

CHAUCER THE LOVE POET:
A STUDY IN HISTORICAL CRITICISM

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an historically based inquiry into the aesthetic function and moral significance of the themes of marriage, fornication, and adultery in Chaucer's poetry about sexual love. Its first aim is to construct a philosophic and historical framework within which to study Chaucer as a love poet and thereby to help dispel the common but fallacious idea that Chaucer's poetic compositions on the subject of love are archetypally and thematically similar to those of the romantic poets of the nineteenth-century. Chaucer's attitude toward love is interpreted as a composite product of the influences of Ovid, St. Augustine, and the Christian Church of the Middle Ages and is shown to be morally incompatible with the idea, popular in the romantic literature of another era, that the world is well lost for love.

The first chapter of the thesis is mainly devoted to an investigation of the salient differences between Chaucer's conception of love, which is in essence abstract moral, and impersonal, and the romantic conception, which tends to be emotional, amoral, and highly subjective. This chapter describes the intellectual background of the distinctively medieval traditions of cosmological love, married

love, and Ovidian love and attempts to interpret the influence of these traditions on the mind and art of Chaucer.

After the first chapter, the focus of discussion becomes much narrower, and descriptive treatment of the history of ideas gives way to close analysis of specific cruxes in love poems like Troilus and Criseyde, the Knight's Tale, and the Parliament of Fowls. These cruxes, which include the problematic function of Chaucer's various apostrophes and invocations to Venus, and the complex moral relationship of Venus to Nature, are examined for their relevance to the question of how Chaucer actually views erotic passion in his great love poetry. The conclusion reached in the second chapter is that the various cruxes treated here can all be resolved by showing that Chaucer consistently subscribes to Augustinian doctrines of nature, grace, and sexual morality.

The third and last chapter of the thesis departs from the conceptual approach to love taken in the previous two in that it adopts a more formalistic and aesthetically orientated mode of criticism. However, this chapter, like the preceding one, concentrates on the elucidation of cruxes and supports its generalizations about Chaucer's artistry through close analysis and attention to poetic detail.

Chapter 3 deals solely with Troilus and Criseyde, analyzing

the concept of "love as an art" to which the poem repeatedly alludes; interpreting dynamics of response in the poem's audience; and discussing the metaphoric association of verbal prevarication with amorous enslavement in the behaviour of Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus. The general conclusion of this chapter, as of the others, is that Chaucer was unquestionably a man of his time -- an orthodox member of the Church and a firm follower of the teachings of St. Augustine in matters of art as in ethics.

To the memory of my father
DONALD GEORGE TREILHARD
May 29, 1925-April 11, 1978

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. THE THEME OF LOVE IN CHAUCER'S POETRY	
1. Courtly Love in Literary Criticism about Chaucer	10
2. Chaucer's Love Poetry: Its Interpretation and Historical Context	35
3. The Tradition of Cosmological Love	48
4. Married Love and Ovidian Love	100
III. NATURE AND LOVE	
1. The Figure of Nature in Chaucer's Love Poetry	131
2. Chaucer's Invocations to Venus	153
3. Nature, Venus and Reason	192
IV. LOVE, LANGUAGE, AND THE ART OF POETRY	
1. Love as an Art in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u> and Other Poems	261
2. The Role of the Audience in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>	
3. Language as a Metaphor for Bondage and Chaos in <u>Troilus and Criseyde</u>	
V. CONCLUSION	376
NOTES	379
SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY	409

INTRODUCTION

I anticipate resentment from some readers for having occasionally applied the word "romantic" to literary criticism which, either consciously or inadvertently, assigns meanings to Chaucer's love poetry that are not indigenous to the intellectual background of the fourteenth century; and since this thesis is the product of an effort to practise what in contradistinction to "romantic" will be referred to as "historical" criticism, I feel an immediate need of forestalling questions by explaining why I have used the slightly ambiguous terms "romantic" and "historical" in the way that I have.

D. W. Robertson Jr., who nearly thirty years ago alerted us to the actual scarcity of historical criticism, defines it as "that kind of literary analysis which seeks to reconstruct the cultural ideas of a period in order to reach a fuller understanding of its literature."¹ Historical criticism is thus not simply literary history or history of ideas; as Robertson points out, "the literary historian . . . is usually preoccupied with purely literary rather than with intellectual traditions", whereas the historian of ideas frequently centers his attention on a single thought pattern so that "his materials only apply to

literature in a very general way, or only to isolated passages." The historical critic is, moreover, not in the ordinary sense a literary critic, for although he possesses the literary critic's interest in the formalistic properties of literature, he distrusts his tendency to interpret older literature in the light of modern psychological, moral, and aesthetic theories. As we become aware of the anachronistic element in interpretations of Chaucer's love poetry that are put forward by literary critics who do not manage to free themselves from the influences of the modern world, we will begin to appreciate the sense in which such interpretations deserve to be classified as romantic rather than historical.

In our present society we view the experience of sexual love from a romantic perspective that is not radically different from that which prevailed during the Victorian era.² Our nineteenth-century ancestors were inclined to elevate love to the status of a transcendental value -- so much so that love represented for them the chief purpose in living -- and as social historians have recognized, the Victorian religion of love was transmitted virtually intact to the cultural milieu of the twentieth century. Joseph Wood Krutch has perceptively observed that scientific twentieth-century treatises on sexuality such as

Havelock Ellis's Studies in the Psychology of Sex, despite maintaining an ostensibly rationalist attitude toward their subject, embody a romantic conviction that "love has its element of transcendental value."³ And it is not necessary to look far in the imaginative literature of our time to find works like Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms which, for all the superficial cynicism in its treatment of nineteenth-century social ideals, still paints an appealing picture of the ideal of romantic love: to the mind of Frederick Henry, the hero of Hemingway's novel, love is, as it was for so many Victorians the one force which can survive the wreckage of entire systems of value to provide a reason for human existence when all else fails. Henry and his beloved, the British nurse Catherine Barkley, ingenuously acknowledge love as a principle of authority beside which the laws of church and state pale into insignificance. Love, as Catherine says, functions as a surrogate religion in her life, a religion which justifies itself and eliminates the need for a normal marriage:

'There's no way to be married except by church or state. We are married privately. You see, darling, it would mean everything to me if I had any religion. But I haven't any religion.'

'You gave me the Saint Anthony.'

"That was for luck. Some one gave it to me."

'Then nothing worries you?'

'Only being sent away from you. You're my religion. You're all I've got.'⁴

Catherine's words express the attitude, so common during the nineteenth century, that men and women can fulfill the purpose of their existence by falling in love and that without love, life itself has no meaning. The literary sources of this attitude, as the historian Walter Houghton points out, are "embodied mainly in the works of Rousseau, Shelley, and George Sand", and are clearly identifiable as Romantic:

The whole attitude is what we call Romantic, and it was, in fact, a direct inheritance from Romanticism: partly from its naturalism, which found the instincts good and appealed to the feelings or the heart as the supreme guide to conduct and wisdom; partly from its idealism whether Platonic or chivalric.⁵

Realizing these facts, the reader of Chaucer must decide how far the romantic attitude toward love ought to determine his response to poetry which antedates the emergence of romanticism by four hundred years. Should he adopt the point of view of the historical critic, he will conclude that romantic ideas do not help us to understand Chaucer because, as Robertson puts it, such ideas "whatever their value may be, do not exist before they are formulated."⁶ In historical terms it is thus inaccurate and "romantic" to think that Chaucer and other medieval authors are celebrating the spontaneous pursuit of sexual instinct

merely because they depict lovers who, contrary to the rules of medieval Christian ethics, allow their feelings to override their reason.

Strangely enough, however, modern critics persist in looking at the subject of love in medieval literature as though medieval authors were familiar with modern romantic notions about naturalism and the purity of sexual instinct. According to one modern historian, the medieval French Roman de la Rose, though written in the thirteenth century, shows its author to be "a pioneer in the cause of modern love" who "intended to stir up trouble in most branches of contemporary society" and who "denounced virginity" and advocated "a thoroughly pagan free love for all."⁷ Another modern writer envisions medieval Europe as a seething bed of sexual frustration whose literature could "never approach the sophistication of earlier or later times", being crippled instead by a prurient obsession with "the topics of adultery and seduction." The same writer goes on to say that medieval Europe was nevertheless shaken by a profound and irresistible revolt against Christian sexual morality -- which revolt proved ultimately successful in ensuring the triumph of man's natural "erotic instincts":

But man is the most highly sexed of all animals. It will always be impossible to thwart the erotic instincts of humanity without causing a distress so dire as to be mortal if it is not met by rebellion. Fortunately for later ages the naturally defiant western mentality, after nearly perishing . . . proved stubborn enough to face and overcome the challenge of a perverse bigotry. The strength of the insurgents won because it was unconscious, a deep amoral urge, not, as the priests proclaimed, a deliberate flouting of decency.⁸

Some of the psycho-sexual phenomena here described will not be unfamiliar to readers of Chaucer. Many of Chaucer's characters, for example, exhibit "a distress so dire as to be mortal" when their sexual impulses are thwarted; one thinks of "hende Nicholas" in the Miller's Tale, who sincerely expects to die unless he can persuade another man's wife to commit adultery with him. Others who find themselves similarly afflicted are Damian in the Merchant's Tale, Aurelius in the Franklin's Tale, and of course Troilus. Yet is it possible to take seriously the suggestion that these characters are the expression of "a deep amoral urge" on the part of Chaucer to "face and overcome the challenge of a perverse bigotry"? Certainly Chaucer's ironic humour and demonstrably moral outlook in the works in which these characters appear would seem to belie his possession of that intention.⁹ And while it is all very well to say that medieval people revolted against the authority of the Church because they knew they would

die if their erotic instincts were not indulged, the fact remains that in earlier centuries, though not so much in modern times, the idea of dying for love was often treated as a joke. Before being carried away by speculations about the causes and "dire" consequences of thwarted love in pre-romantic cultures, we should recall the dispassionate words of Rosalind in As You Like It:

The poor world is almost six thousand years old, and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love-cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club; yet he did what he could to die before, and he is one of the patterns of love. Leander, he would have lived many a fair year, though Hero had turned nun, if it had not been for a hot midsummer night; for, good youth, he went but forth to wash him in the Hellespont and being taken with the cramp was drowned: and the foolish chroniclers of that age found it was "Hero of Sestos". But these are all lies: men have died from time to time and worms have eaten them, but not for love. (IV.i.94-108)

The purpose of the preceding remarks is merely to suggest that one must be cautious about making assumptions about the nature of love in the Middle Ages. It is not safe to state categorically that medieval man's sexual nature was pitted against a "perverse bigotry" and expressed itself as a "deep amoral urge". Such statements, however true they may be of people in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, are less likely to be valid for cultures which were incognizant of romantic doctrines regarding the universal goodness and irresistibility of sexual instinct.

Furthermore, though it may seem perfectly reasonable to us to think that most men respond amorally to subconscious drives, the Middle Ages had no conception of the subconscious equivalent to our own,¹⁰ and thus it is historically inaccurate to define the sexual attitudes of medieval people as products of an agency which for them did not exist.

Because of the current abundance of unhistorical criticism on the subject of medieval love,¹¹ it has been necessary in this thesis to discredit romantic views of Chaucer wherever their influence impedes historical interpretation of his love poetry. As a result, the following chapters contain extensive analysis of the opinions of some of Chaucer's modern critics, and I hope that analysis of this sort will not seem to outweigh the amount of original discussion that accompanies it. I should, nevertheless, point out that new commentary on the subject of love in poems like Troilus and Criseyde and the Knight's Tale has not been my main objective here. Instead, I have sought to synthesize and focus the disorderly elements in our understanding of what love means to Chaucer, separating ideas which are historically sound from those which are not.

The first chapter concerns the medieval intellectual background to Chaucer's ideas on love and the second two deal with the relevance of this background to his poetry. These two chapters I have loosely organized around the themes of "love and nature" and "love and art". There is a parodic purpose in this, for nature and art, like love, were among the great romantic ideals of the nineteenth century,¹² and modern misinterpretation of Chaucer's view of love is generally commensurate with the tendency to misunderstand medieval ideas about nature and art. The second and third chapters, therefore, attempt to interpret the relationship between love and nature and love and art in Chaucer's poetry in a medieval context defined by the Church and the influence of Ovid instead of in romantic terms. If this thesis does anything to enhance the reader's awareness of how necessary historical imagination is for the appreciation of Chaucer's poetry, I will be rewarded with a modest sense of accomplishment.

CHAPTER I

THE THEME OF LOVE IN CHAUCER'S POETRY

1. "Courtly Love" in Literary Criticism

About Chaucer

John Gardner has recently remarked, "In nearly everything he wrote, Chaucer worried one basic philosophical question, the nature and spiritual effect of love. Chaucer wrote, of course, during one of the world's great moments for love poetry; but his handling of love is nevertheless one of the essential ingredients of his uniqueness."¹ While Gardner's statement emphasizes an important truth about Chaucer -- one which provides the subject of this thesis -- it is a statement that requires some interpretation before it can help us to understand Chaucer's poetry. This quickly becomes evident when we pause to consider the differences of opinion that have arisen in the past over the subject of what Chaucer means or does not mean by the word love.

Since the publication in 1936 of C. S. Lewis's classic study in medieval literary tradition, The Allegory of Love, the main lines of opposition among Chaucer's interpreters have been drawn on the issue of whether or not the poet recognized the existence of a literary and

sociological phenomenon known to us in the twentieth century as amour courtois or "courtly love". Although some critics have refused to acknowledge that Chaucer was familiar with this phenomenon, others have resolutely maintained not only that he was, but that he incorporated its principles into his poetry. If, as the state of published criticism suggests,² the controversy over courtly love has grown somewhat stale in the past ten years, its influence still produces sharply divergent interpretations of such poems by Chaucer as Troilus and Criseyde and the Knight's Tale. Having for so long been central to critics' conceptions of Chaucer's identity as a love poet, courtly love, despite its unimportance, in the chapters which follow, must inevitably be taken as the point of departure for our discussion. A summary of the main features of courtly love as it pertains to Chaucer is therefore necessary.

C. S. Lewis, it is well known, argues that in the twelfth century the emotional life of western civilization underwent a profound revolution in which sexual love came to be recognized as an ideal comparable in Christian terms to God's grace. Before this revolution occurred, love, allegedly, was defined very differently -- usually as a political or military bond of the type which existed between lords and vassals. This is how Lewis describes the idea of love that prevailed in Europe until the twelfth century:

"The deepest of worldly emotions in this period is the love of man for man, the mutual love of warriors who die together fighting against odds, and the affection between vassal and lord. . . . Of romance, of reverence for women, of the idealizing imagination exercised about sex, there is hardly a hint. The centre of gravity is elsewhere -- in the hopes and fears of religion, or in the clean and happy fidelities of the feudal hall."³ However, due to causes which Lewis does not specify, the "love of man for man" grew outdated and was replaced by the conventions of courtly love: Humility, Courtesy, and Adultery, as Lewis refers to them.⁴ The average medieval courtly lover is supposed to have practised these conventions by addressing his affections to another man's wife in the hope of obtaining her sexual favours, and, moreover, by showing himself to be slavishly obedient to her most fanciful wishes and ready to pine away to death in the event of her rejecting him.

According to Lewis, courtly love, after being popularized in the courts of Provence, began to permeate the rest of European literature and society, so that by Chaucer's time its ideals and conventions dominated the outlook on love held by the aristocracy in England. Since Chaucer spent most of his life under the protection of various members of the family of Edward III, this would suggest that,

at an early stage in his career as a poet, he would have been exposed to courtly love. Lewis finds the evidence to support such a notion in the content of most of the poetry that Chaucer wrote with the exception of the Canterbury Tales. Troilus and Criseyde, in particular, is seen by Lewis as a poem that Chaucer penned in praise of courtly love with the intention of representing in action the psychology and code of behaviour of courtly lovers.⁵ In Lewis's view, the scene in which Troilus first sees Criseyde and is consequently smitten by Love (I.155-315) is a fulfillment of the requirement for abject suffering on the part of the male that constitutes the conventional basis of courtly love.⁶ The portrait of Criseyde, similarly, is said to be idealized according to the same system of conventions. Criseyde is everything that a woman would have to be to inspire the zealous devotion of a young courtly lover like Troilus. Lewis writes: "In the Criseyde of the first three books Chaucer has painted a touching and beautiful picture of a woman by nature both virtuous and amorous, but above all affectionate. . . ." Lewis subsequently explains that while Criseyde is portrayed as naturally chaste, she nonetheless gets involved in courtly love with Troilus because in the city of Troy, which really represents fourteenth-century England, love of this sort is "the greatest of earthly goods".⁷

While Lewis calls the Troilus Chaucer's "greatest poem" and "the consummation . . . of his labours as a poet of courtly love",⁸ he contends that the Canterbury Tales, because of their pervasive irony and humour are not part of Chaucer's real love poetry, that is, his poetry about courtly love. Lewis urges that Chaucer's contemporaries all took his love poetry "au grand sérieux" and implies that we, his modern audience, should do the same. Thus, in order to give what he considers to be an appropriate seriousness to his discussion of Chaucer in The Allegory of Love, Lewis bypasses the Canterbury Tales entirely. His rationale for so doing he outlines as a response to "a false emphasis which is creeping into the criticism of Chaucer":

One of the advantages of keeping the Canterbury Tales out of sight . . . is that we may thus hope to rid ourselves of a false emphasis which is creeping into the poetry of Chaucer. We have heard a little too much of the mocking Chaucer. Not many of us will agree with the critic who supposed that the laughter of Troilus in heaven was 'ironical'; but I am afraid that many of us now read into Chaucer all manner of ironies, slynesses, and archnesses, which are not there, and praise him for his humour when he is really writing with 'ful devout corage'.⁹

Other works by Chaucer which, according to Lewis, were written in the same spirit of 'ful devout corage' as went into the making of the Troilus are the "Compleynt unto Pite" and the "Compleynt to His Lady", the Compleynt of Mars, the Parlement of Foules, and the Book of the Duchesse. All

of these are said to be variations on the theme of courtly love.

The opposition to Lewis's ideas about courtly love goes back to an early article by D. W. Robertson, Jr., "The Subject of the De Amore of Andreas Capellanus". Although Robertson does not specifically take issue with Lewis in this article, he attempts to undercut any historical justification for a belief in courtly love by demonstrating that Andreas Capellanus, the only known medieval author to have written on anything resembling the subject, was actually condemning the sin of fornicatio and not providing instructions for courtly lovers in his book, the De Amore (otherwise known as the Art of Courtly Love). This work, which was likely written in the late twelfth century, is interpreted by Lewis as the main presentation of "the characteristics of the theory of love as it existed in the general mind of the period."¹⁰ Since Robertson not only questions the existence of courtly love in the Middle Ages, but also interprets the tone of Andreas as humorous and ironic,¹¹ the implications of his interpretation of the De Amore are, where Chaucer is concerned, much at variance with those of Lewis. If Andreas is, as Lewis would have it, a definitive source of information about the medieval theory of love that exists in Chaucer, evidence that shows the De Amore to be ironic must strongly

favour a similar conclusion about Troilus and Criseyde.

Robertson extends his ideas about Andreas to the task of interpreting Chaucer's love poetry in the fifth chapter of A Preface to Chaucer, a book which appeared ten years after his article on the De Amore. Having repeated that the De Amore is a work criticizing foolish love whose criticism is reinforced by the "device of irony, the art of condemning while seeming to praise",¹² Robertson proceeds to an analysis of the theme of the Troilus. The Troilus he describes, in terms antithetical to those used by Lewis, as a tragedy that "involves the fall of a prince who subjects himself to Fortune through an unworthy love."¹³ Unlike Lewis, Robertson detects a pervasive irony in the Troilus, especially in connection with the religious imagery of Book III:

In Book III there is a great deal of religious imagery. Literary historians are apt to say that it is "conventional" and that it reflects the traditions of "courtly love". No one in the book, however, uses religion as an adjunct to courtesy. And Chaucer certainly does not "accept" the behavior of Troilus. The religious imagery serves exactly the same function it serves in Chretien's Chevalier de la charette: to suggest the values which the hero inverts and, at the same time, to furnish opportunities for ironic humor.¹⁴

As we might expect, Robertson does not make any serious distinction, such as we find in Lewis's writing, between

the tone in which Chaucer treats love in the Canterbury Tales and that which he uses to address the same subject in the Troilus. The presence of irony is, in Robertson's estimation, as ubiquitous in any one of Chaucer's poems about romantic sexual love as it is in another.

The impact of Robertson's opinions concerning courtly love has been widespread, and the term itself has by now to a large degree been discredited. This has caused Francis Lee Utley to remark that "in America today one must be valiant to use the term courtly love without radical surgery."¹⁵ Among the critics who have cast doubt on the historical authenticity of courtly love are E. Talbot Donaldson, John F. Benton, and John V. Fleming.¹⁶ a list which could be augmented by including the names of the many outstanding medievalists who have accepted Robertson's strictures on courtly love without themselves becoming directly involved in the debate over the questions that it has raised.¹⁷

Yet despite the amount of opposition that it has encountered, courtly love still appeals as a literary concept to many critics of Chaucer. Elizabeth Salter, in a fairly recent essay entitled "'Troilus and Criseyde': a Reconsideration" dismisses the arguments of Lewis's opponents with the comment: "Although many academic critics have expressed 'second thoughts' about C. S. Lewis's overall

view of Troilus and Criseyde -- 'a great poem in praise of love' -- I suspect that most readers will continue to find him a precise and sensitive guide to Chaucer's meaning."¹⁸ Salter insists that "the 'passionate sanity' of C. S. Lewis's writing on Troilus has not been obscured or outdated" and attributes to those who have contested the validity of Lewis's opinions a desire to "disturb traditional attitudes by exercising ingenuity at the expense of common sense and sensibility."¹⁹ Far from seeing in the religious imagery of Book III the humorous irony that is apparent to Robertson, Salter believes that Chaucer uses such imagery to express his admiration for Troilus's behaviour as a lover and that "every new move" that Troilus makes towards a physical consummation of his affair with Criseyde "is endorsed by religious language."²⁰

One area in which Lewis's influence on critics of Chaucer has been especially pronounced concerns Chaucer's "realistic" portrayal of human sexual functions in the Troilus. Salter, who draws attention to the "delighted concreteness"²¹ of the bedroom scenes in Book III and who finds in this particular quality of their description a sufficient reason to believe that Chaucer is praising Troilus's love, bases her views on a passage in The Allegory of Love which says:

It is the quality of the first three books, and above all of the third, that counts; that book which is in effect a long epithalamium, and contains, between its soaring invocation to the 'blisful light' of the third heaven and its concluding picture of Troilus at the hunt (sparing the 'smale bestes'), some of the greatest erotic poetry in the world. It is a lesson worth learning, how Chaucer can so triumphantly celebrate the flesh without becoming either delirious like Rossetti or pornographic like Ovid. The secret lies, I think, in his concreteness. Lust is more abstract than logic: it seeks (hope triumphing over ~~experience~~) for some purely sexual, hence purely imaginary, conjunction of an impossible maleness with an impossible femaleness. So Lawrence writhes. But with Chaucer we are rooted in the purifying complexities of the real world.²²

Another piece of criticism on Chaucerian sexuality which, like Salter's essay, is imbued with the influence of Lewis is Donald Howard's "Literature and Sexuality: Book III of Chaucer's Troilus". Howard, who calls Book III of the Troilus "the first great night of love in our literature", argues that the main strength and significance of Book III is "that it portrays intense physical intimacy in its noblest and most fulfilling form, and yet reveals its profoundest limitation."²³ Howard's article deals primarily with "the problems posed by the representation of sexuality in literature" as they are reflected in Book III. His discussion of these problems has much in common with Lewis's comments on the style of Chaucer's erotic poetry, although he writes with an exaggerated enthusiasm that Lewis

generally avoids. The following passage typifies Howard's thought and expression in the article mentioned:

" . . . it seems widely supposed . . . that the sex act itself is always the same. People seem to feel that beneath any cultural tradition of courtship or lovemaking lies an unalterable biological fact -- plus ca change, plus c'est la meme chose. For all its appearance of common sense, I believe that this is not the case. Even from the biological point of view, the act of love has uncontrollable and unpredictable results; the reproductive process is a convenient construct, but in fact every sexual act can be an act of hostility, of aggression, of concealed guilt. It can be in Iago's language "making the beast with two backs", "the act of darkness"; it can be a neutral and repetitive function performed at the time when the clocks are wound; it can be an act of casual and temporary affection or of momentary passion; it can be an expression of longstanding devotion; it can be inexpressible ecstasy. It takes its character from the characters of participants and from their moods; from their culture and on Kinsey's evidence from their social class. The spectrum of sexuality is therefore the spectrum of human experience itself. It would be truer to say "Plus c'est la meme chose, plus ca change . . . where the intention of erotic literature is to draw the reader into the work, make him empathize with its particular action, the writer must enlist rather than alienate the reader's sexual fantasies -- must keep his response from becoming vicarious. Boccaccio strives much less successfully with this problem than Chaucer. The first night of love in the Filostrato was clearly -- in fact admittedly -- the poet's fantasy of wish fulfillment.²⁴

This kind of commentary draws its inspiration from one basic idea, originally expressed by Lewis, about the epistemological orientation of Chaucer's poetry of courtly love: the idea that poems like the Troilus were conceived in a spirit

of literary realism. Howard's assumptions about the realistic design of the Troilus are evident from his discussion of the work in terms of the spectrum of human sexuality and experience, an aspect of what Lewis refers to as "the purifying complexities of the real world."

If Howard's bias in favour of literary realism helps to give the above quotation from "Literature and Sexuality" the tone of an excerpt from Masters and Johnson, it should be remembered by the puzzled reader that not all Chaucerians would consider Howard's article to be a work of exceptional critical acumen. To maintain a balanced perspective on the question of epistemology in Chaucer's love poetry, we must take into consideration Robertson's point of view, which is diametrically opposite to Howard's. Robertson emphatically rejects, along with the theory of courtly love, the arguments for literary realism with which the theory tends to be associated. According to Robertson, realism as we understand it is foreign to all forms of medieval art including Chaucer's poetry:

We admire psychological profundity, dramatic intensity, well-rounded characters, realism, and well-structured plot development in our own literature, and we naturally ascribe these same characteristics to Chaucer's narrative art in order to express our admiration for it. But such criteria are basically misleading when used in this way. They are inconsistent with fourteenth-century stylistic conventions. No one thought in terms of psychology in the fourteenth century any more than he thought in terms of differential calculus or Marxist

dialectic. Cultural developments had not yet provided conditions suitable to the growth of a taste for dramatic intensity in the nineteenth-century sense. Realism was alien to the artistic expression of the period generally, and artists showed no interest in the ordering of events in a continuum of space and time shared by the observer, in such a way as to create structures suitable for the vicarious release of tensions.²⁵

When Howard argues that in the Troilus Chaucer is attempting to "enlist . . . the reader's sexual fantasies", he is saying in effect that Chaucer did create aesthetic structures "suitable for the vicarious release of tensions" and is implicitly disagreeing with Robertson. The same disagreement is evident in his assertion that Boccaccio wrote Il Filostrato as a fantasy of wish fulfillment, for it suggests that medieval writers not only thought in terms of psychology, but wrote in order to achieve release from psychological pressures much as did Shelley, Coleridge, and Keats.

In a book entitled The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World which appeared a year before "Literature and Sexuality", Howard offers a more elaborate and theoretical apology for his belief in courtly love and medieval realism. Howard begins this book by asserting that Robertson "has fallen into a mode of criticism which illustrates the most distressing tendency of modern man, that of dehumanizing and mechanizing the works of the

human mind and spirit."²⁶ The Three Temptations sets itself the task of redressing the "dehumanizing" errors spread by Robertson and in order to do this rejects as overly simplistic the Robertsonian idea that in any conflict in his poetry between Christian morality and sensual instinct, Chaucer's purpose is invariably to discredit the latter. According to Howard, the relationship between these two forces was much more flexible in the Middle Ages than Robertson would allow, because the "highly formalized game of sensuality" that constituted courtly love, though it "conflicted with Christian teachings . . . did not openly or philosophically contend with them."²⁷ Thus, although courtly love and Christian morality were contradictory and irreconcilable, it was possible for a writer like Chaucer to affirm simultaneously the truth of both as long as the conflict between them was not openly declared. To maintain that their relationship was one of intransigent mutual opposition, as Robertson does, is for Howard false and reductive. Instead Howard argues that there existed a wide range of subtle relationships between courtly love and Christian morality in medieval literature and that one such relationship is adumbrated in the "natural" world of the Troilus:

This relationship of love to Christian morality is what distinguishes the various styles of courtly literature. On one end of the spectrum stands Dante, in whose work love is totally idealized and merged with Christianity in its highest eschatological and ascetical aspects, the lady becoming symbolic of the very end of Christian life itself. At the other extreme, as in the Flamenca or the Council of Love at Remiremont, fleshly love is treated with broad humor and its incompatibility with the Christian life is flaunted. Between these extremes, with inevitable overlapping love may be idealized and made compatible with Christian marriage, as in Parsifal or in all of Chretien except the Lancelot. Or it may be treated, as in the De Amore, ambiguously and equivocally -- praised and idealized, and yet shown to be dissatisfying and imperfect. Finally, it may be treated, with various degrees of irony, as something which exists in a non-Christian "natural" world. Into this last mold, more than any other falls the Troilus. The lover's story may follow the pattern of the Christian life, but in a natural world where he seeks a pseudo-grace in a pseudo-Christian system.²⁸

The manner in which Howard interprets nature and the natural world in the preceding observations on love in the Troilus epitomizes his conception of Chaucer's literary realism. In Howard's opinion the dictates of nature which are responsible for Troilus's behaviour constitute an ethical standard that Chaucer recognized as being independent of regulations governing the Christian life. In other words, Chaucer's realism lies in his supposedly naturalistic acceptance of sensuality as a law unto itself. To enlist support for this contention, Howard directs us to Aldo Scaglione's study of the "tradition" of medieval naturalism, Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages.

Scaglione's book explicitly draws a connection between courtly love on one hand and realism and naturalism on the other. Courtly love is seen here as the product of "a resurgence of nature's rights . . . a reaction to the stifling 'conventions' of an official morality" in the eleventh century. The poetry inspired by courtly love in Provence and elsewhere had, according to Scaglione, the effect of rejuvenating "the customarily stiff and stale world of medieval culture with a breath of fresh air." It was, Scaglione says, "a contagious lesson in freedom from prejudice", and furthermore, "its vigorous expressions of realism and naturalism", he states, "unequivocally pointed the way to much of later romance literature."²⁹ Howard apparently includes Chaucer's work in the canon of what Scaglione refers to as "later romance literature", since he believes that Chaucer wrote out of a spirit of naturalistic reaction against the restrictions of Christian morality. Just how much truth there is in this belief is a question that will be taken up at a later stage in our discussion. For the present it is necessary only to remark that a close literary relationship between courtly love and realistic naturalism is thought to exist by many critics who, in disagreement with Robertson, regard Chaucer as a poet of courtly love.

The naturalism that Howard detects in the Troilus is, he contends, but one of several different kinds of courtly love, all of which existed simultaneously in the later Middle Ages. Howard's view of courtly love as a diverse and protean phenomenon is one that is shared by certain other critics who, like Howard, are anxious to avoid the "dehumanizing and mechanizing" tendencies in Robertson's theories about courtly love. Utley, for example, after dismissing Robertsonian scholarship as monolithic and "rather dreary", states that the term "courtly love" cannot be discarded by students of medieval literature, because courtly love was an inveterate social and literary convention of the Middle Ages which flourished in as many as thirty different forms:

There is not one courtly love but twenty or thirty of them, warring with theories of divine love and with popular reductions, such as those few which seem at times to condone adultery. The realm of most of them is not the real but the ideal, and the ideal is usually plain and open and well-cued, like medieval irony and medieval allegory, and needs no mystic interpreters. Though love, which of all passions best fits the proverb "Plus ça change, plus la même chose," is by no means unique to the Middle Ages, that time is especially prolific in elaborate codifications. . . . Rejection of the term courtly love will not sweep the social phenomena and the literary expression under the rug, and it is time for serious house-cleaning, where we roll up our sleeves and go to work bringing together the multiple and variable evidence with all the skill we have for careful reading, including philology and linguistics, partristic exegesis, glosses literary and artistic, rhetoric, historical externals, the

variety of medieval philosophies, a sense of the value the past has for the present, and plain common sense.³⁰

Another notable proponent of the theory of many loves is Alan M. F. Gunn, author of The Mirror of Love, a book subtitled A Reinterpretation of "The Romance of the Rose". Gunn maintains that J  an de Meun, the poet of the Roman de la Rose, is an expositor of at least six individual systems of love which are pitted against one another in "the allegory's 'grand debate'." Love thus becomes, not only in medieval society as a whole but even in the context of a single poem, an encyclopedic term denoting the most antithetical principles and concepts that can be imagined. Gunn writes:

It is manifest that the occupants of the various "professorial chairs of love" take issue with each other in regard to first principles; that each one of them represents a different approach to life's problems, a different system of values. They inhabit distinct realms; and it is between these realms that the real conflictus of opinion takes place. The affirmations and rebuttals, the brushes of dialectic, are the surface expressions of profounder chasms. How far are the tawdry chambers of La Vieille's memory and the serene sphere out of which Raison speaks! The chivalric garden of delight over which Amors reigns is poles removed from either, as it is from the common-sense world of Amis and from the Mount Cytherea of Venus with all its voluptuous, tropical warmth. And standing apart from and yet including all of these except the realm of Raison is the circling orbit in which such cosmic agents as Nature and Genius move and exercise their regenerating influence. . . . In this . . . series of engagements in man's struggle to achieve his

Sentelechy, not two or three, but fully six divergent systems of value, philosophies of human love and experience take part. And of these systems is represented in the romance, not summarily, but as veritable worlds and therefore with all amplitude and in the fullest and most concrete detail.³¹

Some pages later, Gunn concludes the discussion from which this quotation has been taken by observing that Jean de Meun did not consider any one of these six systems to be superior to the rest and that he was, in fact, equally committed to all of them:

It is finally to be emphasized that Jean de Meun not only penetrates deeply into each of the realms that engage in his great conflictus; he becomes -- for the necessary time -- an ardent propagandist for each system of values. Whether it is the view of La Vieille or of Amors or of Raison or of Genius that he is expounding, he urges it upon the lover (and the reader) with like enthusiasm and evangelical ardor. He shows much the same zest in preaching the sexual Machiavellianism of La Vieille that he does in praising Socrates' love of Reason. He causes all his "masters" to speak with the voice of auctoritas.³²

At the end of the book however, Gunn compromises this declaration somewhat by asserting that "in the conflict between those who would renounce life and those who would embrace it" we can have no doubt as to which side Jean is on. Jean, Gunn claims, "believes most strongly in the goodness of created things and in the goodness, therefore, of their perpetuation and abundance". From this Gunn draws the conclusion that "we can hardly say that Jean de Meun was of many minds about the value of human love" and that

Jean's manifest predilection was for procreative love, or, in more concrete terms, sexual intercourse. Gunn even goes so far as to suggest that Jean, in his enthusiasm for the sexual act, regarded it as "the chief manifestation of the goodness, the love, the overflowing bounty of God."³³

What all this comes down to is, once again, the notion that courtly love is inspired by naturalism, for it is Nature who, in the Roman, commands that man engage in sexual intercourse in order to propagate his species and whose dictates thus offer an excuse for Amant's courtly efforts to pluck the Rose. "Nature's command", says Gunn, "overrules every objection and forces the perplexed lovers to cease from troubling further about the metaphysics and casuistry of love." The various systems of love set forth in the Roman are, in other words, irrelevant to human actions; man is free to ignore all teachings on love, including those of Reason, so long as he diligently engages in procreative sexual activity.

So far, we have seen that many critics who believe in courtly love also believe that it was a manifestation of naturalism, that its influence encouraged the growth of medieval literary realism, and that it existed in a wide variety of species and forms. But there is one other common assumption about courtly love that we have still not looked at in sufficient detail, and this is that courtly lovers

are ennobled by their passion. On the question of ennoblement in the Troilus, Donald Howard, indeed, has this to say:

. . . Troilus and Criseyde depicts love between man and woman as a natural and irresistible feeling, influenced by the stars -- a part of the condition of human life. Even the pain it causes is sweet pain. The inception and progress are presented often in the language of a religious or mystical conversion. The two people who experience it are admirable people: they are of the aristocracy and have the highest virtues of gentillesse, discretion, honor. The "game" of love in which they come to take part is no Italianate seduction but a delicate courtly ritual; it is full of depth, of subtlety, and of charm. . . . Moreover, once entered upon, love has an ennobling effect on the hero -- he is a better warrior, more fearless, more courteous.³⁴

And E. Talbot Donaldson, whose perception of Troilus's character does not differ fundamentally from Howard's, claims that the hero's ascent to the eighth sphere at the end of Book V comes as a reward for his nobility of character: "The three stanzas describing Troilus's after-life afford him that reward which medieval Christianity allowed to the righteous heathen. And in so doing, they salvage from the human wreck of the story the human qualities of Troilus that are of enduring value -- most notably, his trouthe, the integrity for which he is distinguished."³⁵

A more elaborate statement of the same interpretation of Troilus's ascent is presented by Peter Heidtmann in an article entitled "Sex and Salvation in Troilus and Criseyde". Heidtmann asserts that in reading the Troilus "we are driven to consider whether poetry can be bound by strictly doctrinal standards."³⁶ In answer to the challenge of this question, Heidtmann contends that the Troilus "flies in the face of Christian doctrine" because it shows how the hero becomes spiritually ennobled as a result of his carnal love for Criseyde. Heidtmann, like Donaldson, thus views Troilus's ascent to the spheres as the climax of a process of ennoblement that carries Troilus directly from the world of sensual self-indulgence to heaven and salvation.

