration. In a deliberate abandonment of the traditional sources of inspiration, Boccaccio chooses instead his true love: "O fair lady: . . . govern my wit in the work I am now to write."³ The transference of divine attributes to a mere mortal in the lines "Thou art my Jove, thou art my Apollo, thou art my muse" is explicit idolatry and sets the stage for the ensuing tragic love affair.

This examination of Boccaccio is illuminating since Il Filostrato is acknowledged to be the direct source of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde. A comparison of Chaucer's introductory invocation with Boccaccio's reveals that Chaucer also discards the traditional deities; instead of Jove, Apollo or the muses, Chaucer selects Thesiphone, one of the three Furies, a virtual alien in the realm of literary inspiration:

Thesiphone, thow help me for t'endite
 These woful vers, that wepen as I write.

To the clepe I, thow goddesse of torment,
 Thow cruwel Furie, sorwyng evere yn peyne,
 Help me, that am the sorwful instrument,
 That helpeth loveres, as I kan, to pleyne. (I,6-11)

In critical scholarship there are various explanations proffered for Chaucer's choice of Thesiphone; the suggested reasons range in scope from obvious assumptions based solely on the poetic

² The nine muses are: Cleo, Euterpe, Thalia, Melpoemene, Terpsichore, Erato, Polyhymnia, Urania, Calliope.

³ R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, p.31.

text to more erudite conclusions founded on medieval research and commentary.

In the category of "obvious assumptions" are the views expressed by Kemp Malone on the role of Thesiphone:

This description (I,6-11) reflects the medieval view that the Furies not only made others suffer but also themselves had perpetual suffering to bear, a view which rested on post-classical if not on classical authority. A goddess sorrowing as well as tormenting may have seemed to the poet a helper more suitable than the god of Love, who inflicted torments on others but had no sorrows himself.⁴

Thesiphone's dual role of tormentor and sufferer, evident in "thow goddesse of torment, / Thow cruwel Furie, sorwyng evere yn peyne" complements Chaucer's own stance to the extent that he himself as narrator suffers extensive personal anguish and "compassioun" for the lovers; however, since Malone does not enlighten the reader with an expansion of his "post-classical" or "classical authority", the value of his assessment is without foundation. His further suggestion that an invocation of the god of Love is less suitable because this god does not suffer is merely a personal conjecture. If the Troilus and Criseyde is primarily a love story, then the proper invocation should surely be the god of Love in spite of his lack of empathy. Since Chaucer chooses instead to invoke Thesiphone, she must have wider implications than the personal suffering stressed by Kemp Malone.

⁴ Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1951), p.108.

An appreciation of the value of the proems in relation to the development of Troilus and Criseyde, is offered by Morton W. Bloomfield. In his appraisal of Thesiphone, he makes the following assertion: "She is a sorrowing Fury, as Dante had taught Chaucer to view her. She is responsible for the torment of humans, but she weeps for her actions."⁵ This statement is a curious mixture of half-truths. Most assuredly, the Furies of Dante's *Inferno* are hideous, serpentine creatures, who claw their breasts with ceaseless moaning:

Women they were in body and attitude,
 And they were girt with bright green hydras round.
 For hair they had small snakes and horn'd vipers
 About the ghastrness of their temples wound.
 He recognizing well the ministers
 Who serve the queen of sorrow that hath no cease,
 Said to me: "Mark now the Erynnes fierce!
 The Fury upon the left Megaera is;
 Alecto is she that clamours on the right;
 Twixt them Tisiphone." Then he held his peace.
 Each at her breast was clawing, and then would smite
 Her body with the palms; so loud their moan,
 I pressed close to the poet in my fright. (Inf. IX,43-51)⁶

In their relationships with mortals, Bloomfield observes a compassion in the Furies which is not grounded on literary fact. According to Dante, the role of the Furies, collectively, is to intercept travellers in the underworld, changing them into stone for eternity. Although they rage and weep, they are, nevertheless, relentless in their persecutions, never missing an

⁵ Morton W. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde", PMLA, LXXII (1957), 14-26. Reprinted in Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II, eds. R. Schoeck & J. Taylor (Notre Dame: 1961), p.202.

⁶ Dante, The Portable Dante, ed. Paolo Milano (New York: Viking Press, 1965), p.47.

opportunity to harass an unsuspecting sojourner; indeed, the only exception is Dante himself who succeeds in bypassing the Furies' torments because of Virgil's safe conduct. Moreover, Bloomfield's assumption that "Dante had taught Chaucer" rests on precarious tenets. Dantean influence is a distinct possibility if not a probability, but one which must not preclude other avenues of persuasion. To say that "Dante had taught Chaucer" is a possible oversimplification which inadvertently limits and restricts Chaucer's sources and influence. Bloomfield's further proposal that Thesiphone "is also in a sense the invoker himself who puts himself in his poem in a similar role"⁷ is an interesting speculation yet one which does not rest on textual authority and is therefore fallacious because it presumes too much. Although Bloomfield is more specific than Malone in naming Dante as his post-classical authority, their conclusions are ultimately the same in their mutual emphasis on the personal sufferings of Thesiphone.

This same view is propounded by F. N. Robinson: "Chaucer's conception of the Furies appears to be a blending of the classical notion of the goddesses who inflict torment with Dante's description of them as eternally suffering".⁸ Curiously enough, although Robinson acknowledges other sources for the invocation of Thesiphone, he fails to elaborate on any further possibilities,

⁷ Ibid., p.202.

⁸ F. N. Robinson, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p.813.

settling instead for this supposed synthesis of the classical and the medieval. By so doing, Robinson virtually rejects alternate sources, and thereby closes all other avenues of influence in much the same way as does Bloomfield. This is much too restrictive an attitude on the part of Robinson who as one of the foremost editors of Chaucer is so widely read and so highly esteemed.

Echoing all of these views is Sanford Meech who in an otherwise perceptive analysis of the Troilus, seems to rely too heavily on these lines:

For wel sit it, the sothe for to seyne,
A woful wight to han a drery feere,
And to a sorwful tale, a sory chere. (I,12-4)

As Meech comments: "He (Chaucer) invokes Thesiphone as a patroness appropriate both for the sad story and for himself its sorrowful teller".⁹ Although this concept is explicit in the lines quoted, there are further implications untapped by this superficial analysis.

One recent scholar who addresses himself exclusively to a study of the prologues and the role of the narrator is George J. Sommer. Recapitulating much of Kemp Malone's criticism, Sommer suggests that there are two other reasons why Greek mythology is relevant: "tradition called for an invocation to someone selected from among those in the pantheon and the story

⁹ Sanford B. Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus (Syracuse: 1959), p.23-4.

itself is about characters and a situation set in the Troy of the Trojan War".¹⁰ Although phrased in highly ambiguous terms, Sommer's two reasons seem to be that of tradition and history. Whether or not this latter assumption is correct, as to the story being about Troy, is not relevant at this point; what is relevant is that he does not establish any relationship between Troy and Thesiphone although this connection seems to be one of his main tenets. His former reason--namely that of tradition--is a drastic oversimplification in which the fallacy is so obvious as to be lamentable. The traditional objects of entreaty are those already observed in Boccaccio's brief discourse (See p.1). If a figure from pagan mythology was all Chaucer required, he need not have by-passed Jove, Apollo and the nine muses; clearly, the deity invoked had to assume a role of unusual dimensions, a role far more extensive than that suggested by Sommer.

Those critics considered so far tend to identify the role of Thesiphone strictly in terms of the poetic text, excluding or avoiding external mythological references. The internal approach is of paramount importance and must be treated as such; however, external influences, such as Bloomfield's and Robinson's reference to Dante, must also be studied keeping in mind the inherent risk of becoming too restrictive in the interpretation selected. As already noted, Robinson's highly selective attitude

¹⁰ George J. Sommer, "The Narrator of the Troilus and Criseyde: A Study of the Prohemium and Epilogue", 21 (Fordham: 1963), p.41.

narrows the possibility of further critical approaches. The value to be derived from considerations of external references cannot be overly recommended especially if a scientific approach is adopted and an open mind maintained.

One critic who has assessed the role of Thesiphone in terms of external medieval commentary is D. W. Robertson. Quoting from Trivet's commentary on Boethius, Robertson states:

The furies are three women with serpentine hair who are so named because of "three passions which produce many perturbations in the hearts of men, and at the same time make them transgress in such a way that they are not permitted to take any regard either for their fame or for any dangers which beset them. These are wrath, which desires vengeance, cupidity, which desires wealth, and libido which desires pleasures. Hence they are called 'avengers of crimes' because crimes are always accompanied by mental pain. And they may be ordered according to their etymologies, for Alecto means 'incessant' and signifies cupidity; Thesiphone means 'voice', and signifies libido; Megara means 'great contention' and signifies wrath."¹¹

This medieval commentary on the nature of the three Furies reveals their idiosyncrasies as well as their collective influence on the individual they attack. Wrath, cupidity and libido are the characteristics, respectively, of Megara, Alecto and Thesiphone; those besieged by the Furies lose all regard for reputation or personal safety. Robertson applies this commentary on the role of Thesiphone to the Troilus and Criseyde relating Thesiphone's etymology which signifies libido, to the theme of love in the poem. Thesiphone's kind of love leads to

¹¹ D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: 1962), p.474.

"wo" and stands in marked contrast to the charitable love which Chaucer himself adopts as he prays "for hem that Loves servauntz be". Inherent in the role of Thesiphone is the tendency toward libidinous love, the very love which possesses Troilus, leading to his abandonment of reason, neglect of personal safety and disregard for reputation. By applying Trivet's commentary on Thesiphone to her role in the Troilus and Criseyde, Robertson reaches far more erudite conclusions than those displayed by the other critics considered. Such a specific categorization of the Furies and their roles is not to be found elsewhere in recent criticism; indeed, the tendency seems to be toward such lax generalizations as already observed in Malone, Bloomfield, Robinson, Meech and Sommer.

By relating Thesiphone's function in the Troilus and Criseyde to the thematic development in the poem as a whole, Robertson demonstrates an historically justifiable approach which points the way to further possibilities in critical research. A study of mythological treatises and literary sources, both classical and medieval, reveals that the Furies have a variety of characteristics and a diversity of roles. Some of these functions apply to the Troilus while others seem to have no immediate connection. By assessing the role of Thesiphone in external sources and applying these findings to the Troilus and Criseyde, a fuller understanding of Chaucer's major themes can be acquired and a keener sensitivity to his purposes be developed.

The first to be considered are the major mythological handbooks which were most assuredly known to Chaucer simply by their popularity and influence in medieval scholarly circles. With the advent of Christianity, the pagan deities did not die, but underwent a gradual metamorphosis which resulted in a "mingling [of] the most diverse forms and ideas [and a] fusing [of] Christian allegory with the ancient symbols of the barbarian religions".¹² The lasting testimonial to the widespread interest in pagan mythology is the large number of mythological treatises which record the deities, their characteristics and functions as well as allegorizing the more licentious passages in an effort to ameliorate Christian antipathy.

One early compilation is the Mitologiarum Libri Tres of Fulgentius (468-533) in which the Furies are described as follows:

Huic quoque etiam tres Furias deseruire dicunt, quarum prima Allecto (secunda Tisiphone, tertia Megera); Allecto enim Grece inpausabilis dicitur; Tisiphone autem quasi tuton phone, id est istarum vox; Megera autem quasi megale eris, id est magna contentio. Primum est ergo non pausando furiam concipere, secundum est in voce erumpere, tertium iurgium protelare.¹³

The three Furies are listed according to their etymologies and their respective interpretations: Allecto breeds fury, Thesiphone

¹² Jean Seznec, The Survival of the Pagan Gods (Pantheon:1953), Bollingen Series XXXCIII, p.121.

¹³ Fabius Planciades Fulgentius, Mitologiarum Libri Tres, in Opera, ed. Rudolfus Halm (Lipsiae: 1898), p.20-1.

causes vocal eruptions, Megara incites actual strife. Although these are the same names and etymologies cited by Robertson, there is no comment made on the passions and perturbations created in the hearts and minds of the men affected.

One of the most remarkable compilations of medieval knowledge, ranging in scope from "De Grammatica" (Liber I) to "De Navibus Aedificiis et Vestibus" (Liber XIX), and including such topics as rhetoric, arithmetic, music, astronomy, medicine, botany, zoology, geography, ad infinitum, is the Etymologiae of Isidore of Seville (560-636). In the chapter entitled "Ecclesia et Sectis" there is a survey of pagan mythology in which the following description occurs:

Aiunt et tres Furias feminas crinitas serpentibus propter tres affectus, quae in animis hominum multas perturbaciones gignunt, et interdum cogunt ita delinquere, ut nec famae nec periculi sui respectum habere permittant. Ira, quae vindictam cupit: cupiditas, quae desiderat opes: libido, quae appetit voluptates. Quae ideo Furiae appellantur, quod stimulis suis mentem feriant et quietam esse non sinant.¹⁴

Although the Furies are not named individually, their appearances and activities are clearly defined, for these three females with serpentine hair, influence the minds of men in such a way that those affected take no heed either for reputation or for hazards. So great are the perturbations of mind which they create that the recipient knows no rest. What Isidore does differentiate clearly are the three distinct attitudes and the equally distinctive

¹⁴ Isidore of Seville, Etymologiarum Sive Originum, ed. W. M. Lindsay (Oxford: 1911). Vol. I, VIII, xi, 95.

influences of each Fury. One has a propensity toward wrath; one toward cupidity; one toward libido. Wrath produces a desire for vengeance; cupidity an inordinate desire for worldly wealth; libido, a craving of the sensual appetites. In the Troilus and Criseyde wrath, cupidity and libido are all present in the protagonist in varying degrees and at various stages of the action. Troilus' first impulse, in seeing Criseyde is one of libidinous desire; his blind obsession in the pursuit and possession of Criseyde is cupidity in its most excessive degree; his wrath when he finally perceives Criseyde's disloyalty is followed by the determined (if frustrated) pursuit of vengeance on the "sodein Diomede". Although Isidore does not name the Furies individually, their basic characteristics and influences are all discernible specifically in the character and actions of Troilus.

Another handbook of mythology compiled in the Middle Ages is the Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum Latini Tres Romae Nuper Reperti. The first mythographer restates the etymologies of each Fury in much the same way as Fulgentius does including a description of their serpentine hair:

Tres Furias, dictas Eumenidas, Plutoni dicunt deservire. Quarum prima Alecto Graece Impausabilis dicitur; Tisiphone, id est istarum vox; Megaera, quaei magna contentio. Hae pro crinibus habent angues.¹⁵

¹⁵ Georgius Henricus Bode, Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum Latini Tres Romae Nuper Reperti, (Cellis: 1834), I, 109, p.55.

The second mythographer also names each Fury, elaborating somewhat on the first account:

Plutoni tres deserviunt Furiae, Noctis et
Acheruntis filiae, serpentibus crinitas, quae
et Eumenides. . . . Primum est ergo non pausando furere,
secundum in voces erumpere, tertium iurgium
protelare.¹⁶

Added in this description is the identification of the Furies as the daughters of Night and Acheron, dedicated to the service of Pluto, god of the underworld.

A unique role of the Furies as avengers is revealed by the first mythographer in the story of Clytemnestra and Orestes. On returning home from the Trojan war, Agamemnon is murdered by his wife, Clytemnestra and her lover, Aegisthus; vengeance, however, is taken by Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, who murders both his mother and her lover.

Qui socii Pyladis admonitu, ad evitandas
Furias templum Apollinis ingressus, quum vellet
exire, invaserunt eum Furiae.¹⁷ Hinc est: Ultrice-
sque sedent in limine Dirae.

For his act of vengeance, Orestes is destined to remain forever in the dwelling of the Furies, or expressed otherwise, under their constant harassment. In the Troilus and Criseyde, when Pandarus wishes to rouse Troilus' jealousy, he fabricates another lover for Criseyde called "Horaste", a variant of Orestes.

¹⁶ Ibid., II, 12, p.77.

¹⁷ Ibid., I, 147, p.47.

There is an inherent irony in choosing for Criseyde's fictitious lover, a figure who is not only the classic avenger of adultery, but also the traditional example of one hurried to his death by the Furies--the same deities invoked by Chaucer for poetic inspiration. In modern studies of mythology the avenging attitude of the Furies is the one most often recounted: "They are avengers of crimes, especially of murder and crimes committed against a parent or other close blood relative".¹⁸ This commonly held conception of the Furies as avengers is recorded, with the etymologies, in the handbook of the Vatican mythographers.

Another lasting testimonial to the popularity of pagan mythology is Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313-75) Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri, in which selections from Fulgentius and excerpts from literature systematically describe the origins and activities of the Greek and Roman divinities. The Furies are first presented collectively as the daughters of Acheron and of Night; then each one is considered individually. The survey of Thesiphone opens in this manner:

Thesiphone Furiarum secunda est Acherontis et Noctis filia, quam sic designat Ovidius: Nec mora, Thesiphone madefactam sanguine sumit Importuna facem, fluvidoque cruore rubentem Induitur pallam, tortoque incingitur angue, Egrediturque domo. Luctus comitatur euntem Et Pavor et Terror trepidoque Insania vultu,¹⁹

¹⁸ G. M. Kirkwood, A Short Guide to Classical Mythology. (Cornell: 1959), p.46.

¹⁹ Giovanni Boccaccio, Genealogie Deorum Gentilium Libri (Bari: 1951), Vol. I, 129.

This excerpt is typical of the entire account which portrays all the Furies as grotesques wielding blood-dripping torches and writhing snakes while accompanied by Grief, Terror, Dread and Madness. In this particular account Juno has enlisted the aid of the eager Furies in a treacherous plot against Athamus and Ino; as a result of the Furies' loathesome appearance and horrifying visitation, both Athamus and Ino are driven insane and murder their children after which Ino leaps to her death into the sea. Certainly in this description there is no evidence of the compassion for mankind which Bloomfield perceives (See p.4) nor is there any such compassion expressed in any of Boccaccio's accounts.

The final handbook of mythology to be considered is the Ovide Moralisé, a medieval collection of mythology of unknown authorship in which the stress is on allegorizing or moralizing the pagan tales. The serpentine tressed Furies function collectively "a conduire et a drecier / Les ames en l'infernal voie". (ll.4469-70).²⁰ Individually, the Furies influence and control three separate motions: Alecto, the thoughts; Thesiphone, the speech; Megara, the actions. Together these three sisters guide "La voie a l'infernal cité" (l.4522) which can be reached by

²⁰ Ovide Moralisé, ed. C.de Boer, Verhandlingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen de Amsterdam, Afdeeling Letterkunde: Bk. IV, ll.4469-4536.

malevolence "en oeuvre, en bouche ou en pensee."(1.4525). The influence of the Ovide Moralisé on Chaucer has been proven by John Lowes and Sanford Meech.²¹ Since treachery in thought, word and deed is a pervading theme of the Troilus and Criseyde, it is highly probably that Chaucer's conception of the Furies was shaped by this rendition in the Ovide Moralisé.

Of Thesiphone, specifically, the Ovide Moralisé states:

Tesyphone, la tencerresse,
 Qui siet en langue tricherresse.
 Ceste fet mesdire et tencier,
 Si fet les noises commencier,
 Briement: tout mal et toute ordure,
 Toute traison, toute injure,
 Toute despit, toute vilonie,
 Tout anui, toute felonie,
 Tout lendenge et tout reproche
 Qui puisse estre en langue et en bouche
 Et qui puisse a despit monter,
 Fet ceste dire et raconter. (11.4496-4507)

Thesiphone promotes every malicious word from relatively mild scoldings to the most venomous of tirades. The theme of "wikked tonges" is introduced in the Troilus and Criseyde in the prologue to Book I: "And biddeth ek....for hem that falsly ben apeired / Thorough wikked tonges, be it he or she" (I,36-9), recurring again as Criseyde anxiously muses on the harm done by wicked tongues: "Also thise wikked tonges ben so prest / To speke us harm, ek men ben so untrewre" (II,785-6). Yet the full irony of this speech is not apparent until Criseyde's final letter to Troilus

²¹ John Lowes, "Chaucer and the Ovide Moralisé", PMLA, 33 (1918), 302-325. Sanford Meech, "Chaucer and the Ovide Moralisé--A Further Study," PMLA, 46 (1931), 182-204.

in which she excuses her long absence as "all for wikked speche" (V,1610) and then deliberately lies to him:

Come I wole; but yet in swich disjoynte
I stonde as now, that what yer or what day
That this shal be, that kan I naught apoynte. (V. 1618-20)

Criseyde herself at this juncture is the example par excellence of "wikked speche", displaying the effects of verbal treachery promoted by Thesiphone, "La tencerresse". The influence of the Ovide Moralisé on the Troilus and Criseyde can be seen specifically in the role of Criseyde as well as in the generally pervasive theme of treachery.

In addition to the foregoing references in handbooks of mythology, the Furies play an important role in classical and medieval literature. An early reference appears in the Aeneid of Virgil (70 B.C.-19 B.C.) in which Thesiphone is cast as the avenger of evil doers who leaps on the guilty with whips and scourges threatening them with hideous snakes. Another reference occurs in the Metamorphoses of Ovid (43 B.C.-18 A.D.) in which the presence of the Furies at a wedding is described:

Non pronuba Iuno,
non Humenaeus adest, non illi Gratia lecto;
Eumenides tenuere faces de funere raptas,
Eumenides stravere torum, tectoque profanus
incubuit bubo thalaeique in culmine sedit.
Hac ave coniuncti Procne Tereusque, parentes
hac ave sunt facti 22

In the absence of the traditional nuptial deities--Juno, Hymen

²² Publius Ovidius Naso, The Metamorphoses, trans. Frank Justus Miller, (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1929), I,vi,318.

or the Graces--the Furies attend the wedding of Procne and Tereus. The ominous aspect of their presence is readily apparent for this of all mythological marriages was unsurpassed in lust, treachery, guile, malice and revenge. The reference to the Furies in Virgil has a negligible application to the Troilus and Criseyde; the Ovidian reference is more revealing. Chaucer invokes Thesiphone, one of the Furies, for inspiration in writing of Troilus' and Criseyde's "pseudo-marriage"; yet in the Metamorphoses the influence of the Furies collectively on wedded bliss is disruptive and devastating. Since any marital union, orthodox or otherwise, sanctioned by the Furies is doomed from the outset, the love of Troilus and Criseyde is destined to inevitable tragedy.

The influence of Statius (45-96 A.D.) on Troilus and Criseyde is evident from Chaucer's own tribute in the epilogue to "Virgile, Ovide, Omer, Lucan, and Stace" (V,1792). In a detailed comparison of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and Statius' Thebaid, Boyd Ashley Wise concludes that: "In the Troilus, the direct influence of Statius is extensive. It is seen both in the form and the content of the poem; and is second only to that of Boccaccio".²³ Of vital significance is the invocation by Oedipus of Thesiphone; he also foregoes the traditional objects of inspiration--Jove, Apollo and the Muses--imploping aid from the "Avenging Furies" and from Thesiphone in particular:

²³ Boyd Ashley Wise, Influence of Statius Upon Chaucer (New York: Phaeton Press, 1911). Reprinted in 1967, p.36.

And thou Tisiphone, so oft the object of my prayer, be favourable now, and further my unnatural wish, . . . Do thou at least, my due defender, come hither, and begin a work of vengeance that will blast their seed for ever! Set on thy head the gore-drenched circlet that my bloody nails tore off, and inspired by their father's curses go thou between the brethren, and with the sword sunder the binding ties of kinship.²⁴

Thesiphone's diabolical influence pervades the atmosphere of the entire Thebaid for she appears wherever strife is imminent and whenever the flames of fraternal hatred need fanning. A dominant theme of the Troilus and Criseyde which has gone virtually unnoticed is that of brotherly treachery; since Statius invokes Thesiphone for the exact purpose of inciting fraternal hostility, it seems probable that Chaucer, who freely acknowledges the influence of Statius, invokes Thesiphone with the same purpose in view. The influence of Statius in Chaucer's choice of Thesiphone is of paramount importance.

Continuing to thrive in medieval literature,²⁵ the Furies play an important role in the Anticlaudianus by Alain de Lille. Thesiphone "yields to the world the lax reins of vice and, triumphing over our people, rejoices in herself and sucks joys from our distress."²⁶ Thesiphone leads the attack on

²⁴ . Publius Papinius Statius, The Thebaid, trans. J. H. Mozley (London: 1928), II, 345-7.

²⁵ . Other references to the Furies are to be found in The Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius, The Romance of the Rose by Jean de Meun and Guillaume de Lorris and the Knight's Tale by Geoffrey Chaucer.

²⁶ . Alain de Lille, The Anticlaudianus, Prologue and Argument and Nine Books, trans. William Hafner Cornog (Philadelphia: 1936), p.58.

the New Man, commanding all the vices--a "whirlpool of sins";²⁷ the entire diabolical spectrum is under the governance of the Furies who stand diametrically opposed to divinity, charity and concord, the good forces operative in New Man.

From this discursive, yet by no means exhaustive survey, of medieval mythology, can be observed the diverse manifestations and influences attributed to the Furies. From Fulgentius and the Vatican mythographers are derived their names and etymologies as well as their specific role as the avengers of murderers of kinsmen. According to Isidore of Seville, the Furies' idiosyncrasies--wrath, cupidity and libido--create in the victim attitudes of vengeance, incessant cravings and voluptuous desires. Boccaccio presents their wrathful, grotesque aspect, while the Ovide Moralisé specifies their malevolent impact on thought, word and deed. The presence of the Furies in both Virgil and Ovid is ominous, and in the latter proffers little hope for wedded bliss. In Statius, Thesiphone incites brother-hatred and in Alain de Lille she leads the entire realm of vice. Collectively, the Furies embody the entire spectrum of diabolic activity; individually, in specialized roles, their attitudes still remain strictly malevolent.

²⁷ Ibid., p.145.

In choosing to invoke Thesiphone, Chaucer selected a figure supercharged with dire ramifications. That Chaucer was cognizant of Fulgentius, Isidore, Boccaccio, the Ovide Moralisé, Virgil, Ovid, Statius and Alain is a certainty; what remains to be determined is which tradition--or traditions--he adhered to in his selection of Thesiphone. As already noted, all external references to Thesiphone which are here considered are by nature pejorative; her invocation at the beginning of Troilus and Criseyde sets an ominous atmosphere--one which can only foster tragedy. In assessing the references to Thesiphone, it appears that some have a limited relevance, to the Troilus, while others have an integral relationship with the major themes. In the category of "limited relevance" are those references to the Furies as avengers (the Vatican Mythographer and Virgil) and to Thesiphone as the leader of all the Vices (Alain). Thesiphone's dreadful appearance described so dramatically by Boccaccio has some bearing on the Troilus as does the presence of the Furies at the wedding of Procne and Tereus. But three references to the Furies in general and to Thesiphone in particular stand out as dominant influences on the major themes of the Troilus and Criseyde. Those references are found in Isidore, the Ovide Moralisé and in Statius and are related respectively, to the themes of concupiscent love, treacherous speech and fraternal feuding. These three themes which are

introduced in the prologue to Book I and develop concurrently as the plot of the Troilus unfolds are all implicit in the invocation of Thesiphone.

The theme of charity is introduced in the prologue:

For so hope I my sowle best avaunce,
To prey for hem that Loves' servauntz be,
And write hire wo, and lyve in charite. (I,47-9)

In marked contrast to charity is the other kind of love resulting in the "wo" of Thesiphone; this love is referred to by Isidore as "libido, quae appetit voluptates" and is generated by one of the Furies. Pursuit of this love leads to a restlessness of mind and a disregard for reputation or for personal safety. All of these characteristics are evident in Troilus when he abandons himself to libidinous thoughts. Although Isidore does not name Thesiphone specifically as the source of libido, the commentary by Trivet which is quoted by Robertson, definitely states that "Thesiphone means 'voice' and signifies libido".²⁸ The theme of dual loves--one charitable, the other concupiscent--is introduced in the prologue and is inherent in the role of Thesiphone as outlined by Isidore of Seville and by Trivet.

The theme of treachery which runs as an undercurrent throughout the entire poem is introduced in the prologue with specific reference to speech:

And biddeth ek for hem that ben despeired
In love that nevere nyl recovered be,
And ek for hem that falsly ben apeired
Thorough wikked tonges, be it he or she. (I,36-9)

As observed in the Ovide Moralisé, Thesiphone is responsible for all malevolent speech no matter what the intensity of the invective. Criseyde, whose role as the prime exemplar of wicked speech has already been noted states: "And who may stoppen every wikked tonge,/Or sown of belles whil that thei ben ronge?"(II,804-5). The answer to this rhetorical question is of course "no one" and the truth of this statement is verified as the Troilus and Criseyde unfolds. Running throughout the poem is a level of hypocrisy, a concern for surface values which finds expression in a superficiality of speech and is as corrosive ultimately as the most bitter of tirades. Perhaps the best example is Troilus' interpretation of Pandarus' role as "go-between":

"But here, with al myn herte, I the biseche
That nevere in me thow deme swich folie
As I shal seyn; me thoughte by thi speche
That this which thow me dost for compaignie,
I sholde wene it were a bauderye.
I am nought wood, al if I lewed be!
It is nought so, that woot I wel, parde!

"But he that gooth, for gold or for ricchesse,
On swich message, calle hym what the list;
And this that thow doost, calle it gentillesse,
Compassioun, and felawship, and trist."(III,393-403)

The tawdry reality of Pandarus' true function is glossed over with a gracious veneer of lofty epithets-"gentillesse/Compassioun, and felawship, and trist". This is surely not the meaning of the brotherly "compassioun" introduced by Chaucer in the prologue to Book I (I,50).

Another example of the same hypocrisy occurs as Criseyde contemplates the possibility of Troilus seizing and rescuing her from the proposed exchange:

"What trowe ye the peple ek al aboute
 Wolde of it seye? It is ful light t'arede.
 They wolden seye, and swere it, out of doute,
 That love ne drof yow naught to don this dede.
 But lust voluptuous and coward drede.
 Thus were al lost, ywys, myn herte deere,
 Youre honour, which that now shyneth so clere.

"And also thynketh on myn honeste,
 That floureth yet, how foule I sholde it shende,
 And with what filthe it spotted sholde be,
 If in this forme I sholde with yow wende.
 Ne though I lyved unto the werldes ende,
 My name sholde I nevere ayeynward wynne.
 Thus were I lost, and that were routhe and synne."
 (IV,1569-82)

Troilus' motivation really is "lust voluptuous"(IV,1573) but Criseyde shrouds this ugly truth with a supposed concern for "Your honour", "myn honeste" and "My name". Her anxiety is not that she has entered an illicit relationship, but only that she risks the possibility of discovery. In Criseyde's shallow thinking, the relationship itself is without shame; it is only exposure of her folly "that were routhe and synne" (IV,1582). Criseyde continues in this same superficial vein as she discloses her reason for loving Troilus:

"For trusteth wel, that youre estat roial,
 Ne veyn delit, nor only worthinesse
 Of yow in werre or torney marcial,
 Ne pompe, array, nobleye, or ek richesse
 Ne made me to reve on youre destresse;
 But moral vertu, grounded upon trouthe,
 That was the cause I first hadde on yow routhe!"
 (IV,1667-73)

Yet a comparison of her alleged reasons with her initial impulses on first seeing Troilus reveals quite the opposite;

And gan to caste and rollen up and down
 Withinne hire thought his excellent prowesse,
 And his estat, and also his renown,
 His wit, his shap, and ek his gentillesse. (II, 659-62)

"And ek his gentillesse" is a typical Chaucerian undercut, for it follows as a virtual afterthought the superficial attributes-- "prowesse," "estat", "renown" and "shap"--which are the real reasons for Criseyde's interest. This hypocrisy manifests itself in speech which in spite of its gracious eloquence is just as insidious as the most vicious denunciation or the most searing invective and for this purpose, Thesiphone, "la tencerresse" is invoked.

The third theme introduced in the prologue is that of brotherhood; as Chaucer contemplates the unhappy situation of "Loves servauntz" he promises to "have of hem compassioun/ As though I were hire owne brother dere" (I, 50-1). By this comment Chaucer signals to his audience that brotherhood will be a key theme in the development of the poem. The Troilus and Criseyde abounds in brothers--Hector, Troilus, Paris, Deiphebus--as well as the sister, Cassandra and the sister-in-law, Helen. Protestations of brotherhood--"brother dere", "My dere brother" and "owene brother dere"--are declared by Pandarus with a mounting frequency which soon gives rise to the healthy suspicion that Chaucer is using the term, if not

contemptuously, at least ironically. As the plot unfolds, the duplicity rampant among the younger brothers of Priam's family stands out in marked contrast to the genuine honour of Hector, the eldest. As observed in the Thebaid by Statius, Thesiphone is invoked by Oedipus for the specific purpose of putting a curse on his sons (and brothers) Eteocles and Polynices. Perhaps the treachery of the Trojan brothers does not lead to bloody fratricide as in the Theban tale; however, the manipulation of kin, the fraudulent activities and the general undercurrent of duplicity is all something less than is expected of the royal household. The invocation of Thesiphone as a disruptive influence on fraternal loyalties is directly related to the same invocation by Statius in the Thebaid.

Inherent in the invocation of Thesiphone, whose ominous figure dominates not only the first book of Troilus and Criseyde but also the entire poem, are the three major themes: concupiscent love, treacherous speech and fraternal disloyalty. Although there may be a Dantean touch in "Thou cruel Furie, sorwing ever in peyne" this possibility must not preclude other avenues of influence. Thesiphone is a figure supercharged with dire ramifications none of which must be negligently by-passed or lightly discarded. Another aspect of this invocation which must be considered is the possibility of a typically Chaucerian touch of ironic humour in that he deliberately rejects the traditional muses of graciousness and eloquence and selects instead the one mythological figure noted specifically for grossness and garrulity.

II

CLEO

With the opening of the prologue to Book II, an image of the sea graphically describes the change in Troilus from despair to hope:

Owt of thise blake waves for to saylle,
O wynd, o wynd, the weder gynmeth clere;
For in this see the boot hath swych travaylle,
Of my connyng, that unneth I it steere.
This see clepe I the tempestous matere
Of disespeir that Troilus was inne;
But now of hope the kalendes bygynne. (II,1-7)

Although the image is a fairly common one, many critics have related the opening lines to Dante's Purgatorio in which is found a similar expression of hope couched in nautical imagery:

Now hoisteth sail the pinnace of my wit
For better waters, and more smoothly flies
Since of a sea so cruel she is quit. (Purgatorio I,1-3)

These lines reveal Dante's buoyant mood as he emerges from the depths of the Inferno into the fresh, pure air of the realm of purification. As Book II of the Troilus opens the hero is shaking off his despair, "thise blake waves", and is figuratively sailing forth as "the weder gynmeth clere". Troilus' change in mood is due to "his Lady's" supposed acquiescence in the proposed love affair--an affair which will only return him to a sea of deeper despair, and not to the "Paradiso" envisioned by Dante. Because the situations in Dante and Chaucer are only somewhat analogous, it may well be that Chaucer's stance is ironic, since Troilus believed that he would discover paradise in Criseyde's fond embrace.

The "kalendes" which is the first day of any new month signifies a change: "But now of hope the kalendes bygygne". In this case, the change is from despair to hope, for the wheel which must revolve full circle, "Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie" (I,4), now commences its relentless revolution. The agony of unrequited love described so vividly in Book I will now change to the "wele" which was presaged in the opening prologue.

In the prologue to Book II, Chaucer chooses to invoke one of the nine traditional muses, the muse of History:

O lady myn, that called art Cleo,
Thow be my speed fro this forth, and my Muse,
To ryme wel this book til I have do. (II,8-10)

Chaucer's explicit request of Cleo is that she aid him with his prosody, the most fundamental problem in composing his poem; he further suggests that he needs no other help since he is merely writing a translation direct from the Latin:

Me nedeth here noon other art to use;
Forwhi to every lovere I me excuse,
That of no sentement I this endite,
But out of Latyn in my tonge it write. (II,11-14)

At this point, Chaucer assumes the stance of the modest craftsman, apologetic for his alleged lack of skill, yet resting his product humbly at the mercy of his audience. The term "stance" is quite accurate, since this is no modest craftsman, but the court poet skilled and gifted. Therefore, the initial explanation for the invocation of Cleo, "to ryme wel this book", must not be accepted at face value but probed for a more logical and meaningful purpose.

Recent critics have rather a limited range of comments to make about Cleo perhaps because her characteristics do not have the same dramatic qualities as those of the Furies. Kemp Malone simply states: "The invocation to Clio, Muse of history, makes the second part of the opening of the book. It comes to only four lines (8-11), and of these only the first three belong to the invocation proper, the fourth line serving to explain that Clio's is the only help that the poet needs in this particular book."¹ No further explanation is offered for Cleo's presence.

Morton Bloomfield displays greater sensitivity to the role of Cleo than does Malone: "Clio, the Muse of history, . . . alludes to the diversity of human custom and language. The sense of history and cultural relativity manifested here emphasizes the distance in time which temporal barriers impose".² These views are based on an assessment of the remaining verses in the prologue which seem to stress the vast differences separating lands and nations:

Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is change
 Withinne a thousand yeer, and wordes tho
 That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
 Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
 And spedde as wel in love as men now do;
 Ek for to wynnyn love in sondry ages,
 In sondry londes, sondry ben usages. (II,22-8)

¹ Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer, p.115.

² M. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde", p.203.

As sensitive as Bloomfield's appraisal is, the point of "cultural relativity" is surely to stress similarities rather than barriers albeit they are "temporal barriers". The key phrase overlooked by Bloomfield is to "spede as wel in love as men now do"; in spite of "diversity of human custom and language" the fruits of love are the same, no matter what the country or what the custom.

A further suggestion is offered by Sanford Meech regarding the role of Cleo:

He invokes Cleo, the Muse of History, an appropriate patroness, since he is asking, not for original inspiration, but for the humble faculty of converting his "Latyn" original into English rhyme. As a mere translator, reduced to that function by his inexperience in love, he will accept neither praise nor blame . . . The self-exculpation and the defense of old approaches to love are patent artifices . . . The poet is tickling our curiosity with his apologies for the exotic in his source . . . ".³

Meech's view is in essence the suggestion already proffered that Chaucer's great need of Cleo as a rhymer is simply a clever "stance" which must not be accepted at face value. Meech later summarizes his wariness in accepting Chaucer's explanation for his choice of Muse with the cautious solution: "Cleo . . . for allegedly literal translatorship".⁴ Meech's skepticism regarding Chaucer's literary veracity is well founded.

³ Sanford Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus, p.33.

⁴ Ibid., p.224.

George Sommer in his protracted attempt to categorize the Narrator expresses the view that in Book II, "his primary role is that of the detached historian" who is "concerned with the accuracy of his account and as a consequence invokes Clio, the Muse of History".⁵ It is obvious that this scholar has swallowed Chaucer's bait, or, to borrow Meech's pertinent phrase, the "patent artifices". Sommer proposes that the invocation of Cleo "emphasizes the helplessness of the Narrator before the awful facts that he is about to reveal."⁶ This entire work is based on the supposition that the Narrator is not Chaucer, but a personage quite divorced from poet and creator; nevertheless, what value is achieved from the "helplessness" whether it be Chaucer's or the Narrator's is quite inconceivable. Sommer's idea of Chaucer's "helplessness" is ludicrous; the Narrator's "helplessness" is just as offensive since it implies that the poet has lost control over his own literary creation. In short, Sommer adds little in originality and much in speculation.

Collectively, the views of the recent critics treat Cleo quite objectively as the muse of History whose role is to aid in the mechanical skills of rhyming and translating. Bloomfield's view of Cleo's presence as an allusion to "cultural relativity"

⁵ George Sommer, "The Narrator of the Troilus and Criseyde", p.51.

⁶ Ibid., p.54.

and Meech's warning of caution in accepting Chaucer's professed reasons for invoking her are the most valid analyses extant. These two assessments aid in the appraisal of Cleo's function in the Troilus.

Two mythographers who comment on Cleo suggest nothing regarding her rhyming or translating accomplishments. Fulgentius states: "Clio appellata est, id est cogitatio quaerendae scientitae".⁷ The Vatican mythographer (II) states: "Clio gesta canens, transactis tempora reddit".⁸ Whereas the emphasis in the former is on a seeking out of knowledge, the stress in the latter is on a celebration of deeds rendered in the past. Taken together, these two attributes suggest the possibility of learning from past experience, a function which history can provide for any age. The invocation of Cleo, the muse of History, implies that the poem contains an element of didacticism, the intrinsic propensity toward the revelation of truth. A medieval view on the purpose of poetry is expounded by Giovanni Boccaccio; in the Genealogia Deorum Gentilium: "This poetry, which ignorant triflers cast aside, is a sort of fervid and exquisite invention, with fervid expression, in speech or writing . . . and thus it veils truth in a fair and fitting

⁷ Fulgentius, Mitologiarum Libri. Tres, p.26.