The idea that Troilus's ascent is a reward for virtue is, of course, not accepted by scholars who share Robertson's belief that Chaucer characterizes Troilus as "a prince who subjects himself to Fortune through an unworthy love." Chauncey Wood, for example, argues in Chaucer and the Country of the Stars that it is difficult to see how Troilus's love, which he himself refers to as the "blynde lust which may nat laste" (V.1824), can be so ennobling that it prepares Troilus for the ascent to Paradise. Instead, Wood maintains, the place to which Troilus ascends is more like the Christian purgatory and may be compared to the region beyond the earth, referred to

in the Parlement of Foules, where "likeroous folk, after that they ben dede, / Shul whirle aboute" . . . Tyl many a world be passed . . ." (PF, 79-81). This interpretation of Troilus's ascent is, in Wood's opinion more in line with the lack of virtue displayed by the hero in his dealings with Criseyde:

Troilus's enlightenment . . . is to be considered the consequence of his release from earth rather than the result of some particular virtue imputed to him -- certainly it is not as the result of his fornication with Criseyde. . . . In sending Troilus to the eighth sphere of the fixed stars, Chaucer sends him as one who is "likeroous" to a place where the wise pause for some time and the lecherous must remain "Tyl many a world be passed" (PF, 81). For both the wise and the not-so-wise, the eighth sphere in the Neoplatonic concept is a place of purification or penance.³⁷

Wood's assessment of Troilus's moral character has much to recommend it, despite the greater popularity among critics of the view which defends Troilus as a fine exemplar of nobility and "trouthe". Clearly, it is possible to take Troilus's ennoblement too much for granted, and although the narrator of the poem offers his testimony in support of this ennoblement (I.1079-85), its existence is inconsistent with several facts about the hero's behaviour. For example, Troilus does not behave nobly when Criseyde must leave Troy. He forgets his responsibilities as a prince in a beleaguered city and whiningly begs Criseyde to run away with him ("So rueth on myn aspre peynes smerte, /

. . . And lat us stele away bitwixe us tweye" IV.1501-03). After his departure he repeats the folly and self-indulgence that he has previously shown in Book I (357-64) by going to bed when he should be helping to defend Troy. He gets up eventually -- not because he should, but because Pandarus taunts him by saying that people will think him a coward (V.412). This brings to mind, at a significant moment for our understanding of the hero, other examples of his disingenuous concern for appearances: his displays of martial valour aimed not to break the siege, but to win Criseyde's admiration (I.481), his affectation of sickness to conceal passion (i.488-90), and his numerous deceits in concealing the liaison from public notice. All of these details point not so much to ennoblement as to selfishness and dishonesty.

Nevertheless, those who are determined to see Troilus as a noble courtly lover have advanced arguments to prove that all the factors contributing to his foolishness, among them the ones just mentioned, are ultimately less prominent than the qualities of "gentil herte", "manhod", and "resoun" in Troilus which, Criseyde claims, attracted her to him in the first place ("Eke gentil herte and manhod that ye hadde, / . . . And that youre resoun bridelde youre delit . . .". IV.1674-80). For example, Alfred David argues that whatever indignities Troilus undergoes

in the course of his passion for Criseyde, he emerges from them in a state of tragic sincerity and ennoblement. According to David, all that detracts from the nobility of Troilus's character is purposely contained in the first half of the poem so that the presence of this nobility may appear all the more striking in the second half. David, as the main drift of his opinions might lead us to expect, also affirms that Troilus's ennoblement is portrayed with an air of "psychological realism":

By subjecting the hero to . . . indignities through the first half of the poem, Chaucer reserves him for the deeper emotions still to come and through this modulation of tone enables us to feel Troilus's coming of age. The beauty of the love scene is made possible, in part, by the humor preceding it. The fulfillment of his love does in fact make a new man out of Troilus. This is what Chaucer explicitly tells us, and we may observe the effects for ourselves. Thereafter we can take Troilus and his emotions much more seriously. Much as Romeo's pining for Rosaline prepares us to accept his love of Juliet as the real thing, the highly formalized nature of Troilus's first sorrow contrasts with the depth and sincerity of his feelings after he has actually experienced love. Only in the last two books are Troilus's sufferings portrayed with a psychological realism that commands our complete sympathy. 38

With Alfred David's remarks on ennoblement, we must conclude this survey of the subject of courtly love in literary criticism about Chaucer. Such a survey does not, in itself, bring us to any new understanding of Chaucer's love poetry, but it tells us something about the

background of scholarly discussion against which this thesis must carry out its investigation. Although the aim of the thesis is not to pursue the debate about courtly love, we will hereafter have occasion to disagree with specific ideas about Chaucer that the modern conception of courtly love has helped to foster -- viz., his supposed belief in the ennobling properties of sexual desire, his literary realism, his naturalism, and his equivocation about standards of sexual morality.

2. Chaucer's Love Poetry: Its Interpretation and Historical Context

D. W. Robertson has called our attention to the profound influence of nineteenth-century aesthetic theories on modern interpretations of medieval literature and he has warned us of the fallacy that results from assuming that the romantic tastes of the nineteenth-century reading public would have been shared by Chaucer's audience in the Middle Ages. Robertson argues that the primary difference between the romantic and the medieval views of art is located in their respective attitudes towards the aesthetic function of sentimental emotions. Romantic literature, he points out, deliberately appeals to sentiment as a gateway to man's higher nature, whereas medieval literature characteristically attempts to cultivate the rational and moral part of man.

Robertson illustrates this difference by contrasting the aesthetic principles underlying the De Amore of Andreas Capellanus with those embraced by the nineteenth-century romantic critic, A. W. Schlegel:

Schlegel wrote that in romantic poetry "the impressions of the senses are to be hallowed, as it were, by a mysterious connexion with higher feelings." In practice, this "mysterious connexion" is almost always achieved, both in literature and life, by an appeal to sentiment. But sentimentality was not, during the Middle Ages, a respectable method of appealing to the thinking public, that is, to the courtly audience. . . . Andreas' lovers are not sentimental; their appeal is an appeal to logic, and we should judge them on the same grounds, without allowing our sentimental inclinations to interfere with what they say. . . . Andreas was a twelfth-century clerk who probably had a pretty thorough training in the trivium. We should alert ourselves, therefore, neither for sentiment nor for refinements of amorous technique, but for logical and rhetorical devices playing against a background of scriptural and classical learning.³⁹

The romantic view of art, as Robertson also points out, would have been no less foreign to Chaucer in the fourteenth century than to Andreas in the twelfth, and in seeking to understand Chaucer's ideas about love, we must continually remind ourselves of this. It is easy to forget that, for Chaucer the superiority of reason to sentiment would have precluded any sentimental definition of the value of sexual love, such as may be found, for example, in the works of Matthew Arnold.

In the nineteenth century sexual love became, for individuals like Arnold, a sentimental refuge from the anxieties caused by religious skepticism, and the popular need which existed at that time for an alternative to traditional Christian beliefs ultimately produced a cult of love which substituted feminine objects of worship for divine ones. The cult had its beginning in the idea that love alone could salvage meaning and value in a world haunted by the "melancholy, long, with-drawing roar" of the Sea of Faith. Arnold expresses this idea in the famous last stanza of "Dover Beach":

Ah, love, let us be true
 To one another! for the world, which seems
 To lie before us like a land of dreams,
 So various, so beautiful, so new,
 Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light
 Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
 And we are here as on a darkling plain
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
 Where ignorant armies clash by night.

An earlier poem by Arnold, "Euphrosyne", illustrates the characteristics of the cult of love in greater detail.

Here Arnold celebrates love as a defence against loneliness and the world's cruelty, as the poet and his beloved swear to make common cause against adverse circumstances:

Two bleeding hearts,
Wounded by men, by Fortune tried;
Outwearied with their lonely parts,
Vow to beat henceforth side by side.

The world to them was stern and drear;
Their lot was but to weep and moan.
Ah! let them keep their faith sincere,
For neither could subsist alone.

The unashamed dependence of one human will upon another that these stanzas celebrate was considered acceptable and even admirable in nineteenth-century literary circles. Leslie Stephen, for instance, evidently thought that an attitude of idolatrous devotion to a woman would be a favourable recommendation for any man who wished her to marry him, since he wrote in a marriage proposal to Julia Duckworth: "You must let me tell you that I do and shall always feel for you something which I can only call reverence as well as love. Think me silly if you please. . . . You see I have not got any saints and you must not be angry if I put you in the place where my saints ought to be."⁴⁰

Similarly, Robert Browning, in his letters to Elizabeth Barrett, expresses sexual fondness in a tone of sacramental awe and abject emotional dependency: "I should like to breathe and move and live by your allowance and pleasure"; "Give me your counsel at all times, beloved: I am wholly open to your desires and teaching and direction."⁴¹

One supposes that the sexual appeals of Leslie Stephen and Robert Browning would not have been lost on

Chaucer's Wife of Bath who prays that God will send to women husbands who are willing to be "governed by hir wyves". However, it is unlikely that Chaucer himself would have thought very highly of the idea that a man should worship a woman and be obedient to her will instead of to the dictates of his own reason. A well-known passage in St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the moral soundness of which Chaucer would not have questioned, stipulates that in Christian marriage the wife must be subject to the husband in all things: "Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord / For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its saviour" (Eph. 6:22-23).

Chaucer, of course, presents an allegorical story dealing with the inversion of St. Paul's teachings on marriage in the Nun's Priest's Tale. Chauntecleer, the animal protagonist of the poem, is ". . . a cok . . . / That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe" (NPT. 3252-53) and who is derelict in his Christian duty as a husband for failing to rule his wife as he should. The Pauline moral of the story is that a man should listen to the advice of his reason rather than to his emotional desires which, in the case of Chauntecleer, are so successfully manipulated by his wife. This moral, indeed, is implicitly stated in the Nun's Priest's allusion to St. Paul at the

conclusion of his narrative:

Taketh the moralite, goode men.
 For seint Paul seith that al that writen is,
 To oure doctrine it is ywrite, ywis;
 Taketh the fruyt and lat the chaf be stille (NPT, 3440-43)

Clearly, the moral implications of the "doctrine" of which the Nun's Priest is speaking are incompatible with the sentimental idealization of women which is so common in nineteenth-century literature and which, with a few minor modifications, persists in much of the literature of our own time. Therefore, it is desirable that we should not let the influence of the nineteenth century attitude towards sexual love affect our interpretations of medieval poetry which treats that subject from an orthodox Christian perspective. In regard to the Nun's Priest's Tale, there is, admittedly, little danger of an intrusion of anachronistic views of love upon literary interpretations of the poem. This, however, is only because the Nun's Priest's Tale is written in a mock-heroic vein which does not encourage sentimental interpretation.

On the other hand, poems like the Troilus and the Knight's Tale, because they are not obviously humorous in conception, have often been thought to sympathize with and even to praise the idolatrous behaviour of their male protagonists towards the opposite sex. Yet there is nothing in the Troilus or the Knight's Tale to suggest that Chaucer is purposely denying Christian teachings on love

in order to celebrate the "courtly love" of Troilus for Criseyde or of Palamon and Arcite for Emilye. To assume that he is to run the risk of viewing these works from an unhistorical angle that distorts the meaning their author may really have intended. Courtly love, after all, is suspiciously similar to the nineteenth-century cult of sexual adoration that we find in Browning and Arnold, and this ought to alert us to the possibility that our very conception of courtly love may be largely derived from the nineteenth century rather than from the Middle Ages.⁴² In lieu of any positive evidence that Chaucer recognized the existence of courtly love, we might do best to interpret his poetry in the light of his unquestionable belief in medieval Christian doctrine.

Historical probability favours an orthodox Christian interpretation of Chaucer love poetry, for the problem of whether medieval secular literature conforms to the doctrines of Christianity is essentially factitious. The teachings of the Church were an all-encompassing standard in the Middle Ages, and while it seems reasonable to expect that men disobeyed them, we should not suppose that they rationalized disobedience by secular standards. Independent secular and religious realms of thought did not then exist as they do in modern culture.⁴³ Chaucer's ability to write

seriously and sympathetically about carnal lovers despite his frequent use of wry humour to condemn them should not, therefore, mislead us to believe that he sometimes had fits of immorality in which he advocated idolatrous love and fornication instead of true Christian marriage.

Similarly, it would be wrong to think that Dante, who in Inferno V faints with pity when he hears the sad story of the lovers Paolo and Francesca, thereby condones the sin of lust. At another stage in ~~the~~ same canto, Dante also experiences pity when Vergil shows him the shades of such lovers as Tristan and Paris "pieta me giunse, e fui quasi smarrito" (pity overcame me and I was as one who had lost the way Inf. V.72). Nevertheless, Dante's compassion for these lovers does not occasion moral perplexity about the right and wrong of their actions as a modern reader might suppose. As Robert Hollander points out, Dante says that he ~~is~~ one who has lost the way to remind us of his condition at the beginning of the poem; where, through his own lust, he was like one who had lost the true way (che la diritta via era smarrita Inf. I.10).⁴⁴

Thus when Chaucer, in the opening stanza of the Parlement of Foules, sympathetically describes the pains of concupiscent love, there is reason to think that, like Dante, he is chiefly regretting the loss of moral direction

that love of this sort brings. Not knowing whether he floats or sinks, Chaucer's narrator is like Dante in the dark wood; he has, in effect, lost the true way:

The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne,
Th'assay so hard, so sharp the conquerynge,
The dredful joye alwey that slit so yerne
Al mene I this by love that my felynge
Astonyeth with his wonderful wishyng
So sore iwis that whan I on hym thynke,
Nat wot I wel wher that I flete or synke (PF. 1-5).

Although Norman Eliason, commenting on this stanza, says that we and Chaucer are "astonished and perplexed by such love",⁴⁵ the moral import of Chaucer's sympathy for the lustful is no less plain and unequivocal than Dante's. The reference in the final line to immersion in water is a pejorative metaphor commonly used to denote lust. In the Paradiso, for example, Dante recalls how God's love saved him "from the sea of wrongful love" (del mar de l'amor torto Par. XXVI.62) and set him on the shore of just love. When Troilus and Criseyde are enjoying the pleasure of concupiscence and fortune, the metaphor again appears and reflects tellingly on the lovers: "For out of wo in blisse now they flete / Non swich they felten syn that they were born" (III.1221-2). Although there is no overt derogatory comment here, the negative figurative connotations of the bliss in which Troilus and Criseyde are swimming are unmistakable. These connotations are derived from the metaphor of shipwreck which mythographers used to describe the

condition of Venus's sailors who, figuratively speaking, are immersed in the sea of libido: "Hanc etiam in mari natantem pingunt, quod omnis libido rerum patiatur naufragium, unde et Porfirius in epigrammate ait: 'Nudus, egens, Veneris naufragus in pelago.'"⁴⁶ In short, the Troilus and The Parlement of Foules, when they may seem, to a modern audience, to express sentimental approval and lack of moral viewpoint concerning carnal love, in fact condemn it. The purpose of both poems, like that of most so-called secular medieval literature, is to identify wrong love and right love and to encourage men to follow the latter.

The sympathy expressed by Chaucer and Dante for carnal sinners is philosophical rather than sentimental.⁴⁷ It stems from the realization that all men are sinners and require God's mercy. Lady Philosophy, in the De Consolatione, implies this when she tells Boethius that it is senseless to hate sinners because sin is a sickness of the spirit, and those who are sick in spirit no more merit hatred than those who are physically ill. Instead they deserve pity (Bk.IV.pr.4). That Chaucer and Dante could write accurately and sympathetically about carnal motives and actions that by medieval Christian standards would have been morally wrong is evidence only of their adherence to Christian doctrine and to the fundamentally

Christian principles advocated by Boethius. The promptings of the flesh could not be taken seriously enough as an alternative to the authority of the spirit to represent an independent moral standard or to necessitate the establishment of certain limits of propriety in poetry and art. Evil was an acknowledged and everyday feature of postlapsarian human existence, and it had its place within the well-defined hierarchy of creation. Thus, as D. W. Robertson has written, "Obscene materials, like classical materials could become a part of the theocratic programme of the cosmic order without ceasing to be recognizable for what they were."⁴⁸ Chaucer's ability to illustrate bad as well as good types of love in his poetry illustrates the truth of Robertson's observation.

Chaucer as a love poet is akin to John Donne in that he can frankly assume, under the guise of a narrator, a variety of attitudes towards carnal love that he himself would not have entertained. J. B. Leishman, in a persuasive study of Donne's poems, argues that they are not all equally serious expressions of Donne the man, and that we must distinguish in degrees of seriousness between light "evaporations" on concupiscence such as "The Indifferent" and the more heartfelt compositions on divine and married-love. Leishman's view of Donne can deservedly be extended to Chaucer: "...the fact that he can describe a situation

or express an attitude with convincing realism and dramatic truth is no proof that he has actually been in that situation or seriously and habitually accepted that attitude."⁴⁹ This characteristic of Donne the poet, which Leishman refers to as the capacity for "dressing up", is medieval ⁱⁿ origin. It is a manifestation of the same sympathy for the lustful which appears in Chaucer and Dante since it constitutes an acknowledgement, on the poet's part, of his own concupiscence. Moreover, Donne's inclusive treatment of various kinds of love from the divine to the concupiscent typifies the medieval breadth of moral awareness previously mentioned. With the example of Donne in mind, we can approach the kinds of love found in Chaucer's poetry with an improved sensitivity to degrees of seriousness. This might help us to avoid the misconstructions of meaning and tone to which Chaucer's critics are often prone. It is important to recognize that tone can be quite misleading in Chaucer's poetry and that passages that are similar in tone can be altogether different in meaning. For example, we shall see that Troilus's prayer to the Venus of concupiscence which identifies her with the mother of charity (T&C. III.1254) is, despite its gravity, amusingly inappropriate, whereas the prayer to the Trinity in the last passage of the Troilus is deeply serious in all respects.

An awareness of the relationship of tone to characterization in Chaucer's poetry is, furthermore, necessary for anyone who wishes to understand the moral implications of Chaucer's portraits of lovers. When Chaucer is being serious and unironic about love, he is least given to the methods of detailed subjective characterization that makes such characters as Troilus "psychologically" interesting to modern readers. Seinte Cecile, for instance, does not have the supposedly fascinating and enigmatic qualities of Criseyde, because she is ideally virtuous and lacks the personal complications provided by vices. Thus the Plowman and the Parson in the General Prologue are described wholly in terms of moral "condicioun", whereas the imperfect and cupidinous characters in the General Prologue, like the Pardoner, have a more individualized and physical presence. We distort Chaucer's meaning in the latter instances if we assume that he is perplexed about love just because he appreciates the variety and subtlety of its cupidinous forms. Without accurate response to tone and characterization, there can be no understanding of what Chaucer's love poetry is about. The literary traditions of love on which Chaucer draws are important in this connection, because they have pronounced influence on the way in which he portrays human nature. These traditions, to which we must now turn our attention, also influence the ethical

perspective in his poetry, and an understanding of them can explain the correspondence between the moral condition of Chaucer's characters and the manner in which they are characterized.

3. The Tradition of Cosmological Love

Chaucer's poetic utterances on love can be divided into two main groups depending on tone and literal content: those praising or invoking cosmological love, the force which rules the heavens, and those in which human sexual behaviour is observed. Of the two groups the latter are by far the more numerous, comprising all that Chaucer has to say about the follies of unbridled concupiscence and about the sanctity of its converse, married love. Chaucer's relatively few references to cosmological love, which we shall discuss first, deal with the ideal of celestial order held up as a model for human behaviour in the De Consolatione: "O weleful were mankynde, yif thilke love that governeth the hevene governede yowr corages II.m.8). This love is explicitly attributed to Seinte Cecile, the protagonist of the Second Nun's Tale, for after describing the etymological variations on the word "heaven" in Cecile's name, the Second Nun compares her perfections to the Primum Mobile which, through God's love, governs the heavens:

And right so as thise philosophres write
 That hevne is swift and round and eek brennyng;
 Right so was faire Cecilie the white
 Ful swift and bisy evere in good werkynge,
 And round and hool in good perseverynge
 And brennyng evere in charite ful brighte.

(SN Prol.113-118)

Charity, the virtue referred to in the last line of this stanza, is the distinguishing feature of cosmological love and, according to St. Augustine, is founded on the love of created things for God's sake rather than for themselves. Although, as in the case of Sainte Cecile, human love can sometimes reflect true "charite", the love felt by Chaucer's characters is more often rooted in cupidity, the evil love of created things for themselves instead of for God. Certain characters, like the Pardoner, recognize their cupidity and make no attempt to disguise it, but others, such as Troilus, mistakenly believe that they are guided by charity and a spirit of cosmological love when they are not. Troilus's foolish prayer to Venus after his first assignation with Criseyde exemplifies his self-deception about the nature of his love:

Than seyde he thus, "O Love, O Charite!
 Thi moder ek Citherea the swete,
 After thiself next heried be she,
 Venus mene I, the wel-willy planete.

(T&C. III.1253-57)

That Troilus thinks he is experiencing cosmological love is clear from his address to the planet Venus, who in the Middle Ages was conventionally associated with cosmic

harmony or muhdana musica -- unlike her earthly counterpart, the goddess Venus, who represented lechery.⁵⁰ But because Troilus's love for Criseyde is carnal, it cannot properly be compared to the love of the heavens which transcends concupiscent desires. Troilus remains ignorant of the love he so fatuously invokes during his lifetime until, released from physical bondage, he ascends to the eighth sphere of the fixed stars. The ascent is not an apotheosis of Troilus's love; rather, it is meant to clarify the difference between charity and cupidity, which has been steadfastly ignored by him. From the vantage point thus given, Troilus is able to look back on earth and recognize his passion for what it has been: "The blynde lust that may nat laste" (V.1824). Chaucer, at the same time, emerging from the role of narrator, identifies Christ as the true source of cosmological love in a prayer that is not a mere reflection of human folly: "So make us, Jesus for thi mercy digne, / For love of mayde and moder thyne benygne" (V.1668-69).

The problem of knowing when Chaucer is describing cosmological love, and when he is using irony to condemn its confusion with lust is complicated by the modern theory that earthly and heavenly love shared a vexed and morally undecided relationship in the fourteenth century. Arthur O. Lovejoy, in an important chapter of The Great Chain of

Being, contends that the two loves were implicitly in conflict with each other, not, as we might expect, because one was virtuous and the other sinful, but because each represented a worthy ideal somewhat incompatible with the ideal represented by the other. Heavenly love demanded in the name of Christian charity that men should aspire to union with God and forsake attachment to material things. Earthly love, which Lovejoy apparently sees as an unformulated antinomian doctrine, "summoned men to participate, in some finite measure in the creative passion of God, to collaborate consciously in the processes by which the diversity of things, the fulness of the universe is achieved."⁵¹

There is a strong resemblance between the ideas about earthly love put forward by Lovejoy and the ideas on the same subject that, certain modern critics maintain, are defended by Chaucer in the Troilus. When Donald Howard tells us that "Troilus and Criseyde depicts love between man and woman as a natural and irresistible feeling, influenced by the stars", he, like Lovejoy, is saying that whether or not this love conflicts with charity, it fulfills the purposes for which it is naturally intended. Now Troilus undoubtedly believes that he is "collaborating" with God and that his affair with the widow reproduces God's "creative passion"; this is why, after consummating his

own passion, he invokes the bond of love with which God unites nature:

Love, that of erthe and se hath gouvernaunce,
 Love, that his hestes hath in hevenes hye,
 Love, that with an holsom alliaunce
 Halt peples joyned, as hym lest hem gye

 So wolde God, that auctor is of kynde,
 That with his bond of love of his vertu liste
 To cerclen hertes alle and faste bynde (III.1744-67)

Troilus's firm convictions about the wisdom and virtue of his passion are sufficiently clear, but that Chaucer or any of his contemporaries could have seen Troilus as divinely inspired rather than deluded is not so evident. Historical probability and the details of the text of Chaucer's poem strongly indicate that Troilus is confusing the sordid with the sublime in likening his passion to God's love. Chaucer would surely have reacted with puzzlement to the suggestion that earthly love in the form of sexual instinct could be considered as an ideal alternative to loving God. Our modern inability to understand when Chaucer is referring to cosmological love and when he is not is caused by the fallacious assumption that pure sexual instinct was regarded by Chaucer's contemporaries as divine. Because cosmological love is divine as well, a critic who subscribes to this assumption, Peter Heidtmann for example,⁵² must commit himself to the argument that the two loves, despite their conflict, are essentially the same and that Chaucer, therefore, never condemns such a thing.³

as lust.

To suggest that it is short-sighted to argue that Chaucer does not always condemn lust is not to say that medieval literature lacks characters who proclaim that lust is a virtue. Sexual promiscuity is, of course, referred to by Genius in the Roman de la Rose as a divine obligation. Genius promises Paradise to all those who use their sexual organs in the struggle to defeat death through procreation. There is a joke in this, however, which consists in Genius's attempt to claim prerogatives that do not belong to him. Genius is simply what John V. Fleming has called "the badge of man's fallen stature".⁵³ As such, he knows nothing of man's true spiritual obligations and exists solely to furnish the concupiscent spur to procreation. The instinct that he represents is a result of the Fall, after which event man's sexual motives ceased to be in accord with his reason. Genius is incapable of knowing anything about the obligations of man's rational nature or about the power of grace. It is thus erroneous, when speaking of the Roman de la Rose, to construct a philosophical dilemma around the opposition of cosmological love, which is controlled by God's grace, and sexual love, which arises from man's postlapsarian defects. Lovejoy correctly identifies a potential antithesis between the two loves, but he mistakenly interprets the antithesis as a contradiction

of ethical standards. Sexual instinct or naturalis concupiscentia, Fleming points out, is in itself morally neutral and becomes good or bad depending on whether or not it complies with reason's dictates.⁵⁴ When it refuses to comply, it becomes antithetical to the rational love that rules the heavens, but it can never contradict this love on equal terms. Like the Fall itself, naturalis concupiscentia is interpreted in the Roman as being totally subordinate to the rational plan of God's love. That Lovejoy does not even mention the Roman, one of the most important books of the Middle Ages, and one that is directly concerned with the very subject about which he is writing, shows that his picture of medieval love is neither accurate nor comprehensive.

The confusion that has been stirred up around the definition of cosmological love is also attributable to the popular belief that medieval thought concerning love was characterized by its "range and fluidity of definition". These are terms used by Pamela Gradon to describe the dimensions of what she considers to be the foundation of medieval literary love -- viz., an unresolved debate about the nature of love that took up most of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The result of this debate, as she sees it, was an idea of love so multi-sided that it included everything from "the adulterous love of a Lancelot for a

Guinevere . . . to the Platonic love of Dante for Beatrice which, by a Platonic ladder, could lead the poet up to heaven."⁵⁵ Here again we are confronted with the inadequately proven modern belief that cosmological love, as revealed to Dante through Beatrice, has moral affinities with unreasonable carnal desire. Yet Dante's plain-spoken reprobation of cupidinous love is sufficient reason for doubting the existence of these affinities (PAR. XXVI.62).

There is no evidence that the debate over the nature of love that Gradon postulates ever existed. Hers is seemingly an effort to avoid subscribing to now substantially discredited theories about courtly love without admitting that serious medieval writers simply regarded cupidity as a deviation from the standard of good love. The notion that all standards were subject to question and debate permits an easy compromise between the sentimental and the historical approaches to medieval literature. Unfortunately however, the "abundant discussion" of the medieval authors Gradon alleges to have been participants in the debate is all curiously one-sided. "One has only to call to mind," Gradon says, "the works of Andreas Capellanus, William of St. Thierry, Richard of St. Victor, St. Bernard, Peter of Blois and Ailred of Rievaulx to realize that love was a complex and controversial subject."⁵⁶ Yet it is difficult to imagine on what issues concerning

love two of these authors could have been seriously in disagreement and, more so, to conceive of any one of them praising carnal or cupidinous love. Each of them, in his writings, repeatedly states that carnal love should not be allowed to distract the soul from its duty to perform works of charity out of a rational love of God for his own sake.⁵⁷ Of them all, only Andreas Capellanus seems to express a point of view that diverges (significantly) from standard Christian doctrine, and Andreas's singularity in this respect quickly disappears if we accept Robertson's interpretation of the De Amore. This in itself is enough to dissolve Gradon's argument for a medieval love debate, since we are given no concrete illustrations of how these authors, whose ideas about charity were all basically the same, generated a debate in which love was "susceptible of many definitions."

If we ask ourselves what the preceding considerations have to do with cosmological love, the answer is that we cannot understand anything about the function of cosmological love in Chaucer's poetry without knowing what he thought of good and bad love. The idea that Chaucer saw in fornication a rival religion ("courtly love") and not the sin of cupidity is inconsistent with all that he says in praise of charity and cosmological love. Whether the inconsistency leads to the argument that Chaucer observes two conflicting

standards of morality, one based on naturalis concupiscentia and the other on cosmological love, or whether it is taken to imply that cosmological love can somehow be experienced through cupidinous means, Chaucer is being completely misunderstood. Chaucer's view of cosmological love is quite straightforward: cosmological love is perfect charity and can either be praised for itself or used as a standard for the condemnation of cupidity. Our perspective on the function of cosmological love in Chaucer's poetry will become much clearer if we now turn our attention to the historical background and evolution of the idea itself.

During the Middle Ages, Pamela Gradon to the contrary, cosmological love was distinctly different from and unquestionably superior to all varieties of sublunary love. The idea of cosmological love, however, reaches back to antiquity when Eros represented destruction and disorder as much as harmony. The differentiation of superior and inferior, creative and destructive aspects of love as mutually exclusive forces first becomes obvious in late antiquity and develops commensurately with Neoplatonism and Christianity. In the Christian tradition cosmological love is the force that maintains order in the heavens and is always good. Disorder resulting from love is invariably caused by human sin and folly and comes about when men voluntarily desire the wrong things and become

thereby the slaves of Fortune. Troilus, for example, is ridiculous because he is so blinded by physical passion that he cannot rationally appreciate this elementary moral truth. His expostulations with Fortune serve only to condemn his own misplaced trust, a trust that is due only to God:

Then seyde he thus, "Fortune, allas the while.

Have I the nought honoured al my lyve,
As thow wel woost, above the goddes alle.

Whi wiltow me fro joie thus deprive. (IV.260-261)

Boethius's De Consolatione, repeatedly quoted and echoed in the Troilus, makes it plain that cosmological love is antithetical to the love which is ruled by Fortune. This follows from the fact that cosmological love is based on the workings of Providence (II.m.8) (IV.m.6), which is above chance, fate, and the temporal illusions of Fortune. In the Troilus it is logically impossible for the hero simultaneously to submit to Fortune and experience the joy of cosmological love.

In classical culture fortune did not lie within the control of human will, and the typical classical tragic protagonist is not, to the same extent as Troilus, morally responsible for what happens to him. Fortune, in classical literature, tends to have objective existence independent of the moral choices of those it affects. Cosmological love and fortune are, as a result, coterminous; both are part of an objective universe as distinct from the psycho-

logical one of appearance and illusion that is governed by Boethian Fortune. Cosmological love can thus have a wide range of creative and destructive effects according to the direction taken by fortune. In the Antigone of Sophocles, cosmological love which rules nature, though it is always a beneficent force in the Middle Ages, is held responsible by the Chorus for Haemon's love for Antigone, a politically subversive love which estranges him from his father,

Creon:

Love unconquered in fight, love who falls on our havings.

You rest in the bloom of a girl's unwithered face.
You cross the sea, you are known in the wildest lairs.

Not the immortal gods can fly,
nor men of a day. Who has you within him is mad.

You twist the minds of the just. Wrong they pursue and are ruined.

You made this quarrel of kindred before us now.⁵⁸

(781-92)

Similarly, in the Hippolytus of Euripides, love is both blamed by one of the characters as a source of strife and injustice (355-61) and praised for the vitality it gives to nature ("Cypris . . . wings her way through the air; she is in the sea, / in its foaming billows; from her everything that is is born." 447ff.).⁵⁹

Although the concept of cosmological love as a pure principle of natural order did not reach full development until late antiquity, it was incipiently present in the mind of Parmenides in the sixth century B.C. Parmenides

conceives of an order in the midst of the heavenly bodies which he personifies as a goddess who governs the universe: "everywhere it is she who is the beginning of painful birth and marriage, sending the female to the embrace of the male, and again the male to the female." "First of the gods she devised Eros."⁶⁰ Parmenides envisages cosmological love as a creative absolute, and so, unlike Sophocles and Euripides, anticipates the broad outline of medieval thought on the subject.

Aspects of the medieval idea of cosmological love were also adumbrated by Empedocles (circa 440 B.C.) who describes a cosmic cycle based on the opposing forces of Love and Strife. Love is the principle of unity and cohesion, while Strife promotes disintegration. As Empedocles explains in the poem On Nature, the physical world is a sphere which, during the Golden Age, was inhabited by Love alone. Love was subsequently partially ousted by Strife and this led to the formation of the present world. Empedocles predicts that in time Strife will gain complete dominance over the cosmic sphere and that Love will be excluded from it. The reverse movement will then ensue, and the Golden Age will eventually return, until the cycle repeats itself.

Empedocles's ideas about the universe were adopted and modified by the early Neoplatonists who believed that Love would ultimately transcend the conflict between Love and Strife.⁶¹ This line of thought reaches down to Chaucer through Boethius and appears in the apostrophe to Venus in the proem to Book III of the Troilus, where Mars is figuratively equivalent to the Empedoclean concept of Strife:

Ye fierse Mars apaisen of his ire,
And as yow list, ye maken hertes digne;
Algates hem that ye wol sette a-fyre,
They dreden shame, and vices they resygne.

(T&C. III. 22-28).

Venus here represents the love that is felt in "hevene and helle, in erthe and salte see" (T&C. III.8), the same force that governs Empedocles's Golden Age. The fundamental difference between the Empedoclean and Chaucerian interpretations of cosmological love is that we do not find in the latter the idea of a discordia concors balancing the forces of Venus and Mars. This idea, which subsequently became very popular in Renaissance art (partly due to the influence of Italian Neoplatonism), was based on the vision of a world of harmoniously interacting contraries in which, to use the words of Pope, "All subsists by elemental strife" (Essay on Man I.169).⁶² The unity inherent in the conflict of Venus and Mars is often symbolized in Harmony, the daughter of their adulterous union. Edgar Wind states the abstract meaning behind these mythical figures as

follows: "Venus is not only joined to Mars, but his nature is an essential part of her own and vice versa. True fierceness is thus conceived as potentially amiable, and true amiability is potentially fierce."⁶³ This is an accurate description of discordia concors as it would have been understood in relation to Venus and Mars in the Renaissance. The same discordia concors prevails in the cosmos of Empedocles.⁶⁴

In medieval tradition, on the other hand, Venus and Mars are most often observed in a state of intransigence towards each other. Whether a suggestion of discordia concors between them is to be found anywhere in the Middle Ages is open to discussion.⁶⁵ So far as Chaucer is concerned, the harmony symbolized by the good Venus of cosmological love cannot be harmoniously combined with strife. The order of nature depends on the unqualified ascendancy of love and leaves no room for Mars. This idea is expressed in the De Consolatione which permeated Chaucer's thinking about love: "And yif this love slakede the bridelis, alle thynges that now loven him togidres wolden make batayle contynuely, and Stryven to fordo the fassoun of this world . . ." (II.m.8). Far from seeing Venus and Mars as essential parts of each other's natures, Boethius categorically denies the possibility of discordia concors: "Nature refuseth that contrariours thynges ben enjoyed"

(II. p.6). Chaucerian characters who are incited to serve Mars in their devotion to Venus are generally treated with some degree of irony as Chauncey Wood has noted.⁶⁶ This is because their martial efforts are associated with concupiscent rather than with charitable motives. Troilus, as mentioned earlier, fights only to gain the admiration of Criseyde. The Squire fights "in hope to stonden in his lady grace" (General Prologue, 88). Palamon and Arcite are even more foolishly misdirected in their strife, since the lady they are trying to impress is oblivious to their very existence. But when Chaucer's narrator in the Troilus celebrates the effects of the good Venus of cosmological love, he means very literally that she suppresses all the signs and manifestations of Mars. This should draw our attention once again to the homogeneity of medieval cosmological love which, admitting no elements of concupiscence, admits none of strife.

The transcendent simplicity of the medieval idea stands in clear relief when it is compared with the outlook of Empedocles, or, for example, with that of the Roman poet Lucretius (99-55 B.C.). Lucretius is relevant in this instance first of all because, like Empedocles, he imagines the universe to be a discordia concors of loving and war-like forces. However, which is more important, his understanding

is in direct opposition to Chaucer's concerning the relationship of cosmological love to concupiscence and strife. His poem, De rerum natura, designates Venus as the source of universal order and also as the principle of human voluptas,⁶⁷ things which do not necessarily coexist harmoniously in Chaucer. Similarly, he believes that although strife is undesirable, it is indispensable to this order. For Lucretius, therefore, cosmological love comprises elements from which, in medieval tradition, it is decidedly separate.

It is yet important to recognize that despite these differences between Lucretius and Chaucer, we do find passages in the De rerum natura which express the idea of an absolute and homogeneous cosmological love. For example, Lucretius prays in his opening invocation that Venus should suppress Mars and assert absolute authority over nature. Although he is expressing a wish and not describing nature as he really sees it, Lucretius does remind us somewhat of Boethius and Chaucer when he writes:

Meanwhile cause fierce labors of war to cease
lulled to sleep throughout all lands and seas.
I make this prayer to you because you alone are
able to bless mortals with the quiet gift of
peace; for Mars, powerful in arms and ruler of
war's fierce labors throws himself into your bosom,
overpowered by the eternal wound of love; then
bending back his shapely neck and looking up-
ward, he gazes on you and feeds his greedy eyes
with love68

One specific way in which this passage anticipates the mind of the Middle Ages is in its use of erotic imagery to support a serious moral theme. In Chaucer's time, as D. W. Robertson observes, physical beauty and sensuality "... could be rationally appreciated as certain commentaries on the *Canticle of Canticles* bear witness. . . . For the lover of wisdom, the abstraction which the physical object suggests is more beautiful than the object."⁶⁹ Of course these aesthetic principles cannot be strictly applied to Lucretius because he makes no initial qualitative distinctions between cosmological love and carnal love. It would thus make little sense to say that he is deliberately expressing one kind of love through the medium of the other. Nevertheless Lucretius aims not to excite voluptas but to give concrete expression to the ideal of a world ruled by cosmological love alone. The sensuality of the invocation is subordinate in importance to the more abstract vision of a world in which mortals are blessed "with the quiet gift of peace." (At this point we should recall analogous words from Boethius: "This love halt togidres peples joyned with an holy boond", II.m.8). The moral idealism of this outlook, furthermore, is not typical of classical ideas of cosmological love, which tend to define love as a relatively strong and amoral force, rather than as an absolute force representing all that is good.

Lucretius, like other ancients, believes that love neither is nor ultimately can be absolute. However, it may be argued, he gives certain wishful intimations of a conception of an absolute love that emerged towards the end of the classical era.⁷⁰

The influence of Lucretius's address to Venus can be felt in Ovid's celebration of the goddess's powers in the Fasti (IV).⁷¹ Ovid, who from the middle of the twelfth century was regarded almost as a Christian poet, has a conception of cosmological love that is not far different from Chaucer's. In the Fasti (IV.90 ff.) Ovid attributes to Venus not only the beauty of the month of April, but also sway over the whole year, all nature, and the other gods: "illa quidem totum dignissima temperat orbem; illa tenet nulla regna minora deo" (IV.91-92). In Ovid, cosmological love has at last become the absolute power it is to be throughout the Middle Ages. It is particularly important that Ovid's celebration of an absolute love is accompanied by another and less praiseworthy side to the same force. Venus is hailed somewhat ambiguously as mother of twin loves: "'Alma favi, 'dixi, 'geminorum mater amorum.'" (IV.1). An unknown medieval commentator on the Fasti interprets the twin loves in the following way:

There are two Venuses, one chaste and modest who leads the way in virtuous loves . . . the other a voluptuous goddess of unlawful passion. . . . There are thus two loves, one good and modest . . . the other shameless and evil . . . there is one Venus literally called 'Genetrix' by the Romans who is considered by Ovid to be the mother of both loves.⁷²

The basic accuracy of this interpretation suggests a marked parallel between the Ovidian and medieval conceptions of love, for the commentator is speaking from a Christian exegetical frame of reference and yet is not distorting Ovid. The "chaste and modest" Venus is called Venus Verticordia by Ovid (Fasti IV.160) and is a domestic form of the Venus of cosmological love. Obviously this is not the Venus who is responsible for the activities occurring in the Amores and the Ars Amatoria.

The close association of cosmological love with the doctrine of twin loves begins with Ovid and continues through the Middle Ages. The twin loves themselves have a much longer history that goes back at least to Plato. A distinction is made in the Symposium between a baser love that exists solely for the sake of physical gratification, and a nobler love that is based on reason and seeks wisdom. The same distinction appears in the Apologia of Apuleius (b.circa 125 A.D.), who describes two Venuses, one vulgar and the other celestial. The first of these is common to both men and brutes, but the latter is found only in men.⁷³

The twin loves are given a Christian orientation, by St. Augustine, who defines the baser as cupidity and the nobler as charity. St. Augustine's definitions, which are based on the difference between love of self and love of God, incorporate earlier classical distinctions between the loves within a broad theological framework: "Accordingly two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the lord."⁷⁴ True wisdom and humanity, both of which were traditionally regarded as prerogatives of good love, are, for St. Augustine, encompassed by the love that seeks God. The love that seeks self is antithetical to true wisdom, because it is rooted in the sin of pride. St. Augustine says of people who exemplify this baser love that "glorying in their own wisdom and being possessed by pride, they become fools." Wrong love, in short, leads to pride, which in turn leads to spiritual blindness. Troilus's love, "The blynde lust the which that may nat laste" (V.1824), is conceived by Chaucer as typical of the blind self-love condemned by St. Augustine. Unlike the love of God which is synonymous with cosmological love and which brings enlightenment (symbolized in the De Consolatione by the "brennyng and cleerseygne" eyes of Lady Philosophy I.pr.i),

Troilus's love creates spiritual darkness, as the words "blynde lust" suggest. Troilus's condition had already been described in a different context by St. Augustine with a quotation from St. Paul: "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God but became vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened" (Romans I.21).

St. Augustine's ideas were repeated by the medieval mythographers who had profound influence on vernacular poets like Chaucer. The most famous mythographic analysis of the two loves is no less morally explicit than the one from the City of God quoted above: "Itidemque Amores duo; alter bonus et pudicus quo sapientia et virtutes amantur; alter impudicus et malus, quo ad vitia inclinamur."⁷⁵ Should it be doubted that these ideas inform "secular" medieval literature, Boccaccio's Glosses to the Tesedia will quickly prove the contrary. Boccaccio identifies the Venus at whose temple Palamon prays as the goddess of base love and contrasts her with the good Venus: "Venus is twofold, since one can be understood as every chaste and licit desire. . . . This Venus is not discussed here. The second Venus is that through which all lewdness is desired, commonly called the goddess of love. Here the author describes the temple of this goddess."⁷⁶ Chaucer borrowed copiously from Boccaccio and it is hard to think of his not having understanding and sympathy for Boccaccio's moral convictions.

Although it is not certain that Chaucer's manuscript of the Teseida contained Boccaccio's Glosses,⁷⁷ there is ample evidence in the Knight's Tale to suggest that Chaucer deprecates the passion of Palamon and Arcite as much as does Boccaccio. The iconography of the temple of Venus, like those of Mars and Diana, is quite negative in connotation and points to an overall significance in malo for that deity⁷⁸ which is reflected in the unhappiness of her followers: "Lo, alle these folk so caught ~~were~~ in hir las, Til they for wo ful ofte seyde 'alas!'" (1951-52). All are victims of the same spiritual blindness from which Troilus suffers, being the targets of Cupid's arrows. Cupid is, according to convention, blind: "Blind he was as it is often seene" (Kn.T. 1965). According to Erwin Panofsky, Cupid's blindness signifies evil and lack of wisdom and is in no way playfully allusive to the capriciousness of emotions: "Whether the word caecus is interpreted as unable to see (blind in the narrower sense, physically or mentally) or as 'incapable of being seen' . . . or as 'preventing the eye from seeing' . . . : blindness conveys . . . only something negative and nothing positive and by the blind man we understand the sinner."⁷⁹ If Panofsky is correct, Chaucer seems to be saying that those who are seen in the temple of Venus are sinners. Furthermore, Chaucer tells us, following St. Augustine's line of thought,

that their sin involves a lack of wisdom that stems from their allegiance to Venus: ". . . wysdom ne richness / . . . Ne may with Venus holde champartie" (Kn.T. 1947-49).

In the Troilus and the Knight's Tale Chaucer does not spell out the difference between good and bad love. This is not because he is less certain about its relevance to human nature than Boccaccio, but rather because he is intent upon exploiting a potential irony in referring to both loves by the same name. This literary technique is not without precedents, since Ovid leaves it to his audience to differentiate the love operative in the Fasti from the love depicted in the Amores. St. Augustine explains that in Scripture the words "love" and "regard" (amor and dilectio) are applied indiscriminately to good and evil affection. It is thus necessary for the reader to be familiar with the different states of will that conduce to good and evil affection⁸⁰ to understand the significance of the uses of these words. Chaucer's poetry exercises the same demands on a reader's mind as Ovid's, and, in the Augustinian sense, Scripture. We are constantly being asked, in a work like the Troilus, to infer from the states of will of certain characters whether or not their condition is sinful when they are said to be inspired by love. "Love" may not be "susceptible of many definitions" in Graddon's phrase, but Chaucer uses the word with sufficient flexibility

to allow its misinterpretation. In this, he is following a basic precept of medieval literary theory and not, as we might be tempted to believe, open-mindedly inviting a range of different opinions about love. In applying one word to two opposite states of will, charity and cupidity, Chaucer can at any time seem to refer to one when, in fact, he means the other. For example, Troilus's sentimental outburst, "O Love, O Charite!" (T&C. III.1253)⁸¹ does not mean literally what it says. Charity is good and praiseworthy, but it is not exhibited by Troilus. Troilus is in reality thoroughly cupidinous, and his delusion is therefore ironic. If we recall that Isidore of Seville defines irony as the art of condemning while seeming to praise,⁸¹ it becomes obvious that Chaucer uses irony to express what St. Augustine states less subtly about bad love.

From what has been said about the separation of love into two rigid categories in Christian tradition, we can infer once again that nobody in the fourteenth century would have confused the workings of cupidity with cosmological love. Except for purposes of humour and satire these forces were never assimilated to each other. Moreover, it seems unlikely that a man of Chaucer's conservative disposition would have written about bad love out of a spirit of rebellion against orthodox ethical standards.⁸²

Returning now to our discussion of the history of cosmological love, we should note that, after the time of Ovid, cosmological love underwent some further modifications due to the influence of Neoplatonism⁸³ and finally assumed in Boethius the form and significance it was to retain for the duration of the Middle Ages. The cosmological love portrayed in the De Consolatione is very solicitous about mankind and his well-being, and this clearly separates it from earlier versions of the same idea. Boethius's idea of an outgoing or descending love that does not remain permanently in heaven, remote and self-absorbed, is altogether foreign to Platonic and Aristotelian traditions. In Plato, love is ultimately the desire of the imperfect for the perfect.⁸⁴ Aristotle, similarly, sees God as perfect and inert, not participating in the universe, but passively moving things through their active desire for Him.⁸⁵ The origins of the idea of a descending love are problematic however and have been speculated upon by C. J. De Vogel⁸⁶ and, in less detail, by Peter Dronke.⁸⁷ Though descending love is a product of certain branches of Neoplatonism, it appears neither in Philo nor Plotinus. Plotinus clearly states that the principle of cosmological love has no "downward tendency" and that it is completely detached from the earthly sphere:

The Heavenly Aphrodite, daughter of Kronos -- who is no other than the Intellectual Principle -- must be the soul at its divinest: unmingles as the immediate emanation of the unmingled; remaining ever Above, as neither desirous nor capable of descending to this sphere, never having developed the downward tendency a divine Hypotasis essentially aloof, so unreservedly an Authentic Being as to have no part with Matter -- and therefore mystically "the unmothered" -- justly called not Celestial Spirit but God, as knowing no admixture, gathered cleanly within itself. 88

This view of cosmological love diverges widely from the ideal, enunciated two centuries later by Boethius, of a love that is active in the created order of nature as well as in heaven, and De Vogel traces the Boethian ideal to the Neoplatonism of Proclus.

Boethius and Proclus both lived in the fifth century, and were born within seventy years of each other. Proclus was one of the key figures in the Neoplatonic school in Athens, and Boethius, who studied in Athens around the year 500, would have come directly in contact with his philosophical doctrines at the age of about twenty. Proclus conceives of love as coming down from the intelligible to the sensible world in order to inspire in all things a desire to return to the intelligible sources of creation. While present in the sensible world, this love creates the peace, unity, and harmony that exist in the intelligible sphere. "Now if you please," says Proclus in his Commentary on Plato's Alcibiades I,

let us return to the subject of love and touch on the more secret doctrines about it. . . . From above . . . love ranges from the intelligibles to the intra-mundane making everything revert to the divine beauty, truth illuminating the universe with knowledge and faith establishing each reality in the good. Now intelligibles on account of their unutterable union have no need of the mediation of love; but where there exists both unification and separation of beings, there too love appears as medium; it binds together what is divided, unites what precedes and is subsequent to it, makes the secondary revert to the primary and elevates and perfects the less perfect.⁸⁹

Since Boethius came from the same school of Neoplatonism as Proclus, this passage may well be an intellectual source of the poem in the De Consolatione describing the harmonious structure of nature that so influenced Chaucer's thinking about cosmological love:

That the world with stable feyth varieth accordable chaungynges; that the contrarious qualites of elementz holden among hemself allyaunce perdurable; that Phebus the sonne, with his goldene chariet bryngeth forth the rosene day; that the moone hath commandement over the nyghtes, which nyghtes Esperus, the eve-sterre, hath brought; that the see, gredy to flowen, constreyneth with a certeyn ende his floodes so that it is nat leueful to strecche his brode termes or bowndes upon the erthes . . . al this accordaunce of thynges is bounde with love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also commandement to the hevene. And yif this love slakede the bridelis, alle thynges that now loven hem togidres wolden make batayle contynuely and stryven to fordo the fassoun of this world, the which they now leden in accordable feith by fayre moevynges (II.m.8).

Due to the popularity of the De Consolatione, Proclus had a strong, if indirect, influence on the literary

mind of the Middle Ages. Chaucer's invocation to Venus in the proem to Book III of the Troilus ("O blisful light of which the bemes clere / Adorneth al the thridde heven faire!" III.1-2) and Boccaccio's lines in Il Filostrato "O luce eterna, il cui lieto splendore / fa bello il terzo ciel. . . ." III.74-79) on which the invocation is based show the results of this influence. In both instances the planet Venus, representing cosmological love, is praised for the outgoing, benevolent power that she exercises over man and nature.

A case can be made that Proclean ideas of cosmological love also occur in the poetry of Chaucer's contemporary, William Langland. There is, of course, no evidence of who Langland was let alone of his acquaintance with Proclus's ideas. However, it is likely that Langland knew the De Consolatione, partly because of its ubiquity in the fourteenth century and partly because of close affinities between it and Piers Plowman. For example, the allegorical figure of Holy Church in Langland's poem seems to be analogous in person and function to Lady Philosophy. Like Philosophy, Holy Church attempts to instruct the human mind in matters concerning truth and virtue, and the tutelary role that she plays toward Will, the protagonist of Piers Plowman, is identical with that assumed by Philosophy in her efforts to cure the spiritually ailing Boethius. It

is not surprising, therefore, to find Holy Church describing cosmological love in terms similar to those used in the De Consolatione. The love that she delineates in the first passus of Piers Plowman, although its imagery is Christian rather than Neoplatonic, clearly belongs to the Proclean tradition of descending cosmological love that was transmitted to the Middle Ages through Boethius:

For trewthe telleþ þat love is triacle of hevene;
 For heven myzte nouzte holden it . it was so hevy of
 hym-self,
 Tyl it hadde of þe erthe . yeten his fylle.
 And whan it haved of þis folde . flesshe and blode
 taken (I.146-53)

The reference in the last line to John 1.14, "And the word was made flesh and dwelt among us", gives an explicit Christian significance to the ensuing asseveration of love's binding power in society: "And a mene as þe Maire is . . . bitwene þe comune / Riȝt so is love a ledere . and þe lawe shapeth . . ." (i.158-159). It is conceivable that the connection between love and civil order to which Langland here refers echoes Boethius's adaptation of Proclus in which the same connection is made: "This love halt togidres peples joyned with an holy boond, and knytteth sacrement of mariages of chaste loves; and love enditeth lawes to trewe felawes." (II.m.8).

The function of descending cosmological love as the source of order in human society also receives a great deal of emphasis in the Troilus. The proem to Book III of the

Troilus, like Piers Plowman and the De Consolatione, attributes communal integrity to the celestial power of cosmological love ("Ye holden regne and hous in unite."

III.29), and this vision reaches back to Proclus's metaphoric comprison of the effects of the baser kind of love to the disorderliness of an ill-governed community. Good love, it follows implicitly, is analogous to a lawful community.

. . . of what sort are vulgar lovers? They mobbed you Now what is the mob? That it is a multitude is clear to anyone, but an indeterminate, confused and disorderly multitude since it is not like the chorus or like the people. The people is a multitude united to itself, but the mob is an incoherent multitude, and for this reason, when speaking of constitutions, they say that ochlocracy is different from democracy; for one is disorderly, lawless and discordant, the other is drawn up under laws.⁹⁰

Without making the mistake of thinking that Chaucer had any veneration for democracy, we shall now digress briefly to consider what the persistent civic and political imagery in the Troilus owes to Proclus; this will serve both to illuminate the nature of Proclean ideas and to provide an introduction to Chaucer's poetic use of the theme of cosmological love.

The Trojan scene in the poem has long been recognized for its moral pertinence to the story of Troilus. As John McCall notes, the fate suffered by Troy for the rape

of Helen symbolized, to the medieval mind, the moral consequences of sexual cupidity.⁹¹ As this is the particular sin of Troilus, there is a parallel which is almost an analogy between his tragedy and that of the city. But beyond this, the decline of civic order in Troy and the ominous approach of its collapse are ironic metaphors for Troilus's delusion that cupidity is akin to cosmological love. This larger significance does not depend on the specific mythological connotations of Troy itself, but only on the archetypal image of a community dominated by what Proclus calls "vulgar lovers."

Chaucer on different occasions makes obvious efforts to popularize the vice of Troilus by attributing it to other persons. Pandarus, besides pimping for Troilus, is also subject to "loves hete", a malady that sends him to bed where, like Troilus, he suffers "ek his part of loves shotes kene" (II.58). Troilus shows something of the same versatility, for he is ready to act as a procurer as well as a lover by pimping for Pandarus in return. Indeed, he says that there is no woman whom he would not try to procure for Pandarus and asks his friend to choose whomever he will ("Be she nevere so fair or wel yshape, / Telle me which thow wilt everychone." III.411-12). Just as Troilus and Pandarus are shown to be capable of exchanging roles, so Antigone, whose song mirrors all Criseyde's amorous

thoughts and concerns (II.827-75), is potentially another Criseyde.

Details such as these go far to suggest that illicit sexual activity is a common feature of day-to-day social intercourse in the city; they also sharpen the point of Troilus's allusion to Paris's fateful deed when he tells Pandarus that he will not leave the city with Criseyde: "First, syn thow woost this town hath al this were / For ravysshynge of wommen so by myght" (IV.547-8). Troilus here momentarily realizes the practical connection between base love and civic affairs, but he does not see the symbolism in their moral connection. He fails to understand that the violation of trust and unity caused on the social level by war are also present on a personal scale in fornication. The political defection of Calchas, "his falsnesse and tresoun" (I.107), is simply the sexual betrayal of Troilus by Criseyde under a different aspect, and it is thus appropriate that Pandarus should refer to it by the same name, "tresoun" (V.1738).⁹² Throughout the poem, images of civic corruption and desolation supplement the treachery and dishonesty of the love story. Troilus's apostrophe to the the vacant house of Criseyde, "O paleys desolat . . ." (V.540), and his earlier clandestine commutation from one house to another (II.1514, III.786) project upon these parts of the city his inner misery and treachery. The city

is depicted, to borrow T. S. Eliot's term, as an "objective correlative" to the spiritual flaws in Troilus's love.

Troy, full of betrayals and subterfuges, resembles

St. Augustine's picture of the earthly city of cupidity:

" . . . this city is often divided against itself by litigations, wars, quarrels, and such victories as are either life-destroying or short-lived. For each part of it that arms against another part seeks to triumph over the nations though itself in bondage to vice."⁹³

The last is an apposite comment on the moral value of such military enterprises as the Trojan war effort against the Greeks.

Troy is conceived in Chaucer's poem as antithetical in every particular to the harmonious community by which Proclus and Boethius personify descending cosmological love. Only Hector's voice is heard in defence of order, and it is prevailed over by the confused "noyse of peple" (IV.183) in Troy.

The love that holds "regne and hous in unitee" belongs neither to Troilus and Criseyde nor to the city they inhabit. Rather it is to be found in the person of Christ who is referred to at the end of the poem as "that sothefast Christ, that starf on rode" (V.1860). Chaucer's transformation of Proclus's descending cosmological love into a Christian concept is much like Langland's; the Neoplatonic descent of love from the intelligible to the

sensible world becomes for Chaucer the self-sacrificial descent of Christ from heaven to earth (V.1842-44), and the Christian Trinity, which Chaucer invokes with the words "uncircumscrip^t and al maist circumscri^{ve}" (V.1865), fulfills the unifying function assigned to cosmological love by Proclus. Indeed, the Trinity is the only power mentioned in the Troilus that matches the description "Benigne Love, thow holy bond of thynges" (III.1236).

The preceding discussion should not be taken to suggest that there were not other medieval traditions and conceptions of cosmological love besides the Boethian tradition which dominated the literature of the fourteenth century. John Scotus Eriugena in the ninth century and Bernardus Silvestris in the twelfth developed the theme in new and important ways. However, it is unnecessary to discuss either of these authors here. Scotus, in the De divisione naturae, adopts the same basic views as Boethius, but his speculations as to whether God's love is both the efficient and the final cause of creation are more important for their philosophical content than for their literary influence.⁹⁴ The De Consolatione, its background, and its numerous commentaries and glosses, are all that is really pertinent to the question of cosmological love in Chaucer.⁹⁵ We know that Chaucer made use of the commentary of Nicholas Trivet when he translated the De Consolatione; his trans-

lation is heavily glossed, and the glosses are verbally reminiscent of Trivet. He no doubt saw, in the Christian doctrine of the commentaries, an indispensable adjunct to the spirit of the De Consolatione.

It is accordingly probable that Chaucer wrote the final stanzas of the Troilus to illuminate the true sense in which he intended its Boethian passages on cosmological love to be understood. It is most unlikely, on the other hand, that he meant there to be any moral inconsistency between what Elizabeth Salter calls the "imaginative issues" of the love story and its "homiletic" ending.⁹⁶ Salter suggests that Chaucer had a complex and tentatively constructed interpretation of cosmological love that was primarily subjective and emotional in bias.⁹⁷ This, however, is entirely untrue. Chaucer's views of cosmological love are derived from a single intellectual tradition. They are straightforward and unoriginal and are supported by the impersonal authority of Christian doctrine. Their apparent complexity is an illusion that persists with critics who are unable to tell the difference between Chaucer's ingenuous utterances and his ironic ones and who therefore make the error of confusing them. This error necessarily leads to the perverse idea that Chaucer's love poetry is complex to the point of being disjointed and morally incoherent. Salter

goes so far as to say that Chaucer really did not know why he wrote or, when he wrote, what he meant,⁹⁸ an opinion that can only be tested by reading Chaucer. Even a short survey of traditions in the history of ideas should ultimately be reduced, when undertaken for literary purposes, to the business of practical criticism. So we might well conclude our discussion of medieval cosmological love by examining one of the passages in Chaucer which Salter cites in defence of her position.

Hitherto we have considered the danger of critical misinterpretation that arises from neglecting the ironic element in Chaucer's love poetry; but we have as yet said nothing about the modern predilection for discovering irony where it does not exist. There are, allowing some room for flexibility of interpretation, four or five passages on cosmological love in Chaucer's works. Most of these are ironic in context; but at least one, the long speech of Theseus at the end of the Knight's Tale (2987-3108), is not. Theseus's speech is concerned with other matters besides cosmological love, for example marriage; but it is fundamentally a description of the harmony of the created universe enriched with prescriptions for ideal human conduct. Chaucer follows the outline of Theseus's speech in the Tesdeida (XIII.6-19) which points out the inevitability of Arcite's death and calls for a cessation of mourning. But

he has introduced much philosophical material that does not exist in Boccaccio. The idea that inordinate grief is a form of disobedience to God ("... whose grucceh ought, he dooth folye / And rebel is to hym that al may gye" Kn.T. 3045-46) typifies Chaucer's additions. It is not really expressed by Boccaccio's Theseus. Similarly, Theseus, in the Knight's Tale, advises the mourners to "... thenken Juppiter of al his grace" (3069), which recalls the duty of a Christian to be thankful for God's grace. The tone of the overall speech can be unmistakably identified in lines such as these; it is simple, serious, and hortative. The message is that charity affords the best means of coping with untoward fortune.

For Elizabeth Salter, however, Chaucer has deftly transformed the speech into an ironic character study of Theseus. Whatever sound "matere" the speech contains, she regards as incidental to this main design. The opening lines, "The First Moevere of the cause above . . ." (2987), are said to possess "impressive dignity." Yet their wisdom is characterized as "debatable" because it invokes the First Mover "with its inevitable Christian associations, to cover the activities of Mars, Venus, and Saturn."⁹⁹

One cannot be sure what this means, but it is possible to guess. Salter apparently thinks that a benevolent Christian

providence, symbolized by the First Mover, is theologically incompatible with the malignant determinism issuing from the three pagan gods. She therefore questions Theseus's wisdom for believing in the omnipotence of the First Mover when Mars, Venus, and Saturn so readily have their way in the world.

Theseus is, nonetheless, being totally reasonable. The pagan gods are not so much planets as aspects of moral character. Hence they are less representative of astral determinism than of the will and inclinations of the characters with whom they are associated. Evidence of this is the double significance of Venus and Mars in the poem. Both are evil in relation to Palamon and Arcite but good in their association with Theseus.¹⁰⁰ Were they merely forces of malignant determinism, they would, presumably, not be equivocally portrayed. As their roles are, D. W. Robertson's analysis of the gods as postlapsarian elements in human nature is most convincing. Concerning the causes of Arcite's death Robertson says: "... as a devotee of Mars (Wrath), he meets his death through the action of an infernal fury sent up by Pluto (Satan) at the instigation of Saturn (Time who consumes his children), who was in turn prompted by Venus (concupiscence)."¹⁰¹ In short, Arcite's concupiscence and wrath are responsible for his death, a fact that can hardly make Theseus's belief in

providence unwise.

Salter next tells us that Theseus is a purveyor of practical wisdom rather than a true Boethian philosopher. Quoting his injunction "to maken vertu of necessitee / And take it weel that we may nat eschue . . ." (3042-43), she argues that it "represents good sense rather than wisdom: it is not simply wrong, but 'folye' to rebel against 'hym that al may gye.'" The injunction she interprets as an introduction to a "list of useful points" which, because of their amoral significance, are inconsistent with the Boethian premises of the speech. "Only the confident flow of the poetry," we are told, "disguises the basic illogicality of the appeals. "In point of fact, however, Theseus is no more a low-minded pragmatist than St. Jerome, who also recommends making virtue of necessity.¹⁰² Furthermore, the logic of Theseus's appeals is in full accord with all the principles of standard theology concerning death and concupiscence. By making virtue of necessity, Theseus means specifically that the best should be made of a bad situation. He proposes that Palamon and Emilye should be married forthwith, as this will bring joy and harmony out of their sorrow at Arcite's death ("Drede that we make of sorwes two / O parfit joye, lastynge everemo." 3071-72). The theodicy of Pope's Essay on Man has a lot in common

with the views here expressed by Theseus. Pope's famous couplet on the ruling passions asserts that because of the order that God has established in the universe, all sins are matched by corresponding virtues: "The Eternal Art educating good from ill, Grafts on this passion our best principle (II.175-76). This idea was quite prevalent in the eighteenth century, and it also appears in James Thomson's The Seasons: "God from seeming Evil still educes Good."¹⁰³ Theseus, by channelling concupiscence into the sacramental confines of marriage, is, similarly, transforming sinful passion into virtue. His praise for the First Mover is, like Pope's praise for the Eternal Art, inspired by recognition of the subordination of evil to the purposes of providence. St. Augustine, centuries earlier, was subscribing to this very theodicy when, in his Confessions, he said of God's providence: "No man's sin does either hurt thee or disturb Thy government first or last."¹⁰⁴

Exactly thus did Chaucer intend his audience to respond to Arcite's sinful concupiscence and to the death which, according to Robertson's explanation, he suffers as a penalty for it. When Theseus recommends making a virtue of necessity therefore, he means that Arcite's mourners should follow the pattern set by providence in

seeking to bring events to the best possible moral conclusion. Seen in this context, Theseus's recommendation, far from being un-Boethian, turns out to be a possible allusion to the last lines of the De Consolatione which describe the necessity of virtue: "Gret necessite of prowesse and vertu is encharged and comaunded to yow, yif ye wil nat dissimulen; syn that ye worken and don . . . byforn the eyen of the juge that seeth and demeth alle thinges." (V.pr.6).

In a Boethian context, making a virtue of necessity is inevitably the same thing as being under the necessity of having virtue. In either case it is important to understand that necessity has nothing to do with a philosophically conceived principle of determinism. W. C. Curry, who claims that the fortunes of Palamon and Arcite are controlled by the "destinal power of the stars",¹⁰⁵ ignores the evidence, to which we pointed earlier, that Chaucer in concurrence with Boethius held the human will to be free of all necessity.¹⁰⁶ (" . . . the willynges of men . . . ben unbownden and quyt of all necessite." V.pr.6). However, by allowing itself to be ruled by passion, the human will involuntarily renounces its freedom and thereby becomes subject to the necessity of Fortune. In this sense, Arcite's death is a necessity dictated by Fortune. For Palamon, to make virtue of necessity, the necessity of that death, is

to regain his own free will and rise above the power of Fortune. This is equivalent to submitting instead to the necessity of virtue as represented by marriage. The word necessity thus has a relatively defined meaning that must be inferred from the context in which the word is found. "Virtue" provides the clue to Theseus's argument, for it is always, in Chaucer, inseparable from free will, and free will cannot exist in bondage to Fortune. Charity, the virtue required to preserve free will, imposes restrictions on behaviour which constitute a good form of necessity. The necessity created by Fortune is, on the contrary, wholly bad. Theseus is subtle but not illogical. He sees that man moves from one form of necessity to the other as virtue is gained or lost.

In his speech Theseus is exhorting the mourners of Arcite's death to imitate the cosmological love of providence. Nowhere else in Chaucer's poetry is cosmological love so extensively described for a purpose that is not ironic. The Proclean qualities of this love are obvious: it is a descending love that links the intelligible to the corrupt, sensible world ("Descending so til it be corrumpable" Kn.T. 3010) and it is also associated with imagery of civic and political order, since the occasion of Theseus's speech is a parliament "To have with certein contrees alliaunce / And have fully of Thebans

obeisance" (2973-74).

Thebes was symbolic of sexual licence in the Middle Ages just as Troy was. Ovid, in the Metamorphoses, recounts the affairs of Jove with the Theban women Europa, Semele, and Alcmena, as a consequence of which Thebes incurred the relentless wrath of Juno, whom Ovid represents as the goddess of chaste marriage and childbirth.¹⁰⁷ Juno's mythical persecution of Thebes would have appeared to the medieval understanding as a condign punishment for the city's concupiscence. Plainly, therefore, the imagery of love in the Knight's Tale parallels that of the Troilus insofar as it features the disruption of cosmological love as civic conflict and turmoil. Here we should recall the opening scenes of the poem which show Theseus restoring peace and order in war-torn Thebes, the home town, appropriately, of the concupiscent cousins Palamon and Arcite. The Theban political background which these scenes provide for the love story is strengthened by such allusions to the wrath of Juno as Palamon makes when he laments his own imprisonment and the destruction of Thebes:

But I moot be in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
That hath destroyed wel nye all the blood
Of Thebes with his waste walles wyde.

(Kn.T. 1328-31)

Unfortunately Palamon does not perceive the symbolic connection between his concupiscent will and the anger of

Juno. Consequently his lament seems rather foolish and inconsequential, for it ignores the causes of the goddess's wrath.

The source of disorder on the social level is the same in the Knight's Tale as it is in the Troilus: the impulse to fornicate. One difference between these poems should be noted however. Direct references to cosmological love in the Troilus are all, except in the last stanza of Book V, ironic. In the Knight's Tale cosmological love is not used ironically. The reason for this is that in the first instance the spirit of cosmological love is undermined by Troilus though he resolutely pretends to advance it. Theseus, by contrast, helps that spirit to prevail over lust by requiring the marriage of Palamon and Emilye. His words about the "faire cheyne of love" do not sit incongruously with his actions and, therefore, should be taken seriously. The sum of these parallels and differences points to the basic cohesiveness of Chaucer's concept of cosmological love and shows that there are two possible contexts and interpretations for particular allusions to it. Often the wrong interpretation of a passage can lead to a thorough distortion of the concept as a whole.

Cosmological love in Theseus's speech is, from any reasonable point of view, a clear standard for right behaviour and a means of evaluating the moral aberrations of

Palamon and Arcite. But Elizabeth Salter's interpretation of it yields a somewhat different and unfathomable conclusion: "It is, surely, a measure of the greatness of Chaucer that his imaginative response to a situation in which innocent creatures confront the wilful abuse of absolute power was strong enough to disturb the overall balance of his work."¹⁰⁸ Presumably this sentence means that Theseus's speech was intended by Chaucer not to answer the ethical dilemma of the story. We have noted the internal consistency of what Theseus says and have seen that it provides an apposite commentary on the causes of Arcite's death. The alleged inconsistency and irrelevance of the speech do not, therefore, permit us to call the Knight's Tale an unbalanced work.

In an earlier essay Salter attributes a similar lack of balance to the Troilus and expresses doubt about the opinions of critics who see the poem as aesthetically and morally integrated: "The acceptability of such statements as 'he achieves a symmetry, a balance, in episode and detail' or 'he communicates to us a view of the whole in which tolerance and critical perception are harmoniously blended' has still to be proved. . . . Troilus and Criseyde shows unmistakable signs of conflicting purposes, unresolved difficulties."¹⁰⁹ An aesthetic structure of conflicting

opposites would, of course, be anachronistic in fourteenth-century literature,¹¹⁰ and the duty of proving that a structure of this sort exists in the Troilus rests with Salter and not with critics who support the opposite and per se more plausible view. Yet Salter herself does not give what amounts to more than an exaggerated restatement of C. S. Lewis's interpretation of the Troilus: 'a great poem in praise of love.'¹¹¹ Much of her discussion is cursory and impressionistic. D. W. Robertson's major article on Chaucerian tragedy,¹¹² which offers a very cogent argument for the unity of the Troilus, is dismissed in a sentence as lacking "the same kind of literary responsiveness which distinguished the Allegory of Love." Its refusal to come to terms with some powerful opposition seriously weakens Salter's essay.

By and large Salter relies, for whatever support she has for her views, on Lewis's article in Essays and Studies, "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato."¹¹³ Regarding this essay, it is safe to say that despite Lewis's learning and inimitable powers of communication, he was on shaky ground in maintaining that Chaucer changed Il Filostrato into a glorification of "courtly love" (or, as Salter at one point calls it, "bodily compassion"). This much should be apparent from what we have seen of the function of cosmological love in the poem and from the incompatibility of

cosmological love with the sexual cupidity on which "courtly love" depends. Lewis's inaccurate interpretation of love in the Troilus is adopted and expanded by Salter, who contends that the passages on cosmological love in Book III are intended to give "religious sanction" to the affair of Troilus and Criseyde. If this were true, Salter would probably be correct in discerning a disjunction between the conclusion of the poem ("Swych fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love. . . ." V.1828) and Book III. As it is, we are compelled to reject in toto her argument about the structure of the poem because it is based on a fundamental misreading of Book III.

Whatever parts of Book III do not fit with her epithalamic interpretation of the bedroom scene, Salter dismisses as "in the long run unimportant." These "unimportant" parts include Pandarus's admission of his own viciousness (III.257-59) which refers unequivocally to the evil of procuring, but is nevertheless considered by Salter to be beneath notice. Salter continues:

" . . . more noticeable is the confidence of the writing. It is confidence based on persuasions of the goodness and legitimacy of this relationship. . . ." Curiously, since she interprets the confidence of Theseus's speech as a concealment for illogicality and even duplicity, Salter is, for no good reason, ready on this occasion to applaud,

without question, the confident assertions of the narrator of the Troilus.¹¹⁴

As a character, the narrator embodies characteristics of the two principal male figures of the story in a way that does him no credit. His affected modesty, his professed inexperience in love (I.16), his obsequiousness as a servant of lovers, his sententiousness, and his taciturnity in the latter stages of the poem identify him with Pandarus. In his propensity for passionate eloquence (II.1-17) and his belief in the inexorable force of love (I.253-59), he resembles Troilus. Like Pandarus and Troilus, the narrator is also a fool of Fortune. He is, therefore, not to be taken at his word however confidently he may express himself about the "goodness" or "legitimacy" of fornication. His close moral association with Pandarus and Troilus does show, however, that he is as unwise about love as either of them is. For example, when the narrator paraphrases Boethius's hymns to cosmological love in order to "telle anon right the gladnesse / Of Troilus to Venus heryinge" (III.47-48), he is ironically unaware that Boethian love is based on the superiority of the will to Fortune, whereas Troilus's love is dependent on Fortune (IV.260-67). This discrepancy should alert us to the narrator's untrustworthiness as an authority on ethics and should certainly preclude Salter's easy assumption that simply because there

is religious diction in Book III, Chaucer is giving
 "religious sanction" to the love there described.

The narrator is not the only person to speak confidently in Book III. Troilus and Criseyde both speak with great self-assurance, and this alone seems enough to convince Salter that their utterances are credible as well. After he has been to bed with Criseyde for the second time, Troilus compares the love by which he is bound to God's love which rules the heavens:

So wolde God that auctor is of kynde,
 That with his bond Love of his vertu liste
 To cerclen hertes alle, and faste bynde . . .
 (T&C. 1765-67)

Salter comments on these lines: "No irony plays about his comprehensive statement of the interlocking of divine and human love." Of course, no irony would colour Troilus's words if his love were indeed complementary to cosmological love; but there is no evidence in the text to indicate beyond doubt that it is. Upon inspection, Troilus's "comprehensive statement" is discovered to be thoroughly ironic in its disregard for the radical incompatibility of the two loves that it attempts to celebrate as one. Divine or cosmological love is represented in the Troilus as a good form of bondage, but the concupiscent love of Troilus and Criseyde is unfavorably associated with chains, imprisonment, and the reduction of the human to the bestial.¹¹⁵

One of the most pervasive motifs in the Troilus concerns hunting, and it coordinates several images of sexual bondage. We first encounter the motif in Troilus's scornful remark about the predatory attributes of lovers: "Ye loveres, and youre lewed observaunces . . . / And whan youre prey is lost, woo and penaunces" (I.198-201). Thereafter, it appears repeatedly in the mouths of the other human figures in the story and in the mouth of the narrator as well. Pandarus tells Troilus to be assured of his assistance in the pursuit of Criseyde, which he compares to a deer hunt ("I shal the deer unto thi bowe dryve" II.1535), and the narrator subsequently describes Diomedes's suit as another kind of hunt: "To fishen hire, he leyde out hook and lyne" (V.777). Whether carnal lovers are symbolically portrayed as deer hunters or fishermen, Chaucer leaves no doubt as to the kind of bondage they themselves are subject to, and as to which kind they impose on their prey. The bondage of human love in the Troilus is essentially dehumanizing, and this is the main reason for the profusion of animal imagery in the poem.¹¹⁶ Diomedes eventually holds Criseyde in the same way that he holds the bridle of her horse when she is delivered to the Greeks at the city gates (V.90-92). Diomedes is not thinking of the bondage of the "faire cheyne of love" when he applies himself to the problem of "How he may best, with shortest taryng /

Into his herte Criseyde's herte brynge" (V.774-75). And Troilus's "hert" is certainly not made "digne" when, anguished, he wallows in sexual bondage: "Ibounden in the blake bark of care" (IV.229). These are merely a few illustrations of the wide difference between "divine and human loves" in the Troilus.¹¹⁷ They are sufficient, however, to make us question Salter's conviction that Troilus's "human love" reaches to the heavens.

Unless the belief is maintained that Book III apotheosizes concupiscence, there can be little justification for Salter's interpretation of the overall structure of the Troilus. However, the historical background of the idea of cosmological love and close reading of relevant sections of the text suggest that Book III may be an ironic appraisal of human folly. It thus seems necessary to assign to this book an integral and necessary place in the larger sequence of Troilus's self-imposed sorrows. Electing to become a servant of Fortune in Book I, Troilus enjoys the favours of Fortune in Book III, and duly suffers Fortune's adversity in Book V. The pattern of these events constitutes a literary structure that is analogous to the circular movement of the wheel of Fortune.¹¹⁸ To speak of the Troilus as a structure of unresolved ethical paradoxes is like calling it a forerunner of the Faulknerian

novel; either view must be considered incongruous and un-historical. On the contrary, the idea that the *Troilus* is structured according to Boethian principles of Fortune has the vast advantage of historical probability.¹¹⁹ This idea of structure perceives the religious diction in Book III as contributory to a parody of cosmological love and is incompatible with Salter's notion that *Troilus's* behaviour is given "religious sanction". We may conclude that the importance of cosmological love extends beyond questions concerning the history of ideas and Chaucer's ethics. A correct understanding of cosmological love is often essential for appreciation of the aesthetic form of his work.