⁸ G. H. Bode, Scriptores . . . Reperti, p.85.

garment of fiction".⁹ Chaucer's familiarity with Boccaccio, already alluded to, suggests the possibility of the relevance of this definition of poetry in Chaucer's work. The "truth" which is veiled in the Troilus and Criseyde is the truth of Cleo, the muse of History. Chaucer's allegation that Cleo will aid his rhyming skills is a typical Chaucerian indirection for her real purpose in the Troilus is didactic. In the historical facts revealed under the "garment of fiction" are lessons of vital significance for the thematic development of the Troilus and Criseyde. Apart from Troy's own story, the history of Thebes plays an important role in the poem, either enriching the background of mythical splendour or vitalizing the foreground in characters such as Antigone and Diomedes. Chaucer introduces the history of Thebes at crucial junctures to point out the analogies between the two great cities and their downfalls, thereby strengthening the major themes of the Troilus and Criseyde. The invocation of Cleo, therefore, is for the specific purpose of didacticism--the lessons and morals to be learned from history.

In the Thebaid, Chaucer's source for the romance of Thebes, Statius seeks divine inspiration with the invocation of Cleo:
 "Which hero first dost thou make my theme, O Clio?"¹⁰
 Then Statius proceeds to name Tydeus, the laurel-crowned prophet (Amphiorax), and Hippomedon, some of the Theban heroes about

⁹ Giovanni Boccaccio, Boccaccio on Poetry, intro. Charles G. Osgood, (Princeton: 1956), p.39.

¹⁰ Statius, The Thebaid, trans. J. H. Mozley (London: William Heinemann, 1928), I, 343.

whom he will sing; however, the importance or priority of each he will leave in the capable judgement of his muse. The aid is certainly not for rhyming skills, but for help in describing the deeds of heroes. Yet in Statius the record of heroic achievement is overshadowed by the curse of Oedipus. The strife of brothers, which is the pervading theme of Statius' Thebaid, is introduced in the opening line of the poem: "My spirit is touched by Pierian fire to recount the strife of brethren, and the battle of the alternate reign fought out with impious hatred, and all the guilty tale of Thebes." Throughout the action, Thesiphone inflames and goads the brothers until the climax in which they kill each other; beyond this immediate tragedy is the bloody slaughter of all those who fought valiantly for a doomed cause. Although the tale of Thebes is one of heroism, it is also a tale of tragedy--the tragedy of feuding brothers. Since this is the tale of bloodshed and anguish over which Cleo, the muse of History presides, the lesson to be learned must have drastic implications for Troy.

In the Anticlaudianus by Alain de Lille can be seen the medieval viewpoint regarding the tale of Thebes. Concord, the symbol of harmony in the universe, addresses the assembly regarding the degenerate state of the human race:

"If my rights, my laws, my pacts the world had preserved in time past, or yet would serve the laws of love, the globe would not be groaning with such great calamities. Not the dinner of brothers, not the consuming of the meal had Phoebus bewept, and lamenting the faults of erring nature, dispatched the shadows of inappropriate darkness upon the earth. The Theban king, brother and enemy of Polynices, having put off the role of brother, had not turned himself into a foe.

Procne, having contrived deceits, having divested the parent, smelling of sin instead of piety, of the step-mother instead of the mother, had never transferred her offspring into her own stomach. The nobility of Troy, the honour of Troy, the illustrious fame of Troy would be flourishing still, and not be in want of the flower of praise. . .".¹¹

The harmonious state of the universe would yet be intact except for the feuding of brothers; this is the massive indictment pronounced by Concord. The "dinner of brothers" referred to is another tale of fraternal treachery in which Thyestes, the brother of Atreus, king of Mycenae, seduced his brother's wife, but as a fitting revenge, Atreus, in a pretence of forgiveness, served to Thyestes a banquet of his two children. After the feast he divulged the awful menu and the curse persisted thereafter for generations. Alain de Lille then refers immediately to the story of treachery involved in Thebes in terms of "brother and enemy" and putting off "the role of brother". Procne's treacherous banquet is also mentioned although not the cause--namely the rape by a brother of a sister. Finally, all these sordid events are linked to the fall of Troy, which would still be flourishing except for the curse of fraternal treachery. This commentary by Alain de Lille shows clearly the medieval attitude toward the romance of Thebes and its close relationship to the fall of Troy.

¹¹ Alain de Lille, The Anticlaudianus, p.70.

Of prime significance is the similarity between Statius' choice of Cleo and Thesiphone and Chaucer's duplicate selection nearly thirteen hundred years later. The co-incidence is too great to be accidental, especially when further study reveals even wider areas of affinity. As Book II opens in a typically Chaucerian May day setting, Pandarus' "slomberynge" (II,67) is disturbed by the "Swalowe Proigne" (II,64) whose metamorphosis is described by Ovid. This tale of treachery involves the discovery by Procne that Tereus her husband has raped her sister Philomela; in retribution, she serves to her lecherous husband a special stew--the boiled flesh of his son. Of course the offspring was her child also, so as an appropriate redress, Procne is transformed into a swallow to sing the rest of eternity about her woe. Since Chaucer only gives the bare details--"Procne", "Tereus" and "hire suster"; the rest of the sordid tale must be understood from a priori knowledge. Knowing the gruesome background, however, and the treachery involved makes the ensuing action far more illuminating.

Pandarus suddenly remembers what "his erand was to doone" (II,72) and leaves at once for Criseyde's house where he also starts the arrangements for a treacherous meal at the house of Deiphebus. Although the degree of treachery is in no way comparable to that of Procne, the parallel is unmistakable. It is equally significant that Pandarus' guide is Janus, the two-faced god

noted as the symbol of deception; Pandarus' entire role in the forthcoming action is one of hypocrisy and duplicity, a role highly fitting for the patronage of Janus.

Arriving at Criseyde's house, Pandarus finds his niece reading the "siege of Thebes" (II,84), the significance of which is emphasized by Criseyde's résumé of the events she has just finished:

"This romaunce is of Thebes that we rede;
And we han herd how that kyng Layus deyde
Thorough Edippus his sone, and al that dede;
And here we stynten at this lettres rede,
How the bisshop, as the book kan telle,
Amphiorax, fil thorough the ground to helle."(II,100-5)

To this Pandarus replies that he has read it all in "bookes twelve" (II,108) and knows it all: "Al this knowe I myselve, / And al th'assege of Thebes and the care; / For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve"(II,106-8). That the "bookes twelve" to which he refers is the Thebaid of Statius is without doubt and herein lies the third piece of evidence which links Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde to Statius. The invocation of Cleo, the address to Thesiphone and the inclusion of the romance of Thebes are all definite clues linking Chaucer's Troilus to Statius' Thebaid. Although this parallel has been noticed by critics, the significance of the tale of Thebes has not been fully appreciated. A further look at the Anticlaudianus may clarify this relevance. According to Alain de Lille "the globe would not be groaning with such calamities" except for the "dinner of brothers", "brother and enemy" and the putting off of "the role of brother".

"The nobility of Troy, the honour of Troy, the illustrious fame of Troy would be flourishing still, and not be in want of the flower of praise".¹² The condemnation is implicit in the parallel examples, for the hatred of brothers which destroyed Thebes, is highly relevant in the fall of Troy. By including the story of Thebes in his Trojan romance, Chaucer is pointing out that the two tales are apposite.

Critics, on the whole, have not appreciated or evaluated the significance of the Theban allusions. One exception is Alain Renoir who makes some very interesting observations on the same passage cited (II, 81-4; 100-5). "The subject of the reading mentioned here is of no consequence to the action and there is no counterpart to this episode in Boccaccio's Filostrato. Yet Chaucer takes obvious and somewhat puzzling pains to call attention to the fact that the story which is being narrated is that of Thebes."¹³ Everything observed by Renoir is correct. Since this is an addition to Chaucer's source, a reason for its inclusion must be lurking in the shadows. Renoir decides that Pandarus' reply "Al this knowe I myselve" is a "slightly superior and pedantic tone"¹⁴ which indicates "that the story to which Criseyde has been listening is a popular, less authoritative

¹² Ibid., p.70.

¹³ Alain Renoir, "Thebes, Troy, Criseyde, and Pandarus: an Instance of Chaucerian Irony", Studia Neophilologica, XXXII (1960), 14.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.15.

version of it"¹⁵ than the Latin of Statius which he, Pandarus, would read. This is an interesting thought but one which credits Pandarus with more academic and literary prowess than his character merits or indicates. The further conclusion drawn by Renoir comes from a realization of the medieval habit of associating the two stories of Troy and Thebes:

What the poet is telling us is that the story to which Criseyde has been listening is written in a book that also contains the story of her own life". . . . The irony here is that the books which she fears will be written are already written and that she is allowed to come unwittingly within immediate reach of one of them before committing the deed for which they blame her.¹⁶

From a shrewd observation Renoir draws this remarkably naive conclusion. His assumption that Criseyde could alter the pages of history is speculative enough but his failure to see the association of stories as a thematic device is a sad oversight.

John P. McCall in a perceptive analysis of the Trojan scene as a backdrop to the Troilus and Criseyde comments briefly on the inclusion of the story of Thebes.¹⁷ The allusions to Thebes in Book II are echoed and elaborated on in Book V by Cassandra when she is summoned by Troilus to attempt an interpretation of his dream. In her detailed account of the story of Thebes, Cassandra at last divulges the name of "Diomedes", son of Tydeus, whose role McCall interprets as the vital link with Thebes since his father died at the doomed siege. What McCall does not observe

¹⁵ Ibid., p.15.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.16-7.

¹⁷ John P. McCall, "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's Troilus", ELH, XXIX (1962), 263-75.

is the recurrence of the brotherly animosity which destroyed Thebes again perpetuated in Troilus' stern rebuttal of his sister and her prophecies:

"Thow seyst nat soth," quod he, "Thow sorceresse,
With al thy false goost of prophecy!
Thow wenest ben a gret devyneresse!
Now sestow nat this fool of fantasie
Peyneth hire on ladys for to lye?
Away!" quod he, "ther Joves yeve the sorwe!
Thow shalt be fals, peraunter, yet tomorwe!" (V, 1520-6)

With her brother's curses ringing in her ears, Cassandra leaves and with her exit is re-enacted for posterity the cruel result of brotherly malice. Although the analogies between Troy and Thebes are self-evident, few have paused to consider the thematic implications.

The preponderance of deceitfulness directly associated with brotherhood is evident in the action of Book II especially in the arrangements for the meal at the home of Deiphebus. As Pandarus starts his scheming, he says to Troilus:

"But, Troilus, yet telle me, if the lest,
A thing which that I shal now axen the:
Which is thi brother that thow lovest best,
As in thi verray hertes privetee?"
"Iwis, my brother Deiphebus," quod he,
"Now," quod Pandare, "er houres twyes twelve,
He shal the ese, unwist of it hymselfe." (II, 1394-1400)

The fact that Deiphebus is the favourite brother makes him the obvious dupe for this fraudulent affair. That Pandarus is well aware of the artifice he will employ is quite evident in "He shal the ese, unwist of it hymselfe". Troilus does not concern himself with inquiring of Pandarus the nature of his plans: he is so dominated by his libidinous thoughts that the

idea of using his brother fraudulently has no moral significance.

As Pandarus arrives at the home of Deiphebus, Chaucer makes this comment: "to Deiphebus wente he tho,/ Which hadde his lord and grete frend ben ay;/Save Troilus, no man he loved so." (II,1402-4) If helping his friend to acquire an illicit relationship is the true test of friendship, then Pandarus is indeed a true friend. However, in The Romance of the Rose, Reason tells the Lover certain aspects of true friendship:

A friend will do
Whate'er he can to ease his friend's distress;
More readily he gives than that one takes.
.....
'In one of his discourses Tully says
That by the law of friendship one should grant
The honourable request of any friend,
Expecting him to do the same if asked
For anything that's reasonable and right.
There are but two exceptions to this rule:
No one should give his aid to take a life
Or bring disgrace upon an honored name.¹⁸

The two curtailments on friendship which must be noted are the aiding of a friend to commit suicide and the act of disgracing an honourable name. The high secrecy demanded by Pandarus as he evolves his plans is proof in itself of his own realization that this is a dishonourable deed. As the action unfolds, Troilus contemplates suicide and although he is temporarily dissuaded from it by Pandarus, the fact remains that it is his "friend's" assistance that facilitated the arrangements which culminated in the ill-fated tryst. "Save Troilus, no man he loved so"(II,1404)--if this is the best that either Troilus or

¹⁸ Guillaume de Lorris & Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, trans. Harry W. Robbins (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1962), p.104.

Deiphebus can do for a friend, then they are indeed, pitiable princes.

Convincing Deiphebus that Criseyde is in danger from the conniving of the fictitious Poliphēt, Pandarus persuades Deiphebus to have a dinner party at which Criseyde may express her fears and acquire the benevolent intercession of the princes of Priam. It is notable that neither Hector nor Paris will be present, but for entirely different reasons:

"It shal be don; and I kan fynde
Yet grettere help to this, in myn entente.
What wiltow seyn, if I for Eleyne sente
To speke of this? I trowe it be the beste,
For she may leden Paris as hire leste.

"Of Ector, which that is my lord, my brother,
It nedeth naught to preye hym frend to be;
For I have herd hym, o tyme and ek oother,
Speke of Cryseyde swich honour, that he
May seyn no bet, swich hap to hym hath she.
It nedeth naught his helpes for to crave;
He shal be swich, right as we wol hym have."(II,1445-56)

In order to secure Paris' approval, it will only be necessary to win Helen's assistance; but herein rests the basis of the crisis facing Troy. Whereas Paris can be manipulated by Helen "as hire leste", Hector can be relied on to act nobly without persuasion or coercion and therefore will not be invited to the dinner party. Troilus, the real reason for the entire hoax, will be included on the list of "dignitaries". The tragedy of Troy rests in its domination by females like Helen and Criseyde who "may leden Paris [and Troilus] as hire lest".

Having set the wheels in motion, Pandarus hastens to Criseyde, lies to her about the "false Poliphete" (II,1467), and

tells her of the dinner arrangements. Then he scurries back to Troilus, reporting on his progress and relaying the plan of action as if he were conducting a major campaign in battle:

"Thow shalt gon over nyght, and that bylyve,
Unto Deiphebus hous, as the to pleye,
Thi maladie away the bet to dryve, -
For-whi thow semest sik, soth for to seye.
Sone after that, down in thi bed the leye,
And sey, thow mayst no lenger up endure,
And ly right there, and byd thyn aventure.

"Sey that thi fevre is wont the for to take,
The same tyme, and lasten til a-morwe." (II,1513-21)

Troilus, so deeply obsessed with his passion for Criseyde, never pauses to query the fraud involved in this plot, musing instead that "I am sik in earnest, douteles, / So that wel neigh I sterve for the peyne"(II,1529-30). To this Pandarus replies: "Thow shalt the bettre pleyne / And hast the lasse nede to countrefete"(II,1531-2). If Troilus had been in control of his faculties, the word "countrefete" would have alerted him to the deceitful nature of the scheme on which he was embarking, but the power of libido coupled with a callous disregard for fraternal loyalty both unite to drive him into a petty plot much beneath his royal dignity.

Much is made of the joyful reception Troilus receives at the home of Deiphebus:

What nedeth yow to tellen al the cheere
That Deiphebus unto his brother made,
Or his accesse, or his sikliche manere,
How men gan hym with clothes for to lade,
Whan he was leyd, and how men wolde hym glade?
But al for nought; he held forth ay the wyse
That ye han herd Pandare er this devyse. (II,1541-7)

But the kindness of Deiphebus and his genuine fraternal distress does not alter Troilus in his course, for he continues the ruse according to the plans of Pandarus. Deiphebus's persuasion of Troilus to befriend Criseyde is a passage of high irony:

But certayn is, er Troilus hym leyde,
 Deiphebus had hym preied over-nyght
 To ben a frend and helpyng to Criseyde.
 God woot that he it graunted anon-right,
 To ben hire fulle frend with al his myght;
 But swich a nede was to preye hym thenne,
 As for to bidde a wood man for to renne. (II,1548-54)

The joke is on the solicitous Deiphebus, for this is the very purpose of Troilus's feigned illness--to arrange a further rendezvous with Criseyde at which time he will really be a "frend with al his myght".

Pandarus performs his role valiantly inciting the assembled dinner-guests with the skill of a trained rhetorician. The malice he engenders is so venomous that the oaths against the "heynous" (II,1617) Poliphete start to fly from the incensed listeners:

Answerde of this ech werse of hem than other,
 And Poliphete they gommen thus to varien:
 "Anhoned be swich oon, were he my brother!
 And so he shal, for it ne may nought varien!" (II,1618-21)

The oath on brotherhood in a setting which is the result of fraternal disloyalty is a masterstroke of irony. Although there is no physical violence involved, the treachery of spirit must not be underrated or deemphasized for this is the same malignancy that destroyed the city of Thebes.

Helen's role in this scene has been assessed astutely by

John P. McCall who views her actions with Troilus as "a glimpse of the gracious allurements of Menelaus' wife, whose actions are a prologue to Criseyde's".¹⁹ It is a deft touch to have Helen the immortal symbol of seduction make the final entreaty of Troilus on Criseyde's behalf:

So after this quod she, "We yow biseke,
My deere brother, Deiphebus, and I,
For love of God--and so doth Pandare eke--
To ben good lord and frend, right hertely,
Unto Criseyde, which that certeynly
Receyveth wrong, as woot weel here Pandare,
That kan hire as wel bet than I declare."(II,1674-80)

With fond protestations of kinship, one seductress pleads on behalf of the other; only Chaucer could produce such a situation.

Unless sympathies run too high on behalf of the victimized Deiphebus, a verse must be scrutinized which is all too often bypassed by scholars and critics:

Deiphebus gan this lettre for t'onfolde
In ernest greet; so did Eleyne the queene;
And romyng outward, faste it gonne byholde,
Downward a steire, into an herber greene.
This ilke thing they redder hem bitwene,
And largely, the mountance of an houre,
Thei gonne on it to reden and to poure.(II,1702-8)

Although Hector has sent an important document for his brothers' consultation, Troilus is too engrossed in his "malady" to consider affairs of state. Shrugging off his official duty, Troilus gives the letter to Deiphebus to study. This gesture clears the stage for the meeting of Troilus and Criseyde, but the activities

¹⁹ John P. McCall, "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde," p.268.

in the garden are also of interest although little is stated except that Deiphebus and Helen are "romyng", "Downward a steire into an herber green".

In a most convincing appraisal of the purpose of the imagery in a medieval literary garden, D. W. Robertson shows the relationship of all gardens to the original Garden of Eden. As Adam and Eve were presented with two trees, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Death, so the imagery employed in descriptions of gardens indicates whether or not the garden is symbolic of charity or cupidity. Commenting on The Romance of the Rose, Robertson suggests that "without sloth the love awakened in the dreamer would die by 'leveful bisynesse'."²⁰ Deiphebus' and Helen's "romyng" in the garden does not indicate "leveful bisynesse" but the same state of idleness found in The Romance of the Rose--the sloth which breeds cupidity. "Downward a steire" indicates a descent from reason which invariably permits control of the higher faculty by the lower passions. An "herber greene" indicates a shaded area from which the light of the sun is restricted and the subsequent cutting off of the light of reason. All these allusions are symbolic and allegorical and can only be verified from biblical exegesis; the thorough approach rendered by Robertson to this particular study makes a conclusive case

²⁰ D. W. Robertson, "The Doctrine of Charity in Medieval Literary Gardens: A Topical Approach Through Symbolism and Allegory", Speculum, XXVI (1951), 41.

for the allegorical meaning inherent in literary gardens.

Although he does not comment on this particular garden, the evidence Robertson submits using the garden from the Romance of the Rose and the garden in The Merchant's Tale can easily be applied to this garden. Added to the symbolic overtones of the scene is the additional comment by Chaucer that Deiphebus and Helen were in the garden "the mountance of an houre/ [while] Thei gonne on it to reden and to poure". (II,1707-9) The alleged reason for Paris' absence from the dinner is that Helen can "leden" him as she pleases, but the fact that Deiphebus at a later date makes Helen his own bride seems to point to the possibility if not the probability that Deiphebus was already "romyng outward" with the fair Helen. The setting, suggested by a few apt phrases, may very well be the cupidinous garden of the Romance of the Rose, the garden of passion where the light of reason is forever excluded. If this is the case, and the evidence is highly convincing, then Deiphebus is not to be too greatly pitied in his role as the dupe in Pandarus' plot for it is just as probable that Paris is as ~~deceitfully~~ used by Deiphebus as Deiphebus is by Troilus. This is only alluded to incidentally by Chaucer because it is subsidiary to the main action of the plot; however, the suggestion of additional fraternal deception is strongly apparent and amplifies and embellishes the major theme of brotherly treachery.

In this detailed analysis of a scene in which the element of intrigue is so highly developed, it can be seen that Chaucer by various means promotes the theme of brotherly disloyalty. Troilus' eager compliance in Pandarus' scheme to deceive Deiphebus speaks for itself; the presence of Helen, the classic symbol of seduction, promoting the fraudulent cause adds another dimension in duplicity as does the ironic oath on brotherhood; lastly, is the suggestion of further duplicity in the garden by means of symbolic imagery. All of these details spell treachery--perhaps not the kind of physical treachery which cooked innocent children in stews as apt reprisals, but the type of fraternal treachery that corroded the integrity of Thebes and eventually was instrumental in destroying that great city.

Since Cleo is invoked for Book II in which the histories of Troy and Thebes are so closely linked, her purpose must be didactic. The Anticlaudianus reveals specifically that the cause of Thebes' downfall was fraternal disloyalty; in the fraudulent activities of the Trojan brothers, can be seen a parallel situation, not so overtly malevolent as that of the Theban brothers, but perhaps even more degraded by the callous manipulation of kin and the rampant hypocrisy. For Cleo, the muse of History, to preside over such relatively trivial events as those surrounding the deceptive dinner party seems almost ludicrous and this may well be an instance of Chaucer's ironic

humour; but Cleo's invocation is also most assuredly a cue to the underlying gravity of a social and political situation in which the petty scheming and rank hypocrisy would eventually lead to the destruction of the "nobility of Troy, the honor of Troy, the illustrious fame of Troy",²¹

²¹ Alain de Lille, The Anticlaudianus, p.70.

III

VENUS

I

As forecast in the prologue to Book I, Troilus' "aventures" in "lovyng" must revolve "Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie"; with an ever increasing acceleration in tempo, the first two books trace Troilus' emergence from bleak despair into fond hope. The "aventures" of Troilus reach their zenith in Book III which is structurally the middle-point of the poem and thematically the high-point of the action. With the achievement of the anticipated union with Criseyde, Troilus has soared "Fro wo to wele"; the remainder of the dire prediction "and after out of joie" has no place in this book of joyful celebration and exhilarating triumph. The third book is the fait accompli--the acquiescence of the blushing maiden, the exultation of the triumphant lover, the culmination of all Pandarus' schemings.

In describing the bliss of the third book, most scholars rise to the occasion with a composite array of eulogy and panegyric. C. S. Lewis, in his celebration of the lovers' union, pays an overwhelming tribute to the climax by calling it "a long epithalamium"¹ (the name of a song composed specifically for a bride on her wedding day). Since the epithalamion does not exist as a genre in medieval English, the best example is one composed nearly two hundred years later by Edmund Spenser for Elizabeth Boyle on the occasion of their wedding in June of 1594. In a splendid outpouring of emotion and elation, Spenser

¹ C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York: 1958), p.196.

lavishes praise on his bride-to-be, entreats "the temple gates" (1.204)² to open wide for his beloved, and charges the bells to ring out in joy. Impatiently, he begs the workers to shun their "wonted labors for this day"(1.262) and join with the entire world in witnessing this blessed union with Elizabeth for "This day is holy"(1.263). Turning again to Troilus and Criseyde, the section which is, according to Lewis a "long epithalamium", has no temple (just a bedroom), no witnesses (except Pandarus) and certainly no hint that "this day is holy", for these "nuptials" are performed in the dark of the night under cover of rain in the most secluded atmosphere of secrecy and shame. Even Lewis flinches at his own use of "epithalamium" for only a few lines later, he suggests, half-apologetically, that "It seems almost an accident that the third book celebrates adultery instead of marriage".³ In this very statement rests the fallacy of Lewis' comments, for this book does celebrate "adultery instead of marriage". This union of Troilus and Criseyde is nothing but an illicit love affair; there is no marriage, nor will there be one. Lewis, in his biased concept of medieval decorum in love fails to see the irony of his own statement and position.

John Speirs, a few years later, ventures to use the same term, "epithalamium", but his uneasiness is even more evident

² Edmund Spenser, The Complete Poetical Works of Spenser, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1936), p.735.

³ C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p. 197.

than is Lewis': "Yet the union of Criseyde and Troilus, once accomplished, is celebrated as a joyous epithalamium, transcending the dubiousness of the preliminaries."⁴ These preliminaries--the lying, the feigning, the trickery, the intimidating, the duplicity--are now deemed acceptable because Troilus has acquired his Criseyde. Speirs' awareness that this is not a nuptial song is evident in his phrase "as a joyous epithalamium" for the "dubfousness" which has preceded this union is quite remote from the realm of true wedded bliss. The buoyancy, the eagerness, the purity of Spenser's Epithalamion is starkly absent from the clandestine atmosphere surrounding the union of Troilus and Criseyde--a union shrouded beneath a "smoky reyn" (III,628). Lewis may view the "smoky reyn" as the "innocent snugness, as of a children's hiding-place",⁵ but surely this is endowing the entire scene with a virtue and naiveté which is more in tune with Spenser than with Troilus. The term, "epithalamium" is a misnomer--a calculated misrepresentation much like Pandarus' preference for the elegance of "gentillesse" rather than the baseness of "bauderye". Although Speirs at times seems to acclaim the "joyous celebration of human love"⁶ he concludes with perception that "the poem is no romantic

⁴ John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker (London: Faber & Faber, 1951), p.66.

⁵ C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p. 196-7.

⁶ John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker, p.67.

glorification of passion".⁷ Yet this "glorification" is just what C. S. Lewis expounds under the guise of a rarified medieval love code. Since there are no formal nuptials in the Troilus and Criseyde, the celebration must be of a union which disdains such rites and thereby must be viewed as a concupiscent relationship.

The possible source for this apparent misconception about the genre of Book III is the invocation of Venus that precedes it:

O blisful light, of which the bemes clere
 Adorneth al the thridde heven faire!
 O sonnes lief, O Joves doughter deere,
 Plesance of love, O goodly debonaire,
 My gentil hertes ay redy to repaire!
 O veray cause of heele and of gladnesse,
 Iheryed be thy myght and thi goodnesse! (III,1-7)

This choice of invocation which differs radically from Thesiphone (Book I) and Cleo (Book II) gives momentous impetus to those critics who revel in the "romantic glorification of passion" because "Joves doughter deere" is the traditional goddess of love. Lewis' idea that the substitution of adultery for marriage is a literary accident has prompted subsequent critics to find Venus the warrant for their interpretations.

According to Kemp Malone, the reason for the invocation is that in Book III, Troilus "wins his lady's love and favors"⁸ and "Chaucer accordingly starts with an invocation to Venus".⁹

⁷ Ibid., p.80.

⁸ Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer, p.116.

⁹ Ibid., p.116.

In a detailed study of this prologue Malone analyses certain characteristics of Venus--her identity as a planet, her astrological significance, her attributes of might and goodness, her ability to pacify tempers and her capacity for welding friendships. Malone also emphasizes that "Venus has set for people a law universally applicable and whoever opposes her is certain to be overcome."¹⁰ Malone's weakness in this otherwise detailed accounting, is that nowhere does he say why those attributes will aid either Troilus as lover or Chaucer as poet. Venus' diversity of characteristics--goodness, might, pacifier, law-maker, tyrant--deserves some explanation especially in relation to the action of Book III. The manner in which Venus' divergent roles will assist Troilus in the culmination of his union with Criseyde is not once considered.

Morton Bloomfield, ever alert for historical overtones, sees that Venus "underlines again the pagan quality of the history";¹¹ he echoes Malone's awareness of "her symbolic, astrological and divine role [which] conquers the whole world and binds its dissonances and discords together."¹² Yet as with Malone there is no relationship drawn between these attributes and the ensuing action. Of Venus' capabilities in love, Bloomfield

¹⁰ Ibid., p.117.

¹¹ Morton Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde," p.203.

¹² Ibid., p.203.

states: "It is she who understands the mysteries of love and who explains the apparent irrationality of love".¹³ Yet surely this is no help to Troilus whose concern for the "mysteries" of love is nil once he has acquired his loved one; nor will Venus' explanations on the "irrationality of love" be of any use to him when his "wele" is behind and he is "after out of joie".

As Malone and Bloomfield recognize the diversity of Venus' attributes, so does Sanford Meech; however, he elaborates on Venus' role with some fresh observations. As Book II closes, Pandarus is hurrying Criseyde into Troilus' "sick-bed" and the subsequent initial meeting is about to be transacted; however, the flow of action is interrupted by the prologue to Book III and the plot is not resumed until the conclusion of the lengthy invocation. Meech notes the significance of the interruption as a "due recognition of his [Troilus] triumph . . . [as] it heralds the period of Troilus' delights, marking its commencement . . .".¹⁴ Meech also proposes that "the first thirty-eight lines dignify earthly love by including it among the manifestations of the great unifying force symbolized by Venus, a force which inspires Jove himself as well as all the

¹³ M. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde," p.203.

¹⁴ S. Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus, p.53.

levels of creation".¹⁵ What Meech neglects to mention is that it is only Jove's adulteries that are cited--his numerous seductions facilitated by his variety of disguises (swans, bulls and rain showers). Meech further appraises Book III as "the great night of love in our literature",¹⁶ a phrase soon clutched by all exponents of the "romantic glorification of passion".

George Sommer relies exclusively on the assessments of Malone and Meech including a few of his own banalities. Since the purpose of Venus is to show the "nobility of amorous fulfilment",¹⁷ the "Narrator prays explicitly that Troilus "be permitted to partake of this happiness. He will do his part . . . to praise the Author of nature by showing his lovers engaged in an act which He has instituted".¹⁸ Apparently for Sommer, the height of man's nobility is in direct proportion to his prowess in the sex act. Sommer's appraisal of Venus concludes that she is invoked "for the tone of rapturous lyricism in the praise of love".¹⁹ In this effusive outpouring, there is little in originality and much in superfluity.

¹⁵ Sanford Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus, p.54.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.72.

¹⁷ George Sommer, "The Narrator of the Troilus & Criseyde," p.89.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.103.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.105.

On the whole, the critics considered recognize the multiformity of Venus' character, yet make little attempt to differentiate her attributes or to categorize her peculiarities. It is highly improbable that all her qualities--might, goodness, pacifist and legalistic tendencies--can apply equally or even be relevant to the action of this book; yet all these critics, Malone, Bloomfield, Meech, consider her characteristics, collectively, and imply that they all have some bearing on the love story which ensues. Most critics suppose that it is sufficient simply to say that Venus, goddess of love, influences the destiny of lovers.

II

The prologue to Book III has long been recognized as having its source in Giovanni Boccaccio's Il Filostrato. As Boccaccio's Troilo walks in the garden with Pandarus, rejoicing in his love for Criseyde, he sings a song in praise of Venus. Following his model, Chaucer paraphrases the first six stanzas of the song, using a similar format; a comparison of these verses with their source reveals many similarities and some notable innovations.

Chaucer's first verse, commencing "O blisful light" is a fairly close paraphrase of Boccaccio; each poet pays tribute to Venus as the radiant planet who in her astrological role has power to influence individuals. Whereas Boccaccio praises Venus' might, Chaucer amplifies this attribute to include

health, gladness and goodness; "O veray cause of heele and of gladnesse, / Iheryed be thy myght and thi goodnesse!"(III,6-7). Boccaccio credits Venus as being the source of his strength and thereby gives a personal tone which is not in Chaucer; by expanding Venus' role to include more characteristics--"heelee", "gladnesse", "myght" and "goodnesse"--Chaucer gives a greater universality to the goddess.

Chaucer's second verse is a very close paraphrase of Boccaccio's; this verse is a tribute to Venus as the source of regeneration in the entire universe:

In hevене and helle, in erthe and salte see
Is felt thi myght, if that I wel descerne;
As man, brid, best, fissh, herbe, and grene tree
Thee fele in tymes with vapour eterne.
God loveth, and to love wol nought werne;
And in this world no lyves creature
Withouten love is worth, or may endure. (III,8-14)

In a few succinct lines, both poets summarize the expansive, all-embracing power of love as the drive which inspires the regenerative process, the power which promotes the urge toward the procreation of the species. The last two lines have undergone much scholarly scrutiny: "And in this world no lyves creature / Withouten love is worth, or may endure." Many critics uphold these lines as conclusive evidence that love makes all creatures in her universe worthy, while the exaggerated interpretation of this view is that no one has any value who is not a lover. While love can have an ameliorating effect, the situation in the Troilus and Criseyde is quite the opposite. The introductory verse in Book I refers to the

"ravysshing" (I,62) of Helen; mythological references abound in adultery, rape and lust; the love-stricken Troilus is totally committed to his passion for Criseyde. Love in the Troilus and Criseyde is not the stimulus of worthy deeds, but the cause of degenerate behaviour. The tribute in this verse is simply to the regenerative power of Venus which has the propensity toward benevolence and dignity and which can be the source of virtue and worth'.

In the third verse, Chaucer follows Boccaccio's example with a commendation of Venus' power over Jove the creator; but in Chaucer's version there is a subtle shift in emphasis. Whereas Boccaccio stresses the ameliorating influence of Venus in making Jove more merciful to mortals, Chaucer refers only to Venus' persuasiveness which inflamed Jove's innumerable seductions in "a thousand formes" (III,20). F. N. Robinson observes this subtle difference: "Chaucer seems to have in mind only the amorous adventures of Jupiter, whereas Boccaccio speaks of Venus in terms applicable to Mercy as an attribute of God";²⁰ however, having noted the innovation, Robinson fails to draw any conclusions. Venus' power over Jove was such that "amorous[^{it}] him made/ On mortal thyng" (III,17); this god forgot his supreme role repeatedly with frequent visits to earth where "he hente" (III,21) the unsuspecting females of the human race with lecherous intent. With this subtle shift, Chaucer

²⁰ F. N. Robinson, Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p.822n.17-21.

changes his source and introduces the theme of lecherous love.

With the reference to Mars in the opening of the fourth verse, the theme of lechery is continued, for the most celebrated love affair in mythology is the love of Venus and Mars. "Ye fierse Mars apaisen of his ire" (III,22) is an accurate appraisal of Venus' influence on Mars; but Chaucer leaves untouched the jealous fury of Vulcan the betrayed husband. The appeasing of "fierse Mars" is described in greater detail in Chaucer's Complaint of Mars:²¹ "Who regneth now in blysse but Venus,/That hath thys worthy knyght [Mars] in governaunce?" (II,43-4). Submission to Venus implies an inversion of the normal hierarchy; Mars forgets his "kighthood" and Jove "in thousand formes" forsakes his supremacy. This is the dire result of Venus' "governance". Chaucer only implies this maleficence then passes on quickly to list the countless improvements which naturally flow from dedication to Venus:

And as yow list, ye maken hertes digne;
 Algates hem that ye wol sette a-fyre,
 They dreden shame, and vices they resygne;
 Ye do hem corteys be, fresshe and benigne;
 And heighe or lowe, after a wight entendeth,
 The joies that he hath, youre myght him sendeth.
(III,23-8)

The benefits accrued from service to Venus are similar to those listed by Boccaccio.

The fifth verse is very similar to Boccaccio's rendering; both poets comment on the unity of the universe, the bond of

²¹ Ibid., p.529.

friendship and the special prowess of Venus in knowing the occult. Whereas Boccaccio concludes his verse with philosophic generalities, Chaucer becomes very specific:

Ye holden regne and hous in unitee;
 Ye sothfast cause of frendshipe ben also;
 Ye knowe al thilke covered qualitee
 Of thynges, which that folk on wondren so,
 Whan they kan nought construe how it may jo
 She loveth hym, or whi he loveth here,
 As whi this fissh, and naught that, comth to were.
 (III,29-35)

With a deft stroke, Chaucer shifts the mystery of "thilke covered qualitee / Of thynges" to the very specific problem of why some individuals fall in love and why others do not. The fishing imagery of the last line creates a humorous effect because it draws an implicit analogy between the pursuit of human love and the trapping of live game--an analogy that gains force when Diomedes later "leyde out hook and lyne" (V,777). Chaucer's addition of the last two lines to Boccaccio's rendition brings the foregoing lofty theme down to a most mundane level.

Chaucer's sixth verse opens, as does Boccaccio's, with a reference to the law of Venus:

Ye folk a lawe han set in universe,
 And this knowe I by hem that lovers be,
 That whoso stryveth with yow hath the werse.
 (III,36-8)

In Boccaccio breakers of the law will struggle with Venus' son; however, Chaucer brings offenders into combat with Venus herself. In Chaucer's phrasing of these lines there is an ambiguity of meaning; it is not clear whether lovers are supposed to avoid strife by co-operating with Venus or whether they are to

shun Venus entirely. Either interpretation is strongly reminiscent of The Romance of the Rose in which Reason offers the Lover this advice:

"If now
 You wish well to accomplish your escape,
 From all Love's grievances to be well cured,
 No better potion can you drink than flight;
 No otherwise can you happiness enjoy.
 Follow Love, and he will you pursue;
 Avoid him, and from you he'll flee."²²

The implication in Boccaccio is more on the danger of being an enemy of Venus' son; Chaucer puts the stress on Venus' disenchantment as well as opening up the possibility of escape by a refusal of lovers to accept the challenge. Whereas Boccaccio ends his verse by submitting himself to Venus' wiles, Chaucer closes by entreating Venus for aid in relating "Som joye of that is felt in thi servyse." (III,42)

In general, Chaucer has followed his source meticulously; however, the changes are of paramount importance. The expansion of "myght" (III,7) to include health, gladness and goodness gives to Venus' role a universality not found in Boccaccio's limited use of "might". Chaucer's addition of Jove's amorous pursuits is of greatest significance because it introduces adultery and the accompanying theme of lecherous love, a theme not evident in the source. In his lecherous relationships with mortals who are his subordinates, Jove, the supreme deity debases himself. By so doing he defiles acceptable interrelationships and creates an inversion of the normal hierarchy of authority.

²² Guillaume de Lorris & Jean de Meun, The Romance of the Rose, p.96-7.

Both the theme of lechery and the theme of inverted hierarchies are underlined and emphasized by the direct reference to Mars and indirect allusion to his submission to Venus. Fishing, which is a form of hunting, embellishes the theme of lechery because the hunt of small game is usually associated with the hunt of Venus: "one common medieval device for illustrating lechery is to depict a man riding on a goat and either carrying or pursuing a rabbit. Not infrequently, he wears a net to show that he is caught in Vulcan's snare."²³ The passage concludes with the veiled suggestion cloaked in ambiguity that the best way to avoid a struggle with the "lawe" is simply not to enter the fray.

The first of these adaptations, the expansion of "myght" to include additional, more expansive qualities, imbues Venus with an even greater universality than that of Boccaccio's goddess. The other innovations--Jove's amours, Mars' submission and the fishing image--introduce the theme of lechery. Chaucer appears to have retained and expanded the theme of Venus' universality, but also introduced the theme of lecherous love as a different capacity of the same goddess. It is quite improbable that the goddess who is the "veray cause of heele and of gladnesse" (III,6) of "myght" and of "goodnesse" is the same goddess who inflicts the lecherous Jove on unsuspecting mortals. Therefore, Venus has a dual nature or a dual role--

²³ D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, p.255.

one which inspires benevolent deeds, one which incites malevolent acts.

There is an abundance of evidence to prove that the medieval age viewed Venus as a dual character. Robert K. Root indicates the existence of a duality in Venus' role: "She is the power of Love, both in its earthly aspect as sexual attraction, and in its Platonic aspect as the unifying principle of the universe."²⁴ However, Root's differentiation must be considered either as inaccurate or incomplete because "sexual attraction" is part of the "unifying principle of the universe". In the Consolation of Philosophy Boethius presents the "classic statement of the medieval idea that love is the principle of harmony in the universe".²⁵ This statement is so fundamental to medieval philosophy that it necessitates a full quotation:

"That the universe carries out its changing process in concord and with stable faith, that the conflicting seeds of things are held by everlasting law, that Phoebus in his golden chariot brings in the shining day, that the night, led by Hesperus, is ruled by Phoebe, that the greedy sea holds back his waves within lawful bounds, for they are not permitted to push back the unsettled earth--all this harmonious order of things is achieved by love which rules the earth and the seas, and commands the heavens.

"But if love should slack the reins, all that now is joined in mutual love would wage continual war, and strive to tear apart the world which is now sustained in friendly concord by beautiful motion.

"Love binds together people joined by a sacred bond; love binds sacred marriages by chaste affections; love makes the laws which join true

²⁴ Robert Kilburn Root, The Book of Troilus and Criseyde (Princeton: 1945), p.463.

²⁵ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. Richard Green, (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1962), p.41.

friends. O how happy the human race would be, if
that love which rules the heavens ruled also
your souls!"²⁶

Boethius includes within "this harmonious order" the sacred bond of matrimony which binds two people together by "chaste affections"; since the purpose of marriage in the medieval age was for the procreation of children the sexual attraction was necessarily part of the universal "harmonious order". The "chaste affections" referred to by Boethius have no relationship to the amorous affections of Jove (III,15-21), yet both are called love and have Venus as their goddess. Although Root is correct in recognizing a duality in the nature of Venus, he errs in not specifying the type of sexual attraction--lechery--which is divorced entirely from universal harmony.