4. Married Love and Ovidian Love

Although cosmological love provides a standard by which the actions of people like Palamon and Arcite and *Troilus* may be judged, it is seldom directly of interest in the Canterbury Tales or Troilus and Criseyde. That the main focus of these poems rests on the ideals and shortcomings of love as a sexual force operating among human beings, few readers would deny. It also seems fair to say that Chaucer is characteristically more concerned with the earthly than with the supramundane effects of sexual love, since, unlike Dante, he rarely writes about the rewards

and punishments of lovers after their deaths. Even when, as in the case of Troilus, Chaucer does describe the experience of the human soul after death, he allows the soul to retain its consciousness of earthly existence and current events. Thus it is that Troilus looks back on "this litel spot of erthe" from the eighth sphere and laughs at those who are weeping for his death (V.1815-22). The immortal souls in Dante's Commedia, on the other hand, are devoid of all knowledge of what is happening on earth, a fact which illustrates the otherworldliness of Dante's vision in comparison with Chaucer's.¹²⁰

If it is correct to say that Chaucer's primary interest as a love poet centres on the human and earthly aspects of love, we must try to estimate the moral value that he would have assigned to the various forms that such love is capable of assuming. In the Middle Ages marriage was considered by Christians to be the ideal and only respectable course for love to follow. And Chaucer, so far as we can tell, gives moral support as a writer to the institution of marriage; he never speaks against marriage, and in the Parson's Tale, which, coming at the end of the pilgrimage, seems to function as a moral standard for the Canterbury Tales as a whole,¹²¹ he asserts that marriage was established by God to prevent the deadly sin of fornication in which postlapsarian sexual activity would otherwise

result:

Now shaltow understonde that matrimoyne is leefful assemblynge of man and of womman that receyven by vertu of the sacrement the boond thurgh which they may nat be departed in al hir lyf, that is to seyn, whil that they lyven bothe. This, as seith the book, is a ful greet sacrement. God maketh it, as I have seyde, in paradys, and wolde humself be born in mariage. . . . Trewe effect of mariage clenseth fornicacioun and replenyseth hooly chirche of good lynage; for that is the ende of mariage; and it chaungeth deedly synne into venial synne bitwixe hem that been ywedded, as wel as the bodies.

(Pars.T. 916-919)

However, critics of Chaucer's poetry have by no means unanimously agreed to the proposition that he saw marriage as the one morally acceptable channel for the expression of sexual love. Those who feel, like Lewis, that Chaucer wrote according to the conventions of courtly love are prepared to defend the idea that his poetry celebrates fornication and courteous adultery as well as marriage. We have reviewed some of the contemporary criticism that inclines to this point of view in a previous section of this chapter.

It should now be noted that no adequate proof has yet been given for the idea that Chaucer ever approves sexual love outside marriage. This fact was pointed out twenty years ago in an article by Derek Brewer who says: "The incompatibility of love with marriage in the poetry of Chaucer is a platitude so widely accepted that it is worth pointing out that it is quite untrue. Chaucer nowhere

celebrates illicit love, though it is sometimes material for a joke or satire."¹²² In his efforts to show that Chaucer always represents honorable love as something that exists within the confines of marriage, Brewer, admittedly, makes some rather improbable assertions. For example, he argues that the lovers in the Knight's Tale, whose love he believes to be honorable, wish from the start to marry Emilye -- a questionable opinion for which he supplies no evidence.¹²³ Nevertheless, despite the flaws in his own approach to the problem of illicit love in Chaucer's poetry, Brewer must be given credit for reminding us that Chaucer's glorification of the sins of fornication and adultery has never been more than an unproven assumption.

That Chaucer entertainingly describes fictional adventures in fornication and adultery scarcely indicates a tendency on his part to countenance forms of sexual behaviour which the Church considered to be sinful. On the contrary, Chaucer characteristically seems to adopt an ironic view of the delusions and penalties of carnal passion. We see this illustrated in works as diverse as the Miller's Tale, the Merchant's Tale, and the Troilus, all of which, in their depiction of the adverse and unexpected results of illicit love, may be termed ironic.¹²⁴ As E. K. Rand has observed, Chaucer's irony as a love poet is strongly

reminiscent of Ovid's.¹²⁵ Parts of the Canterbury Tales, indeed, have the same ironic tone as the Ars Amatoria and the Amores and thus seem to project an Ovidian vision of love. For this reason, we shall use the term "Ovidian love" to refer, in the present context, to Chaucer's stylized portraits of illicit love. Ovidian love and married love, as we shall see, are complementary in Chaucer's writing, one criticizing moral deviations from the Christian ideal represented by the other.

Although Chaucer frequently praises marriage by condemning fornication, the manner in which fornication is condemned can mislead modern readers to think that it is being praised. A precedent for this kind of literary misunderstanding was set by those nineteenth-century critics of Ovid who took seriously the advice given in the Ars Amatoria and thus concluded that Ovid's poetry is immoral.¹²⁶ But while the formula "Ovid misunderstood" has gained widespread currency, its correct meaning for the student of medieval literature has not been decided to the satisfaction of everyone concerned. The questions as to when and by whom Ovid was misinterpreted have received conflicting answers. C. S. Lewis says that the medieval love poets were the first people to misunderstand Ovid and that out of their misunderstanding came much of the ethos of courtly love. Taking literally Ovid's ironic exhortations

to young lovers to obey their mistresses, medieval writers, according to Lewis, created the ideal of Frauendienst ("the service of ladies").

While one must hesitate to challenge any scholarly opinion advanced by Lewis, it seems necessary to observe that the idea that the Middle Ages consistently misunderstood Ovid will stand or fall with the argument that there existed medieval doctrines of courtly love. Over the past fifteen or so years the evidence has become irresistible that courtly love, as spoken of in connection with medieval vernacular love poetry, is largely what D. W. Robertson has called it -- "an irrelevant modern fantasy."¹²⁷ Since courtly love appears to be a product of the romantic nineteenth-century imagination, it seems quite likely that that same century was responsible for the misunderstanding of Ovid with which courtly love is associated. The nineteenth-century artist or critic, as has been said, invariably made sentiment and not reason the arbiter of moral and aesthetic issues. Not only did this permit the apotheosis of passion essential to the notion of courtly love, but it also reduced the reader's awareness of forms of wit and irony based on the manipulation of logic and reason.¹²⁸ The nineteenth century's lack of appreciation for Ovid's satire, which makes its subtle appeal strictly

to the reason, is therefore hardly to be wondered at. Ovid was judged to be obscene and prurient and, for the first time in centuries, his reputation suffered a complete eclipse.

The real misunderstanding of Ovid occurred not so much in the fourteenth and earlier centuries as in the nineteenth, when everything that he wrote was taken literally. E. K. Rand became one of the first critics in modern times to challenge the popular conception of an immoral Ovid by arguing, on the contrary, that Ovid was a satirist. According to Rand, Ovid left it to his audience to detect, beneath the superficial licentiousness of his verse, a morally based opposition to foolish love.¹²⁹

Ovid's apparent recognition of two loves, one good and the other bad, lends theoretical support to Rand's position, for it indicates that Ovid was not unconcerned with matters of ethics. Works of medieval exegesis like the Ovide Moralisé have received unwarranted deprecation from modern critics who overlook the element of moral seriousness in Ovid. Douglas Bush writes of "the sheer appalling bulk of allegorical commentary" represented by the Ovide Moralisé and tells us that its "religious and moral and other lessons . . . would of course have made Ovid stare and gasp."¹³⁰ To this, the best answer is that Ovid would have

been as much taken aback had he been told that his works would one day be regarded essentially as invitations to vice. The medieval writers who allegorized the Metamorphoses and quoted the Ars Amatoria in serious didactic works of their own¹³¹ were aware of more meanings than the literal in Ovid's poetry. They hereby demonstrated a more marked sensitivity to the subtlety of the Ovidian spirit than those critics, medieval as well as modern,¹³² who have been unable to imagine that Ovid, just because he wrote about vicious love, could have been anything except prurient.

Ovid's immense popularity and influence, which followed the revival of interest in his works at the end of the eleventh century, is widely apparent in medieval European literature. His example was perhaps most strongly felt by Jean de Meun and Chaucer, poets whom E. K. Rand has named ". . . the most conspicuous reincarnations of Ovid in the Middle Ages." As Rand goes on to say, "Ovid, the whole Ovid, never was better understood than in the Ages of Faith, and no one ever so lived him through as Geoffrey Chaucer."¹³³

We shall presently look at some of the poetic results of Ovid's influence on Chaucer. But since, as Rand suggests, this influence is most prominent in Chaucer's use of irony, the best way to recognize Chaucer's debt to

Ovid is first to understand the function of the ethical norms that control irony in the Canterbury Tales and the Troilus. As we have seen, marriage has a strong claim to being the principle ethical norm in Chaucer's love poetry, for while cosmological love is also a norm, it transcends the world of human sexuality with which Chaucer tends to be chiefly concerned. The relationship of marriage to cosmological love is, nonetheless, clearly defined for Chaucer. In the fourteenth century it was thought desirable not that sexuality and cosmological love should be irreconcilable, but that they should be brought together in an ordered hierarchical relationship through the only means possible: marriage. Marriage leads sexual desire into harmony with the divine order of the universe, whereas consummated concupiscence can produce only an illusion of this harmony. Accordingly, the De Consolatione designates not fornication but marriage as a human manifestation of cosmological love ("This love . . . knytteth sacrement of mariages and chaste loves" II.m.8).¹³⁴

Turning, then, to the specific ways in which marriage serves as a norm for sexual behaviour in Chaucer, we must note that marriage was commonly recognized as having two purposes in the Middle Ages. These are outlined by Hugh of St. Victor in the De Sacramentis: "The institution of marriage is two-fold: one before sin for office, the

other after sin for remedy; the first that nature might be multiplied; the second that nature might be supported and vice checked."¹³⁵ A character like Palamon in the Knight's Tale, if judged according to the moral values of Hugh of St. Victor, assumes a most unfavorable appearance. In praying to Venus for the possession of Emelye, Palamon is as much as repudiating marriage through his pledge to "werre alwey with chastitee" (Kn.T. 2236). Of the two purposes of marriage referred to by Hugh, the second he rejects outright, while remaining oblivious to the first. Palamon's obvious preoccupation is vicious self-indulgence, a fact about which Boccaccio's Glosses on Venus in the Teseida leave no doubt. Boccaccio makes it quite clear that Palamon has no interest in procreation or the prevention of vice, since the Venus to whom he prays is antithetical to the Venus of marriage. Though both deities rule the concupiscible appetite, "one can be understood as every chaste and licit desire, as is the desire to have a wife in order to have children. . . ." ¹³⁶ while the other, says Boccaccio, is the mother of lewdness.

If Palamon is hardly aware of the distinction between marital and libidinous desire, Troilus, true to his more intellectual character, seems from his allusion to Hymen to know that a distinction exists, but cannot remember what it is. Rapturously, he delivers misdirected

praise to the god of wedding when he first finds Criseyde physically accessible:

After thiself next heried be she
 Venus mene I, the wel-willy planete
 And next that, Imeneus I the grete. . . .
 (T&C. III.1256-58)

But Hymen has little part to play in the sexual encounters of Troilus, and this invocation merely draws attention to Troilus's actual contempt for the functions of marriage. Indeed, much of the irony surrounding Chaucer's carnal lovers is generated by their refusal to seek a proper alternative in marriage to their sexual frustrations. Troilus is not, so far as Chaucer is concerned, to blame for having concupiscent appetites. His fault lies in ignoring the legal outlet which marriage provides for them. This is also true of Palamon until, in obedience to the command of Theseus, he marries Emilye. References and allusions to marriage are, therefore, heavily ironic when they appear in connection with persons caught in the toils of Venus.¹³⁷ They serve always to remind us of the free will of the sufferers and of their complete responsibility for their own unhappiness. But the individual who, like Theseus, subordinates concupiscence to marriage, voluntarily places himself above the experiences of unfortunates like Troilus and Palamon and Arcite. Palamon and Arcite have both the reason and the free will necessary for making the same choice as Theseus. Choosing otherwise, they suffer

their desserts accordingly.

The example set by Theseus fulfills the good effects of marriage as described by St. Augustine. In a rebuttal to Julian's allegation that he regards the union of the sexes as evil, St. Augustine explains that the sacrament of marriage sanctifies sexuality:

I do not say that children, coming from an evil action, are evil, since I do not say that the activity in which married persons engage for the purpose of begetting children is evil. As a matter of fact I assert that it is good because it makes good use of the evil of lust and through this good use, human beings, a good work of God are generated.¹³⁸

Theseus has in mind the same ideas about marriage. The bond that he establishes between Palamon and Emilye is clearly founded on the necessity for procreation. As Theseus points out, all earthly things "shullen endure by successiouns" (3014) of death and renewal. The demise of Arcite is thus perfectly balanced by the marriage which follows it. In speaking of bringing joy out of sorrow, Theseus expresses the Augustinian hope that the evil of Palamon's lust may be turned towards the procreative usefulness of marriage.

The figurative connotations of the medieval concept of marriage are well known and scarcely require detailed summary. Chaucer's Parson says: "God made mariage in paradys, in the estaat of innocence . . ." (Pars.T. 893) and his reference to man's prelapsarian state should remind

us that marriage was intended to restore, though imperfectly, the harmony of reason and emotion that man enjoyed in Paradise before the Fall. Because this harmony is a gift of grace and not something accessible to unaided human virtue,¹³⁹ marriage is traditionally referred to as an ordinance of God. It therefore behooves those who are married to observe divine law governing the relationship of the sexes: the husband is morally obliged to rule his wife as the reason should rule the emotions. The Fall was caused by a subversion of this sexual hierarchy when the female principle of emotion overthrew male reason. Man was thereby deprived of his capacity for rational love and became subject instead to animal lust. Marriage is a symbolic reunion of the divinely rational with the physical and emotional parts of man that were alienated through Adam's uxoriousness. As Paul Olson notes, marriage repairs the broken order of creation by reconstituting a link in the chain of being that had been lost when Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise: "Since a link in the 'faire cheyen' had been broken, the marriage of the first garden was kept as an institution, a fragment shored against the complete ruin of rationality in man."¹⁴⁰ Ideally, the espoused couple should possess the balance of reason and emotion that existed between Adam and Eve in Paradise. Marriage will thus elevate the human spirit above

x the postlapsarian state to its pristine rationality.

Theseus, who acts as a surrogate for God in the final stages of the Knight's Tale, effects a renewal of man's fallen reason when he bids Emelye take Palamon "for housbonde and for lord" (Kn.T. 3081). Palamon is obliged in marriage to stop being a fool of passion and Fortune and to learn to exercise the authority of his reason. Emelye, meanwhile, assumes an appropriate stance of female subordination.

This, however, provides more than a literal solution to the problems of the characters in the story. Chaucer's audience would have recognized in the growth of Palamon's infatuation a series of psychological steps described by D. W. Robertson as "an inner repetition of the Fall":¹⁴¹ sensual suggestion leads to "immoderate thought" and thence to mania or passio. By correcting Palamon's unbalanced mental state, Theseus contributes to the spiritual redemption of postlapsarian man whom Palamon represents.

The Knight's Tale contains most of the major themes of the Canterbury Tales: Fortune, predestination, love, sin, and salvation. This synoptic quality is probably the reason for its being told first on the pilgrimage. The philosophical questions raised by the Knight anticipate on a broad scale the specific insights into the human condition of subsequent narrators and his solution to those

questions, marriage, is either literally or figuratively apposite to each of the other Tales.

The medieval concept of marriage had diverse implications. All human beings were considered in a tropological sense to be married to Christ or the Devil.

Marriage was also a metaphor for social and moral order.

D. W. Robertson notes that in medieval terms "... a well-ordered hierarchy of almost any kind may be thought of as a 'marriage'."¹⁴² Whether, as in the case of the

Merchant's Tale, a work of Chaucer's is specifically concerned with marital relations, or whether, like the Monk's Tale, it addresses itself to the subject of Fortune,

marriage opens a fundamental avenue for the exploration of literary content. Admittedly, the Monk's allusions to marriage are inconsequential and relatively few. Though at one point he offers the same advice as the Nun's Priest,

"Beth war-by this ensample oold and playn / That no men telle hir conseil til hir wyves" (Mk.T. 2091-92), he does

not successfully illustrate the connection between marriage and Fortune. This failure however, when seen in its in-

tended context, tells us a great deal about the flaws in the Monk's character. We must remember, when reading the

Monk's Tale, that it stands in contrast to the Tales of the

Knight¹⁴³ and the Nun's Priest both of whom prescribe the

order represented by marriage as a safeguard against the

adversity of Fortune. For the Monk, Fortune is inexorable, capricious, and unpredictable. All the exempla recited by him in the course of his Tale project an unChristian pessimism based on the belief that moral decision is unavailing when faced with the power of Fortune. The implication of this belief is that since reason and virtue cannot control Fortune, one might as well obey sensual emotion and instinct as try to resist them. And, as his portrait in the General Prologue shows, it is exactly this course of behaviour that the Monk follows.¹⁴⁴

For a true Christian interpretation of the symbolic correlation between marriage and Fortune, we must turn our attention to the Nun's Priest's Tale. The Nun's Priest's story of "a cok . . . / That tok his conseil of his wyf, with sorwe" (3252-53) identifies the abuse of sex with submission to Fortune's rule. Chauntecleer's dereliction in the marital duty of controlling his wife corresponds morally to the abandonment of reason in favour of the sensual emotion that makes him a victim of Fortune. Chauntecleer would rather obey the laws of Venus than those of marriage, and when Venus betrays him, he gets what he deserves. The Nun's Priest ironically reproves Venus for her perfidy:

O Venus, that art goddesse of plesaunce,
 Syn that thy servant was this Chauntecleer,
 And in thy servyce dide al his poweer,
Moore for delit than world to multiplie
 Why woldestow suffre hym on thy day to dye?
 (NPT. 3342-46)

The second last line in this quotation is a pointed reminder of Chauntecleer's deliberate violation of the first of the two offices of marriage mentioned by Hugh of St. Victor; and the analogy in Chaucer's mind between submission to Fortune and the subversion of rational conduct in marriage may be detected in a comparison of the Nun's Priest's complaint to Venus with the mocking appeal to Fortune that occurs in the Merchant's Tale after Januarie has been cuckolded:

O sodeyn hap! O thou Fortune unstable!
 Lyk to the scorpion so deceyvable

 Why hastow Januarie thus deceyved,
 That haddest hym for thy fulle freend receyved?
 (Merch.T. 2057-66)

The purpose of both these passages is to ridicule false ideas of moral order. Because the Venus of concupiscence and the goddess Fortune are inherently untrustworthy, only blatant stupidity will rely upon them, and it is notable that Januarie's stupidity, like Chauntecleer's, specifically takes the form of marital corruption. The Parson warns that intemperate sexual possessiveness in marriage is contrary to Christian charity (Pars.T. 858), but Januarie chooses "of his owene auctoritee" (Merch.T. 1597), and against the "just" counsel of Justinus, to yield to it.

Chauntecleer's unfortunate situation also resembles that of Troilus, who complains to Fortune in the same unreasonable manner affected in the appeals of the Nun's Priest and the Merchant (T&C. IV.260-80). Troilus's actions, similarly, contravene the standards of marriage in that, being guilty of fornication, he additionally injures the chastity of a widow. Widows, in deference to their original marital vows, were expected to abstain from further sexual involvement: "The second manere of chastitie is for to bene a clene wydewe, and eschue the embracynges of man, and desiren the embracynge of Jhesu Christ" (Pars.T. 943). Troilus, not unexpectedly, suffers for his literal contempt for marriage because it is a sign of his fatal lack of concern for a symbolic, orderly marriage of his own reason and emotion.

Marriage, in Chaucer's poetry, figures as the chief alternative to Fortune. The Parson classifies it merely as a remedium contra peccatum luxurie and as such Theseus imposes it upon Palamon in the Knight's Tale. But because the effects of lechery and Fortune are so closely allied, marriage simultaneously frees Palamon from his subjection to the latter. The Nun's Priest's story of marriage offers, likewise, both a solution to the Monk's understanding of Fortune and a remedy for his resultant lechery. The Monk is no more successful than Chauntecleer or Troilus at

preserving an orderly marriage of his higher and lower faculties. He is guided by emotion and not reason when he sets out to "biwaille in manere of tragedie / The harm of hem that stode in heigh degree" (Mk.T. 1891-92), and he sounds not unlike the characters in other Tales who irrationally complain about Fortune. The Monk has lost his moral alertness through excessive sensuality and has become unable to distinguish properly between good and evil. He therefore does not realize how foolish and amoral is his view of Fortune. The Nun's Priest tacitly attempts to diagnose and treat the Monk's unsound moral condition. He creates a protagonist who shares the Monk's problem but who recovers from it before it is too late.¹⁴⁵ Chauntecleer holds "his eyen cloos" (NPT. 3332) in blind misunderstanding of Fortune, but he learns from the experience about the folly of him "that wynketh whan he sholde see" (NPT. 3431). He realizes that he has been "recchelees" in obeying his wife and listening to the fox and decides to reinstate reason in its intended position of authority over his emotions. An implication of the story is that the Monk should do the same. The story of Chauntecleer's marriage is intended to show that reason and emotion should be hierarchically wedded like husband and wife. This moral has direct application to the Monk as well as to Chauntecleer, which illustrates the extensiveness of the theme and

symbolism of marriage in Chaucer's work.

For Chaucer, marriage is the only morally acceptable condition for human sexual love. This is less a matter of interpretation than of fact, and further comment would be unnecessary were it not so often suggested that Chaucer sanctions sexual alternatives to marriage. Ida Gordon, for example, proposes that Chaucer purposely creates an ambiguous context for some stanzas in Book I of the Troilus (247-259) that discuss the so-called "virtuous effect" of love. These stanzas are derived, as she points out, from the description of Cupid's snares in the

Roman de la Rose:

Ful many a worthy man hath it
Yblent, for folk of grettist wit
Ben soone caught heere and heere awayted.
(RR. 1609-11)

The Chaucer stanza to which this specifically corresponds begins: "Men reden not that folk han gretter wit / Than they that han be most with love ynome" (T&C. I.241-42). Chaucer, it will be noticed, substitutes the word "ynome" (taken) for the possibly less subtle "caught". Gordon attaches considerable importance to this and to other slight alterations:

. . . by eliminating the words 'yblent', 'caught', and 'awayted', Chaucer removes any indication of what kind of sexual love is meant, that which binds and enslaves or the other kind. When he goes on to describe the virtuous effect of love, it is open to the reader to judge which kind it is that has this virtuous effect, or has it more permanently.¹⁴⁶

This is not, however, a particularly convincing analysis of the stanzas in question.

If Chaucer is indeed trying to create an ambiguous atmosphere for his remarks about love, the impression on the reader is very short-lived and is quickly forgotten beneath the weight of derogatory allusions to the binding and enslaving power of carnal love. The theme and imagery of sexual enslavement in the Troilus have been ably discussed by Stephen Barney, who shows that far from eliminating words that express love's bondage, Chaucer uses them at every turn.¹⁴⁷ It is therefore difficult to see why, on this particular occasion, Chaucer would be interested in suppressing such words or how he could expect his audience to detect and appreciate what must be taken as a momentary reversal of a dominant motif. Whatever "the other kind" of love that Gordon refers to may be, there is no doubt that Troilus's love is of the binding and enslaving variety. And Chaucer never says, except with irony, that this love awakens virtue. Virtue is inseparable from free will, and only vice accompanies enslavement. The De Consolatione stresses that the soul that abandons its reason and succumbs

to passion becomes enslaved by vice: "But the laste servage
 is whan that thei ben yeven to vices and han ifalle fro
 the possessioun of hir propre resoun . . . thei hepen and
 encrecen the servage which thei han joyned to hemself; and
 in this manere thei ben caytifs fro hir propre liberte"

(V.pr.2). We can safely believe that Chaucer does not
 invite us to think that Boethius was mistaken in this
 opinion. Chaucer's translation of the philosopher's work
 is but one sign of his respect for its lessons. The Troilus
 is weighted with Boethian imagery and ideas, and this is
 no less than to be expected in the fourteenth century when,
 to borrow D. W. Robertson's phrase, "Boethius was widely
 regarded as a saint."¹⁴⁸ Marriage is compatible with
 Boethian ethical principles, but fornication is not. Un-
 less the "virtuous effect" of love on Troilus is to be
 understood in the context of a specifically un-Boethian
 and ultimately unchristian definition of virtue, Troilus's
 behaviour can be seen as nothing short of vicious. This
 implies that without the sanction of marriage, sexual love
 cannot lead to virtue. Nevertheless, Chaucer does not say
 so overtly in the Troilus.

Chaucer's reticence in expressing ethical judge-
 ments on the subject of love reflects the ironic spirit
 of his art and does not stem from intellectual tolerance
 or moral uncertainty. Still less does it put in question

his belief in the ideal of marriage. The Troilus and the Canterbury Tales depend more on irony than on any other stylistic device.¹⁴⁹ However, the various forms of irony used by medieval writers often involve subtle and indirect statement, and modern readers, not being so quick as Chaucer's contemporaries would have been to understand what is not said plainly,¹⁵⁰ sometimes run the risk of misinterpreting Chaucer.

It is now time to return to our discussion of Ovid, because, as was suggested earlier, the example of Ovid can tell us much about the way in which Chaucer uses irony to assert the rightness of married love.¹⁵¹ Chaucer's debt to Ovid is displayed not merely in the quantity of poetic material that he borrowed from the Roman poet; it also emerges in the manner in which he uses irony to pass moral judgements. The character of Criseyde, for instance, owes much to Ovidian satiric portraiture. Edgar F. Shannon has surmised that Criseyde was modelled after Ovid's Helen¹⁵² in the Heroides, who also is vain, self-centered, and deceitful, and who, while offering token resistance to the advances of Paris, in her heart welcomes them. Although Shannon perhaps errs in trying to pinpoint too exactly the original of Criseyde, he clearly sees her unsatisfactory moral qualities.

Other critics have been more romantically inclined to idealize Criseyde's faults. Constance Saintonge, in an essay entitled "In Defense of Criseyde", claims that Criseyde, being "soft, amorous, sweet, timorous, and mysterious", is exempt from the human obligation to exercise free will and that her tragedy is that "she is not free to choose." We are somehow to believe that, "through her own nature", Criseyde cannot act differently from the way she does and that her deeds cannot be defined as evil because she transcends all moral judgements. The rather florid conclusion to Saintonge's essay focuses on the alleged incongruity of levelling moral accusations at Criseyde. Criseyde "brings to mind Botticelli's picture of Venus, of Love itself -- passive and soft, harking back to the ancient purity that went before, looking forward with submissive apprehension to the monstrous pile of charges that will be laid before her."¹⁵³ This seems vaguely reminiscent of Pater's description of the Mona Lisa, but any resemblance between Saintonge's picture of Criseyde and the one that Chaucer intended his audience to perceive remains slight. Criseyde's charm is not meant to imply that she is not the victim of her own foolish decision or to obscure her characteristic dishonesty and propensity to tell lies. Though charming, her statements to Diomedes about her

own character and past are neither mysterious, nor, in Saintonge's sense of the word, tragic. They are simply untrue:

"But as to speke of love, ywis," she seyde,
 I hadde a lord, to whom I wedded was,
 The whos myn herte al was, til that he deyde;
 And other love, as help me now Pallas,
 There in myn herte nys, ne nevere was . . .
 (T&C. V.974-78)

Diomede is, of course, not taken in by Criseyde's denial of her liaison with Troilus. He realizes what has been going on between Troilus and Criseyde from the instant that she is delivered to the Greeks at the gates of Troy. Any trace of mystery that ever clung to Criseyde is removed when Diomede, seeing straight through her, masterfully takes her bridle in his hand:

. . . the son of Tideus took hede
 As he that koude more than the crede
 In swich a craft, and be the reyne hire hente.
 (T&C. V.88-90)

Diomede's Ovidian expertise in love's craft helps to establish a tone in Book V of the Troilus that recalls Book III of the Ars Amatoria. Criseyde, like Ovid's heroines, is very decorously satirized and her romantic image is deflated only by the subtle exposure of her serious but commonplace defects. Ovid keeps his readers constantly aware of the deceptiveness of feminine charms underneath which often lurk the most seamy aspects of character:

"It is necessary for us to be privy to your beauty secrets; there are a great many other things we have better be kept in ignorance of. Many of your doings might turn a delicate stomach or repel a sensitive nose. The glorious trappings of a theater are only giltwood; therefore the audience is not permitted to clamber up and examine them."¹⁵⁴ Chaucer's treatment of courtly ladies such as Dorigen, Emilyè, and Criseyde is ironic in the same way that Ovid's cosmetic instructions are. When Ovid refers to things that the sensitive nose might find repellent, he implicitly criticizes those that emanate from moral character, though the humour of his attack is based on a pretended carelessness of moral issues. Chaucer, analogously, shows in Book V that Criseyde's exotic beauty is a poor concealment for her moral unseemliness.

The scenes of Diomedes's courtship distract much of our attention from the things about Criseyde that have made her fascinating in the eyes of the idolatrous Troilus: "hire sydes longe, flesshly, smothe, and white" (III.1248), "hire sonnysshe heeris" (IV.816), "hire fyngeres longe and smale" (IV.737) and so forth. Diomedes, who is tactical and self-possessed, is also less inclined than Troilus to rationalize his vices by calling them virtues. His interest in Criseyde is thus undisguisedly selfish, opportunistic, and above all, carnal. That Criseyde responds as readily

to the frankly carnal Diomedes as to the high-minded affectations of Troilus indicates that, for all her personal adornments, her principles are no higher than those acknowledged by Diomedes. The moral proximity of Criseyde to Diomedes is shown in their common response to the prospect of carnal self-indulgence. Consenting to an affair with Troilus, Criseyde remarks: "He which that nothing undertaketh, / Nought n'acheveth . . ." (II.807-08), and is later echoed by Diomedes: "'But for t'asay,' he seyde, 'it nought me greveth; / For he that nought n'assaieith, nought n'acheveth'" (V.783-84). This expresses nothing more nor less than strong cupidinous desire; Criseyde and Diomedes are only concerned with getting as much as they can for themselves as individuals and each looks forward to a purely materialistic "achievement." Diomedes wants Criseyde as an object to demonstrate the superiority of his virility to that of Troilus, and with this aim he applies himself to wooing her despite her sorrow:

But whoso myghte wynnen swich a flour
From hym for whom she morneth nyght and day,
He myghte seyn he were a conquerour. (T&C. V.792-94)

And Criseyde wants Troilus because the sexual conquest of a prince will nourish her vanity:

For out and out he is the worthieste,
 Save only Ector which is the Beste;
 And yet his lif al lîth now in my cure

I am oon the fairest out of drede.

(T&C. II.739-46)

Chaucer does not surround the personality of Criseyde with mystery; he shows us that she responds to the same carnal allurements as the other principal figures in the Troilus and that she shares the same vices.

There is no difference between the motives that cause Criseyde to accept Troilus as a lover and those which impel her towards Diomedes. The strain of Ovidian satire that stands out in Book V is present throughout the poem, and Chaucer nowhere implies that Troilus's passionate idolatry is morally superior to Diomedes's pragmatic cynicism. Certainly Diomedes's seduction of Criseyde recapitulates many of the efforts of Pandarus on Troilus's behalf. As Alan Gaylord puts it, "It is something like seeing a minuet projected at a faster speed, giving the dance a comic aspect without changing the basic steps."¹⁵⁵ Diomedes has Troilus's familiar susceptibility to blushes (V.925-28), and Criseyde's responses are, as ever, coy and evasive. In Book V Chaucer is simply reviewing the process of Books II and III at a greater distance and from a more detached angle. That critics of the poem have been able to ignore this, while arguing that the Troilus

religiously celebrates carnal passion, might lead us to ask whether the formula "Chaucer misunderstood" could not be widely applied to published commentary on the poet's works.

In the case of the Troilus, the main impediment to scholarly understanding of Chaucer's satire is the attractiveness with which he endows concupiscent love in Book III. Readers easily assume that Chaucer must be in favour of the doings of Troilus and Criseyde because the lovers are enjoying themselves. Yet this conclusion does not follow by reason. It was appreciated in the Middle Ages that vice could be just as attractive and, in appearance, as desirable as virtue. Boethius makes this point when he says that sinners desire the same good that belongs to the virtuous and that they are merely misled through "wandrynge errour" to seek false goods (III.pr.2). False goods bear a specious resemblance to the true good which can only be attained as a result of virtue. If this were not so, there would be no vice in the world, for it is only the deceiving attractiveness of vice that induces men to sin. The Wife of Bath's lament, "Allas! Allas! that evere love was synne!" (WBP. 614), expresses clear-sighted recognition of this truth and a painful acceptance of the association of sexual beauty with corruption. But Troilus fails, despite all his Boethian intellectualizing, to suspect that there could be any inconsistency between

virtue and his private responses to Criseyde's beauty. That beauty provides Troilus with a pleasant illusion to cover up the existence of evil, just as it helps Criseyde to hide her personal flaws. E. K. Rand's apt comment on Ovid's satiric technique could be extended to Chaucer's portrait of Criseyde: "He . . . conveyed . . . satire with an art that even the fair victim would have found delectable."¹⁵⁶ Troilus, for his part, resembles the dupes of sexual passion whom Ovid intermittently mocks in the Ars Amatoria.

Ovid's influence on Chaucer is a subject for intensive, independent study, and does not concern us here. The purpose of the preceding remarks has been merely to point out the harmonious relationship which exists between the Ovidian and Christian elements in Chaucer's art: The ironic humour that colours most of what Chaucer says about bad love and which is directly traceable to Ovid is supported, we must remember, by a fair amount of Boethian philosophical doctrine. This intellectual synthesis is frequently encountered by the reader of medieval literature. Perhaps its most striking appearance before Chaucer is in the Roman de la Rose, which poem, E. K. Rand, in a lapse from his customary perspicacity, has described as a clash between Ovid and Boethius.¹⁵⁷ For Chaucer, as for Jean de Meun before him, Ovid's wit complemented the clarity and

philosophical coherence of Boethius, and like much medieval literature written to condemn irrational abuses of love, his work combines the strengths of both authors.

CHAPTER 2

NATURE AND LOVE

1. The Figure of Nature in Chaucer's Love Poetry

Having sought to develop a balanced historical perspective on Chaucerian love, we can now begin to look more closely at the structure and meaning of some of the poet's principal love poems. Since an important implication of the preceding chapter is that a close correlation is generally to be found between the moral and the aesthetic elements of medieval poetry, it seems reasonable to base a formalistic discussion of works like Troilus and Criseyde and the Knight's Tale on an examination of their moral issues. To approach these issues, we must in turn remember that sexual love was not, for medieval writers, the panacea that it came to be in the literary mind of the nineteenth century. Among Chaucer's contemporaries it was thought, on the contrary, to offer a dangerous incentive to sin and was therefore consistently looked upon with moral suspicion.

Perhaps as a result of this suspicion, carnal lovers in medieval literature are frequently characterized by an urge to supply moral justification for their behaviour. The male figures in the De Amore attempt to use reason and

logic to defend their immoral intentions towards the women with whom they carry on their dialogues, and several of Chaucer's characters, both male and female, rationalize their sexual abuses. Old January in the Merchant's Tale, for instance, goes to elaborate lengths to prove to himself and his friends that it is right for him to marry a young wife for concupiscent motives, but the unsoundness of his logic is repeatedly revealed through his inversions of common sense and basic morality. When he assures his youthful bride that they can sinlessly indulge in unbridled concupiscence, January presents a concise but ludicrous argument in defence of his opinion; a man, he claims, cannot sin with his own wife because of the sanctity of wedlock:

It is no fors how longe that we pleye;
 In trewe wedlok coupled be we tweye;
 And blessed be the yok that we been inne,
 For in oure actes we mowe do no synne.
 A man may do no synne with his wyf,
 Ne hurte hymselfen with his owene knyf
 (Merch.T. 1835-40)

January, however, simply overlooks the Christian principle that nothing justifies the cupidinous love of a worldly creature before God. Certainly the sacrament of marriage cannot provide an excuse for love of this sort, and, as Chaucer's Parson points out, a man can as easily sin with his own wife as hurt himself with his own knife. The only proper way to love a wife, concludes the Parson, is with patience and discretion:

God woot, a man may sleen hymself with his owene knyf, and make hymself dronken of his owene tonne. Certes, be it wyf, be it child, or any worldly thyng that he loveth biforn God, it is his mawmet, and he is an ydolastre. Man sholde loven hys wyf by discrecioun, patiently and atemprely. . . . (Pars.T. 858-60)

Other Chaucerian characters who advance specious arguments for sexual immorality are the Wife of Bath, Troilus, and Palamon and Arcite, the heroes of the Knight's Tale. Like January, each of these characters becomes entangled in his own web of sophistry in the process of trying to justify behaviour that is not rationally justifiable. In the ensuing pages of this chapter, we shall analyze in some detail an argument that many of Chaucer's lovers use to justify fornication and adultery -- the argument that such activities are "natural". To begin with however, we must establish what the concept of nature meant to Chaucer. This will involve some fairly lengthy discussion of the figurative significance and interaction of the goddesses Nature and Venus in Chaucer's work. From here we will proceed to an assessment of Nature's influence on sexual motives and morality in some specific poems, among them Troilus and Criseyde, the Parliament of Fowls, and the Knight's Tale.

Chaucer, it will be remembered, makes reference to the allegorical figure Nature in several of his works, such as the Physician's Tale, (9-29), The Book of the Duchess

(871-75), Anelida and Arcite (78-80), and Troilus and Criseyde (99-105). In each case Nature is seen as a creative and beneficent force and in the Physician's Tale is even quoted as claiming to be the vice-regent of God on earth:

For He that is the formere principal
 Hath maked me his vicaire general,
 To forme and peynten erthly creaturis
 Ryght as me list, and ech thyng in my cure is
 Under the moone, that may wane and waxe;
 (Physician's Tale 19-23)

Chaucer was not alone among medieval writers in attributing divine authority to Nature. Langland describes a dream in Piers Plowman in which the narrator is approached by Kynde (Nature) and is led to a mountain top where he receives instructions from Kynde on how to love God through knowledge of God's works revealed in nature:

and sithen cam Kynde,
 And nempned me by my name and bad me hymen hede,
 And thorn the wondres of this worlde wytte for take
 And on a mountaigne that Mydelerd hyzte as me thou thouzte
 I was fette forth by ensaumples to knowe
 Through eche a creature and Kynde my creatoure to Love.
 (XI.312-17)

Chaucer and Langland alike personify Nature as a chief intermediary between God and the created universe. Nature is responsible for the order of the physical elements and for the constant patterns of animal behaviour.

This image of Nature is partly derived from Boethius's portrayal of her in the De Consolatione:

☞ . . . Nature, myghty, enclyneth and fytteth the governe-
ment of thynges, and by whiche lawes sche, purveiable,
kepith the grete world; and how sche, byndynge, restreyneth
alle thynges by a boond that may nat be unbownde" (III.m.2).

(To illustrate the binding power of Nature, Boethius cites
examples of the influence of instinct upon certain creatures.
Tame lions, he observes "remembren hir nature" and reverting
to their wild habits will devour their masters. A bird
may be confined to a cage and be taught to take its food
from human hands, but if it should catch sight of the woods
which are its natural habitat, it will wish to escape from
its cage to return to them. The heavenly bodies, too,
follow natural instinct; the sun sets in the west but
unfailingly returns to the east where it is accustomed to
rise. Boethius concludes from these phenomena that "alle
thyngs seken ayen to hir propre cours, and alle thynges
rejoysen hem of hir retornynge ayen to hir nature" (III.m.2).

Man, like other creatures has fixed inclinations
which are planted in him by Nature. Boethius, however,
implies that what is natural for animals is not natural
for man. While animals obey Nature by following their
carnal appetites, man is inspired by Nature to seek the
sovereign good: "For why the covetise of verray good is
naturely, iplayntyd in the hertes of men . . ." (III.2).
Unfortunately, men do not always recognize the sovereign

good and are diverted from it by errors of perception:
 "And therefore naturel entencioun ledeth you to thilke
 verray good, but many maner errours mystorneth you therfro"
 (III.p.3). The purpose of the entire five books of the
De Consolatione is to define the good that man should
 desire, for although animals can fulfill their true natures
 with unerring instinct, man must exercise free-will and
 reason to fulfill his. When man does not use his reason, he
 puts himself in bondage to false goods, some of which
 Boethius enumerates: "rychesses, honours, power, glorie
 and delitz" (III.p.2). By falling victim to the pursuit
 of these false goods, man abdicates his human nature and
 assumes the nature of a beast: "Than folweth it that he
 that forletith bounte and prowess, he forletith to ben
 a man; syn he may nat passe into the condicioun of God, he
 is torned into a beeste" (IV.pr.3).

Chaucer's Parson states the same lessons as Boethius
 in clear Augustinian terms, pointing out that God alone is
 the sovereign good and that to turn away from God for
 lesser goods is mortal sin: "'deadly synne' as seith
 Seint Augustyn, 'is whan a man turneth his herte fro God,
 which that is verray sovereyn bountee that may nat chaunge
 and flitte', And certes, that is every thyng save God of
 hevene" (Pars.T. 367-8). The Wife of Bath's Tale also
 also reveals the influence on Chaucer of Boethian ideas

concerning man and Nature. The Wife of Bath tells a story of a Knight, "a lusty bachelor" living in King Arthur's court, who is sentenced to death by the King for having committed rape. This sentence, fortunately for the Knight, is eventually commuted, and he is instead adjured by the queen to find, within a year, the answer to the question "What thyng is it wommen moost desiren" (WBT. 905), the penalty for failing to secure the right answer being death.

There is an obvious verbal parallel between the queen's question and the one addressed by Lady Philosophy to Boethius in the De Consolatione: "'Forsothe,' quod sche, 'thanne nedeth ther somewhat that every man desireth'" (III.pr.3). To appreciate the irony that appears to lie hidden in the similarity of the two questions, we should consider the difference between the purposes for which they are uttered. Lady Philosophy is rightfully trying to restore Nature's gift, reason,¹ to the mind of Boethius in order that he may rise above passionate self-pity and see God. The queen in the Wife of Bath's narrative is ostensibly punishing the knight for forcefully depriving a maiden of her virginity, but whether she is acting as the instrument of justice and morality and thereby, like Lady Philosophy, serving Nature is open to serious doubt.

It is obvious that the queen's philosophy concerning the ideal relationship of the sexes is the same as the Wife

of Bath's, for they both approve the knight's answer to the question of what women naturally desire most -- namely, that "wommen desiren to have sovereynetee / As wel over hir housbond as hir love" (WBT. 1039). Since the Wife of Bath considers her bele chose (WBT. 447, 510) an indispensable weapon in the war of sexual politics through which female sovereignty in marriage is achieved, she has little use for virginity and, echoing La Vieille in the Roman de la Rose (13483 ff), she declares: "I wol bistowe the flour of al myn age in actes and in fruyt of mariage" (WBT. 114). These words do not in fact say that the Wife honours marriage, though this is what they appear to mean. The Wife really wishes to subvert Nature's order as reflected in the institution of marriage by challenging what the Middle Ages regarded as the husband's natural position of authority over the wife.² In the process of voicing her opposition to true marriage, she also evidently condemns virginity, which was identified by no lesser than St. Jerome as the "fruyt of mariage". D. W. Robertson elaborates, as follows, the significance of the Wife's reference to the "fruyt of mariage" for our understanding of her attitude towards virginity: "the fruit . . . is clearly neither the 'virginity' St. Jerome regarded as the fruit of marriage nor progeny, nor that spiritual perfection which, regardless of physical condition, may also be called 'virginity'.

Both kinds of virginity are, in effect, dismissed at once."³

The affinity between the philosophies of the queen and the Wife of Bath may reasonably be assumed to cover not only marriage but the metaphorically related question of virginity as well. If this assumption is correct, as the parallel between the characters of these women implies, the queen is ironically disqualified to adjudicate in a case involving the loss of someone else's maidenhood. Although it is probable that the queen resents the affront to female sovereignty which the rape represents, she clearly does not condemn rape for the sound moral reasons outlined in the Parson's Tale. The Parson includes, among his examples of the sin of lechery, any act of defloration occurring outside marriage: "Another synne of Leccherie is to bireve a mayden of hir maydenhede; for he that so dooth, certes, he casteth a maydyen out of the hyeste degree that is in this present lif, and bireveth hire thilke precious fruyt. . . . Certes, he that so dooth is cause of manye damages and vileynyes mo than any man kan rekene" (Pars.T. 867-79). As none of the ideas here expressed by the Parson so much as enters the queen's mind, we cannot suppose that she is punishing the knight for his specific offence. If anything, her implied outlook on the concupiscent appetites would serve only to encourage the lechery

of which the knight is guilty, thereby making her a party to his sin.

The Parson calls the destruction of virginity sinful because it brings irreversible spiritual pollution (Pars.T. 871) but also, as the imagery of his speech suggests, because it impairs the excellence of what Nature has created. The "damages and vileynyes" for which a person like the knight is responsible are compared to the depredations of wild beasts in a garden or the maiming of a living body: ". . . right as he somtyme is cause of alle damages that beestes don in the feeld, that breketh the hegge or the closure, thurgh which he destroyeth that may nat been restooored. For certes namoore may maydenhede be restooored than an arm that is symten fro the body may retourne agayn to wexe" (Pars.T. 869-70). The Parson's words give some basis for thinking that Chaucer meant us to recognize in the offence of the Wife of Bath's knight, an assault against Nature herself.

Although the Parson does not make any overt references to Nature, the Physician, whose Tale, like the Wife of Bath's deals with defloration and rape, talks about virginity as a natural state of perfection. The Physician bases his Tale on Livy's account of Apius and Virginia⁴ and begins with a description of the physical and spiritual graces of the victim, all of which, particularly

her virginity, are praised as gifts of Nature:

This mayde of age twelve yeer was and tweye,
 In which that Nature hadde swich delit.
 For right as she kan peynte a lillie whit,
 And reed a rose, right with swich peynture
 She peynted hath this noble creature,
 Er she was born upon hir lymes fre,
 Were as by right swiche colours sholde be;
 And Phebus dyed hath hire tresses grete
 Lyk to the stremes of his burned heete.
 And if that excellent was hire beautee,
 A thousand foold moore vertuous was she.
 In hire ne lakked no condicioun
 That is to preyse, as by discrecioun
 As wel in goost as body chaste was she;
 For which she floured in virginitee.

(Physician's Tale 30-44)

The same conception of Nature as the bestower of man's best physical and spiritual possessions appears in Alain de Lille's De Planctu Naturae which Chaucer had read and to which he refers in the Parliament of Fowls (316).

Addressing the author of the De Planctu, Nature explains how she has joined together the human body and spirit that each might complement the other in perfection:

I ordered the senses, as guards for the corporeal realm, to keep watch, that like spies on foreign enemies they might defend the body from external assault. So would the material part of the whole body, being adorned with the higher glories of nature, be united the more agreeably when it came to marriage with its spouse the spirit; and so would not the spouse, in disgust at the baseness of its mate, oppose marriage. Thy spirit, also, I have stamped with vital powers, that it might not, poorer than the body, envy its successes. And in it I have established a power of native strength, which is a hunter of subtle matters in the pursuit of knowledge, and estab-

lished them, rendered intelligible in the understanding. On it also I have set the seal of reason, to set aside by the winnowing fan of its discrimination, the emptiness of falsehood from the serious matters of truth.⁵

When the Physician says that Virginia was chaste "as wel in ghoost as body," he seems to be borrowing Alain's conception of the ideal marriage between reason and sense which Nature intended to exist in every human being. The Physician goes on to point out that Virginia's maidenhood is a symbol of her physical and spiritual integration, for which, "she floured in Virginittee." Because this integration is the product of Nature, any threat to the virginity by which it is represented is also, figuratively, a threat to Nature herself. Apus, the corrupt justice whose lecherous designs on Virginia lead her father to cut off her head rather than allow her to be raped, is like those who tear Nature's garments in the De Planctu Naturae through their sexual perversions. The case for this sort of allegorical meaning is the Physician's Tale may be supported by D. W. Robertson's observation that "the action in the De Planctu Naturae . . . is an action continuously taking place; men tear Nature's garment at all times in postlapsarian history."⁶ Given this predisposition of the medieval mind to perceive the violation of Nature in a recurrent and allegorical sense, we can be fairly sure that Chaucer would not have overlooked the rich metaphorical

implications in the rape of virginity.

The carnal desires of the knight in the Wife of Bath's Tale are different from those of Apius only in that they are successfully carried into action. The queen and the knight are therefore, as much as Apius, the enemies of Nature. Both help to confiscate and destroy Nature's gifts, the knight through rape and the queen by conniving at his vicious behaviour. The irony of the queen's question about the desires of women is that unlike its prototype, Lady Philosophy's question about the sovereign good which all men desire, it is not intended to strengthen human respect for Nature. For Boethius, who attempts to approach the truths of the De Consolatione solely through man's natural reason and without the support of Christian revelation, reason must be cherished as the best of Nature's gifts to man; reason is the means whereby man can achieve happiness, the sovereign good which Nature causes him to desire: ". . . blisfulnesse be the sovereign good of nature that lyveth by resoun" (II.pr.4). By substituting female sovereignty for rational happiness and so changing the definition of the sovereign good, the queen, and the Wife of Bath whom she represents, undermine Nature's gift of reason. They do this by encouraging figures like the knight to follow their lustful passions instead of reason. As we have seen, the knight's crime is not really discordant

with the principles of the queen and the Wife of Bath, and this suggests that in destroying the gift of virginity, he prepares the way for the queen's more ambitious attempt to destroy reason also.

The Wife of Bath's Tale is, among a variety of other things, a parody of the philosophy of Nature contained in the De Consolatione. The queen corresponds to Lady Philosophy and attempts to lead the knight in the direction of "the many maner errours" that divert people from the natural sovereign good, whereas Lady Philosophy preserves Boethius from them. Towards the end of the Tale, after an old Hag has saved the knight's life by supplying him with the answer to the queen's question and has exacted from him in payment a promise of marriage, the knight expresses revulsion at the thought of fulfilling his promise. Informed by the Hag that she would not wish to have all the precious metal on earth unless she already had his love ("But if thy wyf I were, and eek thy love") (WBT. 1066), the knight replies: "'My Love?' (quod he) nay my dampnacioun!" The knight's response to the Hag is basically ironic, for the cupidinous and unnatural ways of love which the queen has encouraged him to follow will, morally speaking, certainly be his damnation. Lady Philosophy on the other hand, has worked Boethius's salvation by instructing him to love God as Nature intended

man to do.

The Wife of Bath's Tale reveals an intricate correspondence between the concepts of love and Nature which frequently emerges elsewhere in Chaucer's work. The philosophical associations in the poet's mind between Nature and the various forms of love reviewed in the preceding chapter have long been recognized; but their implications have excited different and sometimes contradictory interpretations. Some critics, J. A. W. Bennett for example, assert that romantic love and Nature are, as understood by Chaucer, morally and aesthetically complementary. D. W. Robertson, on the other hand, has argued that Nature is irreconcilable with Venus, who usually symbolizes the carnal passion of romantic lovers. Venus, Robertson says, encourages idolatrous and obsessive patterns of behaviour which are incompatible with Nature's purposes: "Nature . . . had no intention of causing man to think about love continually or of urging him to place the act of love above everything else; and this is exactly what the lover does. . . ." ⁷ We should do well to compare the merits of these claims in order to decide which of them is more acceptable from a critical point of view and may begin by examining some details of the contrast between Nature and Venus which emerges in the Parliament of Fowls.

The Parliament of Fowls begins with a statement

from the narrator that he is perplexed by the "wonderful werkyng" (PF. 5) of Love, and in the first several stanzas the narrator proceeds to outline the causes and circumstances of his interest in Love. It is nighttime and he has, all day been reading a book "write with lettres olde" entitled "Tullyus of the Drem of Scipioun" because he wishes "a certeyn thing to lerne" (20-35). The book concerns Scipio Africanus about whom the narrator begins to dream after having stopped reading to fall asleep. The narrator tells how he dreamt that Scipio "was come and stood right at my beddes syde" (98) and how in recompense for his diligent perusal of his "olde bok to torn", Scipio undertakes to teach the narrator something about the facts of love, guiding him for that purpose to the entrance of "a park walled with grene ston" (122). The top of this entrance is divided by two inscriptions, one of which points the way to bliss, while the other warns that through it lies the way to sorrow (127-140). Scipio reassures the narrator, who apparently reveals some anxiety of spirit, that these warnings do not apply to him because he is not a servant of Love (158-9). The narrator enters the park and we hear no more of Scipio. Once inside the park, the narrator soon becomes aware of the two main realms of which it is constituted, one belonging to the "noble goddesse Nature" and the other to Venus. It is clear that

each of these realms is indicated by one of the inscriptions above the entrance to the park. The second inscription, which points to Venus, includes specific references to Disdayn and Danger, the allegorical enemies of the servants of Venus in the Roman de la Rose and makes it clear that part of the woe suffered by those who follow Venus is inflicted by these figures:

"Thorgh me men gon" than spak that other side,
 "Unto the mortal strokes of the spere
 Of which Disdayn and Daunger is the gyde,
 Ther nevere tre shal fruyt ne leves bere (134-137)

The sparseness of vegetation in Venus's realm, which is mentioned in the line from the inscription immediately following the account of Disdayn and Daunger, sets up a contrast between this place and the other side of the park where Nature rules. The narrator distinguishes between the topography of the two realms by referring to the greater lushness of the realm of Nature; for example, he says upon revisiting Nature after completing a tour of Venus's territory:

Whan I was come ayeyn into the place
 That I of spak, that was so sote and grene,
 Forthe welk I tho my selven to solace,
 Tho was I war wher that ther sat a queene

 And in a launde, upon an hil of floures
 Was set this noble goddesse Nature. (295-303)

The correspondence between this passage and the lines of the first inscription at the entrance of the park shows that Chaucer meant us to associate the "blysfyl place" (127) with Nature. The inscription states that here ". . . grene and lusty May shal evere endure" (130).

Despite the very basic differences in this poem between the qualities of Nature and those of Venus, J. A. W. Bennett contends that neither deity is really alien to the other. Basing his argument on the absence of any mentioned boundary separating Nature's side of the park from Venus's, Bennett rhetorically asks: "Is it fanciful to see this shading of one scene into another the suggestion that the realms of Nature and Love march together, that however different their climates may be, no sharp impenetrable boundary divides them?"⁸ Bennett evidently does not anticipate a serious answer to this question since he utters it with the force of an assertion. But given the critical consideration it deserves, his question will surely elicit the response that to see any co-operation between Nature and Venus is more than fanciful; it is completely misleading. If Chaucer wanted to show that "the realms of Nature and Venus march together," one must wonder why he took the trouble to point out, by means of the inscriptions at the entrance to the garden, that the way of Nature leads to happiness, whereas Venus engenders sterility and sorrow.

Having opposite effects on human life, Nature and Venus can scarcely be considered allies. Bennett provides no plausible answer to this objection, but George Economou in a chapter of his book, The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature, adopts a line of argument similar to Bennett's and may be quoted in defence of Bennett's views on the relationship of Nature and Venus. Economou says that the inscriptions concern only "extreme estates of love" and that there is a middle ground between Nature and Venus in the park that is described in neither of the inscriptions: ". . . it is possible that there is between these extremes, a territory of love that the inscriptions do not explicitly chart. This likelihood is borne out during the narrator's progress through the park when he describes the scenes that suggest the great variety of the estates of love on earth rather than a simple opposition between fruitful and fruitless love."⁹

Economou is, in effect, arguing that Chaucer regarded earthly love as some sort of mean between vice and virtue. As we have seen, Chaucer habitually represents Nature as a force which is conducive to virtue, and in the Parliament of Fowls Nature's realm leads to the "welle of grace" (129). Venus, however, denotes lechery, having among her followers Lust, who is traditionally one of the seven deadly sins (219). Earlier in the poem, before we

are introduced to Venus, Scipio lectures the narrator on the consequences of lechery and leaves us in no doubt as to the quality of the sorrow ultimately suffered by the followers of Venus:

But brekers of the lawe soth to seyne,
And likerous folk, after that they ben dede,
Shul whirle about th' erthe alwey in peyne,
Tyl many a world be passed, out of drede . . .
(78-81)

The punishment which Scipio describes as belonging to carnal lovers is the same one that is allotted to the sinners Paolo and Francesca in the Divine Comedy (Inferno, V). When these few points are taken into account, the reader of the Parliament of Fowls quickly sees that the opposition between Nature and Venus is founded on virtue and vice and not simply, as Economou euphemistically puts it, on "fruitful and fruitless love." The idea that earthly love falls neither on the side of virtue nor on the side of vice implies that virtue and vice are exotic and abnormal moral states instead of common realities in the postlapsarian world. However, the doctrine of original sin was not so unrecognized in the Middle Ages that Chaucer would have failed to understand that earthly love is extremely susceptible to the influence of lechery and cupidity. The mere fact that the fruitlessness of cupidinous earthly love is not always explicitly labelled as such should not cause us to think that Venus is not to

be thoroughly condemned. Similarly, we are probably not meant by Chaucer to infer that because the realms of Nature and Venus are not strictly demarcated, they are not antithetical. Chaucer may have had reasons for neglecting to mention a boundary between Nature and Venus that are not recognized by Bennett and Economou.

In a literary and moral tradition which reaches from Alain de Lille's De Planctu Naturae to Spenser, Venus represents the libidinous corruption of Nature by man.¹⁰ Chaucer was in all likelihood working in this tradition in the Parliament of Fowls; because he mentions by name the De Planctu Naturae in his initial description of Nature and tells us that he is describing the same goddess as Alain:

And right as Aleyn, in the Pleynt of Kynde,
 Devyseth Nature of aray and face,
 In swich aray men myghte hire there fynde
 (316-18)

Since Chaucer's Nature is modelled on Alain's, the Venus of the Parliament of Fowls might be expected to correspond to the Venus against whom Nature inveighs in the De Planctu. Alain's Venus perverts the sexual instincts implanted in man by Nature and turns them away from their proper procreative function. Sexual instinct nevertheless remains, even in its corrupted form, the property of Nature. Venus is by herself nothing; she can only misuse Nature's creations. "If we ask ourselves to consider, for a moment,

the possibility that these are also the qualities of Venus in the Parliament of Fowls, it becomes apparent that Bennett and Economou may be wrong in arguing that Venus and Nature are not in fixed contradiction. An alternative to their point of view is to see the apparent proximity of Venus to Nature in this poem as ironically emphasizing Venus's parasitic dependence on instincts which properly are Nature's and for which Nature has better purposes. "The "shading" of the scenes of Venus into scenes of Nature, which Bennett takes as evidence of an alliance between the two goddesses, may only be intended to reflect the encroachments of Venus on Nature's territory. This opinion has been put forward by Robertson and Huppé who observe that Venus's garden is merely a parody of Nature's: "Such a garden is well designed to show that the pleasures of earthly love are deceiving and that they are a corruption of the true love which is at the centre of God's purpose. . . . These artificial creations have been added to Nature's domain by man through the influence of Cupid."¹¹

2. Chaucer's Invocations to Venus

Whether or not we dismiss Bennett's argument about the harmonious interaction of Nature and Venus and accept instead the theory of Robertson and Huppé, will depend largely on the role we assign to Venus in the Parliament of Fowls. We have already noticed that Venus is associated with images of vice, but not all critics are convinced that she is bad. George Economou, for example, commits himself to the position that the Parliament of Fowls is not "essentially against earthly love."¹² Economou further asserts that while the Venus of earthly love has unsavoury characteristics, there is another Venus in the poem who is wholesome and beneficent. The latter, according to Economou, is addressed in the invocation which the narrator utters before describing his dream:

Cytherea! thow blysful lady swete,
That with thy fyrbrond dauntest whom the lest,
And madest me this sweven for to mete,
Be thow myn helpe in this, for thow mayst best!
As wisly as I sey the north-north-west,
Whan I began my sweven for to write,
So yif me myght to ryme and ek t'endyte! (113-119)

The reference to Venus's firebrand recalls to the mind of Chaucer's reader the final scenes of the Roman de la Rose in which, armed with a flaming brand, the goddess sets fire to the castle where the Rose is imprisoned and, by spreading confusion among its defenders, enables the Lover to enter

the castle and satisfy his carnal desires (21251 ff.)). Economou recognizes the Venus of the Roman as an advocate of unregenerate earthly love, but contends that she is not necessarily related to the Venus invoked by the narrator in the Parliament of Fowls. "Nor," he adds, "is the invocation meant ironically."¹³ We should note in passing that Economou does not attempt to defend this statement by means of argument and supportive evidence. Instead, he uses a footnote to direct our attention to a certain part of Jean Seznec's The Survival of the Pagan Gods and to two articles by Bertrand Bronson entitled "In Appreciation of Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls" and "The Parliament of Fowls Revisited."¹⁴ Seznec, however, says nothing whatever about Venus on the page of his book cited by Economou, while Bronson's articles implicitly attack the position which Economou is seeking to defend. Bronson argues that the narrator's invocation is consciously ironic: "It is hardly to oversubtilize the poem to suggest that Chaucer may have had his tongue in his tongue in his cheek when he calls upon Venus as his inspiration and aid."¹⁵ Whether Economou is aware of Bronson's opposition to his view is unclear, since he gives no indication of what, precisely, we are to infer from the data contained in his footnote. It is sufficient for us to notice that Economou's interpretation of the narrator's invocation remains largely

unsupported.

Bennett offers a more sophisticated apology for the idea that Venus is good, his main premise being that the name Cytherea primarily denotes not the lubricious goddess Venus, but the "benevolent planet of a Christianized cosmology."¹⁶ Among the passages of medieval poetry which, in Bennett's view, represent Venus as a beneficent planet is the passage from Dante's *Purgatorio* describing the arrival of the two poets at the summit of the mountain of Purgatory. As Dante rests meditatively after having passed through the purgatorial fires, sleep comes upon him and he dreams that it is the hour when Cytherea is burning with love and that she is shining on the mountain from the east:

Ne l'ora, creo, che de l'orient
prima raggio nel monte Citerea
chi di foco d'amor par sempre ardente
(Purgatorio XXVII.94-96)

Bennett is quite correct in this instance to identify Cytherea with "the benevolent planet of a christianized cosmology"; Dante is obviously speaking of the Venus who rules in the heavens and who is said in the *Convivio* to have the power to inspire earthly beings with good love:

"Prende la forma del detto cielo uno ardore virtuoso,
per lo quale le anime di qua giuoso s'accendo ad amore"

(The form of the said heaven conceiveth an ardor of virtue to kindle souls down here to love. II.v.13). However, there

is reason to believe that neither Dante nor Chaucer intended every reference or invocation to Cytherea to be taken as a certification of the presence of good love. Bennett fails to point this out when he quotes the first few lines of Book III of the Troilus as an example from Chaucer's poetry of praise directed to the good planet Venus. The relevant verses are:

O blisful light, of which the bemes clere
 Adorneth the thridde heven faire!
 O sonne lief, O Jove's daughter deere
 (T&C. III.1-3)

While there is little doubt that the Venus addressed in these lines is nominally the same as the star that Dante sees in Purgatory, there is some question as to what Chaucer may have meant by prefacing the contents of Book III with an invocation to the heavenly Venus.

There is a marked incongruity between the kind of love represented by the planet Venus and the carnal love which Troilus and Criseyde consummate in Book III. Although not all critics have been prepared to acknowledge that Troilus's love is morally opposite to the love which rules the heavens, the weight of ironic and allusive detail in Book III permits no other conclusion. Early in the book Pandarus admits his shame at being a pander and gives us a clear insight into the corruption, dishonesty and betrayal on which Troilus's love is founded;

..... for shame it is to seye:
 For the have I bigonne a gamen pleye,
 Which that I never do shal eft for other.

.....
 That is to seye, for the am I becomen
 Bitwixen game and earnest swich meene a
 As maken wommen unto men to comen;
 Al sey I nought, thow wost wel what I meene
For the have I my nece, of vices cleene,
 So fully maad thi gentillesse triste,
 That al shal ben right as thiselven liste.
 (III.249-259)

We should remember that Dante places panders among the thieves and hypocrites in hell (Inferno XI) and should notice that the effect of Pandarus's reference to Criseyde's innocence in the last part of the stanza is to imply that she is now going to be corrupted by the things that Troilus desires. The use of the word "triste" reinforces the implication, for Criseyde herself has already suggested that Pandarus intends to sacrifice her innocence by means of her misplaced trust in him. She takes this as a sign of a universal decline in truth and honesty and, though she does not mean it, rebukes him for trying to lead her into an affair:

.....
 Allas for wo! Why nere I deed
 For of this world the faith is al agoon
 Allas! what sholden straunge to me doon
 When he, that for my beste frend I wende,
 Ret me to love, and sholde it me defende.
 (II.409-413)

After he has confessed to Troilus that he has become a pander, Pandarus confirms the appropriateness of the remark made earlier by Criseyde when he describes himself as being at

once her uncle and betrayer: ". . . she is my nece deere, / And I hire em, and traitour eke yfeere!" (III.272-3).

All of this tends to set up a very negative context for the ensuing events in Book III. The invocation to Cytherea at the beginning of the book, which, as we have already seen, is indebted to Boethian ideas of cosmological love, rejoices in Cytherea as a force of trust, friendship and unity: "Ye holden regne and hous in unitee; Ye so the fast cause of frendshipe ben also" (III.25-6). However everything that happens in Book III seems to contradict the laws of friendship and unity and to promote instead betrayal and dissension. As Whitney Bolton has demonstrated, one of the most conspicuous motifs in the Troilus is the series of images based on the theme of treason.¹⁷

This motif is supported in Book III by repeated allusions to things associated with ordure and corruption. For the first part of the evening upon which Criseyde visits Pandarus, Troilus is hidden in a stew observing Criseyde without her knowledge of his presence: "But Troilus, that stood and myght it se / Thorughout a litel wyndow in a stewe" (III.601). Chaucer rarely uses the word "stew" in his poetry and on every occasion that it appears, it means 'brothel' (House of Fame I.26, Pardoner's Tale 465, Friar's Tale 1332). Troilus is of course literally hidden

in a closet, but Chaucer evidently intends a double entendre by calling the closet a stew. This is quite a reasonable assumption to make considering the obvious moral compromises that Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus are making. What is more important is that Troilus is hidden in the stew in order to make Criseyde believe Pandarus's lie about his whereabouts: "she . . . axed hym if Troilus were there. / He swor hire nay, for he was out of towne . . ." (III.569-570). Thus the treason in Pandarus's dishonesty towards his niece becomes associated with an appropriate image of lechery, the brothel. After Criseyde has gone to bed, Pandarus lets Troilus out of the stew ("he . . . gan the stewe doore al softe uppyne" III.698) and tells him that he is now to go to heaven: "For thou shalt into heven's blisse wende" (III.704). This designedly absurd sequence of gestures is given heightened effect by Pandarus's equation of the carnal heaven which Troilus is shortly to experience with the heaven of cosmological divine love which is the subject of the invocation in the proem to Book III. To gain for Troilus access to "heaven", Pandarus is again obliged to lie treasonably to Criseyde, and once more his lie is highlighted by a suitably corrupt image. He tells her that Troilus has returned to town and that he has arrived secretly at his, Pandarus's, house by crawling there

in a gutter by a secret passageway: "This Troilus, right platly for to seyn, / Is thorough a goter, by a pryve wente" (III.786-7). Chaucer uses the comparably corrupt image of the latrine in the Merchant's Tale to lend excremental connotations to the romantic love of May and Damyan which, in its dependency on secrecy and deception, is identical with that of Troilus and Criseyde. Stricken hopelessly with love and full of sorrow, Damyan writes to May, who secretly reads his letter in the toilet and, appropriately, disposes of it there:

And whan she of this bille hath taken heede,
 She rente it al to cloutes atte laste,
 And in the pryvee softely in caste.

(Merch.T. 1952-54)

She then takes steps to commit adultery which Damyan which X culminate in his furtive entrance into Januarie's garden and his fateful ascent of the pear tree upon the branches of which Januarie is at length cuckolded. Damyan is of course, like Troilus, characterized by a variant of the phrase "this sorwful man" (Troilus and Criseyde iv.1697 etc. and the Merchant's Tale 1298) and in those parts of the Troilus and the Merchant's Tale which touchingly tell of how Damyan and Troilus are saved from the agony of their sorrows and brought into "hevene blisse", latrines and gutters have considerable importance as tools of strategy;

their strategic usefulness in bringing about assignations is responsible for their symbolic association with vice and dishonesty. As we imagine Troilus crawling through a gutter to heaven, we realize that Troilus's situation is not less vicious than Damyan's or less foolish than Januarie's. Januarie's sexual ambitions, despite his age and impotence are the same as those of Troilus; Januarie too, fantastically, aspires after the heaven of carnal love:

I am agast now in myn age
That I shal lede now so myrie a lyf,
So delicat, withouten wo and stryf,
That I shal have myn hevене in erthe hēere.
(Merch.T. 1644-47)

There is so little substantial difference between the theme and tone of the Merchant's Tale on one hand and Book III of the Troilus on the other, that one cannot help pointing out that Elizabeth Salter's sentimental appreciation of Book III might just as well have been applied to the story of Damyan, May, and Januarie: ". . . the dominant mood of the poetry is 'pees' and 'suffisaunce,' and the dominant movement is andante cantabile."¹⁸

Returning to the subject of J. A. W. Bennett's views of Cytherea, we must note that in his comments on the invocation which opens Book III of the Troilus, Bennett gives no sign of recognizing any ironic intention on the part of Chaucer. This indicates that Bennett sees Troilus's love as compatible with heavenly love. However there is

a lot of evidence to show that Troilus's love is, aside from being vicious, quite ridiculous, and because these are not qualities of the love inspired by the beneficent Cytherea, we should assume that the invocation is ironic. The effect of the invocation is to create a contrast between the spiritual heaven of Cytherea and the carnal heaven of Troilus and Criseyde. The same contrast is central to the plot of the Merchant's Tale and is there stated in the form of an intellectual dilemma by Januarie, who regretfully ponders the incompatibility of his carnal desires with heavenly love:

There may no man han parfite blesses two, ----
 This is to seye, in erthe and eek in hevene.

 For sith that verray hevene is bought so deere
 With tribulacioun and greet penaunce,
 How sholde I thanne that lyve in swich plesaunce
 As alle wedded men doon with hire wyvys,
 Come to the blisse, ther Crist eterne on lyve ys?
 (1638-52)

That Troilus, unlike Januarie, cannot so much as recognize his own concupiscence for what it is and repeatedly confuses it with the love of the beneficent Cytherea (III.1254-1274; 1744-1771 etc.) merely intensifies the irony of the opening invocation in Book III.

Bennett's lack of awareness for the irony of the invocation implies a tacit belief that Chaucer does not condemn Troilus as a sinner and that in fact he sees Troilus as something of a moral idealist, one genuinely motivated

by "benigne Love." Bennett is nevertheless extremely hesitant about stating openly the conclusions which follow logically from his attitude towards the invocation, and he therefore stops short of telling us that Chaucer sanctions Troilus's love. Despite the elusiveness of his arguments however, Bennett should be held responsible for the full range of implications in his statements about Cytherea. Bennett writes, concerning the allusions to Cytherea in the Purgatorio and Book III of the Troilus, that for both Chaucer and Dante her name "primarily denotes the planet and the planet in her beneficent aspect."¹⁹ These words imply, without stating so directly, that the moral context for Dante's allusions to Cytherea is the same as Chaucer's, that is to say, that Dante and Virgil, having passed through the cleansing fires of Purgatory in preparation for Dante's ascent into heaven, have the same moral status vis à vis the divine love of Cytherea as Troilus, who has succeeded only in lying his way into the carnal heaven of Criseyde's bedroom.

Although he tries not to make judgements concerning Troilus's ethical standing that would decisively classify his critical outlook as either romantic or historical, Bennett's use of the word "beneficent" to describe Cytherea involves him inextricably in the conflict between these two approaches to medieval literature. It should here be

restated that the modern romantic approach to medieval love poetry is based on the belief that medieval writers often elevated sexual love to the level of a religious ideal as did writers in the nineteenth century. The historical approach, conversely, appreciates the dissimilarity of medieval and modern ideas of love and tries to take their differences into account in the business of practical criticism. John Fleming has aptly described the emphasis on reason in medieval teaching about sexual love, an emphasis which is lacking in our post-Freudian and post-romantic era: "The . . . medieval psychology . . . taught that man's essential distinguishing characteristic was his reason. His sexuality, which he was said to share with brute beasts, was a constant embarrassment which needed careful, constant, rational control and the force of positive law to constrain."²⁰ Because of their philosophical incompatibility, the romantic and historical interpretations of medieval love poetry produce divergent definitions of Cytherea's beneficence. For many romantic critics, the good planet Cytherea represents passionate sexual attraction, whereas the historical critic identifies her with reason and charity, both of which were believed in the Middle Ages to be nobler attributes of human nature than sexual passion.

Bennett, in referring to Cytherea as beneficent, is pretending to use that epithet in an historical rather than

a romantic sense, since he uses it initially in connection with the reference to Cytherea in Purgatorio XXVII for which there is no possible sexual or romantic interpretation. We therefore react with justifiable confusion to Bennett's covertly expressed identification of Dante's Cytherea with the Cytherea who appears in Book III of the Troilus. From the point of view of historical criticism, the Cytherea of Book III is decidedly not beneficent because she promotes concupiscence. She may be beneficent from a romantic point of view but she cannot be beneficent in the same sense as Dante's Cytherea. We inevitably wonder whether Bennett shifts from an historical definition of Cytherea's beneficence, when he is discussing Dante's Purgatorio, to a romantic definition when he turns his attention to the Troilus. How else can we explain Bennett's assertion that the opening invocation to Book III is "a hymn into which Chaucer injects his own masculine force and serious feeling?"²¹ This assertion is inconsistent with the morally conceived irony of the invocation because it suggests that Chaucer did not subject Troilus's love to severe intellectual criticism, but instead responded to the story of it with a passionate enthusiasm much like that of Troilus himself. And when Bennett subsequently informs his reader that: "Troilus . . . cannot prevent himself from falling in love" and that "love is beautiful and has

its own special 'worthinesse', "²² his romantic bias becomes even clearer. The historical critic knows that the medieval psychology of love did not include the romantic idea that sexual passion is irresistible and that it cannot be controlled by reason; nor did it regard as beautiful and worthy the failure to exercise rational control in sexual matters when the temptation not to do so was present.

There is, despite what Bennett says, very little in Chaucer's poetry to indicate that he had equivocal views of sexual love and that he was in the habit of romanticizing cupidinous carnal appetites while inconsistently preaching about charity. As we have seen, several good reasons exist for believing that Book III, apparently the most romantic book of the Troilus, is permeated with an unromantic spirit of Christian disapproval for the folly and sinfulness of lust. To a reader already convinced that Book III is dominated by irony, this would seem sufficient evidence to show that Chaucer's indiscriminate application of the name Cytherea to the earthly as well as to the heavenly Venus is another example of irony. We have already discussed a similar form of ironic strategy in the opening invocation, but this in itself may not be enough to convince anyone in doubt that when Troilus hails Venus as "Citherea the swete" (III.1255), and afterwards as "Venus, the wel-willy planete" (III.1257), he has in mind not the Venus of the

Purgatorio, but her opposite. Therefore some more demonstration is required to substantiate the argument that Book III is thematically based on an ironic inability of its narrator and characters to distinguish the Venus of earthly passion from her heavenly counterpart.

To begin with, we must question the idea that in calling Venus Cytherea, Chaucer is ipso facto attributing to her a love which deserves to be called beneficent not only in the romantic, but also in the historical sense of the word. In order to test the validity of Bennett's contention that the name Cytherea, denoting "the planet in her beneficent aspect", has a significance in medieval commentary and allusion which is primarily good, we shall glance again at Dante's reference to Cytherea in Purgatorio XXVII. When Dante awakens from the dream in which he sees Cytherea shining "de l'oriente . . . nel monte," Virgil informs him that he can go no further with Dante for he can no longer discern the way before them ("e se! venuto in parte / dovio per me più oltre non discerno" Purgatorio XXVII.128-9). Instead Dante, whose will is now purified, is henceforth to be accompanied by Beatrice, and Virgil tells him to sit down and wait "until the fair eyes come which weeping made me come to thee" (lieti li occhi belli che, lagrimando, a te venir mi fenno Purgatorio XXVII.137). We recall that the cause for

Beatrice's weeping was Dante's sinful condition at the beginning of the poem, retrospectively described in the Paradiso as his immersion in the "sea of wrongful love" (mar de l'amor torto Paradiso XXVI.62). However when Virgil says that Dante is at last cleansed of his sins and that he is "free, upright and whole" (libero, dritto e sano è tuo arbitrio Purgatorio XXVII.140), we understand that Dante is safe on what he later calls the shore of the right love (Paradiso XXVI.63) and that Beatrice will accordingly rejoice. The image of Cytherea in the dream that precedes Virgil's words to Dante thus becomes associated with the righteous love which Dante will hereafter follow in his-recovered innocence, but it also prompts us to look back on Dante's original subjection to bad love. The impending departure of Virgil and Beatrice's anticipated arrival reinforce the importance of the image of Cytherea as a connection between the bad love of Dante's past and the righteous love of the future. We notice, if we move on to Cytherea's reappearance as the planet of the third heaven in Paradiso VIII, that there also she serves as a symbolic reminder of the moral alternatives of good and bad love. Canto viii, in fact, begins with a denunciation of the ancient human error of attributing bad love to the beneficent Cytherea and of thereby failing to discern

the difference between the two loves and the alternatives which they represent:

Solea creder lo mondo in suo periclo
che la bella Ciprigna il folle amore
raggiasse, volta nel tirzo epicielo;
per che non pur a lei faceano onore
di sacrificio di votivo grido
le genti antiche ne l antico errore;
ma Dione onora vano e Cupido,
quella per madre sua, questo per figlio . . .
-(Paradiso viii.1-8)

(The world was wont to believe, to its
peril, that the fair Cyprian, wheeling in
the third epicycle, rayed down mad love;
wherefore the ancient people in their
ancient error not only to her did honor
with sacrifice and votive cry, but they
honored Dione and Cupid, the one as her
mother, the other as her son. . .)