Boccaccio does not exploit the dual relationship of Venus in Il Filostrato; however, there is evidence from another source that he knew of her duality. In his notes to the Teseida,²⁷ Boccaccio tells of the double Venus, one concerned with matrimonial love, the other concerned with concupiscent passion. Since the source of the Knight's Tale is the Teseida, it is highly probable that Chaucer was familiar with this concept of the double Venus.

²⁶ Ibid., p.41.

²⁷ Giovanni Boccaccio, Teseida, ed. Aurelio Roncaglia (Bari, 1941), p.417.

Even apart from Boccaccio, there were other innumerable sources from which Chaucer could have derived his concept of duality. A thorough study of classical and medieval writings by D. W. Robertson indicates some of these sources and the twofold attitude of Venus' personage:

There are, clearly, two ways to look at Venus, or at least there are two "loves" which may call her Mother. An alternative remains, however, for we may make two Venuses. This solution was developed by the Pythagoreans, who placed the traditional deities in two "hemispheres", one celestial and the other infernal, so as to make pairs, and among these pairs was Venus. . . . Thus Remigius of Auxerre says that "there are two Venuses, one the mother of sensuality and lust. . . the other chaste, who rules over honest and chaste loves." A commentary on the Fasti produced during the late eleventh or early twelfth century recognizes that Venus is responsible for both "virtuous love" and "unlawful passion".²⁸

An excerpt from the third Vatican mythographer, not included by Robertson, verifies the duality of Venus: "alter bonus et pudicus, quo sapientia et virtutes amantur; alter impudicus et malus, quo ad vitia inclinamur."²⁹ All of Robertson's sources--Lucretius, Ovid, Boethius, Hugh of Saint Victor, Bernard Silvestris--were known by Chaucer and could have afforded to him the concept of a double Venus.

Another recent critic who concurs with Robertson's findings is John Benton: "This idea of a division of love was commonplace in the twelfth century; as Hugh of St. Victor put it succinctly: 'two streams flow from the single fount of love,

²⁸ D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, p.125-6.

²⁹ G. H. Bode, Scriptores . . . Reperti, p.259.

cupidity and charity'. In the next century Thomas Aquinas ponderously demonstrated that it was proper to distinguish between the love of friendship and the love of concupiscence"³⁰. Benton stresses the special talent of the medieval mind to think categorically and to enjoy literature which "played" on deliberate ambiguities such as the double role of Venus.

The prevalence of the concept of Venus' duality can readily be established from classical and medieval sources. The comparison of the prologue with its source in Boccaccio shows the subtle way in which Chaucer infused his version with the theme of lechery, keeping intact the other aspect of love as harmony in the universe. Yet Chaucer accomplishes the infusion of the theme of concupiscent love so deftly that the result is an ambiguity which continually confuses the modern scholar. According to Benton: "medieval authors and audiences enjoyed ambiguity in literature not because they felt it reflected a basic ambiguity in the universe or the heart of man, but because their natural tendency was to think in very rigid categories"³¹. Having noted Boccaccio, Robertson and Benton, we may conclude that Chaucer was fully cognizant of the duality of Venus' role and that in blending the two aspects of love so imperceptibly, created a deliberate ambiguity, the purpose

³⁰ John F. Benton, "Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love", ed. F. X. Newman, The Meaning of Courtly Love, (New York: 1968), p. 29.

³¹ Ibid., p. 31.

of which was not just to tease the medieval thinker, but to enable him to play on two ideas simultaneously in an intellectually attractive manner. The ambiguity in itself serves the double function of designating the type of love being described in the poem and the type of love being rejected. The union of Troilus and Criseyde is an act of passion quite unencumbered by the sacred rites of matrimony; therefore, by medieval standards, this union is a concupiscent relationship--similar to Jove's and Mars' love affairs. In stark contrast to lecherous love stands the other love--the principle of harmony, of concord and of charity. By creating this ambiguity, Chaucer is able to show the inferior love which is adopted by the lovers in contrast to the superior love which is repudiated. Scholars, in general, tend to bypass this ambiguity or to dismiss it as merely Chaucerian wit. Many critics such as Malone, Bloomfield, and Meech, recognize some diversity in Venus, but simply "lump" all her characteristics together under the one convenient label of love. A recognition of Chaucer's deliberate introduction of the theme of concupiscence, alongside the principle of harmony, into the prologue to Book III will aid critic and scholar in acquiring a fuller understanding of the significance of Troilus and Criseyde.

III

By the juxtaposition of charitable love and lecherous love, Chaucer achieves the twofold purpose of describing the imperfect in terms of the ideal and thereby advocating ideal love by contrast with its opposite; one aspect of love delineates and explicates the other by antithesis. This same polarity of identity which is clearly operating in the prologue is also evident in the imagery of Book III. In literary terminology the proper label is symbolism--one image signifying another image either inside or outside the context of the poem; however, when the symbol points to an entirely different code of values--an ideal which has been discarded--the poet is functioning in an ironic mode. The poet appears to be praising his subject matter when in reality he is stringently condemning. To quote a thirteenth century definition of irony by Boncompagno of Signa: "Irony is the unadorned and gentle use of words to convey disdain and ridicule. . . . Hardly anyone can be found who is so foolish that he does not understand if he is praised for what he is not. . . . it is nothing but vituperation to commend the evil deeds of someone through their opposite, or to relate them wittily".³² Chaucer, while seeming to praise the fruits of Venus, is in reality castigating the lecherous love of Troilus.

³² John Benton, "Clio and Venus", p.28-9.

The poetic imagery of Book III is analysed by Robertson in terms of Christian values; critics challenge this conception on the grounds that the Troilus is a pagan story and has no relevance to Christianity. The best refutation of this argument appears in the epilogue when Chaucer concludes his poem by recommending the love of Christ. This controversy can be avoided entirely by not categorizing the imagery as "religious" (Robertson) but by analysing the same imagery in terms of philosophy. Although the influence of Boethius on the basic philosophy of the Troilus and Criseyde has been widely recognized, the prevalence of the same influence on the poetic imagery has not been noted. This influence stems directly from the Consolation of Philosophy by Boethius. Since the Consolation is a pagan philosophy which expounds a code of values similar to the basic Christian precepts, the poetic imagery of the Troilus can as easily be termed "philosophic" as "religious"; as such, the imagery fulfills the same purpose proposed by Robertson for religious imagery: "to suggest the values which the hero inverts and, at the same time to furnish opportunity for ironic humor."³³ A comparison of the imagery used by Boethius and Chaucer shows the basic

³³ Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, p.487.

values expounded and rejected, as well as its use in creating Chaucer's ironic stance.

One of the most pervasive metaphors in the Consolation of Philosophy is the imagery of light and darkness: "Alas! how this mind is dulled, drowned in the overwhelming depths. It wanders in outer darkness, deprived of its natural light"(I:m2);³⁴ "the light of his mind gone out (I:m2);³⁵ "It is the nature of men's minds that when they throw away the truth they embrace false ideas, and from these comes the cloud of anxiety which obscures their vision of truth. I shall try to dispel this cloud by gentle treatment, so that when the darkness of deceptive feeling is removed you may recognize the splendor of true light" (I:6).³⁶ In each example, light is associated with reason; darkness is associated with the lack of reason, or ignorance. The man who rejects the guidance of reason is figuratively drowning in "overwhelming depths", captivated by "false ideas" and lost in a "cloud of anxiety"; the same man who finds his reason has figuratively, regained his "natural light", re-kindled the "light of his mind" and has recognized "the splendor of true light". The imagery of light and darkness,

³⁴ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, p5.

³⁵ Ibid., p.6.

³⁶ Ibid., p.19. Other references to the light of reason: p.20; p.56; p.61; p.65; p.69; p.75; p.81; p.86; p.104; p.108.

metaphorically representative of reason and ignorance, pervades the Consolation of Philosophy.

In Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, the same imagery is used extensively in Book III with the same implications. The candle which Pandarus considerately moves to the chimney is often referred to as a charming stage prop, another of Chaucer's meticulous attentions to detail. A close appraisal of this verse reveals a valuable thematic purpose much more fundamental than that of charm or detail:

Quod Pandarus, "For aught I kan asprien,
This light, nor I, ne serven here of nought.
Light is nought good for syke folkes yen!
But, for the love of God, syn ye ben brought
In thus good plit, lat now no hevy thought
Ben hangyng in the hertes of yow tweye"--
And bar the candele to the chymeneye. (III:1135-41)

"Light is not good for syke folkes yen"-- both the comment and the action by the busy Pandarus provide humour; however, the irony rests in the realization that these "syke folkes", Troilus and Criseyde, need the light--the light of reason--but Pandarus is carefully removing the one prop, the tiny candle, which might relieve the lost judgement of the enamoured couple. When Lady Philosophy visits the bedside of the ailing Boethius, she furiously dismisses the Muses saying that "They cannot offer medicine for his sorrows";³⁷ the remedy she prescribes in the course of the dialogue is the medicine of reason which dispels the

³⁷ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, p.4.

darkness of ignorance with the "true light" of wisdom. The need of Troilus and Criseyde for Lady Philosophy's remedy is just as urgent as Boethius's need, but Pandarus, instead, in his massively ironic statement declares that "Light is nought good for sike folkes yen!" (III:1137).

After the joyous consummation of the illicit union, both Troilus and Criseyde realize that their liaison is only temporary and that with the coming of day he must return to the palace. In the ensuing verses the imagery associated with day and night, light and darkness is predominant:

"Myn hertes lif, my trist, and my plesaunce,
That I was born, allas, what me is wo,
That day of us moot make disseveraunce!
For tyme it is to ryse and hennes go,
Or ellis I am lost for evere mo!
O nyght, allas! why nyltow over us hove,
As longe as whan Almena lay by Jove?"

"O blake nyght, as folk in bokes rede,
That shapen art by God this world to hide
At certeyn tymes wyth thi derke wede,
That under that men myghte in reste abide,
Wel oughten bestes pleyne, and folk the chide,
That there as day wyth labour wolde us breste,
That thow thus fleest, and deynest us nought rest.

"Thow doost, allas, to shortly thyn office,
Thow rakle nyght, ther God, maker of kynde,
The, for thyn haste and thyn unkynde vice,
So faste ay to oure hemysperie bynde,
That nevere more under the ground thow wynde!
For now, for thow so hiest out of Troie,
Have I forgon thus hastili my joie!" (III:1422-42)

These words are Criseyde's entreaty to the "blake nyght" to remain forever so she and Troilus may continue in "joie"; it need hardly be stated that their "joie" can not risk the

bright light of day. The prologue which refers to the "thousand formes" whereby Jove seduced unsuspecting mortals; contains a reference to a specific conquest in which the lecherous Jove, in order to seduce Almena, miraculously lengthened the night through three "days". It is ironic that Criseyde draws her analogy from the conquests of Jove whose lecherous intentions have already been noted.

Troilus continues the same theme but in a slightly different vein:

"O cruel day, accusour of the joie
 That nyght and love han stole and faste iwryen,
 Acorsed by thi comyng into Troye,
 For every bore hath oon of thi bryghte yen!
 Envyous day, what list the so to spien?
 What hastow lost, why sekestow this place,
 Ther God thi light so quenche, for his grace?

"Allas! what have these loveris the agylt,
 Dispitous day? Thyn be the peyne of helle!
 For many a loveere hastow slayn, and wilt;
 Thy pouryng in wol nowher lat hem dwelle.
 What profrestow thi light here for to selle?
 Go selle it hem that smale selys grave;
 We wol the nought, us nedeth no day have." (III, 1450-63)

In scathing and derogatory tones Troilus curses the day challenging her to "Go selle" her light to the graveyards of small seals; this is a scriptural reference (Ecclus. 38:26-39) to meticulous craftsmen "whose skills are necessary to a city, but who nevertheless fall short of the highest wisdom."³⁸ Since wisdom and light are always equated in biblical imagery, Troilus, by summarily dismissing the light of day, unconsciously relegates himself to a position subordinate to that

³⁸ R. E. Kaske, "The Aube in Chaucer's Troilus", Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II, Schoeck & Taylor, p.177.

of the gravers. The irony rests in Troilus' delusion that his "occupation" is far superior to that of the humble craftsman-- "works of profounder wisdom--like his own--are best matured in the dark."³⁹

The lovers' curse on day is resumed on the occasion of their next tryst:

But cruel day, so wailaway the stounde!
 Gan for t'aproche, as they by synges knewe;
 For which hem thoughte feelen dethis wownde.
 So wo was hem that changen gan hire hewe,
 And day they gonnen to despise al newe,
 Calling it traitour, envyous, and worse,
 And bitterly the dayes light thei corse.

Quod Troilus, "Allas, now am I war
 That Pirous and tho swifte steedes thre,
 - Which that drawn forth the sonnes char,
 Han gon som bi-path in dispit of me;
 That maketh it so soone day to be;
 And, for the sonne hym hasteth thus to rise,
 Ne shal I nevere don him sacrificise." (III:1695-1708)

"Cruel Day", "traitour" and "envyous" all culminate in Troilus' particularly dreadful oath: "Ne shal I nevere don him sacrificise." This awful curse against Apollo, the sun-god, is not long in being answered for in the opening of Book IV appear "Nyghtes doughtren thre" (IV,22), the Furies described individually by Boccaccio as "Acherontis et Noctis filia"⁴⁰ and collectively by the Vatican mythographer as "Noctis et Acheruntis filiae".⁴¹ The lovers swiftly receive the eternal night for which they prayed.

³⁹ Ibid., p.177.

⁴⁰ Giovanni Boccaccio, Genealogie . . . Libri, p.129-30.

⁴¹ Georgius Henricus Bode, Scriptores . . . Réperti, p.77.

In this highly figurative imagery Chaucer indicates the complete rejection of reason by the two lovers; they prefer the darkness (and ignorance) which will conceal their concupiscence, to the daylight (and reason) which will reveal their folly. As noted by R. K. Root, "Criseyde's reproaching of Night has no counterpart in Filostrato"⁴². Since any addition Chaucer makes to his source is worthy of scrupulous attention, these elaborate, extended and highly metaphoric passages all based on the imagery of light and darkness must have the utmost significance. We may conclude that this significance is derived from Boethius, who used the same imagery as symbolic of reason and ignorance. Since the same imagery has scriptural significance as well, the result is a poetic achievement unsurpassed in richness, depth and meaning.

Although the imagery of light and darkness, associated with reason and ignorance, is perhaps the most pervasive poetic and thematic device, there is other imagery which serves a similar function of showing the values which are neglected or inverted by the hero. Troilus is forever burning with the fire of Venus' passion; fire in its ideal form, according to Boethius, is the fire of the sun which will "burn off the fogs and clouds of earth"⁴³ and reveal the true light of reason. Closely connected

⁴² Robert K. Root, The Book of Troilus and Criseyde, p.489.

⁴³ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, p.61.

and by Dante in the Divine Comedy (Purg. I:7-9). The Thebaid deals with the tragic tale of the siege of Thebes--the fall of a great city and the deaths of brave men; the Divine Comedy is the tale of Mankind from damnation to salvation. These are the topics of the true epic. Calliope's role in the Troilus and Criseyde can be much more easily assessed when viewed in retrospect:

Calliope, thi vois be now present,
 For now is nede; sestow nought my destresse,
 How I mot telle anonright the gladnesse
 Of Troilus, to Venus heryinge?
 To which gladnesse, who nede hath, God hym brynge!
 (III:45-9)

If Calliope were invoked to relate the tragic fall of Troy, the choice would be a suitable one; on the contrary, the plight of Troy or the Trojans is quite remote from the clandestine love affair of Book III. Therefore, the invocation of Calliope is ironic but the full implications of this mode can only be appreciated "in retrospect". The ironic mode is established in the prologue with the "deliberate ambiguity" of the double Venus and persists throughout the entire Book in metaphor and symbolism. Chaucer reveals his own stance in the final line of the prologue: "To which gladnesse, who nede hath, God hym brynge" (III:49). The irony of the line is implicit in the three words "who nede hath" for whoever does have need of this kind of love will surely also need God's help.

IV

FORTUNE

I

"Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie" (I,4) is an appropriate description of the narrative movement of Troilus and Criseyde; the first half of the prognostication is realized in the action of the third book. As Criseyde finally yields to her eager suitor, the narrator comments, "For out of wo in blisse now they flete" (III;1221); this phrase which echoes the analogous line from the prologue to Book I, marks the imminence of the climax and the zenith of Troilus' aspirations. Book III concludes on an idyllic plane of peace and fulfillment as "Troilus in lust and in quiete/ Is with Criseyde, his owen herte swete" (III,1819-20). Suddenly, however, the tranquility is shattered with the abrupt opening of Book IV:

But al to litel, weylaway the whyle,
Lasteth swich joie, ythonked be Fortune,
That semeth trewest whan she wol bygyle,
And kan to fooles so hire song entune,
That she hem hent and blent, traitour comune!
And whan a wight is from hire whiel ythrowe,
Than laugheth she, and maketh hym the mowe. (IV,1-7)

The change of mood from serenity to disquiet is quickly accomplished with the initial "But" as well as with the introduction of "Fortune" for this goddess is to be "ythonked" that "swich joye" of Troilus and Criseyde lasts "al to litel". With these omens the scene is set for the fulfillment of the

early prediction "Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie"; in accordance with this forecast, Troilus must soon forfeit his "wele" and departing "out of joie" re-enter the gloomy vale of "wo".

As previously noted, the deities invoked or addressed in the prologues carry implications for the books concerned as well as for the entire poem: Thesiphone, Cleo and Venus denote, respectively, passion, history and love. The predominant characteristics of Fortune are well described in the opening verses of Book IV:

From Troilus she gan hire brighte face
 Away to writhe, and tok of hym non heede,
 But caste hym-clene out of his lady grace,
 And on hire whiel she sette up Diomedé; (IV,8-11)

Fortune, the example par excellence of duplicity, seems to be the truest when she is the most deceptive, laughing one moment then grimacing the next, beguiling a new victim while simultaneously discarding the old one. The most familiar symbol associated with Fortune's duplicity is the Wheel; on which she mounts her candidates for a joyously carefree ascent and an equally dolorous descent. Troilus, in this case, has become the unhappy "discard" from Fortune's Wheel whereas Diomedé is now set up for his merry whirl into Criseyde's good graces.

A detailed study of Fortune's nature and function,

presented by Howard R. Patch,¹ reveals her popularity in classical and medieval times. Although her active devotees gradually disappeared, especially with the advent of Christianity, Fortune remained very much alive in the literature of the era. While citing literary references to Fortune in the works of Juvenal, Seneca, Augustine, Alanus and Petrarch, Patch pays special tribute to the Consolation of Philosophy in which Boethius describes the traditional classical figure of the pagan goddess Fortune. Nearly one-third of the Consolation is devoted to Fortune and her role in human activities; the conventional characteristics of Fortune--her fickleness, her facial contortions, her Wheel--noted in the Consolation are those characteristics also present in the prologue to Book IV. The risks involved in playing Fortune's game are vividly outlined in the Consolation by the goddess herself: "I spin my wheel and find pleasure in raising the low to a high place and lowering those who were on top. Go up, if you like, but only on condition that you will not feel abused when my sport requires your fall."² As is apparent in the Troilus, the protagonist has already entered into the "sport" and his fall is imminent. Since the influence of Boethius

¹ Howard R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature (Cambridge: 1927).

² Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, p.24.

on Chaucer is extensive, a full understanding of the basic precepts of the Consolation is essential for an understanding in the Troilus of the concept of Fortune in particular and an evaluation of the major themes in general.

Lady Philosophy endeavours to counsel her student on the nature of Fortune and the way to tolerate her vicissitudes. She emphasizes to Boethius that Nature endows the animals and men with ample produce to satisfy their basic needs; however, beyond the simple rudiments all gifts are in the jurisdiction of Fortune who reserves the right to bestow and to retrieve them as she pleases. Fortune's gifts are listed in Boethius under five categories: "riches, honor, power, fame and pleasure."³ In the days when Fortune smiled on him, Boethius had partaken lavishly of all of these gifts, but in his present state, imprisoned, exiled and impoverished, he can only rail against Fortune, bemoaning his fond memories and berating his miserable condition. Lady Philosophy, administering her medicines gradually, advises Boethius that Fortune's gifts are only of a temporary nature, and that his error was in ever mounting Fortune's Wheel; furthermore, his remedy is to know himself: "Then if you possess yourself, you have something you will never want to give up and something which Fortune cannot take

³ Ibid., p.44.

from you".⁴ Boethius, in order to be cured, must ignore Fortune, reject her gifts and rely solely on his own resources.