(Singleton Translation)

The pertinence of this passage to the character and moral situation of Troilus is not hard to perceive. Troilus repeatedly makes the mistake of thinking that the beneficent Cytherea inspires his love, and as he leaves the "stewe" and sets off for Criseyde's bedroom, he makes quite clear his commitment to the "antico errore" when he calls upon Cytherea to inspire him: "'Yet blisful Venus this nyght thow me enspire,' / Quod Troilus, 'As wys as I the serve'" (T&C. III.712-13). Troilus, moreover, belongs to the ancient world and is a pagan; this gives extra significance to his habit of praising the planet Venus as the source of irrational earthly passion. As Kittredge pointed out many years ago, Chaucer has attempted in the Troilus

"to give the tale an ancient -- a Trojan -- atmosphere."²³

The various invocations to classical deities which appear in the Troilus, and the allusions to figures from ancient legend such as Orpheus and Eurydice (iv.791), Nisus's daughter (v.3110), and Procne (II.64) are additions which Chaucer has made to his source. Interestingly, since the attitude of the ancients towards love has unfavorable overtones in the Troilus, many of the classical allusions in the poem, including all examples noted here, concern tales of unhappy and wrongful love.²⁴ It is also noteworthy that the foolish narrator of the Troilus, like the ancients whom Dante condemns, worships Cupid as the son of the beneficent Cytherea, and Dione as her mother:

Thow lady bryght, the doghter to Dyone,
Thy blynde and wynged sone ek, daun Cupide,
That ye thus fer han deyned me to gyde,
I kan namore, but syn that ye wol wende
We heried ben for ay withouten ende.
(III.1807-13)

This invocation does not have a counterpart in Il Filostrato, and it seems to be original with Chaucer. The allusion to Cytherea's mythological relatives is possibly a deliberate echo of Paradiso viii.7-8, which would indicate that Chaucer shared Dante's outlook on the worship of Cytherea among the ancients and that he associated pagan culture with bad love. Furthermore, since the invocation appears at the very end of Book III, it is obviously designed to balance the invocation with which Book II begins. These

symmetrically placed apostrophes to Cytherea complement each other and carry the same force of irony.

The association of the religion and mythology of ancient culture with bad love and the false understanding of Cytherea remains subtly evident as the story progresses. After Criseyde's departure for the Greek camp in Book V, Troilus finds that his trust in the stability of the religion of carnal love has been damaged. He therefore quite unreasonably curses Cytherea along with Cupid and the other pagan deities:

. . . in his throwes frenetick and madde
He corseth Jove, Appollo, and ek Cupide
He corseth Ceres, Bacus and Cirpide
(V.206-8)

Troilus addresses his curses to the heavenly Cytherea whom he has hitherto praised; but he does so without realizing that he should properly be cursing the lewd Cytherea who, although she is not mentioned by name, is the real inspiration behind the events about which he is complaining. When at the end of the poem Chaucer himself curses the pagan gods, he, unlike Troilus, blames them not for betraying carnal lovers, but for abetting carnal love and other "wrecched worldes appetites" (v.1851) in the first place:

Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites,
 Lo here, what alle hire goddes may availle;
 Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites;
 Lo here, the fyn and guerdoun for travaille
 Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille:
 (v.1849-53)

We can compare this execration upon the pagan gods with Virgil's similarly derogatory dismissal of them in Dante's Inferno. Describing his own past, Virgil remarks that he was born in Rome "under the good Augustus in the time of the false and lying gods." (sotto 'l buono Augusto / nel tempo de li dei falsi e bugiardi" Inferno I.72). His date of birth and pagan culture, Virgil indicates, have prevented him from knowing the true Christian God and entering the heavenly city. However, Virgil offers to lead Dante to Beatrice who will guide him there. Dante responds eagerly to this suggestion: "Poet, I beseech you, by that God whom you did not know . . . lead me whither you said just now" (Poeta is ti richoggio . . . / che tu mi meni la dov or dicesti" Inferno I.130-133). Like Virgil in his speech to Dante, Chaucer contrasts the mendacity of the pagan gods with the truthfulness and reliability of Christ; and as Virgil counsels Dante to seek God, so also Chaucer urges "yonge fresshe folks" to let themselves be led to Him:

For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
 That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
 And syn that he best to love is and moste meke,
 What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?
 (V.1845-48)

The statement concerning "feynede loves" refers, apparently, to fatal, romantic passions, the only safe alternative to which is to love God. In a previous stanza Chaucer identifies Troilus's love with the insecurity and falseness of the world. ("Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love . . . Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse!" v.1829-32) and since the word "feyned" in Middle English includes among its several meanings "false" or "spurious,"²⁵ it is logical to think that by "feynede loves" Chaucer wishes us to understand the kind of love exemplified in the character and actions of Troilus. However the persistent symbolic connection in the Troilus between concupiscent passion and the religion of the ancients suggests that "feynede loves" might also refer to the adoration of false gods and particularly to the worship of Cupid and the lewd Cytherea in the name of the good planet of the third heaven. John M. Steadman, for example, has interpreted "feynede loves" as applying not just to the deceits of carnal lovers, but also to what he refers²³ to as "the erotic fictions of the poets . . . and the machinery of the pagan gods."²⁶ Unfortunately Steadman does not provide a very precise defence for this very illuminating aperçu. Beyond explaining that like Troilus's carnal love, "The religion and literature of the ancients have been the victims of time and change," and implying that the epithet "feyned" bespeaks

mutability, Steadman offers less proof than one might want that "feyned" loves" is a phrase which actually incorporates the double meaning that he assigns to it. Nonetheless his interpretation of the phrase can be shown to be substantially correct and to contain important consequences for our understanding of Chaucer's references to Cytherea.

There is, as Steadman points out, an intended parallel in the conclusion of the Troilus between the stanza which announces the ephemerality of Troilus's love (V.1828-34) and the one which, with a comparable rhetorical emphasis, describes the ephemerality of pagan customs (V.1948-55). Both stanzas are grounded on the standard Boethian assumption that things of this world are changeable and not to be trusted (De Consolatione II.pr.4.120-130). This tells us that the basis for the philosophical comparison which Chaucer seems to be making between carnal love and pagan customs is in their common status as temporal things. Concerning the relationship between God and temporal things, Boethius argues that the latter seek to imitate God's changeless nature in order to attain the completeness of being which they lack in themselves (De Consolatione V.pr.6.65-70). We shall see in Troilus's delusions a typical manifestation of the imperfect and misdirected efforts of the temporal to imitate the eternal. "Troilus's tragic error," Alfred David has said, ". . . is to have

tried to love a human being with an ideal spiritual love."²⁷ Although David's conclusions about the beauty and goodness of Troilus's love are generally wide of the mark, his assertion about Troilus's idealism is quite accurate. As an idolatrous lover, Troilus worships Criseyde as he should properly worship God. In this sense Troilus is seeking an ideal state of permanence in a passing instinct.

The same pattern of imitation governs the role of the pagan deities in the poem and John McCall has shown that in numerous instances pagan religious references have Christian paradigms, for example when Jove is addressed as "auctour of Nature" (III.1016) or when Minerva, Jupiter and Venus are depicted with the attributes of the Persons in the Holy Trinity.²⁸ Thus Chaucer is evidently telling us indirectly that carnal passion and pagan religion both imitate, albeit to a limited degree, the changlessness of the Christian God, which, according to Boethius, is expressed in the "everlasting law" of Love (II.m.8). It is consequently interesting that the Middle English Dictionary defines "feinen", the infinitive of the participle "feyned", as "to make a likeness of (something)" or "imitate".²⁹ This indicates that there is a good possibility that in dissuading his audience from the pursuit of "feyned loves", Chaucer is warning them that the pagan gods are inadequate imitations of the true God who alone repre-

sents changelessness and Love. The case for such an interpretation is supported by Chaucer's use of the word "feynen" to describe the imitation of eternal by temporal things in his own translation of Boethius: "For this ilke infinit moevyng of Temporel thinges folweth this presentarie estat of the lif unmoevable and so as it ne mai nat contrefetin it, ne feynen it, ne be evene like to it, for the immoevablete . . . , it faileth and fallith into moevyng fro the simplicité of the presence of God" (V, pr. 6.68-70). Since a subject intrinsic to the Troilus is the futility of carnal lovers who believe that their temporal passions can successfully imitate the eternal love of God, it is likely that Chaucer would have had this passage in mind when he wrote about the folly of "feyned loves", and that his choice of the word "feyned" was influenced by Boethius. The context of the final stanzas of Book V, in turn, leaves little doubt that pagan gods as much as carnal lovers belong to the class of temporal things that desire eternal status. Thus the numerous classical deities named in the Troilus, especially Cytherea, are designated by the phrase "feynede loves".

The question, "What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?" has, in the light of these implications, a twofold reference to the Cytherea of Troilus's devotions. It advertises the folly of succumbing to the romantic passion.

that she inspires, while on a somewhat more figurative level of meaning it challenges her attempts as an ephemeral pagan goddess to usurp the identity of the heavenly Cytherea who symbolizes the love of the Christian God. Cytherea is an unambiguous figure of false religious authority and for this reason invocations which declare her to be the source of cosmological love are not to be taken seriously. That the narrator and hero of the Troilus do not realize this and persistently ignore the facts about Cytherea's identity is unquestionably ironic.

If these observations concerning the role of Cytherea in the Troilus have any validity, it will quickly be seen that Bennett misleads his reader when he says that Cytherea represents "the benevolent planet of a Christianized cosmology", without pointing out that the invocation in Book III where she is said to enjoy this role is ironic. Because he ignores the question of irony in connection with Cytherea, Bennett inevitably conveys the impression that in this invocation Chaucer is ingeniously communicating to us the belief that the Cytherea who inspires Troilus is good.

We must now return to the problem of the invocation of Cytherea in the Parliament of Fowls and ask ourselves whether in this instance, recognizing Bennett's misreadings of similar invocations in the Troilus, we should trust his argument for Cytherea's beneficence. Bennett does not

adduce any data to support his argument that we have not already been met with in his comments on the Troilus. Maintaining that in The Parliament of Fowls as in the Troilus, Cytherea signifies the "planet in her beneficent aspect". Bennett makes a rather startling comparison between the first-mentioned poem and the passage about Cytherea in Purgatorio XXVII. According to Bennett, the events in the Parliament of Fowls which lead up to the narrator's invocation to Cytherea parallel those which prepare for Dante's dream of Cytherea:

. . . in Dante as in Chaucer we pass from an account of sleep after toil, to the credibility of dreams, then to the sight of the planet of love burning in the sky, and finally to the vision of an earthly paradise, whither Dante has been led by Virgil and Statius, even as Chaucer is now led into such a paradise by the great African. Not the least of the arts that Chaucer learnt from Dante was this art of astronomizing in poetry, of welding planetary allusions . . . firmly onto a narrative.³⁰

The validity of Bennett's assertion that the place to which Africanus leads Chaucer is an earthly paradise depends very much on the point which he is trying to prove, namely that Dante and Chaucer are talking about the same Cytherea. But although Bennett correctly points out that Dante and Chaucer often make similar poetic uses of astronomical allusions, his idea that the Parliament of Fowls and Purgatorio XXVII are both concerned with the

heavenly Cytherea is not very convincing. As we noted earlier, the image of the firebrand that appears in connection with Cytherea in The Parliament of Fowls has connotations deriving from The Roman de la Rose which appertain directly to the goddess, but which, we should now add, are rather irrelevant to the planet. The firebrand is a portable, manufactured object which can be held in the hand of an anthropomorphic goddess but which cannot in common sense, be held in the hand of a planet.³¹ Nevertheless Bennett tries deftly, though inconclusively, to argue that the planet Cytherea, as well as the goddess, carries, a firebrand: "The firebrand is a symbol common to both goddess and planet, as appropriate to the one burning in the sky as to the other who sets aflame the heart of man -- and in the Roman the whole world."³² This method of reasoning enables Bennett to equate the Cytherea of the Parliament of Fowls with the Cytherea of Purgatorio XXVII despite the absence of a symbolic firebrand from Dante's description of the latter. That Dante speaks of Cytherea as "burning with the fire of love" (di foco d'amor ardente Purgatorio XXVII.96) is for Bennett adequate proof that she is equipped with a firebrand. However, it is necessary to examine in further detail the assumptions which lie behind Bennett's conclusion.

Bennett assumes that because the heavenly Cytherea

burns, she generates the same kind of fire as the burning torch of the goddess Cytherea, but he gives no argument to support that assumption. On the other hand, Dante himself does not leave us in any doubt about the difference between the fires of Hell and those of Paradise and Purgatory. Immediately after Dante has had his dream of Cytherea, Virgil tells him that he has now passed through the temporary fires of Purgatory as well as the everlasting fire of Hell: "il temporal foco e l'eterno veduto hai, figlio" (Purgatorio XXVII.127). This assertion firmly distinguishes the two fires from each other, implying that one is an unremitting fire of punishment whereas the other fulfills the temporary function of cleansing sinners in preparation for their entrance into Paradise. The fire of love with which Cytherea burns is obviously unlike either of these other types of fire. This heavenly fire is inspired by the third person of the Trinity, who, as Charles Singleton notes, symbolizes Love.³³ In the last canto of the Paradiso Dante describes the third person as a fire breathed forth by the other two persons: "e'l ti tirzo parer foco / che quinci e quindi igualmente se spiri" (Paradiso XXIII.119-20), and throughout the Paradiso we encounter allusions to the fire of heavenly love. Piccarda, in heaven of the moon, is said to smile in such a way that she seems "to burn with the first fire of love"

ch'arder pareia d'amor mel primo foco (Paradiso III.69). Similarly, the spirits inhabiting the heaven of Cytherea are compared to "sparks within flames" (in famma favilla Paradiso VIII.16), and in the ninth canto, the heavenly seraphim are called "devout fires" (fuochi pii Paradiso IX.77). In view, therefore, of the variety of types of fire mentioned by Dante in the Divine Comedy, we could well wish that Bennett had found some concrete evidence to show that the firebrand is benevolent and therefore potentially analogous to the celestial flame of Dante's Cytherea.

Although metaphors of fire and flame are commonly used in patristic works to denote charity and divine love, the symbol of Venus's flaming firebrand, which apparently originated in the thirteenth century, has an opposite significance and belongs to a distinctly different literary tradition. R. Freyhan observes that the symbol of Venus's firebrand is "of an entirely secular character" and lists, among the works in which it is first mentioned, a thirteenth-century German poem by the "wild Alexander" and the Roman de la Rose.³⁴ Since Jean de Meun appears to have been one of the earliest medieval authors to use the symbol of the torch to represent profane love, a brief look at the connotations of that symbol in Jean's writing will tell us something of what the symbol must have meant to

later authors like Chaucer.

When the Lover succumbs to an idolatrous passion for the Rose, Reason tells him that good love is based on friendship and charity and promotes every virtue, whereas evil love leads to destruction:

This love that I have told to thee
Is no thing contrarie to me;
This look I that thou folowe wel.
And leve the tother every del.
This love to vertu all entendith,
The tother fooles blent and shendith.

(R.R. 5305-10)

There can be no question about which of these loves, in Reason's opinion, the Lover is pursuing, for Reason clearly specifies that although some love is good, the Lover's passion is not; therefore she tries to dissuade him from coveting the Rose:

For som love leful is and good
I mene not that which makith thee wood
With such love be not more aqueynt.

(R.R. 5195-5200)

The love which makes the Lover "wood" is, as we discover in Guillaume's section of the Roman, ignited by Venus's firebrand. After the Lover has in vain pleaded with Fair Welcoming for an opportunity to kiss the Rose, Venus comes to his aid with her firebrand, which has awakened desire in many a lady:

This lady brought in hir right hand
 Of brennyng fyr a blasyng brond;
 Wherof the flawme and hooted fir
 Hath many a lady in desir
 Of love brought and sore het . . .
 (R.R. 3705-3709)

Feeling the heat of the firebrand, Fair Welcoming grants the Lover a kiss without further delay. This event prefigures the circumstances surrounding the conclusion of Genius's sermon to Love's barons in Jean's continuation of the Roman. Having finished his exhortations to his congregation concerning their responsibilities as products of Nature to engage indiscriminately in sexual intercourse, Genius throws down the bishop's candle which he is holding. The smoke from the candle spreads through the congregation, permeating the "bodies, hearts and thoughts" of the ladies and stirring up their carnal appetites. Genius, who represents natural concupiscence, is indifferent to the virtuous love which Reason recommends to the Lover and he influences his congregation in the same way that Venus influences Fair Welcoming. The smoke from Genius's candle, which was originally lit by Venus, sets off the chain of events that leads to the conflagration of the Rose's castle and to the satisfaction of the Lover's desires. Thus Venus's firebrand is the principal symbol of the evil love connived at by Fair Welcoming and deprecated by Reason. By means of the firebrand, the Lover obtains everything in the

way of illicit pleasure from a kiss to the experience of "factum" (coitus).

Some readers of the Roman have attempted to argue that Reason is not meant to be the final authority on good and evil love. Alan Gunn, for instance, has ventured the opinion that sexual intercourse was, in Jean's mind, God's highest gift to man.³⁵ Gunn's understanding of the function of Reason in the Roman is thus at variance with the idea that Jean held to the orthodox Christian assumption that human actions should be guided by Reason rather than the amoral, sexual instinct. This is not the place to begin a demonstration of Jean's orthodoxy in matters of sexual ethics; that task has been impressively carried out by John Fleming.³⁶ However it is worth mentioning that among medieval readers, Reason's approach to the subject of love seems to have attracted a great deal of favourable attention. To prove this, Fleming points to the evidence contained in the original manuscripts of the poem where Reason's warnings against evil love are highlighted by heavy under-scoring and numerous approving marginal glosses. If we think that Jean did not want us to judge Venus and her firebrand from the moral viewpoint of Reason, we are concluding, whether or not we admit it, that our understanding of the Roman is better than that of his contemporaries. To avoid this fallacy it is necessary for us to recognize

the evil significance of the firebrand.

Chaucer only once refers directly to Venus's firebrand outside the Parliament of Fowls: in The Merchant's Tale Venus appears at January's wedding feast dancing "biforn the bride and al the route" with "hir fyrbrond in hire hond aboute" (1727-8). The goddess's exuberance expresses her gratification in knowing that January has "bicomme hir knyght" (1724) and her firebrand is the obvious symbol of January's vassalage. However the qualities of knighthood are not, in January, the "trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie" (Gen. Prol. 46) which characterize the Knight in the General Prologue. January is committed to the vice of lechery which, ironically, is contradictory to all the ideals of knighthood. John of Salisbury comments in the Policraticus that the moral responsibilities of members of the military professions are comparable to those of the clergy and warns that ". . . there is no worse enemy of both services than luxury (lechery)." ³⁷ Insofar as moral logic is concerned therefore, the expression "knight of Venus" involves a contradiction in terms which, in the context of medieval culture, points to a lack of reason in January's love for May. Despite their differences in age and physical appearance, January and the Lover in the Roman are fundamentally alike because both allow the influence of Venus's firebrand to supersede the good counsel of Lady

Reason.

The background and conventional significance of the firebrand symbol thus strongly indicate that the firebrand of Cytherea in the Parliament of Fowls is to be interpreted in malo. This suggests that no separation should be made between the identity of Cytherea, who appears only in the narrator's invocation and that of the concupiscent Venus, who is juxtaposed with Nature during the main part of the poem. We have seen that the name 'Cytherea' does not, the arguments of Bennett and Economus notwithstanding, at all times bespeak good love; and the irony with which the name is used in the Troilus should prepare us for the possibility that it is also used ironically in The Parliament of Fowls.

Although the narrator does not discuss the firebrand in any detail, there is no reason for us to think that it does not have the same meaning in The Parliament of Fowls that it has in the Merchant's Tale or the Roman de la Rose. The narrator, furthermore, evidently believes that carnal passion, which the firebrand represents, is the most important and powerful element in human nature. This we can infer from his statement that all men are ultimately at the mercy of Cytherea: "Cytherea thow blysfyl lady swete / That with thy fyrbrond dauntest whom the lest" (Parliament of Fowls 113-14). But the narrator seems not

to realize that Cytherea is only able to "daunt" those who allow their reason to be ruled by their passions, and this, by medieval standards, betrays in him a serious lack of understanding about human moral responsibility. In the Middle Ages any reader of Boethius would have known that God, man's sovereign good, is solely attainable not through passion but through reason ("the sovereign good of nature . . . lyveth by resoun" II.pr.4) and that man is therefore morally obligated to respond to reason before passion.

Aelred of Rievaulx writes in the Speculum Caritatis that reason should dominate the amorous passion so completely that we compel ourselves to love, for the sake of reason, persons for whom we have no instinctive passionate attraction: "Even though we may not feel a great deal of love towards our fellow men, or even towards God, reason insists that we make the necessary effort to love. . . . We must follow the dictates of reason . . . and be prepared to do good to enemy and friend alike."³⁸ Chaucer's narrator's disregard for the solemn Christian truths enunciated by Boethius and St. Aelred, and his glib celebration of the power of passion over reason are characteristics of the invocation to Cytherea which could hardly have failed to impress a medieval reader as being foolish and morally unsound.

The irony of this invocation, as of those we have

already discussed, lies in the narrator's inability to appreciate the dissimilarity of the goddess of lechery and the planet of love. Confusedly, the narrator addresses the planet, whom he says he has seen lately in the northern sky ("as wisely as I sey the northnorthwest" Parliament of Fowls 117), as though she were the firebrand-bearing Venus. When he goes on to credit this curious hybrid personification, whom he meaninglessly calls Cytherea, with the inspiration for the dream upon which the Parliament of Fowls is based ("thow . . . madest me this sweven for to mete" 115), we are left somewhat distrustful of the narrator's conception of love in the poem. He seems to lack a clear understanding of where good love ends and evil love begins and as a result, to depict Cytherea as a figure representing both extremes at once. Certainly his picture of Cytherea is not sufficiently unambiguous to justify the opinion that she is distinctly unlike the Venus who appears a few stanzas later. Despite Economou's insistence that recognition of the "distinction between Cytherea and the Venus in the temple is absolutely necessary if one is to understand Chaucer's poem,"³⁹ it would be more accurate to say that the opposite is the case. Cytherea and Venus are both associated with the subversion of reason and natural order and the only difference between them is that Cytherea is referred to as a planet and Venus

is not. Because this difference in appellation is due to the obtuse moral judgment of the narrator rather than to the belief of the author, it cannot be taken at face value.

The effort to differentiate Cytherea from Venus reflects a tendency among critics to oversubtilize Chaucer's poem by introducing interpretative nuances and fine distinctions where none are needed. Another manifestation of the same tendency is to be found in the earlier-mentioned theory that there is a subtle gradation from evil to good in the movement of the narrative from Venus's side of the park to Nature's. This theory goes hand in hand with the notion that earthly love as represented by Venus is not "essentially" bad and that Venus's realm does not have a clear-cut moral significance in the Parliament of Fowls. However, whatever there may be in the poem to suggest that Venus is a mysterious and imponderable quantity, she is so only in the way that Cytherea is; Venus is described and interpreted by the same near-sighted narrator whose invocation to Cytherea, immediately preceding, does not lead us to expect him to recognize evil where it exists. The narrator's failure to give an explicit definition to Venus's faults tells us much about him but relatively little about the goddess herself. To appreciate the significance of Venus we must observe her in relation to Cytherea.

The appearance of Venus and Cytherea within the continuum of the narrator's reflective consciousness establishes a degree of common identity between them. In similar ways they help to create an ironic context for all that the narrator says and thinks about love. Each is misunderstood in relation to that subject by the narrator, who accords them both an undue amount of respect and recognizes the vices of neither. Venus is presented as beautiful and voluptuous; her surroundings give off "a thousand savours sote" (274) and she is accompanied by Ceres, a symbol of plenitude who, we are told, "doth of hunger boote" (276). But the narrator is as obtuse in not seeing what is unattractive about Venus as he is in failing to recognize the inappropriateness of the symbol of the firebrand to the heavenly Cytherea.

From the beginning of the poem there are strong implications that Venus is more deserving of reprehension than of praise. Cicero's Dream of Scipio, which the narrator is occupied in reading before he falls asleep, and begins to dream, severely censures the lustful passions which are fed by Venus. (Cicero is approvingly paraphrased to the same effect by the narrator in his description of the punishments that carnal lovers will suffer after death (78-81). Moreover, Scipio, who guides the narrator to the garden of Venus, is an outspoken critic of carnal lovers

and is quoted by Cicero in condemnation of "souls . . . who have surrendered themselves to the pleasures of the body and have become their slaves."⁴⁰ This puts Scipio on the side of Boethius and St. Aelred as an opponent of the evil kind of love that obeys passion before reason. That such love is symbolized by Venus is strongly suggested by the similarity of the gates of the garden of Venus to the gates of Hell in the third canto of Dante's Inferno.⁴¹

The irony of these details is due chiefly to the mental outlook of the narrator, who is oblivious to the incompatibility of the values of Scipio with those represented by Venus. Venus, like Cytherea, is a symbol of lechery and is antithetical in spirit to reason, and so, to Nature who intended that man should live by reason. Since the narrator defers to the moral ideas of Scipio, he should logically, although he does not, condemn Venus without reservations. Towards Venus therefore, as much as towards Cytherea, the narrator shows himself to be incapable of a balanced moral attitude based on a rationally coherent set of principles. The close similarity of the confused responses which Venus and Cytherea elicit from the narrator is ultimately an indirect indication that they are different names for the same personification of vice.

3. Nature, Venus, and Reason

Whether Nature and Venus are in cooperation or contradiction in the Parliament of Fowls is a question which has an important bearing not just on that poem alone, but on the greater part of Chaucer's love poetry. A claim frequently made on the behalf of Chaucer's carnal lovers is that in serving Venus they are first and foremost obeying the dictates of Nature. An oft-quoted couplet from a stanza in Book I of the Troilus asserts, for example, that in waxing "most subjit unto love," the hero is obeying an irresistible natural law: "Love is he that alle thing may bynde, / For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde" (I.237-8). Whatever interpretation we happen to place on this statement by the narrator of the Troilus will strongly affect our views on such matters as the quality of Troilus's heroism, the degree to which he is responsible for his tragic fate, and the ethical status of his love for Criseyde. If we assume that Venus and Nature complement each other, we will interpret the narrator's statement literally and conclude from Troilus's experiences as a lover that he is a true hero and a noble lover who is cruelly and undeservingly turned against by fortune while obeying the laws of Nature. On the other hand, should we see a fundamental antagonism between Nature and Venus, the idea that

Nature commands men to follow Venus must be considered absurd and the sententious manner of its utterance, accordingly, ironic. In this case our picture of Troilus becomes altered substantially and he appears instead a foolish hero bent self-destructively on the gratification of his lechery. Therefore, to establish a reliable basis of interpretation for such passages in Chaucer's poetry as the one mentioned, a systematic critical framework for discussing the relationship of Nature and Venus is necessary. Without a framework of this sort, it is difficult to know whether a passage should be understood literally or ironically. The Parliament of Fowls has a key function in determining a line of approach to this dilemma. The question it raises concerning the two goddesses is encountered repeatedly in the Troilus and the Canterbury Tales, thus making reasonable the assumption that to recognize the real character of their relationship in the Parliament of Fowls is to recognize it in other poems as well.

At the beginning of the Parliament of Fowls a distinction emerges between lechery and something which Scipio refers to as "commune profit" (73-80). Scipio, the narrator says, tells him that whosoever virtuously loves the "commune profit" will be rewarded after death with everlasting joy:

. what man, bred other lewed
 That lovedde commune profyt, wel ithewed,
 He shulde into a blysfyl place wende,
 There as joys is that last withouten ende.
 (Parliament of Fowls, 46-9)

However, Scipio goes on to say that "likerous folk" will come to a very different end, being kept "alwey in payne, / Tyl many a world be passed out of drede" (79-80). The distinction is relevant in a basic way to the roles of Venus and Nature in the poem. As much as Venus is associated with lechery, Nature seems to represent and protect the interests of "commune profyt." This is evident from Nature's efforts to maintain order at the assembly of birds, which, D. W. Robertson notes, is analogous to the English parliament. Robertson observes that, constitutionally, the function of parliament in Chaucer's day was to give "counsel on the common profit."⁴² Hence, we should infer that when Nature attempts to discipline the squabbling assembly ("Now pes," quod Nature, "I commaunde heer" 617), she wishes to preserve among the birds a parliamentary spirit of mutual help and cooperation which has disappeared from their midst.

The birds have gathered together in the first place, in accordance with Nature's seasonal law which requires them to choose their mates, and Nature makes clear to the assembly that her law should be obeyed promptly and efficiently:

By my statut and thorgh my governaunce,
 Ye come for to cheese -- and fle youre wey --
 Youre makes, as I prike you with plesaunce.
 (386-9)

The pricking of concupiscence which Nature awakens in the birds is intended, she says, to expedite the process of mating, and, in a business-like manner, Nature tells them that when they have choosen their mates, they are to fly their separate ways. As concupiscence encourages mating, so mating serves the purpose of reproduction whereby, through the perpetuation of the species, the common profit is advanced. Any use of concupiscence which deviates from or delays the orderly mating procedure prescribed by Nature is, however, an impediment to the common profit.⁴³ Thus, when the royal tercel eagle, whom Nature asks to choose his mate first, refuses to follow Nature's rules, the harmony of the entire assembly is disrupted. The tercel declines to choose a mate and instead expresses the idolatrous wish to serve a mistress, addressing his prospective partner as "my soverayn lady, and not my fere" (416). What, in effect, the tercel is saying is that in serving the female eagle, he intends to serve his own concupiscence instead of Nature's plan for it. Not surprisingly, the female eagle blushes for shame at the idea of perverting Nature's instincts: "Ryght as for shame al wexen gan the hewe / Of this formel whan she herde al this" (444-5). By

the time two more tercel's have joined the first in exhibiting the same idolatrous folly in their efforts to woo the formel, the rest of the assembly of birds has grown extremely impatient. Their cries of protest that they are being ruined by the tercel's, which are accompanied by loud demands that the tercel's put an end to their debate, make safe the assumption that in opposing Nature the tercel's are damaging the common profit:

The noyse of foules for to ben delyvered.
 So loude rong; "have don, and lat us wende!"
 That wel wende I the wode had al to shyvered.
 "Com of!" they criede, "allas, ye wol us shende!
 Whan shal youre cursed pletynge have an ende?"
 (491-495)

The conflict of the tercel's with the other birds reflects, on a symbolic scale, the rift between Venus and Nature. The tercel's are obviously prompted by Venus in their foolish behaviour, since the formel, when she decides to have nothing to do with any of them, announces, "I wol nat serve Venus ne Cupide" (652). By inciting the tercel's to lechery, which is incompatible with common profit, Venus overthrows Nature's control of the sexual instincts.

It is on the whole rather apparent that the characteristics of Venus, as exhibited in the Parliament of Fowls, are not of a kind to persuade us that she shares Nature's purposes for the sexual instincts of men any more than for those of birds. Nature wants her creatures to act in a socially productive manner, which, for human beings,

means, exercising the virtue of charity to control carnal passion. Under the direction of charity, human concupiscence leads to procreation through marriage and in renewing human life, serves Nature's interest in the commonweal. Venus on the contrary, is not, as is Nature, the mother of life, and she cares more about the pleasures of concupiscence than about its social utility. Venus encourages the satisfaction of the concupiscent desires of the individual to the exclusion of any serious concern on his part for his responsibilities to his fellows.

Enough has been said to establish that Chaucer probably regarded romantic love as a perversion of Nature. From what we have seen in The Parliament of Fowls of Nature's disposition, we should expect her moral affinities to lie more or less with cosmological love, which, since it embraces the whole universe, is necessarily oriented to the demands of the commonweal. It should be noted in this connection that in the De Consolatione, Boethius describes the bonds of Nature in terms very similar to those that he uses to describe the bonds of cosmological love:

It liketh me to schewe by subtil soong, with
 slakke and delytable sown of stringes, how that
 Nature, myghty, enclyneth and flytteth the
 governmentz of thynges, and by whyche lawes,
 sche, byndynge, restrayneth alle thynges by
 a boond that may nat be unbownde. . . . Alle
 thynges seken ayen to hir propre cours, and alle
 thynges rejoyssen hem of hir retournynge ayen
 to hir nature. (III.m.2)

A comparison of the quoted passage with the familiar verses on cosmological love in Book II, m.8 of the same work will reveal that Nature's laws are for Boethius, identical with the power of the "love that governeth erthe and see, and hath also commandement to the hevene" (II.m.8). When Boethius refers to Nature's restraining all things "by a boond that may nat be unbownde," he echoes a previous and similar assertion about cosmological love: "al this accordance of thynges is bounde with love." An example used by Boethius to illustrate love's restraining power over the movements of created things is the sea, which, despite its propensity to flow, remains confined within set limits: "the see, gredy to flowne, constraineth with a certain eende his floodes, so that it is nat lawful to streeche his brode termes or bowndes upon the erthes" (II.m.8). In other words, cosmological love, like Nature, compels all things to follow consistent patterns of behaviour ("alle thynges seken ayen to hir propre course") so as not to disrupt the order of creation. Man's behaviour is unfortunately the only common exception to this rule in all the works of Nature. Man alone is diverted from what is naturally good for him by "many maner erours" (III.p.3).

The standard medieval explanation for man's unique situation is significantly related to the role and identity of Nature in medieval literature. Man runs afoul of Nature

by ignoring the advice of his Reason, and because Reason is, among Nature's creatures, peculiar to man alone, we are faced with two quite dissimilar images of Nature herself, one appropriate to beasts and the other to human beings. Chaucer's romantic lovers often have great difficulty in accepting this as a fact, as does, for example, the dreamer in Piers Plowman. The latter cannot understand why the mating habits of beasts are guided by Reason in the direction of temperance, whereas man's sexual behaviour is irrational and excessive. For this state of Nature's affairs, the dreamer rebukes Reason:

Ac that moste moeved me . . and my mode chaunged,
 That Resoun rewarded . and reuled alle bestes
 Save man and his make; many tyme and ofte
 No resoun hem folwed . . and thanne I rebuked
 Resoun and rizte - til hym - selven I seyde,
 'I have wonder of the' quod I . 'That witty are holden
 Why thow ne sewest man and his make . that no
 mysfait hem folwe.

(XI.360-366)

The dreamer's complaint about Reason is uttered in the same petulant and irresponsible spirit as the remonstrances of Troilus against Fortune (T&C. IV.260-80). Neither Langland's dreamer nor Chaucer's Troilus recognizes that obedience to Reason, as to Fortune, is for a man entirely voluntary. The dreamer exudes a righteous concern for man's irrational carnal offences, but his own misunderstanding of the purpose of Reason in human life is no less serious than Troilus's. By assuming that Reason should take charge of

human actions even when man does not invite her guidance, the dreamer reveals that he does not know that Reason must be exercised at will. This puts him, as much as Troilus, at the mercy of Fortune and the irrational promptings of instinct. In reply to his accusation, Reason advises the dreamer, he says, not to worry about what she does or does not allow, but instead to do something himself to set right what is amiss in the world of Nature:

And resoun arated me . and seyde, 'recche the nevere
Whi I suffre or nouzt suffre . thi -self has nouzt
to done

Amende thow it, if thow myzte
(XI. 367-9)

Reason is here serving the dreamer with a reminder that he, and by extension man in general, can behave rationally only by choosing to do so. Through an understanding of the relation of free-will to Reason, he must recognize that in their mating activities animals conform to reason instinctively simply because they, unlike man, are incapable of conscious decision in matters of sexual conduct. Were the dreamer able to see that man must relate to Reason through free-will rather than instinct, he would cease to be perplexed about why Nature treats man differently from animals.

Although Nature does not figure as an intrinsically evil force in any of the works we are discussing, she does wear several different aspects, some of which are morally

more worthy than others. In addition to the distinctions just cited between animal nature and human nature, we must, for example, be aware of the prelapsarian and postlapsarian states of the latter. These, in the Middle Ages, counted as two independent forms of Nature, as may be seen from Alain de Lille's observations in the Anticlaudianus:

"Nature vero duo; vnum in pura natura consideratum, ab omni corruptione alienum, quale, opus Nature fuit ante Ade peccatum, aliud vero vario corruptione viciarum, quale fuit post peccatum Ade."⁴⁴ The distinction which Alain perceives between the pure Nature that existed before the Fall and the corrupt Nature that succeeded it is reminiscent of the mythographic distinction between the good and the bad Venuses. While it would be inaccurate to equate the Venus of carnal love with fallen Nature and the Venus of charity with unfallen Nature, it should be seen that these aspects of the two goddesses are definitely correlated. If we are to understand why Nature and cosmological love, despite their ideal affinity, are not always in harmony with each other, we will have to investigate some aspects of the correlation between fallen Nature and the lewd Venus.

In The City of God St. Augustine asserts that in Paradise man's sexual members obeyed the authority of the will and that if all had remained as God had planned it,

"the field of generation should have been sown by the organ created for the purpose, as the earth is sown by the hand."⁴⁵

Another way of describing the rationality of the prelapsarian sexual instinct in man is to say that before Adam sinned, the Venus of concupiscence obeyed Nature and provided an incentive to procreation rather than lechery.

Thus, in Alain de Lille's De Planctu Naturae, Nature explains that the intended function of Venus, which should be performed in subordination to Nature, is to create life:

"I stationed Venus, who is skilled in the knowledge of making, as an under-deputy of my work, in order that she, under my judgement and guidance, and with the assisting activities of her husband Hymen and her son Cupid . . . might weave together the line of the human race in unwearied continuation."⁴⁶

Reason is the agent through which Nature directs concupiscence to these ends, but when Reason loses control of the sexual instincts, Nature succumbs to the false authority of Venus and becomes corrupted. This pattern of psychological events was first enacted at the time of man's Fall and is repeated whenever an individual misuses Nature's faculties for lecherous reasons. The sequence of the pattern shows that rather than being equivalent to the lewd Venus, fallen Nature is her product and implement. As John Fleming has aptly put it, "Nature

does not use Venus; Venus uses Nature."⁴⁷

There is, as a result of this, always a potential irony in statements that postlapsarian men like Troilus are compelled by Nature to obey Venus. It would be impossible under any circumstances to argue that the "lawe of kynde" to which Troilus defers is the law of unfallen Nature, since this would imply that Chaucer did not believe in original sin. Troilus, in consequence, must necessarily be understood to obey the impulses of fallen Nature.

Whether or not we are ready to acknowledge Troilus's moral guilt, we must at least admit that to speak of fallen Nature as prescribing the rules for human behaviour toward Venus is to put the cart before the horse. In the postlapsarian world Venus dictates the "lawe of kynde" to Nature, not vice versa, and Nature is not responsible for man's vices although she suffers from the effects of his innate depravity. Fallen Nature in medieval literature is more or less the victim of human actions that Vaughan, in the seventeenth century, described her as being.

(Vaughan expresses the moral commonplace that Adam is to blame for Nature's evil condition: "He drew the curse upon the world and cracked / The whole frame with his fall").⁴⁸ By analogy, Troilus, who is Adam's descendant, is not so much under the governance of fallen Nature as he is at fault for corrupting Nature in the first place.

Once this is understood, the irony of justifying Troilus's actions with the plea that he may not "fordon the lawe of kynde" becomes quite apparent. The "lawe of kynde," arguably, is not imposed on Troilus from without, but has its origin in his own selfish concupiscence.

Nevertheless the term "lawe of kynde" has occasioned enough wayward interpretation among certain critics to seem anything but straightforward in meaning. Ida Gordon, whose views are representative of a certain trend in criticism⁴⁹ suggests that by "lawe of kynde", Chaucer wishes us to understand two separate things: the law of reason and charity and the law of sexual desire. The "problem of sexual love" in the poem, as Gordon sees it, is that both laws are natural and that both, therefore, deserve to be obeyed: ". . . the paradox is that while caritas is thus the 'lawe of kynde' for man, sexual desire, implanted in him by nature (and hence also a 'lawe' of his kind) may override the control of his reason, which is what distinguishes his kind from that of the beasts."⁵⁰ Yet while it is all very well to say that sexual desire is a natural law, there is no good reason for thinking that Chaucer regarded it as a law which should be allowed to compete with the law of reason for authority over man's actions.

For Gordon, references to the "lawe of kynde" in

the Troilus carry with them an aesthetically contrived ambiguity which "gives room for alternative reactions" and which typifies Chaucer's indeterminate moral stance vis a vis the love affair. In conformance with this premise, she argues that in acting as he does, Troilus is as true to natural law as he would have been had he decided, rationally, to curb his concupiscence. Such an approach to the subject of natural law is not altogether unexpected in a study given over to the investigation of various sorts of ambiguity in the Troilus. However, one suspects that Gordon's interpretation of natural law is determined more by her pre-conceived interest in ambiguity than by an objective appreciation of Nature's role in the Troilus.

The certainty that Chaucer knew and understood the difference between fallen and unfallen Nature implies a reading of "lawe of kynde" which is at least as reasonable as the one Gordon proposes. It is not necessary to call the phrase ambiguous just because sexual desire and reason, though clearly opposed to each other under the circumstances concerned, are laws of Nature. We should remind ourselves that while reason existed before the Fall, it only came into conflict with sexual desire after that event. Hence, whereas reason is plainly the law of unfallen Nature, recalcitrant sexual desire may best be described as a law of postlapsarian or fallen Nature. The "lawe of kynde" can

as justifiably be taken to refer to one or the other of these different types of natural law as to both at the same time. Therefore, no strong reason is at hand for thinking that Chaucer is deliberately creating ambiguity; indeed, ambiguity, though one of the catch-words of modern criticism, is somewhat misplaced in discussions of medieval literature -- especially when it diverts a reader's attention from standard concepts of medieval culture which are relevant to works being studied.

The obvious importance of the Fall in the attitudes to Nature of Jean de Meun and Dante provides a good standpoint from which to observe matters related to natural law in Chaucer. The picture of Nature which is presented in the Roman de la Rose is unambiguously postlapsarian, as is evident from its lack of relationship with Reason.⁵¹ (The final section of the Roman, in which Nature figures most prominently, contains no mention of Reason who, after her initial departure from the Lover, does not appear again in the poem.) Furthermore, since Nature in the Roman is in the main concerned with procreatively resisting Death (16005-10), which only became a feature of human life after the Fall, it can scarcely be argued that she transcends the moral limitations of postlapsarian sexual instinct. Although Nature is not, in herself, evil, she has no moral authority over man because her power to control his instincts

does not extend to his divinely bestowed reason. This is why, according to Fleming's persuasive analysis, the attempt of the Lover to find moral support for his cause by appeals to the authority of Nature, ends up looking quite ludicrous.⁵² Man is not supposed to follow the laws of fallen Nature; to act morally, he must obey Reason which ruled Nature before the Fall. In the Roman, then, there is no ambiguity concerning the identity of Nature or the meaning of natural law. Neither is there any question about man's obligations in terms of the latter.

Dante expresses the same fundamental outlook on natural law in Canto XVII of the Purgatorio where, again, a tacit but clear distinction emerges between the two states of Nature. Virgil, speaking on the subject of love, informs Dante that love may be either natural or of the mind but that for important reasons, only the natural is without error:

Ne creator ne creatura mai,
 . . . figliuol fu' senza amore,
 o naturale o d'amino; e tu 'l sai
 Lo naturale e sempre senza errore,
 ma l'altro puote erra per malo obietto
 o per troppo o per poco di vigore.
 Mentre ch'elle e nel primo ben diretto,
 e ne secondi se stesso misura,
 esser non preo cagion di mal diletto
 ma quando al mal siterce . . .
 contra 'l fattore adovra sua fattura
 (Purgatorio XVII.91-102)

(Neither Creator nor creature, my son, was ever without love, either natural or of the mind, and this you know. The natural is always without error; but the other may err through an evil object, or through too much or too little vigor. While it is directed on the Primal Good, and on secondary goods observes right measure, it cannot be the cause of sinful pleasure. But when it is turned awry to evil . . . , against the Creator works his creature.) (Singleton translation)

Dante does not mean by natural love the kind of love which is inspired by fallen Nature. Thus, when Virgil asserts that the "natural is always without error," he is not describing the same emotion that rules the Lover in the Roman. The perversions which turn the creature away from its Creator and so go against the spirit of natural love violate the order of creation and repeat the action of man's original Fall. Natural love is love which remains focused on the Primal Good as Nature's law demanded ante Adi peccatum.

The love which Dante refers to as being of the mind and subject to error is that which led to the Fall and to postlapsarian natural law. This love is called "voluntary" by Thomas Aquinas and is said by him to differ from natural love in that it is based on freedom of the will to love good or evil, whereas natural love is an inborn craving in all created things to fulfill the roles set for them in creation by the Primal Good: ". . . natural tendency differs from voluntary tendency because the inclination of natural

tendency is from an extrinsic principle; and therefore it has no liberty . . . however the inclination of the voluntary tendency is caused by the will itself. . . ."53

Man, having rational free-will, may choose to adhere to natural law by deliberately seeking God, which means that his voluntary love to be good, must be a conscious affirmation of the instincts of "natural love." "Hence," observes Aquinas, "it is evident that the natural law is nothing other than the participation in eternal law by the rational creature."54

For Jean de Meun and Dante the concept of natural law hinges on that of original sin, and although natural law may be interpreted in a postlapsarian sense, as in the Roman, or in a prelapsarian sense, as in the Divine Comedy, in neither instance does it carry the ambiguous mixture of prelapsarian and postlapsarian connotations that Ida Gordon attaches to Chaucer's statements about "love of kynde": Moreover, Jean and Dante share the same set of assumptions about reason and sexual desire, which are the main factors relevant to any definition of natural law in the Middle Ages. This raises the question of whether Chaucer would have been more likely to have interpreted natural law in an ambiguous Empsonian fashion than to have understood it according to the stricter definitions unanimously accepted by his contemporaries.

So far as may be determined from what Chaucer actually says in the Troilus about natural law, he would have had few disagreements with Jean and Dante. Ida Gordon does not appreciate this because, being interested chiefly in what she regards as the paradox of natural law in the poem, she fails to grasp the ironic implications of Chaucer's tone. But a little reflection on the narrator's assertion, "may no man fordon the lawe of kynde," will show that however it is interpreted, it ignores the consequences and realities of man's Fall and that, therefore, it should not be taken seriously. If Reason is the "lawe of kynde", it is incongruously associated with the Love which binds Troilus. Indeed, since the function of reason is to preserve spiritual freedom in order that men may follow the course of natural love, it is obviously antithetical to the sort of Love which ". . . so, soone kan / The fredom of . . . hertes to hym thralle" (Troilus and Criseyde I.235).

Yet when the narrator, who characterizes Love in these words, proceeds immediately to the conclusion that natural law (Reason) is inexorable, as though he were still speaking of Love, the coherence of his speech begins to dissolve. This lack of differentiation between the separate bondages of Love and Reason can be discerned in the verbal sequence in which the narrator expresses his thoughts:

For thy ensample taketh of this man,
 Ye wise, proude, and worthi folkes alle,
 To scornen Love, which that so soone kan
 The fredom of youre hertes to hym thralle;
 For evere it was, and evere it shal byfalle,
 That Love is he that alle thing may bynde,
 For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde.

(T&C. I.232-8)

In the last two lines of this stanza, nothing is said that would warn the reader that the narrator is transferring his attention from Love to the natural law of Reason; and if there were, the final inference would still be illogical because the power of Love does not necessarily entail the power of Reason. But while it is barely possible that Chaucer intended the stanza to reflect, ironically, the narrator's misunderstanding of the relation of Love to Reason, it is more likely that the "lawe of kynde" has no connection whatever with Reason or caritas. The irony which would inevitably result from reading "lawe of kynde" as a reference to Reason, (an irony to which Ida Gordon is oblivious), must be considered forced and mechanical. Although such irony would remove any possibility that the paradox pointed out by Gordon was meant to provoke anything more than amusement at the narrator's foolishness, it is almost certain the the "lawe of kynde" is merely sexual desire, the law of fallen Nature. This is confirmed by the analogy between Troilus's subservience to the "lawe of kynde" and the coercion imposed on Bayard the draft horse by

"horses' lawe," symbolized by the whip:

As proud Bayard gynneth for to skippe
 Out of the weye, so pryketh hym his corn,
 Til he a lasshe have of the longe whippe;
 Than thynketh he, "Though I praunce al byforn
 First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,
 Yet am I but a hors, and horses lawe
 I moot endure, and with my feres drawe;
 (I. 218-224)

Troilus, who renounces his free-will when he becomes Love's
 thall, is little different from Bayard who never had free-
 will to begin with. Thus is implied a strong resemblance
 of "lawe of kynde" to "horses lawe". D. W. Robertson
 logically observes that "just as a horse must obey 'horses
 lawe', so Troilus will succumb to the 'lawe of kynde' which
 dominates the fleshly or 'horsy' aspect of man."⁵⁵

Gordon, however, objects that Robertson's view is
 too limited, and she argues that because "lawe of kynde"
 could be construed as the law of Reason as well as the law
 of sexual desire, both meanings have a necessary bearing
 on the stanzas just quoted. By way of trying to prove that
 the likeness of Troilus's situation to Bayard's does not
 carry the significance which Robertson assigns to it.
 Gordon claims that "horses lawe" is in fact, Reason. She
 bases her argument on the premise that the whip must be
 iconographically identified with the rational control of
 passion: "The 'horses lawe' which Bayard must endure is the

control of the whip, so if the 'horse' signifies fleshly appetite the analogy should signify the control of fleshly appetite (by Reason). And indeed it is probably the concept of the whip, or bridle, that gave to the 'horse' its iconographic significance."⁵⁶ From here, Gordon goes on to announce that "the obvious parallel between 'horses lawe' and the 'lawe of kynde' is . . . not so straightforward as it might seem" to critics like Robertson. In other words, she is telling us that if 'horses lawe' refers to Reason, so, by virtue of analogy, must 'lawe of kynde', her ultimate conclusion being that 'lawe of kynde' cannot apply strictly to the corrupted instincts of fallen Nature.

All this would perhaps be plausible, were Gordon able to offer an adequate rationale for interpreting the whip as a symbol of Reason. But any iconographic connection between the whip and the bridle is rather tenuous.

Robertson has documented the function of bridle imagery in medieval art and literature,⁵⁷ and though it is true that the bridle was popularly associated with rational constraint in the Middle Ages, there is little evidence that the whip was.⁵⁸ A look at some of the occasions upon which Chaucer mentions whips indicates that they tend to represent the pain of punishment and remorse suffered for sin rather than the disciplined guidance of Reason which prevents sin. The

Wife of Bath describes herself as the whip of tribulation which was visited on her husbands in marriage:

. . . I have toold thee forth my tale
Of tribulation in mariage,
Of which I am expert in al myn age,
This is to seyn, myself have been the whippe, --
(WBT. 172-5)

The Wife's husbands, like Troilus, were at the mercy of their own cupidinous desires, and this is why the Wife was able to manipulate them and make their lives miserable. As she says, when they refused to acquiesce in her waywardness and "walkynge out by nyghte" (397), she would chide and deprive them of carnal satisfaction so that she could have her own way:

Namely abedde hadden they meschaunce:
Ther wolde I chide, and do hem no plesaunce;
I wolde no lenger in the bed abyde,
If that I felte his arm over my syde . . .
(407-10)

The effectiveness of this treatment in stilling the objections of her husbands was, she knows, due to their inordinate regard for the attractiveness of her "bele chose". Consequently, if the Wife is the whip which tormented her husbands, her power to hurt must have come primarily from the sinful excesses of their sexual desires. It follows by implication that those upon whom the whip is inflicted are responsible for their own resultant discomfort. With this in mind, we can look at the analogy between Bayard and Troilus in a rather different light, noting that the whip

which strikes the recalcitrant animal is analogous to the pain which Troilus receives from Love, the personified image of his own recalcitrant animal instincts.

Elsewhere Chaucer identifies the whip as a purgatorial device, which is in keeping with the punitive connotations given to it by the Wife of Bath. The Parson speaks of whipping as one of the penalties faced by men in purgatory (X.715-20), and, in The Merchant's Tale, Januarie's counsellor, Justinus, warns him not to marry on account of the danger that a wife can become a man's purgatorial whip:

Paraunter she may be youre purgatorie!
 She may be Goddes meene and Goddes whippe;
 Thanne shal youre soule up to hevene skippe

 I hope to God, hereafter shul ye knowe
 That ther nys no so greet felicitie
 In mariage. . . . (Merch.T. 1670-76)

Justinus then informs Januarie that the Wife of Bath "Of mariage, which we have on honde, / Declared hath ful wel in litel space" (1686-7), and this reminds us that the Wife calls herself a purgatory as well as a whip in marriage; "By God! in erthe I was his purgatorie" (489), she exclaims about her fourth husband. The cumulative significance of these details severely weakens Gordon's claim that "just as the horse that 'gynneth for to skippe . . . ' has to be controlled and directed by the whip, so sexual desire has to be controlled and directed by reason".⁵⁹ The

function of Reason is not to administer punishment and therefore it cannot be accurately compared to the horse driver's whip, which is a symbol of purgatory as well as an agent of practical chastisement. And if Reason has nothing to do with "horses lawe", we shall probably be ready to agree that it is equally foreign, so far as the analogy goes, to the definition of "lawe of kynde".

In addition, Gordon's interpretation of the last line of the couplet, "That Love is he that alle thyng may bynde, / For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde" (T&C. I.237-8), distorts the syntax of the passage. Gordon, as was pointed out, believes that if Reason is one of the things meant by "lawe of kynde", the last line must be entering a caveat against Love in the name of Reason. But grammatically, the last line does not qualify or limit the power of Love, as it would have to if it were actually saying that sexual desire must be "directed by reason"; in fact, the line should be read as another detail in the list of Love's attributes. The conjunction "for" (meaning "because"), which introduces the line, indicates that "lawe of kynde" is treated as a manifestation of Love's power and not as a restriction which is imposed on it. Translated, the final lines of the stanza should read: "It always was and always shall be the case that Love is he who can bind everything, because no man can annul the

law of Nature." The only-conceivable meaning for "lawe of kynde" is therefore Love, since the term unquestionably does not refer to Reason.

The other half of Gordon's argument about "lawe of kynde" -- the idea that Love, or sexual desire, is a law which is seriously thought of by Chaucer as ineluctable, and, in the same sense as Reason's law, natural -- must now be considered. That "lawe of kynde" means Love and not Reason is a rather clear indication of Chaucer's belief in the same separation of fallen and unfallen Nature endorsed by Jean and Dante. If Chaucer has thought that Reason and unsupervised sexual desire were two different expressions of the same state of Nature, he would have allowed "lawe of kynde" to be interpreted in both senses. As it is, the unambiguous significance of "lawe of kynde" proves that the Nature, whose law Love is, does not represent Reason. Consequently Reason must be affiliated with a different Nature from Love, and it does not require much critical acumen to realize that because Reason ruled before the Fall, it must be the law of unfallen Nature. So Troilus's Love, the "lawe of kynde", is evidently the law of fallen Nature which prevails in the Roman de la Rose.

It was suggested earlier that when the narrator of the Troilus says "may no man fordon the lawe of kynde," he is uttering an absurdity insofar as "lawe of kynde"

applies to fallen Nature. The "lawe of kynde" is the result of Troilus's cupidity just as fallen Nature is the result of man's original sin. The point to be understood is that Troilus is entirely responsible for all that happens to him; Nature forces him to do nothing against his will, because he controls the concupiscent impulses which Nature arouses in him. Although he is of necessity surrounded by the conditions of fallen Nature, he possesses the power not to be dominated by them. Virgil's analysis of free will and necessity in Purgatorio XVIII is quite pertinent to the situation of Troilus, for it emphasizes that, in love, no man is subject to determinism:

Onde pognam che di necessitate
 surga, ogne amore che dentro a voi s'accende,
 di ~~ar~~inerlo e in voi la podestate.
 La nobile virtu Beatrice intende
 per lo libero arbitrio. . . .

(Purgatorio XVIII.70-4)

(Wherefore, suppose that every love which is kindled in you arises of necessity, the power to arrest it is in you. This noble virtue Beatrice understands as the free will. . . .)

However, various lovers in Chaucer's poetry, despite the evidence of man's free will, adopt a deterministic outlook on their lives and destinies which, they assume, ultimately reflects Nature's law. Arcite, in the Knight's Tale, justifies his infatuation with Emilye by claiming: "A man moot nedes love, maugree his head. / He may nat fleeen it, though he sholde be deed" (116-7). In the final

part of the Troilus, Diomede, whose interest in Criseyde is, like Troilus's, at bottom carnal, also professes to serve the god of Love (v.144), before whom, he says, he is helpless: "Ek I am not of power for to stryve / ayeyns the god of Love, but hym obeye" (v.166-7). And, Troilus, during his soliloquy in the temple, which is spoken after the Trojans have decided to trade Criseyde with the Greeks in exchange for Antenor, sees his consequent sorrow as foreseen and predestined by God. Troilus does not mention Nature directly in this speech, but what he says is still generally relevant to the theme of Nature misunderstood:

For al that comth, comth by necessitee:
Thus to ben born is my destinee

"For certeynly, this wot I wel," he seyde,

"That foresight of divine purveyaunce
Hath seyn alwey me to forgon Criseyde,
Syn God seeth every thyng, out of doutance. . . ."

(T&C. IV.958-64)

Though Troilus thinks that these considerations are sufficient "for to destruye oure fre choys every del" (IV.1059), he seems not to remember that when he decided to trust Pandarus and to begin an affair with Criseyde, he acted not by necessity but by free-will. His initial resignation of his fate to Pandarus and Fortune is fully conscious and deliberate, and is frankly acknowledged by Troilus himself at the time:

Now, Pandare, I kan no more seye,
 But, thow wis, thow woost, thow maist, thow art al!
My lif, my deth, hol in thyn hand I leye
 (I.1051-53)

Troilus's soliloquy, furthermore, is likely a parody, unrecognized as such by him, of the Boethian doctrines of fate and free will upon which it is based. . . . Robinson, in an explanatory note on the text of the poem, observes that there is a potential difference between the philosophical viewpoints of Chaucer and Troilus on the question of free will, but he does not call attention to the possibility that Chaucer is actually satirizing Troilus's misunderstanding of Boethius; he merely points out that Troilus's response to his predicament is not necessarily a reflection of Chaucer's moral:

The argument of Troilus closely follows that of Boethius, but whereas in the De Consolatione, Philosophy makes a reply and defends human freedom, Chaucer (or Troilus) stops with the fatalistic conclusion. It is not to be inferred that Chaucer himself was a fatalist. The speech . . . expresses not Chaucer's moral, but Troilus's emotional reaction.⁶⁰

Nonetheless the most important question that confronts the reader of Troilus's soliloquy concerns the justification for Troilus's "emotional reaction." It must have been apparent to Chaucer that this reaction is very foolish, as the hero, his pleas to the contrary notwithstanding, is obviously not without free will. Troilus is just incapable

of assuming responsibility for his own behaviour, and Chaucer would not have found this weakness particularly admirable. Therefore the chances are quite good that Troilus's philosophical departures from Boethius ironically accentuate the shortcomings of his character.

The whole purpose of the commentary on necessity in the De Consolatione is to point out that man's free will is not incompatible with God's foreknowledge of events. God sees the future as man sees the present, because all things belong to the present tense in God's vision. The only necessity which God imposes on human actions is that designated by Boethius under the term "conditional necessity". Conditional necessity applies to events which, because they are known to be happening, must, therefore, necessarily be happening. Since God sees all things, all human actions are subject to the conditional necessity which results from his knowledge of them: "Thise thynges thanne, yif thei be referrid to the devyne sighte, than ben thei maked necessarie by condicioun of the devyne knowynge" (V.pr.6). But each man remains self-determining despite God's omniscience:

For no necessite no constreyneth a man to gon
That goth by his propre wil, al be it so than
whan he goth that it is necessarie that he goth.
Ryght on this same manere thanne, yif that the
purveaunce of God seeth anythyng present, than
moot thilke thing ben by necessite, althogh that
it ne have no necessite of his owne nature.

(V.pr.6)

Troilus rejects these teachings and self-pityingly affixes to God the blame for the sorrow he has brought upon himself. The ridiculousness of his behaviour is not very hard to perceive, and it follows that if God himself does not interfere with man's free will, Nature is not likely to do so. Troilus's complaint that the deterministic influence of divine providence is responsible for his final loss of Criseyde is, in fact, symmetrically correspondent to the narrator's claim that Troilus falls in love in the first place because Nature compels him to. In each case man's refusal to accept for his actions the moral responsibility which accompanies free will results in an absurd denial of reality. The truth of this, so far as it concerns Nature's alleged determination of the course and inception of human love ("love of kynde" T&C. I.979), is borne out by Chaucer's repeated reminders to his audience of the fact that it is possible to choose not to yield to the concupiscent love awakened by fallen Nature.

One such reminder is ironically conveyed in the previously quoted couplet from Arcite's speech on love: "A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed. / He may not flee it, though he sholde be deed" (Kn.T. 1169-70). The assertion made here, that a man cannot flee Love, deliberately echoes and contradicts Reason's claim in the Roman de la Rose that he can. Reason addresses the Lover with the

following advice:

No bettir counsel maist thou take
Than thynke to flee wel, iwis;
May nought helpe elles, for wite thou this,
If tho fle it, it shal flee thee;
Folowe it, and folwen shal it thee.

(R.R. 4780-4)

There can be no dispute about the wisdom of Reason's words since the Lover, in the same manner as Troilus, has voluntarily surrendered his will to the obsessions of carnal passion. The Lover is pursued by the god of Love only after he decides to enter the Garden of Deduit, where he is vulnerable to Love's arrows. As Reason says to the Lover, he himself admitted the god of Love into his life:

A sory gest, in goode fay,
Thou herberedest than in thyn inn,
The God of Love whanne thou let inn!

(R.R. 5107-9)

If we look at Arcite's declaration of the impossibility of fleeing Love in the context of the passage from the Roman which it parodies, we will notice that Arcite has a very incomplete understanding of how Love works. He is, indeed, literally unable to flee Love "though he sholde be deed," for he is remorselessly pursued by a passion for Emilye which causes his death. But his fate as a lover is entirely due to his having invited Love's pursuit by originally following Love instead of fleeing from it. Arcite is given the opportunity to flee when his friend

Perotheus persuades Theseus to release him from prison and to let him return to Thebes. Unfortunately Arcite finds the prospect of leaving Athens too distressing to be endured, saying that he will die if he is deprived of the sight of Emilye:

Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
 Syn that I may nat seen you Emelye,
 I nam but deed; ther nys no remedye.
 (Kn.T. 1272-4)

Arcite, once in Thebes, languishes "a year or two" (1881) in a melancholy humour before Mercury appears to him in a dream and tells him ". . . To Athens shaltow wende, / There is thy shapen of thy wo an ende." (1391-2).

Ironically it is not his separation from Emilye that kills Arcite, but his symbolic journey back to Athens. Mercury, in alluding to the end of Arcite's woe, is of course, speaking of his imminent death in the tournament with Palamon. And this death results from his decision to abandon his enforced flight from Love in order to pursue Love more actively. Had Arcite fled from Love out of free will, he would have been safe in Thebes, for, as Reason argues, Love would have fled from him. Because his will is perpetually following Love however, his physical flight from Athens has no effect on his unhappy state of mind, and Love continues to follow him. The return to Athens is thus merely a literal acting out of the spiritual pursuit of Love which Arcite, contravening the rules of

Reason, has been engaged in all along. He is clearly not in any position to comment authoritatively on the difficulties of fleeing from Love, not having experienced them, and his opinions on this score are undoubtedly calculated by Chaucer to appear foolish.

The certitude of Palamon and Arcite that all their doings as lovers are compelled by deterministic forces outside their own wills is very similar to Troilus's. All of them think, against Reason, that they cannot flee from Love and that God (or gods) and Nature are responsible for this state of affairs. Palamon blames Saturn and Juno for his imprisonment, and Venus for his idolatrous and infatuated mental state:

But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
And eek thurgh Juno, jalous and eek wood,
Of Thebes with his waste walles wyde;
And Venus sleeth me on that oother syde.
(1328-32).

These lines carry the same tone of petulant self-indulgence that informs the speech of Troilus on divine providence

(T&C. IV.958-1078). In neither case, however, is the deterministic outlook of the speaker morally justified. Palamon, no less than Arcite has the option as a human being of fleeing spiritually from Venus, and Palamon's claim that his imprisonment is determined by Saturn is, as Chauncey Wood has argued, inconsistent with some important evidence to the contrary:

If we note only that both [Palamon and Arcite] scribe imprisonment to Saturn, we see that they are styled by Chaucer as deterministic characters; but when we reflect that Arcite said they were both in prison because of Saturn and that Palamon ascribes his own imprisonment to Saturn even after Arcite has been released, then we may fairly judge that Chaucer is not only saying that both are deterministic but also that to be deterministic and pessimistic in the face of contrary evidence is to be short-sighted.⁶¹

A deterministic philosophy of divine providence is complemented, particularly in the mind and character of Arcite, by a deterministic philosophy of Nature's influence on human affairs. From the instant that Palamon and Arcite first see Emelye, Arcite is distinguished from his cousin by his private belief that his love is more in accordance with Nature's law than Palamon's. Palamon, who, looking from his barred window, is the first of the two knights to see Emelye as she wanders in the garden adjoining their prison, exclaims in a sudden rush of infatuation that she must be a goddess: "I noot wher she be womman or goddesse, / But Venus is it soothly, as I gesse" (1101-2). Arcite, however, is quick to ridicule Palamon's opinion as being affected and unrealistic, pointing out that his own claims to be Emelye's "paramour" possess the stronger warrant of having arisen from a more vital instinct which causes him to love her as a "creature":

What wiltow seyen? Thou woost nat yet now
 Whether she be womman or goddesse!
 Thyn is affecioun of hoolynesse,
 And myn is love, as to a creature;
 (Kn.T. 1156-9)

The sense in which Arcite refers to Emelye as a "creature" implicitly identifies her as a product of Nature instead of something supernatural. The connotations of the word "creature", when it is applied to beautiful women, usually pertain directly to the creative power and authority of Nature:

Half hire beaute shulde men nat fynde
 In Creature that formed is by kynde
 (L.G.W. 245-6)

For Nature hath with sovereyn diligence
 Yformed hire is as greet excellence,
 As though she wolde seyn, "Lo! I, Nature,
 Thus kan I forme and peynte a creature. . . .
 (Phys.T. 9-12)

As she, lat be make no comparisoun
 To creature yformed hire by kynde
 (T&C. IV.450-51)

And since Arcite professes to love Emelye not as a "goddesse", but as a "creature", he seems to be arguing not only that she herself is a product of Nature but that so also is his love for her. Arcite's tacit conviction that Nature sanctions his love is further demonstrated when, to Palamon's accusation, "thow wodest falsly been aboute / To love my lady" (1142-3), he replies: ". . . positif lawe and swich decree / Is broken al day for love in ech

degree" (1167-8). Robinson, in his note on positive law in the standard edition, writes: "'lex positiva', as opposed to natural law, is that which rests solely upon man's decree";⁶² and since by positive law Arcite is referring to his formal duty as a knight to help rather than to oppose Palamon, there is evidently a significant connection in Arcite's mind between his love and natural law. When Arcite violates positive law for the sake of Love, he is, he supposes, acting out the demands of natural law. Indeed, in asserting the superiority of his love to all man-made statutes, he specifically speaks of it as a law; "Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan, / Than may be yeve to any erthely man" (1165-6). Arcite is hereby indicating that because love's "lawe" is not subject to man's decree, it must stem from Nature which, as Robinson observes, is the principal alternative legal authority.

Immediately afterwards, Arcite goes on to remark that love is determined by necessity: "A man moot nedes love, maugree his heed" (1169). Having intimated that natural law is the source of his love, Arcite is now, presumably, also attributing to that law a determinism which denies man's free will. This connection between natural law and necessity is reinforced by an interesting coincidence in Arcite's use of imagery. When he first refers to love as a (natural) law he swears by his "pan" (skull) (1165)

and then, when speaking of love in terms of necessity, he observes that a man must love "maugree his heed" (1162). These head images may be subtle allusions to the faculty of reason which is seated in Man's brain and which cannot be considered irrelevant to questions of human behaviour involving love, natural law, and necessity. It is thus possible that Chaucer is indirectly inviting his audience to examine Arcite's opinions in the light of reason.

The cumulative import of Arcite's initial remarks about love is that he is compelled by natural law to love Emelye. Consequently, his general theory of love is identical with that expressed by the narrator of the Troilus in the statement: ". . . Love is he that alle thyng may bynde, / For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde" (T&C. I.237-8). We have seen that from Reason's point of view this allegation about the power of Love is quite unsound, because Troilus actually uses free will when he chooses to start an affair with Criseyde. The analogy between Troilus and Arcite, which is based on their mutual subjection to the supposedly deterministic influence of natural law, would, therefore, seem to suggest that Arcite has as many delusions about the relationship of Love to Nature as does the narrator of the Troilus. Arcite, no less than Troilus, enjoys the human prerogative of free will, and when he allows himself to fall into an idolatrous and ultimately

fatal passion over Emelye, he has no logical justification for saying that Nature caused him to do so.

Arcite's subsequent, implicit allusions to natural law and to his own status as a "creature" appear ironic because Arcite, while pretending to be a staunch advocate of Nature's ways, usually turns out to be quite at odds with all but the most fallen and corrupted aspects of Nature. His false belief that Nature determines his love is, as we shall see, only the first of a series of distortions and subtle misunderstandings of what Nature represents, and for these it is evidently intended to prepare the reader. Palamon, who does not appeal to natural law in order to assert a right to Emelye, suffers, interestingly enough, less adverse criticism than Arcite for possessing the wrong attitude towards Nature.

For a long time critics have been interested in the similarities between the characters of Palamon and Arcite. Many years ago, Hoxie N. Fairchild advanced the opinion that Palamon and Arcite are representative, respectively, of the contemplative and active lives, and that their dissimilarities are thus very pronounced.⁶³ W. H. French on the other hand, argued twenty years later that in most respects "Chaucer permitted no important differences. Both were paragons, equally eligible, presentable, brave, and

comely."⁶⁴ J. R. Hulbert, thinking along similar lines, contended that Chaucer was intent on posing a problem of courtly love: which of two young men of almost equal claims and merit should win the lady.⁶⁵ William Frost, however, took the view that a valid preference between Palamon and Arcite is definitely implied by the author and that Palamon is to be favoured because he is a greater idealist than Arcite.⁶⁶ R. M. Lumiansky went so far as to identify the lovers with the two states of mind experienced by Boethius in the De Consolatione, after and before his treatment for mental illness by Lady Philosophy.⁶⁷ As this brief, random summarization of critical opinions will tell, Palamon and Arcite have been compared and contrasted from a wide variety of angles: moral, courtly and philosophical. However, I would like to draw attention to the themes of Nature and natural law as together constituting another angle from which the topic might fruitfully be approached; an awareness of the importance of these themes in the Knight's Tale can be of help in reaching an accurate comparative assessment of the characters of Palamon and Arcite.

Boccaccio's Teseida, the poem upon which the Knight's Tale is modelled, omits any reference to an immediate quarrel between Palamone and Arcita in their first sight of Emelye.

Instead they try to give each other comfort for the pangs of love from which they are both suffering. Moreover, Boccaccio portrays Arcita, not Palemone, as the first of the lovers to see Emelye, and Arcita frankly declares that she is a goddess: "Venir e qui discesa veramente" (Venus has truly come down here Teseida III.13). Upon the question of Emelye's identity, Palemone is in complete agreement with Arcita, since he too believes that she is Venus: "Per certo questa e Citerea; / io non vidi giammai si bella cosa" (Certainly this is Cytherea. I have never seen anything so beautiful. Teseida III.14). Chaucer, by contrast, not only reverses the order in which the lovers see Emelye; he also introduces, independently, the scene of a quarrel between the lovers involving their apparently different attitudes towards love. Because this quarrel constitutes an original and distinctive innovation in Chaucer's version of the story, there is good reason to suspect that its issues are important for interpretation of the Knight's Tale.

It is noteworthy that the contradiction, posited by Arcite, between "affecioun of hooplynesse" and love which obeys natural law also receives mention in one of Panarus's speeches in the Troilus. After Troilus has been hit by Love's arrow and has become the victim of a carnal passion for Criseyde, Pandarus finds him "biwayling in his chambre . . . allone" (T&C. I.547). In an effort to comfort

Troilus, he tells him that all people are susceptible to love, whether of the celestial or of the natural variety, and that he therefore has hopes of Troilus's love being requited by Criseyde:

Was nevere man or womman yet bigete
 That was unapt to suffren loves hete,
 Celestial or elles love of kynde;
 Forthy some grace I hope in hire to fynde
 -(T&C. I.977-80)

Having said this, Pandarus proceeds, in the same key as Arcite, to explain how in youth "love of kynde" is more fitting than love "celestial"; Criseyde, he believes, will readily incline to the former love, realizing that it "sit hire naught to ben celestial" (I.983). The consequence of this, according to Pandarus, ought to be that Criseyde, in obeying natural law, will embrace the opportunity for an affair with a worthy knight like Troilus: "But trewely it sate hire right nowthe / A worthi knyght to loven and cherice," (I.985-6). However, what is startling is the abrupt conclusion to which Pandarus brings his reflections on love: unless Criseyde agrees to love Troilus in the way which Pandarus has specified as natural, he will, he says, consider her to be sinful: "And but she do, I holde it for a vice" (I.987). The proposition that abstaining from fornication is to sin would have come as enough of a surprise to Chaucer's readers to cause them to question its

moral logic, and we must do the same.

Pandarus is speaking from the assumption that so-called "love of kynde" possesses a moral standard peculiar to itself and that while fornication may not be among the values represented by love "celestial", it is perfectly good and acceptable according to the independent standard of "love of kynde". This belief that natural love and heavenly love are mutually exclusive must, however, face the objection that in terms of the Boethian philosophy which controls the Troilus,⁶⁸ natural love, far from being antithetical to heavenly love, is a manifestation of it.

Lady Philosophy states firmly in the De Consolatione that men are led by "natural entencioun" to seek sovereign happiness ("the verray fyn of blisfulnesse" III.pr.3), which, she has already pointed out, lies in heavenly love: "O weleful were mankynde yif thilke love that governeth hevene governede your corages" II.m.8). It follows from what Lady Philosophy says that, since Nature's primary purpose is to move men to heavenly love, there cannot be, except through corruption of Nature, a "love of kynde" which is distinct from or contrary to heavenly love. This reflects rather badly on Pandarus, suggesting that he is guilty of a morally distorted view of Nature and that, in attempting to propagate his misapprehensions about "love of kynde", he himself is displaying the vice which he is

ready to impute to Criseyde. Arcite, similarly, must be suspected of moral error, his opinion about the absence of any correlation between natural love and heavenly love being much the same as that maintained by Pandarus.

And just as Pandarus incurs a reader's distrust through his curious misapplication of the word "vice", so Arcite, in calling Palamon's passion a holy sentiment, suffers a loss of credibility which causes us to doubt his competence even to recognize the qualities of the two types of love which he is speciously attempting to dissociate from each other. Considering the Boethian definition of heavenly love as love which preserves social bonds and "enditeth lawes to trewe felawes" (II.m.8), it is hard to see how Palamon's love, which is disruptive of peace and friendship, can properly be dignified by any such epithet as holy, heavenly, or celestial.

As for Arcite's love, it is no more unequivocally natural than Palamon's is holy. Despite his supposition that his desire for Emelye is sanctioned by Nature, Arcite, by the standards set by Chaucer's Parson, is acting in a way which is destructive to Nature. We can see this by comparing the general features of Arcite's love with the Parson's description of lechery and fornication: "Of Leccherie as I seyde sourden diverse spes, as fornicacioun, that is betwixe man and woman that been nat married; and

this is deedly synne, and agayns nature. Al that is enemy and destruccioun to nature is agayns nature" (Pars.T. 865).

Quite clearly Arcite's purpose is not to marry Emelye, for he gives no sign that he is interested in her as a prospective wife. On the contrary, he believes that love, instead of being circumscribed by marriage should and must be permitted to culminate in adultery and fornication.

Marital status, declares Arcite, is irrelevant to the satisfaction of sexual desire: "A man moot nedes love maugree his heed . . . / Al be she mayde, or wydwe, or elles wyf" (Kn.T. 1168-71). With this attitude, Arcite,

who does not want a plantonic relationship with the unmarried Emelye, can scarcely intend any outcome for his passion except fornication, which, as the Parson says, violates Nature.