Closely associated with Fortune are the Boethian concepts of Providence, Fate, and Free Will; since all of these forces are operative in Troilus and Criseyde a brief survey of their meanings and implications is a necessary adjunct to a full understanding of the poem. Basically, Providence is "the divine reason itself" while Fate is associated with "all mutable things". "Providence is the unfolding of temporal events as this is present to the vision of the divine mind; but this same unfolding of events as it is worked out in time is called Fate."⁵ The problem for Boethius is to reconcile divine Providence--foreordination--with Free Will; if events in the temporal realm are divinely foreseen, then man's individual freedom is drastically curtailed if not completely negated. To his anxious queries, Lady Philosophy offers the explanation of simple and conditional necessity: "For there are two kinds of necessity: one is simple, as the necessity by which all men are mortals; the other is conditional, as is the case when, if you know that someone is walking, he must necessarily be walking."⁶ Simple necessity involves divine foresight; conditional necessity may involve divine foresight but admits

⁴ Ibid., p.29.

⁵ Ibid., p.91.

⁶ Ibid., p.117.

the existence of freedom. Providence exists in an eternal present quite unlike the human time scheme of past, present and future; therefore, God can foresee a future event involving human Free Will although the actual event has not yet transpired. God's knowledge of this future action, however, does not foreordain the event or preclude an alternative choice by the individual; Free Will is an established fact: "There is free will, . . . and no rational nature can exist which does not have it. For any being, which by its nature has the use of reason, must also have the power of judgment by which it can make decisions and, by its own resources, distinguish between things which should be desired and things which should be avoided."⁷

The interrelationship of Providence, Fate and Free Will is the basis of the Consolation of Philosophy, but Lady Philosophy also offers advice regarding bad Fortune or evil which is sent either to punish the wicked or to test the virtuous. Bad Fortune, therefore, is to be borne patiently, even to be welcomed, as evidence of divine concern. If the Free Will is exercised properly toward virtuous action, then no amount of supposed bad Fortune should be resented, for it is merely a test of strength. On the contrary, the presence of good Fortune is a situation fraught with peril for when Fortune smiles she is her most deceptive. The homogeneous

⁷ Ibid., p.103.

nature of most philosophies makes an analysis of individual segments virtually impossible; this examination of Providence, Fate, Free Will and Fortune is emblematic of the problems inherent in dissecting a system of thought. Although the discourse on the philosophy of Boethius may seem extensive and somewhat circuitous the full implications of these concepts will be shown as having paramount significance for the thematic development of the Troilus and Criseyde.

The idiosyncrasies of Fortune are so traditional that critics, in general, agree on her composite fickleness, duplicity and mutability; the discrepancy in scholarly opinion arises in two other areas--first, the actual function of Fortune in Troilus and Criseyde, and second, the assessment of the protagonist's attitude toward her role. Light can be shed on both matters by applying Boethian principles to Chaucer's poem; although many critics profess to use Boethian concepts, they more often ignore the implications or distort the findings to suit their own purposes. One such critic is Theodore A. Stroud who in the very title of his article acknowledges "Boethian' Influence".⁸ In what seems to be a deliberate misreading of the Consolation, Stroud names "power, dignities and fame"⁹ as fortune's gifts; yet a reading of Boethius reveals

⁸ Theodore Stroud, "Boethius' Influence of Chaucer's Troilus" MP, XLIX (1951-2), 1-9. Reprinted in Chaucer Criticism, Vol.II, Schoeck & Taylor, p.122.

⁹ Ibid., p.126.

"riches, honor, power, fame and pleasures".¹⁰ Stroud contends that Lady Philosophy dismisses bodily pleasure as "hardly worth considering", yet fails to note the scathing condemnation in Book IV of the Consolation: "the man who is sunk in foul lust is trapped in the pleasures of a filthy sow. In this way, anyone who abandons virtue ceases to be a man, since he cannot share in the divine nature, and instead becomes a beast."¹¹ Stroud further contends that "the possession of the loved one became a treasure . . . a bonum in saeculo (a worldly good), a source of virtue and ultimately of happiness compared to which the Boethian goods were indeed trivial." Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde "would supplement the conclusions of Boethius in an area of human activity which he had neglected." As indicated in the previous quotation from Boethius on "foul lust" and the "filthy sow", he certainly did not neglect the area of human passions; however, in his tribute to Love (Bk.II, m.8) Boethius expresses himself fully on the proper direction of the passions in the "sacred bond" of "sacred marriage(s)". When Stroud equates Criseyde with a bonum in saeculo, he has undercut his own argument, for in Boethian philosophy all worldly goods are to be eshewed as gifts of Fortune; therefore Criseyde must also be eshewed if Stroud is in reality using Boethian principles. Yet in Stroud's arguments there are no logical

¹⁰ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, p.44.

¹¹ Ibid., p.83.

conclusions; he sees the Consolation of Philosophy as a treatise promulgating predestination and the inexorable workings of Fortune. In view of Fortune's relentless revolutions, Troilus "in his supreme innocence" becomes "a saint", "a religious devotee", "a quasi-saint, matchless in devotion and virtuous activities".¹² Nowhere in this semi-regurgitation of Boethian philosophy does Stroud acknowledge Free Will as the antidote to Fortune's fluctuations; yet as already illustrated a proper attitude to Fortune's whims is the very essence of Lady Philosophy's advice.

Morton Bloomfield recognizes in the figure of Fortune "the great presiding deity of the sublunar world . . . [who] suggests instability and transience".¹³ Yet in his proclivity toward historicity, he claims that "Troilus and Criseyde is a medieval tragedy of predestination because the reader is continually forced by the commentator to look upon the story from the point of view of its end and from a distance Chaucer sits above his creation and foresees, even as God foresees, the doom of his own creatures."¹⁴ Bloomfield, as Stroud, makes no mention of Free Will; he implies that since Chaucer has a priori knowledge of the narrative events of his poem, his characters are thereby stripped of all freedom. Surely this is pushing an analogy too far even for those

¹² Theodore Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus," p.125; p.127; p.128; p.128; p.128; p.131.

¹³ M. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde", p.203.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.205.

with historical sensitivities; the poet must always have a priori knowledge of his characters' activities but this does not preclude the possibility of freedom of choice in the roles which he creates or portrays.

Another critic who zealously advocates the concept of predestination is Walter Clyde Curry: "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde is a tragedy, strongly deterministic in tone, the action of which is presided over by a complex and inescapable destiny."¹⁵ Closely related to Destiny is "still another blind and capricious force called Fortune whose function it is . . . to rule over the checkered careers of human beings in this world".¹⁶ Although Curry acclaims the indebtedness of Chaucer to the Consolation of Philosophy, he stresses only predestination and completely overlooks the possibility of Free Will. Yet as already noted, Boethius affirms the existence of Free Will and in concluding stresses that the "freedom of the human will remains inviolate, and laws are just since they provide rewards and punishments to human wills which are not controlled by necessity."¹⁷ Since it suits his critical stance to recognize only the Boethian elements of Fortune and Destiny, Curry chooses to omit this important aspect of the Consolation.

¹⁵ Walter C. Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", Chaucer Criticism, Vol.II, Schoeck and Taylor, p.34.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.36.

¹⁷ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, p.119

Adding his voice to the chorus of advocates for pre-destination is George Sommer: "the Narrator does not indicate that they are morally culpable. Instead he blames Fortune, for she, in turning her wheel, has changed the relative positions of Troilus and Diomedes."¹⁸ What a carefree existence if man is not "morally culpable" for his actions and, moreover, always can conjure a ready scapegoat in the figure of Fortune. But this is not Boethian philosophy, for in the final lines of the Consolation, Boethius asserts that "the necessity of virtuous action imposed upon you is very great".¹⁹ Nowhere does Boethius suggest that humans are not "morally culpable" for their actions. All of the foregoing scholars--Stroud, Bloomfield, Curry and Sommer--equate Destiny with Fortune, thereby making the relentless revolution of Fortune's Wheel the same as the inevitable process of Destiny. This equation of two forces, Destiny and Fortune, completely obliterates the possibility of Free Will. When Troilus and Criseyde is viewed in this light, the characters become mere puppets, performing with mechanical accuracy the precision-like steps of Fortune's dance. Such a view strips the poem of its innate grandeur and drastically delimits its tragic implications.

If in assessing the significance of Troilus and Criseyde,

¹⁸ G. Sommer, "The Narrator of the Troilus and Criseyde", p.115.

¹⁹ Boethius, Consolation of Philosophy, p.119.

the supposed Boethian concept of "predestination" is set aside, and the doctrine of Free Will asserted in its place, then an entirely different evaluation of the poem emerges.

Lady Philosophy advises Boethius to use his Free Will in an effort to ignore Fortune and her dubious gifts; by so doing, he will acquire a knowledge of himself and of the true happiness to which all being is directed--namely God. This same principle can be applied in Troilus and Criseyde for if Troilus asserts his Free Will in an effort to overcome the lure of Fortune's gifts, he will avoid his unhappy whirl on the fickle Wheel and possess true Knowledge. Since Troilus does not assert his Free Will, but chooses instead to heed Fortune, he subjects himself to all the capriciousness of the fickle goddess. Troilus' fall is tragic but is not to be blamed on Destiny since the choice was his, either to play Fortune's game or to disregard her enticements.

In his study of the goddess Fortuna, Patch makes an interesting observation: "Fortuna is not the goddess of a special function, like Venus or Diana; she is not even the personification of a special aspect of fate, like Lachesis or Atropos. She represents one view, degraded if you like, of a universal, omnipotent god; and therefore her only rival could be such a figure as that of Jove."²⁰ In the Troilus and Criseyde the other deities invoked--Thesiphone, Cleo, Calliope and Venus--each have highly individualized "special function(s)"

²⁰ H. R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna in Mediaeval Literature, p.4.

quite unlike Fortune, a goddess possessing universal power if left to rule independently. The only force able to control her whimsicalities is a higher deity, namely Jove. Patch's comment is of special significance when the role of Fortuna in Il Filostrato (Chaucer's direct source) is compared with the role of Fortune in Troilus and Criseyde. Sanford Meech observes that in Il Filostrato Fortuna is not subordinate to Jove, but has independent powers; since Fortune and Jove are invoked on equal terms, the one does not in any way delimit the influence of the other. Fortuna "stands throughout the poem for unpredictable and therefore seemingly arbitrary change".²¹

Chaucer adapts the role of Fortuna from Il Filostrato maintaining her traditional "unpredictable" aspect, yet subordinating her power to a higher deity:

But O Fortune, executrice of wyrdes,
 O influences of thise hevenes hye!
 Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes,
 Though to us bestes ben the causes wrie. (III,617-20)

In the Troilus and Criseyde, Fortune is made subservient to a Superior Being, the executor of fate "under God". Whether or not "God" stands for the Christian Deity is of no account; the significance is that Fortune is a subordinate influence unlike her counterpart in Il Filostrato.

²¹ Sanford Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus, p.206.

The ramifications of this differentiation for the characters in the Troilus are vast; although their destinies come under the influence of Fortune, they have, nevertheless, recourse to a Higher Power. As in Boethius, Fortune can be shunned by seeking God, so in the Troilus and Criseyde Fortune's influence can be resisted by contemplation of the same Higher Power.

Sanford Meech astutely analyses the relation between Fortune and her Superior: "The narrator assures us in propria persona of the control of Fortune, Fates, and planets by a Supreme Being and signalizes His power. . . the author's pronouncements on destinal forces, with those of the hero and occasional ones of the more earthbound heroine and confidant, build up an impression of inexorable fate essential for tragedy, yet do not destroy the also necessary one of individual freedom and responsibility."²² These final words, "individual freedom and responsibility" cannot be overly emphasized for these are the very traits so markedly absent in the protagonist; Troilus forfeits his freedom in subservience to blind passion and thereby forsakes all responsibility for his country and himself. Iconographically, his overthrow is figured in his revolution on Fortune's Wheel; metaphorically, the rotation of the Wheel symbolizes the subjection of reason by passion. Critics such as Stroud, Bloomfield and Curry,

²² Ibid., p.143.

who expound a doctrine of Boethian "predestination" lose the vital significance of this profoundly tragic poem.

Troilus exemplifies the medieval concept of the tragic hero which is so aptly expressed by the Monk in the Canterbury Tales:

Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie,
As olde bookes maken us memorie,
Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
And is yfallen out of heigh degree
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly. (MKT, B² 3163-7)

Pride which is the basic cause for most of "falls" described by the Monk, and which is instrumental in leading Troilus astray is closely associated with the subjection of reason by passion. Soon after Troilus wins Criseyde--his gift from Fortune--Chaucer comments: "And thus Fortune a tyme ledde in joie / Criseyde, and ek this kynges sone of Troie." (III, 1714-5). Herein lies the massive indictment of Troilus' behaviour; he is a prince, the heir to the Trojan dynasty, yet he abandons himself to Fortune (or passion) by refusing to exercise his Free Will (or reason). The paradox in this enigma is that by first abandoning his Free Will, he becomes progressively more and more deeply shackled in his own fetters, losing his freedom completely, and forfeiting all possibility of future rationality or freedom of choice. Troilus' dreams are symbolic of the personal captivity which he suffers:

And whan he fil in any slomberynge,
 Anon bygynne he sholde for to grone,
 And dremen of the dredefulleste thynges
 That myghte ben; as, mete he were allone
 In place horrible, makyng ay his mone,
 Or meten that he was amonges alle
 His enemys, and in hire hondes falle.

And therwithal his body sholde sterte,
 And with the stert al sodeynliche awake,
 And swich a tremour fele aboute his herte,
 That of the fere his body sholde quake;
 And therwithal he sholde a noyse make,
 and seme as though he sholde falle depe
 From heighe o-lofte; and thanne he wolde wepe.
 (V,246-59)

In the first dream, Troilus is "allone", a prisoner in his own personal hell; in the second dream, he is attacked by his enemies, not just one but "all his enemys", and falls under their "hondes". In each portrayal there is the sense of isolation, an inability to function and the impossibility of reprieve. The third dream is perhaps the most revelatory of all for Troilus feels "as though he sholde falle depe / From heighe o-lofte; and thanne he wolde wepe". And well he might weep for his fall is complete--the complete subjugation of reason by passion, or Free Will by Fortune. By making Fortune subordinate to a Superior Being, Chaucer demarcates her range of influence thereby giving to his characters the possibility of avoiding her whims--a choice not available to Troilo in Il Filostrato. Fortune is the "executrice of wyrdes" but the Higher Power stands as a buffer between her

foibles and her besieged mortals. If man so chooses, he can by strength of will overcome Fortune's wiles and win true freedom; or he can, as Troilus, succumb to Fortune's charms, losing his freedom and incarcerating himself.

The advocates of predestination rely heavily for their authority on Troilus' monologue which he delivers in the temple after learning that Criseyde is to be exchanged for the prisoner Antenor. Troilus, "fallen in despear", (IV,954) prays "to the pitouse goddes everichone" (IV,949); but his prayers take the form of a personal debate or dialogue which has been embraced with an almost religious fervour by the exponents of predestination. Stroud, in a most unusual statement, says: "Pandarus finds him proving the foreordination of all men's actions and eliminating the alternative in any unsystematic but thorough fashion (a lengthy paraphrase from the Consolation)."²³ Just how the "unsystematic" can be termed "thorough" is highly debatable, but so is Stroud's entire argument. Bloomfield echoes Stroud's theory when he says: "It has long been recognized that Troilus' speech in favor of predestination (IV,958ff.) is an important element in the poem. It certainly indicates that Troilus believes in predestination."²⁴ Curry reiterates both Stroud and Bloomfield

²³ T. A. Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus", p.132.

²⁴ M. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde", p.207.

but includes an additional negation of Free Will:

The speech of Troilus on predestination is the most powerful element of the poem in the confirming of that fatality which governs the tragic action; it makes clear that the ultimate power behind the destinal forces inherent in movable things is the arbitrary will of God, whose plans for the universe do not include human free-choice.²⁵

Stroud, Bloomfield and Curry collectively endorse Troilus' speech as the philosophical core of Troilus and Criseyde.

Since these critics have unanimously signaled the importance of this speech in particular, a closer examination of it is highly essential. Starting midway in a verse, Troilus commences:

"For al that comth, comth by necessitee:
Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee.

"For certeynly, this wot I wel, "he seyde,
"That foresight of divine purveyaunce
Hath seyn alvey me to forgon Criseyde,
Syn God seeth every thyng, out of doutaunce,
And hem disponyth, thorough his ordinaunce,
In hire merites sothly for to be,
As they shul comen by predestyne.

"But natheles, allas! whom shal I leeve?
For ther ben grete clerkes many oon,
That destyne thorough argumentes preve;
And som men seyn that, nedely, ther is noon,
But that fre chois is yeven us everychon.
O, welaway! so sleighe arn clerkes olde,
That I not whos opynyoun I may holde." (IV, 958-973)

Troilus' mood of abject despair is sensed immediately in the opening lines, "Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee"; his

²⁵ W. C. Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", p.58.

confusion, however, is the result of his ambivalence between two opposing theories--predestination and Free Will. First he decides that "divine purveyaunce" has always foreseen his eventual loss of Criseyde; then he recalls great thinkers who claim "that fre chois is yeven us everychon" (IV,971). Having weighed the two opinions he clings to "predestyne" (IV,966) claiming that "We han no fre chois" (IV,980). In the next two verses Troilus ponders the possibility of God's not having divine foresight only to conclude that "swich an errour upon God to gesse / Were fals and foul, and wikked corsednesse" (IV,993-4). But this does not end the dilemma:

"I mene as though I laboured me in this,
 To enqueren which thyng cause of which thyng be:
 As whether that the prescience of God is
 The certeyn cause of the necessite
 Of thynges that to comen ben, parde;
 Or if necessite of thyng comynge
 Because certeyn of the purveyinge. (IV,1009-15)

He wonders whether God's foresight causes the "thyng comynge" or whether the "thyng comynge" causes God's foresight. Leaving this hypothetical issue unanswered, Troilus switches to a more concrete illustration, contemplating the situation of the man who sits and whether or not he sits "by necessite":

For if ther sitte a man yond on a see,
 Then by necessite bihoveth it
 That, certes, thyn opynyoun sooth be,
 That venest or coniectest that he sit. (IV,1023-6)

This example of the "sitting man" is immediately reminiscent of Lady Philosophy's exemplar of the "walking man" (Bk.V,pr.6) which she used for Boethius in her explanation of simple and conditional necessity. Troilus concludes after much deliberation that the man sits because of "Goddess purveyance".(IV,1046) Interestingly enough, Lady Philosophy's exemplar was used to prove exactly the opposite: "from the standpoint of divine knowledge these things are necessary because of the condition of their being known by God; but, considered only in themselves, they lose nothing of the absolute freedom of their own natures."²⁶ But Troilus is by no means finished; he continues his rambling discourse with allusions to "thynges temporel"(IV,1061) and "prescience eternel" (IV,1062) finally concluding with a verse cloaked in truths and semi-truths:

"And over al this, yet sey I more herto,
That right as whan I wot ther is a thyng,
Iwys, that thyng moot nedfully be so;
Ek right so, whan I woot a thyng comyng,
So mot it come; and thus the bifallyng
Of thyngs that ben wist bifore the tyde,
They move nat ben eschued on no syde." (IV,1072-8)

The first three lines express the Boethian concept of conditional necessity; but the last lines "the bifallyng/Of thyngs that ben wist bifore the tyde" seem to be Troilus' understanding of

²⁶ Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, p.110,

prescience which he mistakes for predestination. His final decision is a total rejection of Free Will in preference for a theory of "sovereyne purveyaunce" (IV,1070) which controls all things so "They mowe nat ben eschued on no syde." (IV,1078). This speech, which constitutes eighteen verses of the Troilus and Criseyde and surpasses in length the prologues and the epilogue, is a classic example of bad rhetoric, faulty logic and confused thinking; the ideas propounded are quasi-truths, disorderly in sequence, repetitious in nature and concluding exactly where they started. Yet this is the speech hailed so vigorously by the "predestinarians", Stroud, Bloomfield and Curry.

The most perceptive analysis of this passage, made over fifty years ago by Howard R. Patch, is consistently overlooked by modern scholarship or summarily dismissed. Patch astutely assesses Troilus' need to find a scapegoat rather than accept the personal responsibility for his predicament. The scapegoat is readily found in "divine purveyance" whereas "fre chois" would put the onus directly on the despairing shoulders of the woeful lover. Troilus "is glad to have something, especially something external, to accuse; for his chief purpose is to exonerate himself in order to justify his self-pity."²⁷ In a later article Patch couches this same view in perhaps more

²⁷ H. R. Patch, "Troilus on Predestination" JEGP, XVII (1918). Reprinted in Chaucer, Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht, (New York: 1959), p.377.

mature phraseology but still retains the identical viewpoint:
 'In the famous soliloquy of Troilus . . . the hero gives . . . considerable expression to what, for the sake of the argument, we may call determinism--although I think he is rather complaining against predestination and trying to exonerate himself without impiety."²⁸

In more recent criticism, it is interesting to note that D. W. Robertson does not call this a speech on predestination but chooses to call it a " 'digression' on free will"²⁹, a concept evidently not contemplated by Stroud, Bloomfield and Curry. In discussing the tenor of the passage itself, Robertson calls it "a long supporting discussion based on Boethius in which Troilus confuses "absolute" and "conditional" necessity in a way that would have taxed the patience of Lady Philosophy."³⁰ If a reading of this passage taxes anyone's patience it is simply because Chaucer intended it to do so; Troilus is not rendering a manifesto on "sovereyne purveyaunce" but is merely groping for an easy escape from the weight of responsibility which he feels pressing in on him. To admit the presence of Free Will would do little to ease his conscience, so it is better to affirm the power of destiny and rail against "Fortune adverse" (IV, 1192);

²⁸ H. R. Patch, "Troilus on Determinism", Speculum, VI (1929), 225-42. Reprinted in Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II, Schoeck & Taylor, p.77.

²⁹ D. W. Robertson, "Chaucerian Tragedy", ELH, XIX (1952), p.1-37. Reprinted in Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II, Schoeck & Taylor, p.97.

³⁰ D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, p.494.

yet his devotion to Fortune has brought him to this unhappy impasse. In a passage fraught with ironic overtones, Criseyde addresses Troilus on the proper attitude toward Fortune:

Thus maketh vertu of necessite
 By pacience, and thynk that lord is he
 Of Fortune ay, that naught wole of hire recche;
 And she ne daunteth no wight but a wrecche. (IV,1586-9)

Criseyde's immediate meaning is simply that she will defy this cruel whim of Fortune by returning of her own volition in ten days. The massive irony inherent in her wisdom is the truth she expounds without comprehension, for if Troilus had refused to heed Fortune he would now still be a "lord" instead of "a wrecche".

II

In the concluding lines of the prologue to Book IV Chaucer promises to complete his story:

For how Criseyde Troilus forsook,
 Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde,
 Moot hennesforth ben matere of my book. (IV,15-7)

These lines are in essence a recapitulation of the pronouncement made early in the first prologue:

In which ye may the double sorwes here
 Of Troilus in lovyng of Criseyde,
 And how that she forsook hym er she deyde. (I,54-6)

Chaucer's manifestation of compassion in the early lines of the poem finds full expression in Book IV:

Allas! that they sholde evere cause fynde
 To speke hire harm, and if they on hire lye,
 Iwis, hemsself sholde han the vilanye. (IV,19-21)

These words reveal the true spirit of charity--a forgiveness of the sinner in spite of the sin--for Criseyde's deception of Troilus has already been forecast in relation to Fortune's wheel: "And on hire whiel she sette up Diomedes" (IV,11).

All the "machinery" stands ready at the commencement of Book IV for the conclusion of the tragic tale, the fulfillment of the circular movement "Fro wo to wele and after out of joie".

Since Book V does not contain a prologue, the preface to Book IV is the final one of the entire poem. The absence of a prologue to Book V as well as the phrase "This ilke ferthe book" (IV,26) has led to the speculation that Chaucer intended to complete his work in four books, but discovered he had sufficient material for a fifth. This observation hardly seems plausible, especially in view of the classical symmetry and structural balance which make the poem such an architectonic delight. What seems more likely is that Chaucer intended a five book structure, but with the introduction of Fortune, a deity of such omniscient power, he did not require a final prologue or invocation for the fifth Book. When Troilus casts himself on Fortune's mercy, he is subject to the relentless revolutions of her wheel; he has reached the zenith of Fortune's favour in Book III and now must suffer the alternate side of her capricious dual nature. The rotation of Fortune's wheel is inexorable and with its downward sweep the final action of the poem is cast proceeding swiftly and unalterably. A prologue to Book V would be superfluous since the remaining events,

hinging on fickle Fortune, have already been precipitated in the prologue to Book IV. The reference to "ilke ferthe book" occurs in the final verse of this prologue and relates specifically to the ensuing Book; the first three verses of the prologue, however, which invoke Fortune are related to the events of Books IV and V and generate the action of the remainder of the poem thereby eliminating the need of a prologue to Book V.

Although all the subsequent action is dominated by the goddess Fortune, other deities are invoked by Chaucer for the alleged purpose of divine inspiration:

O ye Herynes, Nyghtes doughtren thre,
 That endeles compleignen evere in pyne,
 Megera, Alete, and ek Thesiphone;
 Thow cruel Mars ek, fader to Quyryne,
 This ilke ferthe book me helpeth fyne. (IV,22-6)

With the invocation of the "Herynes, Nyghtes doughtren thre" the circular movement of the action draws near its completion for Thesiphone, the presiding figure of Book I, is reinvoked for Book IV. As well as being a direct answer to Troilus' curse on the "the dayes light" (III,1701) the invocation of Thesiphone recalls the three major themes which find expression in her diverse character. The themes of concupiscent love, fraternal disloyalty and treacherous speech all of which are inherent in Thesiphone's role, have developed concurrently with the rising action of the Troilus and Criseyde.

For inspiration in the denouement, all three sisters, Thesiphone, Alecto and Megara are invoked, augmenting the sense of foreboding and imminent crisis. The etymologies of Alecto and Megara, recorded by Fulgentius, Boccaccio and the Vatican mythographers are: "Alecto enim Grece inpausabilis dicitur. . . Megara autem quasi megale eris, id est magna contentio" (See pp. 10-14). As Trivet interprets the same: "Alecto means 'incessant' and signifies cupidity . . . Megara means 'great contention' and signifies wrath."³¹ It is significant that at this juncture Chaucer invokes all three Furies, naming them each individually. Just as Thesiphone's role is highly specialized, so are the functions of her sisters. Alecto who inspires cupidity, the eager desire of worldly wealth, also infuses her victims with sensations of jealousy when possession of the treasure is frustrated. Criseyde has become Troilus' "worldly wealth" and over half of the poem is devoted to his obtaining "possession of the treasure"; however, with the invocation of Alecto, and the subsequent parting of the lovers, jealousy enters the scene:

Therwith the wikked spirit, God us blesse,-
 Which that men clepeth the woode jalousie,
 Gan in hym crepe, in al this hevynesse;
 For which, by cause he wolde soone dye,
 He ne et ne drank, for his malencolye,
 And ek from every compaignye he fledde:
 This was the lif that al the tyme he ledde. (V, 1212-18)

31

D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, p. 474.

Troilus is now overcome by an insane jealousy which is the direct result of his concupiscent desires and the invocation of Alecto.

"In al this hevynesse"(V,1214) Megara, the third sister, can function with efficiency, for her influence which creates wrath has the propensity to change quickly into vengeance. When Troilus receives Criseyde's final letter, he at last concedes that "she/Nas nought so kynde as that hire oughte be" (V,1642-3); but when he sees his brooch--a farewell gift to his lady--pinned on Diomedes's sleeve, his wrath is without bounds. Megara reigns supreme as grief, fury and vengeance seize the stricken prince:

"Now God," quod he, "me sende yet the grace
That I may meten with this Diomedes!
And trewely, if I have myght and space,
Yet shal I make, I hope, his sydes blede."(V,1702-5)

As recorded by Isidore of Seville an attack by the Furies makes the individual heedless of reputation or personal safety; this influence is verified by Troilus in his own words:

"And certeynly; withouten moorespeche,
From hennesforth, as ferforth as I may,
Myn owen deth in armes wol I seche,"(V,1716-18)

The truly honourable death of a Trojan prince is recorded in the death of Hector who loses his life in the supreme act of patriotism:

But on a day to fighten gan he wende,
At which, allas! he caught his lyves ende.

For which me thynketh every manere wight
 That haunteth armes oughte to biwaille
 The deth of hym that was so noble a knyght;
 For as he drough a kyng by th'aventaille,
 Unwar of this, Achilles thorough the maille
 And thorough the body gan hym for to ryve;
 And thus this worthi knyght was brought of lyve. (V,1553-61)

Hector's death in defence of his native Troy is quite different from Troilus' deliberately suicidal mission. Troilus' behaviour is the result of concupiscent love which has dominated him from the outset, the kind of love inspired by Thesiphone; but the outcome of this love in jealousy and in vengeance needs the combined influence of Alecto and Megara.

As well as the Furies, Chaucer invokes Mars for poetic inspiration:

Thow cruel Mars ek, fader to Quyryne,
 This ilke ferthe book me helpeth fyne,
 So that the losse of lyf and love yfeere
 Of Troilus be fully shewed heere. (IV,25-8)

The traditional Mars is the bellicose god of war whose presence is always manifested at the scene of battle. In The Knight's Tale as the noble Theseus rides to Thebes on his freedom mission, his banner is described as having the insignia of Mars:

The rede statue of Mars, with spere and targe,
 So shyneth in his white baner large,
 That alle the feeldes glyteren up and doun. (KnT, 975-7)

The Mars of Theseus is the god of war, who has, nevertheless, another aspect which is also revealed in The Knight's Tale. Arcita, overcome by his passion for Emelye, prays to Mars for

success in battle; his prayer is answered, but is followed immediately by his sudden death. At the instigation of Pluto, "a furie infernal" (KnT, 2684) springs from the ground, frightening Arcita's horse and causing his death; this is one of the same Furies who play so important a role in the Troilus and Criseyde. As Robertson expresses it: "concupiscence frustrated leads to wrath which in time causes self-destruction";³² Mars in this role is quite different from the Mars of Theseus in that he aids and abets concupiscent love (as does Thesiphone) but then rewards the victim with self-slaughter. This is the same Mars who is himself subdued by Venus: "Ye fierse Mars, apaisen of his ire" (III,22); but his subjection to Venus is an inversion of the hierarchy which leads to Mars' own domination and virtual self-destruction. The death of Arcita is analogous to Troilus' suicidal mission and is the direct result of subjection to passion. Calamity and disaster are all presaged in the invocations of the Furies and of Mars in whose combined roles is inherent the stark tragedy of the "double sorwe of Troilus." (I,1)

32

D. W. Robertson, A Preface to Chaucer, p.110.

III

Chaucer promises to reveal the "losse of lyf and love yfeere" (IV,27) of Troilus; as Book IV unfolds, the "machinery" is set for the exchange of Criseyde, thereby effecting the second "losse" of love. The first "losse of lyf" is virtually realized in the closing lines of Book IV:

For mannes hed ymagynen ne kan,
N'entendement considere, he tonge telle
The cruele peynes of this sorwful man,
That passen every torment down in helle.
For whan he saugh that she ne myghte dwelle,
Which that his soule out of his herte rente,
Withouten more, out of the chaumbre he wente. (IV,1695-1701)

"His soule out of his herte rente" expresses in highly figurative language what is in reality the death of the protagonist for in bequeathing his soul to Criseyde, he destines himself to instant death when she forsakes him. Spiritually, Troilus is already dead; his physical death will be transacted by the Parcae, another family of pagan sisters operative in the affairs of mortals:

Aprochen gan the fatal destyne
That Joves hath in disposicioun,
And to yow, angry Parcas, sustren thre,
Committeth, to don execucioun;
For which Criseyde moste out of the town,
And Troilus shal dwellen forth in pyne
Til Lachesis his thred no lenger twyne. (V,1-7)

Although Book V has no preface, this first verse sets the stage in much the same way as the prologues of the previous Books. The traditional role of the Parcae is described by Isidore of Seville: "Quas tres esse voluerunt: unam, quae vitam hominis ordiatur; alteram, quae contexit; tertiam, quae

rumpat."³³ These three sisters, Clotho, Lachesis and Atropos, spin the course of man's life on their spindle, selecting his time of birth and his time of departure. The moment of death is decreed by Atropos who snips the thread of life thus releasing man from his mortal coil. Since the Fates are closely associated with the goddess Fortune, it is significant that they introduce Book V, the action of which has already been ordained by their fickle mistress.

A passage in Book V which requires due consideration is the narrative of Cassandra in which she claims that her purpose is to show "how that Fortune overthrowe / Hath lordes olde; thorough which, withinne a throwe / Thow wel this boor shalt knowe" (V,1460-2). The "boor" she refers to is the wild boar from Troilus' nightmare:

So on a day he leyde hym down to clepe,
 And so byfel that in his slep hym thoughte
 That in a forest faste he welk to wepe
 For love of here that hym these peynes wroughte;
 And up and down as he the forest soughte,
 He mette he saugh a bor with tuskes grete,
 That slepte ayeyn the bryghte sonnes hete.

And by this bor, fast in his armes folde,
 Lay, kissing ay, his lady bryght, Criseyde. (V,1233-41)

This dream which is symptomatic of Troilus' deteriorating mental state, is immediately interpreted correctly by the brooding lover; but Pandarus, refusing to believe his niece's

³³ Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae, Vol.I,VIII,xi,93.

infidelity, and attempting to soothe his friend's agitation, suggests alternative interpretations. The final decision is to summon Cassandra, Troilus' sister, who has been endowed with the special gift of prophesy and insight and will be able to discern more readily the meaning of the vision. Cassandra's reply is a lengthy one, for she elects to relate the outstanding tales of Thebes and "how that Fortune overthrewe/ Hath lordes olde".

Cassandra's entire discourse on Thebes (V,1464-1519) is an addition by Chaucer to his source. In Il Filostrato Troilo simply interprets his own dream, and the aura of drama which is associated with Chaucer's handling of the same incident, is kept to a bare minimum. Cassandra appears in Il Filostrato not to interpret the dream, but to deliver, unflinchingly, a scathing rebuke of Troilo and his actions"

"Brother, grievously has thou felt, as I hear, accursed love, which shall be the ruin of us all, as we might see if we would. And yet, since thus it had to be, would that thou hadst given thy love to a noble lady, thou, who hast let thyself waste away for the daughter of a rascally priest, a man of evil life, and little worth. Behold the son of an illustrious king spending his life in woe and weeping because Criseida has left him."³⁴

The naked truth of Cassandra's words is more than Troilo's tortured soul can bear; because he has virtually squandered

³⁴ R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, p.117-8.

his birthright in grief over his love; unable to face reality, Troilo's only recourse is to curse Cassandra and her "lies".

Walter C. Curry notes that "Cassandra's elaborate exposition of the vision, is introduced independently by Chaucer",³⁵ but then he aborts his entire discovery with this conclusion: "In this manner Chaucer strengthens our impression that the destiny prepared for Troilus is inescapable."³⁶ The converse of this conclusion is as defensible for just as the "lordes olde" could have avoided Fortune's whims, so could have Troilus. The rebuke of Chaucer's Cassandra is just as severe as is Boccaccio's, but is so well disguised as a commentary on Fortune that few critics seem to perceive either the similarities or the implications.

Cassandra's narrative, for purposes of examination can be divided into three sections: the first about Diana; the second concerning Meleagre, the third regarding the siege of Thebes. The tale about Diana explains why the goddess was incensed with the Greeks and what she did as revenge:

"Diane, which that wroth was and in ire
 For Grekis nolde don hire sacrificise,
 Ne encens upon hire auter sette afire,
 She, for that Grekis gonne hire so despise,
 Wrak hire in a wonder cruel wise;
 For with a boor as gret as ox in stalle
 She made up frete hire corn and vynes alle." (V, 1464-70)

³⁵ W. C. Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde", p.60.

³⁶ Ibid., p.61.

Since the Greeks had shirked their sacrificial obligations to Diana, she took her revenge by terrorizing them with a fierce boar which created havoc by eating the produce of the land and by savagely killing any human defenders.

Meleagre's tale revolves around his fascination for "a mayde", his triumphant slaying of the boar and the murder of his two uncles:

"To sle this boor was al the contre rayسد,
 Amonges which ther com, this boor to se,
 A mayde, oon of this world the beste ypreysed;
 And Meleagre, lord of that contree,
 He loved so this fresshe mayden free,
 That with his manhod, er he wolde stente,
 This boor he slough, and hire the hed he sente;

"Of which, as olde bokes tellen us,
 Ther ros a contek and a gret envye;
 And of this lord descended Tideus
 By ligne, or ellis olde bookes lye.
 But how this Meleagre gan to dye
 Thorough his moder, wol I yow naught telle,
 For al to longe it were for to dwelle." (V,1471-84)

Although Cassandra necessarily compresses the tale, the main points are nevertheless clearly stated. Meleagre, "lord of that contree" becomes so enamoured by "a mayde, oon of this world the best ypreysed" (V,1473) that he risks his life in combat with the boar in order to win the esteem of "this fresshe mayden free". (V,1475). When he succeeds in slaying the boar, he sends to the "fresshe mayden" (Atalanta) the head--a tribute of great respect. This action so infuriates Meleagre's uncles Plexippus and Toxeus, that "ther ros a contek anda gret envye" (V,1479);

the ensuing "contek" results in the murder of the uncles by Meleagre and subsequently his own death at the will of his mother, the grief-stricken sister of the slaughtered Flexippus and Toxeus. There is a subtle shift in emphasis from Chaucer's source in The Metamorphoses; in Ovid, Atalanta, a huntress, scores the first hit on the boar thereby inciting the jealousy of the male hunters; and although Meleagre finally kills the boar, she actually earns the tribute of the severed head by her hunting skill. Ovid also emphasizes the passionate element of the tale: "As soon as his (Meleagre's) eyes fell on her (Atalanta) the Calydonian hero straightway longed for her . . . he felt the flames of love steal through his heart."³⁷ Chaucer, however, chooses to omit the "huntress" aspect of Atalanta's role, making the tale centre on Meleager's passion and the subsequent murders.

The third phase and the longest of Cassandra's narrative centres on the siege of Thebes, its cause and results. The Theban romance, already alluded to in the opening of Book II is now given a thorough reworking following closely the Thebaid of Statius. Polynices and Eteocles, sons (and brothers) of Oedipus, agree to rule Thebes alternate years; however, when the first year expires, Eteocles refuses to relinquish control to his brother. While in exile from Thebes, Polynices becomes

³⁷ Ovid, The Metamorphoses, I, 429.

the "felawe" or sworn brother of Tydeus; in true brotherly spirit, quite unlike the feuding of the natural brothers, Tydeus leads a band to Thebes to protest on behalf of the wronged Polynices:

She tolde ek how Tideus, er she stente,
 Unto the stronge citee of Thebes,
 To cleyment kyngdom of the citee, wente,
 For his felawe, daun Polymytes,
 Of which the brother, daun Ethiocles,
 Ful wrongfully of Thebes held the strengthe;
 This tolde she by proces, al by lengthe. (V,1485-91)

Cassandra stresses the heroism of Tydeus who "slough fifty knyghtes stoute" (V,1493) and praises the valiant though vain efforts of the "seven kynges" (V,1495). She concludes her tale of Thebes by recounting the dual fratricide and the burning of the town:

She gan ek telle hym how that eyther brother,
 Ethiocles and Polymyte also,
 At a scarmuche ech of hem slough other,
 And of Argyves wepyng and hire wo;
 And how the town was brent, she tolde ek tho.
 And so descendeth down from gestes olde
 To Diomede, and thus she spak and tolde. (V,1506-12)

Cassandra's initial purpose of interpreting the identity of the boar is at last fulfilled:

"This ilke boor bitokneth Diomede,
 Tideus sone, that down descended is
 Fro Meleagre, that made the boor to blede.
 And thy lady, wherso she be, ywis,
 This Diomede hire herte hath, and she his.
 Wep if thow wolt, or lef! For, out of doute,
 This Diomede is inne, and thow art oute." (V,1513-9)

After fifty-six lines of poetry, Cassandra finally arrives at the point of her whole discourse--the identity of Diomede.

But this climactic revelation concerning Diomedes need not have been preceded by such a lengthy digression on the romance of Thebes; even Cassandra's alleged reason of showing how "that Fortune overthrowe/Hath lordes olde" does not seem to merit this extensive discourse. Yet the placement of this passage so close to the conclusion of the entire poem strongly suggests that Chaucer had basic and vital reasons for its inclusion.

An evaluation of each of these tales considering their outcomes and their motivations may shed light on a perplexing matter. As already observed, Cassandra's narration hinges on three separate tales--one about Diana, one about Meleagre, one about the siege of Thebes; it is noteworthy that the first involves a deity, the second a mortal and the third a political situation. All of these stories end in bloodshed; Diana's revenge causes the death of noble Greeks; Meleagre murders his uncles and is in turn violently killed; the siege of Thebes results in the slaughter of many valiant warriors as well as the dual fratricide. All of these conclusions are violent, bloody and tragic.

What is not so readily apparent, however, are the basic causes of these awesome events; nevertheless, a careful consideration of the three tales, individually, reveals three basic reasons for the subsequent tragedies. The cause of Diana's

wrath is that "Grekis nolde don hire sacrificise" (V,1465); therefore, the Greeks were negligent in their responsibility to their deity and their plight is due directly to irresponsibility. The first basic cause of these tragedies is the shirking of duty. The cause of Meleagre's double murders and his own surcease is not the boar, but his lust for Atalanta whom "He loved so this fresshe mayden free"(V,1475). His insistence that the boar's head be given to Atalanta triggers the immediate melee, but the basic cause of the strife is Meleager's lustful passion. The second cause of tragedy is blind lust. The cause of the siege of Thebes and the ensuing violence and bloodshed is due directly to the disloyalty of brothers and the hatred of kinsmen. The cause of this tragedy, therefore, is fraternal treachery. Collectively, the causes of the three tragedies related to Diana, Meleagre and Thebes, are respectively, the shirking of duty, blind lust and brotherly treachery.

In a deft stroke, Chaucer has summarized the entire tragedy of Troilus and Criseyde in terms of Theban romance for Troilus, the hero, is guilty of these same three offenses. He is first seen in the temple admiring Criseyde, not sacrificing to Pallas; his purpose in slaying Greeks is to impress his lady, not to defend his besieged Troy; his feigned illness in order to woo his lady is perpetrated at a time of national crisis. Troilus is guilty of shirking duty on all sides--religious, moral and national.

That he is guilty of blind lust in the pursuit of Criseyde has already been firmly established (Chap.III). His duplicity in his relationship with Deiphebus makes him guilty of a type of treachery perhaps not so violent as that of Polynices and Eteocles, but degrading, nevertheless, for one of his royal stature. Not to be dismissed lightly is the oath he utters against his whole family when he senses Fortune's changing countenance:

"Allas, Fortune! if that my lif in joie
 Displeased hadde unto thi foule envye,
 Why ne haddestow my fader, kyng of Troye,
 Byraft the lif, or don my bretheren dye,
 Or slayn myself, that thus compleyne and crye."(IV,274-8)

This awesome curse, which is soon fully granted, places Troilus in the ranks of Oedipus, the classic figure of tragic patricide, and it is ironic that only a few lines later, Troilus utters these words:

Ne nevere wol I seen it shyne or reyne,
 But ende I wol, as Edippe, in derknesse
 My sorrowful lif, and dyen in distresse.(IV,299-301)

This is a most proleptic passage, because Troilus, already in spiritual darkness, is figuratively as blind as the tragic Oedipus and his life will soon end in the same misery and "distresse". Therefore, the shirking of duty, blind lust and brotherly treachery are all traits present in Troilus' progressively deteriorating character. Cassandra, as her predecessor in Il Filostrato, knows the state of her brother's decline and warns him in this allegorical mode of the tragedies he invites by his degenerate behaviour.

Cassandra's narrative also has implications for Troy which is in the same state of moral deterioration as Troilus. Pleading for his daughter's ransom, Calkas comments on Troy's history:

"For certein, Phebus and Neptunus bothe,
That makeden the walles of the town,
Ben with the folk of Troie alwey so wrothe,
That they wol brynge it to confusioun,
Right in despit of kyng Lameadoun,
Bycause he nolde payen hem here hire,
The town of Troie shal ben set on-fire."(IV,120-6)

According to Calkas, Troy's doom is due directly to a refusal by the early founder to make proper restitution to the gods. Since this passage is an addition to his source in Boccaccio, Chaucer undoubtedly meant this neglect of payment to have vital significance. The Trojans' spurning of Phebus and Neptune is analogous to the Greeks' spurning of Diana; both the Trojans and the Greeks are guilty of irresponsibility or shirking of duty. Just as Troy is to burn because of divine wrath, so in Cassandra's tale "the town was brent" (V,1510). Since Thebes' burning is not found in Statius (Chaucer's source for this portion) and is another variation by Chaucer, it seems conclusive that he was very much concerned to parallel the histories and the progressive deterioration of both cities.

The integral relationship between lust and national crisis was readily apparent even to Troilus:

"First, syn thow woost this town hath al this werre
For ravysshing of wommen so by myght,
It sholde nought be suffred me to erre,
As it stant now, ne don so gret unright."(IV,547-50)

The rape and seduction of Helen by Paris had triggered the Trojan war and was the continued cause of strife and slaughter. The "ravysshyng of wommen" by Paris is analogous to Meleagre's pursuit of Atalanta in that neither prince nor lord considered either the exigencies or the consequences of their lustful actions. The "fruits" of blind lust in Paris' case are the futile deaths of countless valiant Trojans; the immediate results of Meleagre's lust are the murders of his uncles. Yet Chaucer is emphatic about the ancestry of Tydeus, the hero of the siege of Thebes:

"Of which, as olde bokes tellen us,
 Ther ros a contek and a gret envye;
 And of this lord descended Tideus
 By ligne, or ellis olde bookes lye."(V,1478-81)

The connection is drawn between Tydeus and the lustful Meleagre in such a way that the sordid events of the Theban conflict are related to Meleagre if not indirectly made his responsibility. The two cities, Troy and Thebes, become the hapless victims of blind lust.

On the political level, Troy is in dire straits, for Troilus, Paris and Deiphebus, the Trojan princes, are all far more vitally concerned with their paramours than with the affairs of state. With the younger brothers of the royal house so deeply engrossed in petty scheming, Hector faces an impossible task. "We usen here no wommen to to selle" (IV,182) is his

stirring pronouncement in parliament regarding Criseyde's exchange, but his is indeed a "voice in the wilderness" for his disinterested benevolence will soon be drowned out by the clamour of dissent. Hector's wisdom is challenged openly with the result that Criseyde is traded for Antenor, the traitor who will eventually cause the downfall of Troy. Pandarus, the trusted friend and confidant of King Priam as well as the princes, offers this advice to Troilus:

"Forthi ris up, as nought ne were, anon,
And wassh thi face, and to the kyng thow wende,
Or he may wondren whider thow art goon.
Thow most with wisdom hym and othere blende." (IV, 645-8)

The final line, "Thow most with wisdom hym and othere blende", is the sad commentary on the type of relationships rampant among the members of the royal establishment. Pandarus and Troilus are not brothers, but terms of brotherly affection are used so flippantly by them both that they become devoid of meaning, exhibiting a hollowness which is symptomatic of the decaying social and political situation of Troy. Troy in its state of political chaos is certainly analogous to Thebes which is rent assunder by the curse of Oedipus and the resultant treachery of brothers. Therefore, on the national level, Troy itself is guilty of shirking duty (to Phebus and Apollo), of blind lust (Paris and Helen) and of treachery (social and political chaos).

With a deft stroke, Cassandra's narrative links the respective fates of Thebes, Troilus and Troy; although masked under the guise of Fortune, the narrative in reality sermonizes on the folly of the shirking of duty, the pursuing of blind lust, and the dishonouring of one's kinsmen. Cassandra's purpose in Il Filostrato, as already noted, is to denounce Troilo's foolish behaviour; she fulfils the same purpose in Troilus and Criseyde but her range of perception is expanded to include Thebes and Troy thereby giving the poem an historical perspective and a universality which enriches and intensifies its thematic value. Immediately after Cassandra is summarily dismissed by the irate Troilus, Chaucer states:

Fortune which that permutacioun
Of thynges hath, as it is hire comitted
Thorough purveyaunce and disposicioun
Of heighe Jove, as regnes shal be flitted
Fro folk in folk, or when they shal be smytted,
Gan pulle away the fetheres brighte of Troie
Fro day to day, til they ben bare of joie. (V, 1541-7)

In this passage, the destinies of Troy and Troilus are drawn relentlessly into the same orbit; Fortune, which "gan pulle away the fetheres brighte of Troie" is again described as subordinate to "heighe Jove". Consequently, the ignoring of Fortune's "permutacioun/Of thynges" is an inherent possibility but one which Fortune's "foles", whether Theban or Trojan, never consider much less comprehend.

THE EPILOGUE

The most meticulously analyzed and most widely reviewed section of the Troilus and Criseyde is the epilogue, the name commonly assigned to the final twelve verses. Structurally the epilogue and the four prologues are complementary in that they frame the poem as a whole lending a sense of architectural balance; thematically, the epilogue finalizes the events which have been initiated in the foregoing introductions. Although most penetrating studies of the Troilus and Criseyde include some references to the epilogue, the one exception is The Allegory of Love in which C. S. Lewis refrains entirely from any comment--indeed refuses to acknowledge its existence. Roger Sharrock, in an astute analysis of Lewis' Allegory of Love and the glaring omission states: "The quest of courtly love from its source to the sea of modern love-marriage which is the thrilling theme of Lewis's book has in this chapter distorted the balance of his fine perceptions: he has ignored the fact that into its Chaucerian tributary there flowed another and a more powerful stream."¹ This "more powerful stream", the stream of Christian love, is described by John P. McCall:

"In the closing stanzas Chaucer directs our attention not only to Troilus, now departed, and to Troy, now in grief, but also

¹ Roger Sharrock, "Second Thoughts: C. S. Lewis on Chaucer's Troilus", EIC, VIII (1958), 137.

to the relationship of both to the awesome facts of the after-life, and the redemptive love of Christ".² Sharrock and McCall freely acknowledge the Christian content of the epilogue-- a concept which fails to adapt itself to Lewis' "quest of courtly love".

Critical theories vary widely in scope expressing diverse opinions on the interpretation and the value of the epilogue. Boyd A. Wise³ shows the similarities with the envoy of The Thebaid proving conclusively the extensive influence of Statius on Chaucer. The classic analysis of the epilogue is presented by John Tatlock who divides the twelve verses into six thematic sections tracing their respective sources and meanings; his final verdict, however, seems to be one of disillusionment for he concludes that: "The feeling in the Epilog is in no way foreshadowed at the beginning or elsewhere; it does not illumine or modify; it contradicts . . . he tells the whole story in one mood and ends in another".⁴ The polarity of feeling engendered by the epilogue is evident from the two disparate views of Theodore Stroud and Morton Bloomfield when the former calls it a "palinode"⁵ and the latter calls it a

² John P. McCall, "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's Troilus", p.274.

³ Boyd A. Wise, Influence of Statius Upon Chaucer, p.36.

⁴ John S. Tatlock, "The Epilog of Chaucer's Troilus", MP, XVIII (April 1921), p.636.

⁵ Theodore Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus", p.123.

"peroration".⁶ Walter C. Curry terms the epilogue "a sorry performance"⁷ while E. Talbot Donaldson suggests that it is in reality an eighteen verse epilogue which "leads up, not to Christ, son of God, but to his mother, daughter of Eve".⁸ In this manner the dispute rages and will continue to do so as long as literary criticism flourishes. Perhaps one of the most rational assessments of the epilogue was presented nearly twenty years ago by John Speirs: "There is no ground whatever for supposing that these stanzas are a moralitas added . . . it is distinctively mediaeval, and makes explicit what has without doubt been implicit throughout the poem--a portion of Chaucer's mediaeval gravity--that above the human love is to be set the love of God."⁹

By recalling that this is the same poet who later composed The Tale of Melibee and The Parson's Tale, the two tales which by their philosophical and religious didacticism give The Canterbury Tales its spiritual core, it should be quite possible to conceive of Chaucer composing a conclusion to his Troilus which would summarize and illuminate the foregoing events. It is highly significant that the three themes inherent in the role of Thesiphone are analogous to the three themes developed in

⁶ Morton Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde", p.201.

⁷ Walter Clyde Curry, "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde, p.66.

⁸ E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Ending of Chaucer's Troilus", Early English and Norse Studies (Methuen: 1963), p.45.

⁹ John Speirs, Chaucer the Maker, p.80.

Cassandra's narrative. The concupiscent love inspired by Thesiphone is the same blind passion which seizes Meleagre; the fraternal disorder incited by Thesiphone is the same hostility bred between the Theban brothers; the treachery fostered by Thesiphone involves a spurning of basic loyalties and responsibilities which is paralleled in the Greeks' shirking of their sacrificial rites and spiritual obligations. The three themes of concupiscence, fraternal malice and treachery which are developed throughout the course of the poem all culminate in the epilogue which offers alternate choices or attitudes based on Christian Doctrine.

When Troilus is slain, he is swiftly transported to a sphere from which he looks back on earth and contemplates the scene he has just left:

And down from thennes faste he gan avyse
 This litel spot of erthe, that with the se
 Embraced is, and fully gan despise
 This wrecched world, and held al vanite
 To respect of the pleyn felicite
 That is in hevене above; and at the laste,
 Ther he was slayn, his loking down he caste.

And in hymself he lough right at the wo
 Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste;
 And dampned aloure werk that foloweth so
 The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste,
 And sholden aloure herte on heven caste.
 And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,
 Ther as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle. (V, 1814-27)

Troilus laughs at the "wo" of his mourners and scorns the "blynde lust" which is pursued so eagerly by mortals; the ephemeral quality of human love finds its eternal counterpart when "aloure herte on heven [is] caste". Troilus has not undergone

love's "ennoblement"¹⁰ nor is he "our saint";¹¹ he has merely become enlightened by the opportunity for objective retrospection. As the true object of devotion is found in "that sothefast Crist", so the proper attitude is to

loveth hym, the which that right for love
Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
First starf, and roos, and sit in hevене above. (V,1842-4)

The answer to "blynde lust" is dedication to the most exalted, the most noble, the most abiding of Loves found in "hevене above".

Another theme running throughout the Troilus and Criseyde is the buying and selling of love. Introduced in the prologue to Book II, in "so nold I nat love purchace" (II,33), the theme re-emerges in Book IV as Troilus declares of Criseyde that he "may hire nought purchace" (IV,557). In Hector's resounding proclamation "We usen here no women for to selle" (IV,182) is the same theme used, however, in a stroke of scintillating irony for although he speaks with the most noble of intentions his younger brothers are motivated by far less honourable traits. In the "sothefast Crist" is found the only pure Love, the Love which died upon a cross "oure soules for to beye". Since Troilus has already sold his soul to Criseyde in the worthless pursuit of "blinde lust", he must forego his heavenly reward accepting instead his seat in the pagan "spere" of purgation, "Ther as

¹⁰ Peter Heidtmann, "Sex and Salvation in Troilus and Criseyde", Chaucer Review, II,1, (Summer, 1967), 246.

¹¹ Theodore Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus", p.128.

Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle". There is no inherent anachronism since Troilus is not conducted to heaven by choirs of angels but is guided by a pagan psychopomp to a pagan realm for pagan purification. This doctrine of Christian salvation is not for Troilus' benefit, but is offered specifically to Chaucer's contemporaries:

O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she
 In which that love up groweth with youre age,
 Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanyte,
 And of youre herte up casteth the visage
 To thilke God that after his ymage
 Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
 This world, that passeth sbone as floures faire.
 (V,1835-41)

If young lovers will shun "worldly vanyte" regarding it as transient as the "floures faire", and cast their attentions instead on "the visage" of God, then they will find real Love, and true salvation in Him Who died "oure soules for to beye" (V,1843).

The two themes of fraternal hatred and treacherous speech which run concurrently throughout the poem find mutual expression in the epilogue: "Such fyn bath false worldes brotelnesse!" (V,1832) Yet each theme also finds fulfillment in the promise of steadfast loyalty and gracious beneficence:

For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
 That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
 And syn he best to love is and most meke,
 What nedeth feynede loves for to seke? (V,1845-8)

The Troilus and Criseyde abounds in "feynede loves" ranging from the fabrication of brotherly affection to the rank pretense

of the faithless mistress. Standing in stark contrast to Pandarus' wily scheming, Troilus' willing involvement and Criseyde's cruel deception is the promise that " he [Christ] nyl falsen no wight". Abiding loyalty can only be found in devotion to "that sothefast Crist" in Whom is manifested the true spirit of brotherhood--the brotherhood which is revealed by Hector the noble pagan, whose motivations always stem from disinterested benevolence. In Hector rests the pagan exemplar of Christian love, truth and honour; this is not to imply that Hector is a Christ figure, but only that as a virtuous pagan he demonstrates Christ-like characteristics. The dual themes of fraternal malice and treacherous speech find a mutual resolution in the example of true brotherhood manifested by the "sothefast Crist".

The series of charges against "payens corsed olde rites" (V,1849) and "Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!" (V,1853) is not to be construed as a condemnation of paganism. The survival of the pagan gods in such disparate fields as astrology, astronomy, art, architecture and literature, offered no threat to fourteenth century Christianity and as such did not incur this poet's righteous indignation. In the epilogue, Chaucer's concern is for the "yonge, fresshe folkes" like Troilus who may mistake "worldly vanyte" for "hevene above", and who may misconstrue the ephemeral for the eternal.

Chaucer's anxiety is directed more toward social than religious problems for he perceives in the society of fourteenth century England the same seeds of decay which destroyed the Trojan dynasty. "Hence the picture of ancient Troy is a kind of mirror image of Chaucer's own world, strange but familiar, lost in the past but rooted in the present".¹² The problem of medieval England is not paganism but the general laxity in the social mores--a laxity which can only be resolved by dedication to Christ and Christian principles.

Directing his poem for due consideration to the "moral Gover" and to the "philosophical Strode", Chaucer concludes the Troilus and Criseyde with a doxology to the Trinity, the first three lines of which are a paraphrase of Dante's Paradiso (XIV,28-30):

Thow oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve,
 That regnest ay in thre, and two, and oon,
 Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscribe,
 Us from visible and invisible foon
 Defende, and to thy mercy, everichon,
 So make us, Jesus, for thi mercy digne,
 For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne. Amen.
 (V,1863-9)

This is the final invocation of the Troilus and Criseyde, an entreaty to the Christian Deity for defence against "visible and invisible foon" (V,1866). The stark simplicity and regular metre of "oon, and two, and thre," with "thre, and two, and oon" create a feeling of stability and order, the implicit suggestion of a sound universe with a firm foundation. The

¹² Donald R. Howard, The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World, (Princeton: 1966), p.114.

basis of the orderly universe is the Trinity, that unique Christian concept of three powers in one holding equal authority. It is significant that Jesus the "mortal" segment of the tripart union is specified in relation to Mary, the "mayde and moder". Chaucer's uncanny sense of subjective and thematic balance is nowhere more keenly felt than here: the poem opens with Thesiphone, a female deity, the inciter of concupiscent love, then concludes with Mary another female, the Christian symbol of virtuous love. Thesiphone and Mary who represent the polarities of love, concupiscent and virtuous, demarcate the introduction and conclusion of the Troilus and Criseyde.

The major themes which are introduced in the prologue to Book I and are developed throughout the poem are resolved in the epilogue. Each prologue initiates the action of the following book just as each invocation sets the mood and controls the atmosphere for ensuing events. Thesiphone fosters concupiscent love, fraternal hostility and treachery. Cleo suggests the implicit didacticism in cultural relativity and in poetic achievement. Venus purports the theme of duality in love, one concupiscent, one virtuous. Calliope, the muse of epic poetry seems strangely out of context in this story of illicit love, yet this is surely Chaucer's ironic humour at its best. Fortune whose fickle nature dominates much of the poem denotes a basic philosophic duality--the belief in destiny or free will.

Alecto and Megara, the ominous sisters of the dread Thesiphone, inspire cupidinous thoughts and wrathful vengeance. Each presiding deity, Thesiphone, Cleo, Venus and Fortune establishes the mood for her respective book but her influence prevails throughout the poem as a whole shaping and directing the development of the predominant themes.

A most significant aspect of the Troilus and Criseyde which is virtually unnoticed, is Chaucer's choice in the invocations of a "female pantheon". All of the deities invoked, Thesiphone, Cleo, Venus, Calliope, Fortune, Megara and Alecto are females with the one exception of Mars; yet the aspect of Mars which is presented in the poem is not the fierce god of war, but the subdued male, dominated by the charms of Venus. Implicit in the Troilus and Criseyde is the stringent condemnation of a society which has allowed the normal hierarchy to become inverted and perverted. Troilus, in allowing himself to become dominated by Criseyde shuns all personal responsibility and political duty; his sin, however, is only a microcosm of the Trojan scene:

Yt is wel wist how that the Grekes, stronge
In armes, with a thousand shippes, wente
To Troiewardes, and the cite longe
Assegeden, neigh ten yer er they stente,
And in diverse wise and oon entente,
The ravysshing to wreken of Eleyne,
By Paris don, they wroughten al hir payne. (I,57-63)

Chaucer alerts his audience in the very first verse of the poem that Troy is under the "governaunce" of females and that

her ruin is inevitable. The "female pantheon" invoked by Chaucer enhances the pervading theme of the folly inherent in a female dominated society. Mars, the one male invoked, is a mere shadow of the once fierce god who in his abject subjugation mirrors the tragedy impinging upon Troilus and upon Troy.

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