There are enough allusions in the Knight's Tale to the harmful effects of Arcite's carnal passion on Nature to show that Chaucer is thereby satirizing the ironic inconsistency of Arcite's verbal defence of natural love with his unnatural conduct as a lover. This inconsistency is the logical result of Arcite's refusal to recognize the complementary relationship of natural love and heavenly love. If he were able to understand that one is not separate from the other, he would have a clearer idea of what natural love entails and would not confuse it

with activities which the Parson refers to as "deedly synne".

The destruction which Arcite causes in Nature's realm can conveniently be viewed through the perspective of another remark by the Parson about the effect of sin. Emphasizing the true interdependence of Nature and grace, the Parson states that through sin, a man loses not only grace but Nature as well: "For certes, synne bireveth a man bothe goodnesse of nature and eek the goodnesse of grace" (Pars.T. 248). The Parson subsequently enumerates, as follows, the various goods of Nature and grace, most of which are vainly sought in the character of Arcite:

Certes, the goodes of Nature stonden outhur in goodes of body or in goodes of soule. Certes, goodes of body been heele of body, strengthe, delivernesse, beautee, gentrice, franchise. Goodes of nature of the soule been good wit, sharp understondynge, subtil engyn, vertu natureel, good memorie. . . . Goodes of grace been science, power to suffre spiritueel travaille, benignitee, vertuous contemplacioun, withstondynge of temptacioun and semblable thynges. (Pars.T. 450-4)

From the time that Arcite catches sight of Emilye until his unfortunate but deserved demise, he demonstrates conclusively that he has very few of the "goodes of grace." Ever driven by the obsession referred to with punning irony by the narrator as "the poynt of his desir" (Kn.T. 1501), Arcite exhibits no capacity for "vertuous contemplacioun" or for the withstanding of carnal temptation. Nor, as a

devotee of Mars, who symbolizes the evils of strife, does he seem to be endowed with much "benignitee." Even more conspicuous however is Arcite's deficiency in the "goodes of Nature", which is attributable mainly to the events that succeed his falling in love. The physical gifts of Nature, "hele of body" etc., are all rapidly forfeited by Arcite as a result of his passion. During his sojourn in Thebes after having been released from prison, the "lover's maladye" to which he succumbs deprives him of "strengthe", "delivernesse" and "beautee", leaving him in a most unnatural state of physical degeneracy;

His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft,
 That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;
 His eyen holwe, and grisly to biholde,
 His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde
 And solitarie he was and evere allone
 And waillynge al the nyght, makynge his mone . . .
 So feble eek were his spiritz; and so lowe,
 And changed so, that no man koude knowe
 His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
 (Kn.T. 1361-71)

Troilus, when Criseyde is surrendered to the Greeks, falls into the same malady which Arcite suffers from, and its unnaturalness is illustrated in his wish for death and by the curses which he simultaneously heaps upon the gods and upon Nature:

And ther his sorwes that he spared hadde
 He yaf an issure large, and "deth" he criedde;
 And in his throwes frenetik and madde
 He corseth Jove, Appollo, and ek Cupide;
 He corseth Ceres, Bacus, and Cipride
His burthe, hymself, his fate ek nature
And, save his lady, every creature.

(T&C. V.204-10)

Troilus's malady shortly brings him to what, he fears, is the point of death and leaves him in a condition much resembling Arcite's. Speaking to Pandarus, he explains that his case is indeed critical:

For wele I fele, by my maladie,
 And by my dremes now and yore ago,
 Al certeynly that I mot nedes dye.

Although Arcite does not give open dramatic utterance to the death wish as Troilus does, it remains tacitly present in his mind and is evinced in his indifference to his own physical well-being as well as in his insistence that unless he can see Emelye he will die (Kn.T. 1121-2). The wish is fulfilled in Arcite's violent death as it is in Troilus's, and in the case of neither can it be said that he does not get, ultimately, what he had desired all along through his unnatural conduct. To desire death, the final forfeiture of the "goodes of body", is to will the ultimate act of destruction to Nature. For Arcite and Troilus, death is simply the appropriate culmination of a long-standing commitment to the abuse of Nature through unnatural passion, because it graphically symbolizes "al that is

enemy and destruccioun" to the "goodes of nature."

The scene of Arcite's death contains at least one pointed allusion to the motif of Nature in the Knight's Tale. Arcite meets his death when Pluto, at the request of Saturn, causes an infernal fury to start from the ground and frighten his horse so that he is thrown forward and "his brest tobrosten with his sadel bowe" (Kn.T. 261).⁶⁹ In the course of a clinically precise account of Arcite's chest injuries, the Knight asserts that Nature no longer has any power over Arcite and concludes, aphoristically, that without the co-operation of Nature, medicine is helpless to effect cures. The upshot is that Arcite must die:

Nature hath now no dominacioun.
And certainly ther Nature wol nat wirche,
Fare wel phisik! go ber the man to chirche!
 This al and som, that Arcite moot dye;
 (Kn.T. 2758-61)

To say only at this late interval that Nature has "no dominacioun" is clearly an understatement of reality, for at no stage in the events narrated in the poem, can it really be said that Arcite is subject to Nature's authority. That Nature "wol nat wirche" to promote a medical cure for Arcite is thus not an unfitting consequence of the rebellious attitude to Nature which has brought him to this pass.

According to such medical authorities as Hippocrates and Galen, who are frequently mentioned in Chaucer's poetry

(General Prologue 431, Monk's Tale 2340, Parson's Tale 830-5, Book of the Duchess 571), Nature is the biological principle upon which all knowledge of medical treatment is based. For Galen and Hippocrates, Nature is responsible for the unity of the physical organism, none of the parts of which can be understood separately and without relation to the rest. A. J. Brock, one of Galen's modern translators, comments as follows on Galen's use of the word Nature:

"By using the term Galen meant simply that, when we deal with a living thing, we are dealing primarily with a unity, which qua living, is not further divisible; all its parts can only be understood and dealt with as being in relation to this principle of unity."⁷⁰ Galen's consciousness of the biological unity of the organism is, moreover, quite aesthetic, and the philosophical overtones of the language in which it is expressed are distinctly similar to those occurring in Theseus's speech at the end of the poem. Here, for example, Galen describes the internal anatomy of the abdomen, which he calls an artistic work of Nature:

As for the actual substance of the coats of the stomach, intestine, and uterus, each of these has been rendered what it is by a special alternative faculty of Nature; while the bringing of these together, the combination therewith of the structures which are inserted into them, the outgrowth into the intestine, the shape of the inner cavities and the like, have all been determined by a faculty which we call the shaping or formative Faculty; this faculty we also state to be artistic -- nay, the best and highest art -- doing everything for some purpose, so

that there is nothing ineffective or superfluous or capable of being better disposed.⁷¹

In terms of the Galenic theory of medicine that was current in Chaucer's day, Nature's desertion of Arcite would mean, metaphorically, that the biological principle of unity which is essential to life has ceased to function in his body. This is why medicine can do nothing for him, and why, as a patient, he is a hopeless case. The medical perspective on Nature which the death scene affords expands, in Theseus's Boethian discourse on universal order, into a broad moral and metaphysical consideration of Nature. Theseus expounds a view of nature's unity which, with its philosophical emphasis on the close relation of parts to the whole, parallels Galen's vision of biological unity:

Wel may man knowe, but it be a fool,
That every part dirryveth from his hool;
For nature hath nat taken his bigynnyng
Of no partie or cantel of a thyng,
But of a thyng that parfit is and stable.
(3005-09)

Both Galen and Theseus call attention to the purposiveness and unity of Nature's art in a way that contrasts markedly with Arcite's irrational and fragmented conception of Nature. Arcite's notions about the discontinuity of natural and heavenly love are in particular contradicted by Theseus in his comments on the unbroken descent of the "faire cheyne of love" from the ethereal level of the First Mover to the corruptible realm of created nature (2987-3015).

Theseus also celebrates the unity of Nature by telling his audience how the First Mover binds the elements of Nature with love: ("For with that faire cheyne of love he bond / The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond" 3991-2, and earlier, Arcite clearly shows the extent to which his love has excluded him from the order of natural harmony spoken of by Theseus. Instead of sharing membership with the elements of Nature in the "faire cheyne of love," Arcite is, as he self-pityingly declares when banished from Athens, shut out from grace and alienated from the elements:

But I, that am exiled and bareyne.
Of alle grace, and in so greet dispeir,
That ther nys erthe, water, fir, ne eir
Ne creature that of hem maked is
That may me helpe or doon comfort in this
(1244-48)

Arcite is certainly "bareyne of grace", though not, ironically, because his release from prison has prevented him from seeing Emelye. His lack of grace, in fact, comes from ignoring the heavenly or cosmological love to which Nature properly leads. It is no wonder that the elements are unsympathetic to Arcite's condition, for, belonging to Nature, they are governed by heavenly love which, by Arcite's own admission, has no part in his feelings towards Emelye. And when Arcite concludes his lament about the elements with the remark: "I nam but deed ther nys no remedye" (Kn.T. 1274),

we are of course reminded once more that he is suffering from an illness and that there is a medical aspect to his moral problems.

Arcite's failure to achieve a harmonious relationship with Nature and the elements has obvious pathological significance if it is interpreted in the context of Galen's teaching. Galen and Hippocrates were the authorities behind the medieval theory that the four elements and the four humours of the body (blood, yellow bile, black bile and phlegm) are constituted of certain combinations of four elementary principles or contraries: cold, hot, dry and moist. According to medieval science, when the four principles are blended in their natural proportion, a eucrasia or balanced mixture is produced which is essential to the body's health and to the overall stability and government of the world of Nature. However, the effect of an imbalance of the four principles is a dyscrasia or evil mixture which upsets the order of Nature and the body and must therefore be recognized as the source of disease. Galen asserts this in his work, On the Natural Faculties: "The cause of the function of every organ is a natural eucrasia, . . . the dyscrasia is itself known as a disease . . . and it is certainly by this that the activity becomes impaired."⁷² The predominance of any one humour upsets eucrasia, causing dyscrasia and hence illness. In Arcite's

case the peccant humour is black bile or melancholy, and
this humour causes the lover's malady that afflicts him:

. . . he ferde,
Not oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
Engendred of humour malencolik.
(1372-5)

The dyscrasia of Arcite's bodily humours is reflected in the imbalance between himself and the rest of Nature as represented by the elements. In saying that not earth, fire, nor air can help him or "doon" him "comfort", Arcite seems to be thinking of the Galenic treatment for disease whereby dyscrasia is corrected by supplying the body with an appropriate quantity of whichever of the four principles it either lacks or possesses too much of. Galen illustrates this method of treatment by citing as an example the stomach which is not functioning properly:

If the stomach is, in a particular case, unable to exercise its peristaltic and grinding functions, how are we going to bring it back to the normal if we do not know the cause of its disability? What I say is that we must cool the over-heated stomach and warm the chilled one; so also we must moisten the one which has become dried up, and conversely; so, too, in combinations of these conditions; if the stomach becomes at the same time warmer and drier than normally, the first principle of treatment is at once to chill and moisten it, and if it becomes colder and moister, it must be warmed and dried; so also in other cases.⁷³

The elements, being composed of the four principles, are functional in the treatment of disease, as Galen indicates when he talks of alleviating the stomach's complaints

with combinations of these principles. So not only is Arcite alienated from the elements by his love, he is furthermore placed, as he rightly believes, beyond the hope of any cure that can be effected through a combination of the principles of Nature. And his comment concerning the elements simply reinforces the evidence that he is pathologically out of touch with Nature.⁷⁴

Arcite's ignorance of Nature does not encourage us to trust his interpretation of natural law which, as we have noted, is based on the assumption that carnal passion is a law to itself that must be followed regardless of the opposing constraints of positive law. For the sake of clarity we shall quote, once again, Arcite's familiar words on the subject of natural and positive law:

Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
Than may be yeve to any erthely man;
And therefore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.

(Kn.T. 1165-68)

These lines introduce into the poem an intellectual byplay on the definition of law which illuminates not just the character of Arcite, who resists all laws not based on carnal instinct, but also that of Theseus, who represents the enforcement of positive law to ensure civil order.

Arcite, as Chaucer's audience would have realized, is taking it upon himself to invert accepted teachings about

the proper balance of positive law and natural law.

Medieval opinion on this subject was largely based on the works of the Stoics, the Roman jurists, and Cicero, all of whom emphasized that in the interests of social justice, positive law should be an expression of natural law.⁷⁵

For Cicero, justice was virtually identifiable with the rules of positive law, which were supposedly derived directly from the rational order of Nature⁷⁶ and which, thus, had virtually the same authority as "laws" of physical science. Ciceronian ideas of law and justice are conspicuous in the Policraticus of John of Salisbury who, as Fr.

Copleston states, held "in accordance with stoic doctrine that there is a natural law, to which all positive law does, or ought to approximate."⁷⁷ The same ideas were also subscribed to by Aquinas, in whose Summa Theologica it is stated that positive law is derived by reason from natural law, and who cites a passage directly from Cicero's

De Inventione in support of this view:

Just as in speculative reason we proceed from indemonstrable principles, known naturally, to the conclusions of the various sciences, so that the knowledge is not innate in us but obtained by the work of reason, so also the human reason has to proceed from the precepts of natural law as though from certain common and undemonstrable principles to other more specialized regulations. And such specialized regulations arrived at by the effort of reason are called human laws, when the other conditions necessary for true law as set forth above are present. Thus Cicero says: "The beginning of law proceeds from nature; then come

certain customs judged useful; finally reverence and religion sanction what proceeds from nature and is established by custom."⁷⁸

Aquinas subsequently asserts that any opposition between positive law and natural law is by definition impossible, since, when laws enacted by man cease to be in accord with reason and natural law, they are no longer, strictly speaking, laws: "But the first rule of reason is natural law, as was evident from the above. Hence all humanly enacted laws are in accord with reason to the extent that they flow from natural law. And if a human law disagrees in any particular with natural law, it will not be a law but a corruption of law".⁷⁹

While it seems unlikely that Chaucer had read Aquinas, the ideas about law which Aquinas sets forth were quite common in the Middle Ages, and Arcite's declaration that positive law must often be broken to accommodate the inconsistent demands of natural law perversely contradicts orthodox jurisprudence. Whereas positive law and natural law were recognized as complementary, Arcite is clearly misled by passion to argue that they are antithetical. Although this in itself points only to Arcite's ironic failure to understand the correct definitions of positive and natural law, his attitude towards law, which follows from this misunderstanding, poses a serious threat

to the order of society. By positive law Arcite does not mean the obligations of knighthood alone, though it is this specific aspect of positive law with which the "gretter lawe" of his love is coming into conflict. Rather, since he speaks of "positif lawe and swich decree", it is obvious that he is thinking of humanly ordained statutes in general as being liable to supersession by natural law.

Moreover Arcite does not, as we know, share with Aquinas the opinion that natural law is coterminous with reason. On the contrary, his abandonment to carnal passion indicates that for him natural law is the law of postlapsarian human existence. Ultimately, therefore, Arcite is saying that all the laws of human society are to no avail in controlling the depravity of postlapsarian man and that the evil consequences of the Fall should and will always prevail over civil order and rational judgement.

At the beginning of the Knight's Tale, this has already happened in Thebes where civil war amongst the descendants of Oedipus has created chaos. Thebes, for medieval poets and mythographers, would have symbolized the hatred and discord which were engendered by the incestuous marriage of Oedipus, and the city is fittingly associated with Palamon and Arcite who are, like their countrymen, guilty of the vices of hatred and ungoverned concupiscence. Athens, the city of Theseus, would, on the

other hand, have been recognized by Chaucer's contemporaries as a protectorate of Pallas, the goddess of wisdom and therefore, as symbolically contrary to the disorder reigning in the Theban society.⁸⁰ Hence when Arcite, a Theban, asserts while he is living in Athens that he is contemptuous of positive law, he is obviously expressing an attitude which threatens the order and stability that distinguish the society of Athens from that of Thebes. It follows that Theseus, through keeping Arcite in prison, is acting in the interest of civil order in Athens.

Critical opinion, nonetheless, has not always treated Theseus with approval for imprisoning Palamon and Arcite. Henry J. Webb, for instance, has suggested that Theseus should be condemned as a tyrannical ruler who violates the code of chivalry by refusing to ransom Palamon and Arcite and who imposes upon them cruel and unfair conditions of imprisonment:

. . . according to the laws of arms as actually practised by medieval knights, the imprisonment was extremely unchivalrous. . . . Denied the medieval right to procure ransom (a right only the Flemings, who "faisoient guerre mortelle sans rançon", refused to recognize) and thereby denied the hope of ever being free men, Palamon and Arcite were placed in a "thikke and stroong" tower, the "chief dougeoun" of the castle whose windows were barred by "iren greet and square as any sparre Iron "fettres" were placed upon their "shynes" and "cheynes" kept them close.⁸¹

Webb concludes, after arguing for several pages in this vein, that "one may well wonder whether Palamon was not uttering the truth as Chaucer saw it when he complained that his 'lynage' was 'so lowe ybrought by tirannye'" (1.1111).⁸²

Whether or not Theseus is indeed a tyrant is a question which can only be answered by examining his role from a legal point of view, since his actions are prompted by the necessity of preserving positive law. John of Salisbury discusses the differences between the good ruler and the tyrant in his philosophy of the State, which is set forth in the Policraticus, and he states that the tyrant is one who enacts positive laws that violate natural law. Fr. Copleston concisely summarizes John of Salisbury's views in the following way:

The positive law defines and applies natural law and natural justice, and the attitude of the ruler on this matter shows whether he is a prince or a tyrant. If his enactments define, apply or supplement natural law and natural justice, he is a prince; if they infringe natural law and natural justice, he is a tyrant, acting according to caprice and not fulfilling the function of his office.⁸³

Theseus can scarcely be judged a tyrant according to the standards of John of Salisbury, for in his defence of positive law, he does not visibly infringe natural law or natural justice. As we have seen, it is Arcite who consistently violates Nature, who deludes himself about the meaning of natural law, and who, by defying positive

law, simply magnifies his contempt for natural law. To the extent that Theseus curbs Arcite by imprisoning him, he is promoting both positive and natural law and is therefore acting not as a tyrant, but as a just ruler.

The truth of this is corroborated rather than disproved by his refusal to accept a ransom for Palamon and Arcite. Webb, in accusing Theseus of denying Palamon and Arcite "the hope of ever being free", forgets that they are primarily slaves of their own carnal passions and that the loss of freedom which they suffer in prison is quite trivial by comparison. As though to stress this point, Chaucer presents us with the ludicrous spectacle of Arcite bewailing his release from prison and envying the good fortune which permits Palamon "blisfully" to remain there:

. . . "Allas that day that I was born!
Now is my prisoun worse than biforn;
Now is me shape eternally to dwelle
Noght in purgatorie, but in helle.
Allas, that evere knew I Perotheus!
For elles hadde I dwelled with Theseus,
Yfetered in his prisoun evermo
Thanne hadde I been in blisse, and not in wo.

. . .
'O deere cosyn Palamon quod he,
'Thyn is the victorie of this aventure
Ful blisfully in prison maistow dure, --
In prison? certes nay, but in paradys!"

(Kn.T. 1223-37)

Without any doubt, it matters very little to Arcite that Theseus denies him "the medieval right to procure ransom" because he does not want to leave prison anyway. As he himself says, the prison of his own concupiscent desires is

far worse than his prison in Athens, so much so that after contrasting them, he regards the latter as a paradise and not as a prison. We may therefore bypass Webb's short-sighted observations about the harshness of Theseus and look for an alternative explanation for the duke's attitude to ransoms.

Arcite's self-imprisonment may well be the clue to the significance of ransoms in the Knight's Tale. Because the desires which captivate him are, in the words of the Parson, "agayns nature", Arcite is guilty, as was previously suggested, of "deedly synne". Therefore Arcite is in the most accurate sense a prisoner of sin, from which he can be released only by penitence and not by ransom. The Parson states that God is the judge of those damned through sin and that God will accept no ransom for them: "First, for God, that is hir juge, shal be withouten mercy to hem; and they may nat ples hym ne noon of his halwes; ne they ne may yeve no thyng for hir ransom . . ." (Pars.T. 224).

Although Theseus may seem to be unchivalrous for refusing ransom, he is in fact demonstrating a judicious awareness of the limits of his own power and authority. Theseus realizes that because Palamon and Arcite are the slaves of sin, they are answerable not to him but to God. His refusal to accept ransom shows that he is free from the cupidity which besets Palamon and Arcite, and, more important,

that his enactments are in full accord with natural law. In a later passage of his sermon, the Parson stipulates that the first cause of thralldom is sin and that lords who have power to limit the freedom of other human beings should realize that their authority originates not in the law of Nature but in the fact of original sin. Therefore, says the Parson, they should refrain from extorting fines and ransoms from bondmen who have lost their freedom through sin and not through Nature. Lords who, nevertheless, persist in this kind of extortion are morally at fault:

Of Coveitise comen thise harde lordshipes, thurgh which men been distreyned by taylages, custumes, and cariages, moore than hire duetee or resoun is. And eek taken they of hire bonde-men amercimentz, which myghten moore reasonably ben cleped extorciouns than amercimentz. Of which amercimentz and rannsonynge of bonde-men somme lordes stywardes seyn that it is rightful. . . . But certes these lorshipes doon wrong that bireven hire bondefolk thynges that they nevere gave hem. . . . Sooth is that the condicioun of thraldom and the firste cause of thraldom is for synne. . . . Thus may ye seen that the gilt disserveth thraldom, but not nature. Wherefore these lordes ne sholde not muche glorifien him in hir lordshipes with that by natural condicion they been not lordes over thralles, but that thraldom comth first by the dessert of synne.
(Pars.T. 751-7)

We may presume that Theseus knows all this and that he does not ransom Palamon and Arcite because he does not want to take unfair advantage of sinners. Instead he chooses to defer to Nature by asserting no more authority over them than is allotted to him by natural law. Palamon and Arcite are his

prisoners only "by the dessert of synne"; were Theseus to receive ransom for them he would be exceeding the natural limits of his lordship and would, in any case, not be helping them to achieve freedom from sin. Because ransoms are irrelevant to the real cause of thralldom and imprisonment in the Knight's Tale, Theseus refuses ransom even after he has decided, in answer to the request of Perotheus, to let Arcite go:

And finally at requeste and preyere
Of Perotheus, withouten any raunsoun,
Duc Theseus hym let out of prisoun.
(Kn.T. 1204-6)

That Theseus should be as adamant in not accepting ransom at the time he releases Arcite as he is at the time he imprisons him demonstrates very clearly that he is in principle opposed to useless and unjust ransoms, but not that he is harshly indifferent to human freedom.⁸⁴

Whereas Arcite is bent on making felt the effects of the Fall, Theseus in his devotion to the status ordained for him by natural law rather than by original sin, seems to be attempting to preserve some vestiges of prelapsarian justice. This could be inferred from the Parson's statement that before man sinned, natural law ruled in Paradise, which means, in other words, that natural law, as defined by the Parson, was the foundation of justice before the Fall: ". . . er that synne began . . . natural lawe was in his ryght poynt in paradys" (Pars.T. 921). Because

Theseus's policy regarding ransoms indicates that his ideas of natural law are like the Parson's, it is logical to think that his ideas of justice are as well. Whatever else the unsympathetic critic might wish to say about Theseus, he cannot, therefore, find fault with him either for tyranny or injustice by orthodox Christian standards.

The sharp contrast between the attitudes of Arcite and Theseus to natural law might seem at first glance to confer some special distinction on Arcite and to differentiate him from his cousin. Certainly, Palamon does not have as much to say on this particular subject as Arcite; nor does he offer to contradict Arcite's assertion that his love is divorced from natural instinct. Does this, we may ask, confirm the opinion of those critics who think that Palamon is intended to appear more idealistic and contemplative than Arcite?⁸⁵ And if so, does the whole issue of natural law in the poem tend to reinforce this traditional concept of the difference between the two characters?

Although Palamon is superficially unlike Arcite in that his love is less self-consciously naturalistic, he says some things which reveal in him a distinctly animal and unidealistic awareness of love, and which remind us a lot of Arcite. For example, Palamon, at one point, bitterly regrets that he has been created a man and not a beast

because a man is prevented from fulfilling his carnal desires like a beast:

. . . . man is bounden to his observaunce,
 For Goddes sake to letten of his wille,
 Ther as a beast may al his lust fulfille

 But I moot been in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
 And eek thurgh Juno, jalous ond eek wood . . .
 (Kn.T. 1316-29)

Besides being unable to accept moral responsibility for his condition as an individual and preferring to attribute that responsibility to the gods, Palamon cannot accept the demands and prerogatives of being human. He does not understand that there is a good reason for the necessity imposed on man of resisting his will, namely, that self-restraint is essential to human happiness. Lady Philosophy explains this to Boethius in her analysis of the results of intemperate indulgence in physical pleasures. If such pleasures bring happiness, she ironically says, then beasts, which know no other kind of pleasure, must have a potential for happiness equal to that of men: "But what schal I seye of delyces of body of which delices the desirynges ben ful of anguyssch and the fulfillynges of hem ben ful of penance? . . . yif thilke delices mowen maken folk blisful, thanne by the same cause moten thise beestis ben clepid blisful, of which beastes al the entencioun hasteth to fulfille hire bodily jolyte" (III.pr.7). Palamon literally believes that the happiness known to beasts is the

most that a man can ask for, and therefore were he in the position of Boethius, he would miss the point of Lady Philosophy's irony completely: that man must seek through reason a happiness higher than any that can be enjoyed through mere physical pleasure.

Palamon's predilection for the carnal "delices" of beasts is virtually indistinguishable from Arcite's vaunted "love as to a creature" and must, presumably, be equally offensive to Nature. It is no accident that later Palamon and Arcite are both metaphorically described as beasts. In a poem imbued with a sense of natural hierarchy, which is made explicit in Theseus's speech on the chain of being, this points to a failure on the part of Palamon and Arcite to conform to the human status which Nature intended them to occupy in the order of creation. (We should remember that Theseus scrupulously accepts the place appointed for him by Nature). It is thus certainly not to ennoble the cousins that the Knight says they fought like lions, tigers and frothing wild boars:

Thou myghtest wene that this Palamon
In his fightyng were a wood leon,
And as a crueel tigre was Arcite;
As wilde bores gonne they to smyte,
That frother whit as foom for ire wood.

(Kn.T. 1655-59)

The recurrence of animal images in the Knight's Tale (1598, 1640, 1810) lends unnatural connotations to the love felt by

Palamon and Arcite because it suggests that they are debased to the level of animals in their pursuit of Emelye -- that is to say, they have forgotten what it means to be human through misinterpreting Nature's law as it applies to men. Their lack of self-knowledge has an appropriate consequence in their figurative transformation into beasts if it is considered from a Boethian viewpoint. Boethius states that human nature surpasses that of animals in dignity but warns that if man loses knowledge of himself through vice, he falls to the level of the beasts and lower:

For certes swich is the condicioun of alle mankynde, that oonly whan it hath knowynge of itself, thanne passeth it in noblesse alle othere thynges; and whan it forletith the knowynge of itself thanne it is brought bynethen alle beestes. Forwhi alle othere lyvyng beestes han of by nede to knowe not himself; but whan that men lieten the knowynge of himself, it cometh him of vice. (III.pr.5)

If the bestial images which are applied to him mean what they appear to, Palamon is not less affected by sub-rational animal instinct than is Arcite. Any distinction between Palamon and Arcite which is based on the notion that Palamon is a more spiritual lover than Arcite must therefore be regarded as superfluous. It is true that Arcite has certain pretensions as a natural lover that are lacking in Palamon, but at root both exhibit an unnatural desire to disrupt Nature's plan by following animal instincts.

The themes of Nature and natural law in the Knight's Tale hence tend more to reveal the fundamental sameness of Palamon and Arcite than to establish the importance of their conspicuous but superficial differences. In his characterization of Palamon and Arcite, Chaucer seems to employ a variation on the expositio, a rhetorical technique of amplification through which the same idea or subject is expressed under a wide variety of aspects and forms.⁸⁶ Thus, Palamon and Arcite, though possessed of identical vices and pursuing the same carnal objective through the same violent means, are portrayed each with his personal nuances and lesser follies. These create variety and local interest in the narrative, but they do not render the moral attributes of the lovers any less identical. Like Tweedledum and Tweedledee, Palamon and Arcite look more ridiculous in conflict the more they look alike.

CHAPTER III

LOVE, LANGUAGE, AND THE ART OF POETRY

1. Love as an Art in Troilus and Criseyde and Other Poems

Nature and art are the two principal parts of the theoretical context necessary for interpretation of Chaucer's love poetry. Nature is responsible for the human instinct to love, and art is the term most often used by Chaucer to designate the social manners suitable for the expression of that instinct. When the speaker of A Complaint to his Lady says: "Love hath me taught no more of his art / But serve alwey and stinte for no wo" (38-39), it is clear that he sees his amorous fidelity and persistence as fulfilling an aesthetic prescription for conduct in a way which may be construed as analogous to that in which certain types of poetry observe rules of rhetoric and composition. That there is a lot more to the art of love than the speaker prides himself on having mastered, may be seen from reviewing the finer points of the art as taught to the lover in the Roman de la Rose by the god of Love. In a series of commandments reminiscent of the Mosaic tables of the law, the god of Love tells the Lover to avoid "rebaudrye" and "vilayn speeche" (2224-5),

"Mayntene thysilf' aftir thi rent / Of robe and eke of
 garnement" (2255-5), wear "streite gloves with awmenere /
 Of silk . . ." (2271-2), learn to play the harp and guitar,
 wash your hands and brush your teeth, and "let no filthe
 upon thee be". (2280).

These commandments have often been thought by critics to represent the rules of the art of "courtly love". C. S. Lewis, most notably, sees in them a manifestation of the "erotic institutionalism" of the thirteenth century, by which he means the conventions of courteous adultery and fornication supposedly derived from Andreas Capellanus's De Arte Honeste Amandi.¹ Lewis contends that this work was written to provide "methodical instruction in the art of love-making" and to deal with the problems of an art which is "so subtle as to lead to hard cases which demand an expert solution."² The Lover in the Roman, who follows the same rules which Andreas is said to propound, consequently emerges, in Lewis's view, as the practitioner of a sophisticated and exacting art; and Chaucer, who was deeply influenced by the Roman, is assumed "to teach, as well as to paint the mystery" and art of courtly love in works such as the Troilus.³

Although Lewis's approach represents a widely accepted way of interpreting the variety of allusions to love's art in the Troilus, it becomes apparent, due to the

amount of skepticism which has arisen concerning the so-called "art of courtly love" in the past twenty-five years, that the theme of art in Chaucer's love poetry creates as many questions and problems for the critic as does that of Nature. Just as the correct reading of a Chaucerian text can be substantially distorted by interpreting a reference to fallen Nature as applying instead to unfallen Nature, so the assumption that Chaucer's love poetry employs the conventions of courtly love produces hermeneutical conclusions quite different from those which result from rejecting the idea of an art of courtly love as irrelevant to what he intended to say. The latter course has been taken by D. W. Robertson and John F. Benton who consider courtly love to be a creation of the modern rather than of the medieval sensibility and who see the work of Andreas Capellanus not as a body of instructions for courtly lovers, but as an ironic commentary on concupiscence. Benton's summary of the case against courtly love may be taken as representative of the views of most critics who have expressed dissatisfaction with the concept:

I have found the term "courtly love" no advantage in trying to understand the theory and practice of love in medieval Europe. It is not a medieval technical term. It has no specific content. A reference to "the rules of courtly love" is almost invariably a citation of Andreas's De Amore, a work which I think is intentionally and humorously ambiguous about love. The study of love in the middle ages would be far easier if we were not impeded by a term which now inevitably confuses

the issue. As currently employed "courtly love" has no useful meaning, and it is not worth saving by redefinition.⁴

Without the benefit of courtly love and its apparatus, poems like the Roman assume a strikingly different aspect from that which they are seen by Lewis to present. Since for Lewis courtly love constitutes a standard of moral values regarding sex which was conceived in deliberate opposition to that of the medieval Christian Church,⁵ it should be assumed that if courtly love did not exist, sexual behaviour would have been judged on the basis of Christian ethics alone. John Fleming and Rosemond Tuve, considering the latter the more likely possibility, ignore questions of courtly love in connection with the Roman and identify as its theme the common sins of concupiscence and idolatry. Fleming, instead of equating the commandments of the god of Love with the rules of the art of courtly love, argues that they are properly to be understood as manifestations of the sins just mentioned. Commenting on the ceremony wherein the Lover swears allegiance to the god of Love, Fleming states:

The . . . ceremony . . . has been described as an exquisite fancy of the courtly sensibility. It can better be described as fornication of the heart, alias idolatry, and it is entirely jejune to suggest, as a recent editor of the poem has done, that the ten commandments of Amours involve no parody of the Ten Commandments of Jehova . . . Guillaume gives us the phony "stone tables of the law". . . . Such austere judgements may at

first seem harsh, for after all are not the commandments of love noble commandments? The injunctions of Amours seems no more sinister than the Boy Scouts' pledge -- be reverent, be clean, be cheerful; but what of the fruits of these commandments, the toothache and the masturbation, the sordid lies and the hypocritical clean speech? It requires no unusual literary sophistication to perceive the ironies which lie behind the commandments of Amours, merely a knowledge, however vague, of those true commandments of love on which hang all the Law and the Prophets.⁶

If "courtly love" can be dismissed as having no bearing on the sexual relations dealt with in the Roman, then it is equally possible that it has no place in discussions of Chaucer's poems about sexual love. Necessarily, any attempt to examine the function of the concept and imagery of art in, for example, the Troilus, must begin by deciding whether or not what have been recognized as the conventions of "courtly love" should be permitted in any way to define our understanding of the term "art." This means asking ourselves to what extent Chaucer intends us to associate "loves art" with the art of courtly love when the narrator of the Troilus, employing a rhetorical formula for modesty, tells his audience that he is deficient in knowledge of the art of love:

For myne wordes, heere and every part,
I speke hem alle under correccioun.
Of yow that felyng han in loves art,
And putte it al in youre discrecioun
To encesse or maken dyminucioun
Of my langage, and that I yow biseche.

(III.1331-1336)

One way of interpreting these lines is to assume that Troilus is characterized as an ideal courtly lover, and that Chaucer's audience was composed of people well versed in the "subtle" art of "courtly love" who would quickly have recognized in his writing any breaches in the etiquette essential to the art. This, of course, is to assume that an important purpose of the Troilus, like that seemingly claimed for the Roman by Guillaume ("It is the Romance of the Rose / In which al the art of love I close") is to provide an exposition of the art of courtly love. However we are no more bound to find in "loves art" a reference to courtly love than we are to associate the commandments of the god of Love with "erotic institutionalism."

The coalescence of the amatory and aesthetic perspectives on reality which is expressed in the phrase "loves art" has precedent in the poems of the troubadours where love is often invoked as the force which not only inspires the poet, but which is also technically responsible for his craftsmanship with words. Arnaut Daniel, particularly, attributes his skill as a poet to the direct influence of love which he sees as supplying the style and finish of his verse:

En cest sonet coind'e leri
fauc motz e capuig e doli,
que seant verai e cert
mou n'aurai passat la lima;
q'Amors marves plan'e daura

mou chantar, que de liei mou
qui pretz manten e governa (1-17)

To this sweet and pretty air
I set words that I plane and finish
and every word will fit well,
once I have passed the file there,
for at once Love polishes and aureates
my song, which proceeds from her,
ruler and guardian of merit.⁷

Here Arnaut posits the unity of love and art in the same way that the narrator does in the Troilus. In both instances the correct use of poetic language is dictated by the authority of love, which in Arnaut's poem is exerted through the skill of the poet himself and which in Chaucer's exists in the minds of the audience who are called upon to emend the poet's errors; "... encesse or make dimynucioun / Of my language, and that I you biseche." We may also note that in the Troilus, as in Arnaut's poem, the envisioned unity of love and art is accompanied by the idea that love enhances moral worth. The narrator of the Troilus says of the hero after he has fallen in love:

For he bicom the frendlieste wight.
The gentilest, and ek the mooste fre,
The thriftiest and oon the beste knyght,
That in his tyme was or myghte be
(T&C. I.1079-1083)

And Arnaut asserts, in the second stanza of the poem just quoted, that he is ennobled by love for his lady:

2

~~For iorn meillur it esmeri-~~
 car, la gensor serve e coli
 del mon, so us dic en apert.
 Sieus sui del pe tro qu'en cima. (8-11)

Each day I am a better man and purer,
 for I serve the noblest lady in the world
 and I worship her, I tell you this in the open
 I belong to her from my foot to the top of my head.

Yet there is no need to believe that the veneration
 which Arnaut professes to feel for the lady has anything
 to do with courtly love or the quasi-religious amorous
 devotion which C. S. Lewis calls Fraudendienst. As Benton
 has told us, the use of amorous phraseology in the songs of
 the troubadors is not likely an indication of passion or a
 desire for sexual intimacy on the part of the speakers;
 indeed "love", which in medieval society was a word often
 used to designate very formal and impersonal relationships
 such as the bond between a feudal lord and his vassals, or
 the brotherhood of the members of a monastic order, would
 have had a similarly impersonal meaning among the troubadors.
 Benton notes that: "For a troubador, traveling from court
 to court and singing to many ladies, these songs probably
 did not imply an emotional commitment, even when expressed
 in terms which sound quite passionate to us. Contemporaries
 could assume that the singer of love songs was not
 necessarily courting a woman but only being courteous."⁸ It
 is quite conceivable that Arnaut only wished to pay a

~~courteous compliment to the lady despite his passionate~~
 manner of address, and that he was not practising "courtly love" but merely expressing friendship. To cite Benton once again, ". . . in courtly circles it could be accepted as reasonable and appropriate to kiss a lady, to give her presents, to declare that one had become a better man through her friendship."

Thus, when Arnaut talks about the unity of love and art (okre e lim / motz de valor / ab art d'Amor. I fashion and file words of worth with art of love"), we are obliged to accept the possibility that "art d'Amor" has no more relevance to the "art of courtly love" than does Arnaut's assertion that he has become a better man for having known the lady whom he claims to serve. These observations are not impertinent to the analysis of Chaucer's Troilus, since the "conventions of courtly love," which in the opinions of Lewis, Robinson, and many others, govern the poem, are allegedly derived from the example of the troubadors.

That Arnaut's ennoblement may not stem from courtly love at all, forces us to reexamine the notion that Troilus's does.⁹ Enough has been said prior to the present stage of our discussion to show that Troilus's ennoblement is exceedingly problematic and that, as Robertson says, "his virtuous behaviour should . . . be regarded . . . with

caution."¹⁰ He is, as we have seen, politically irresponsible, frequently dishonest, and strongly given to carnal self-indulgence. All these characteristics attest to his lack of virtue and not to his ennoblement, suggesting that Chaucer is criticizing rather than praising Troilus and that, like Arnaut, his real beliefs about the essence of ennoblement may be founded on orthodox moral assumptions rather than on the "heresies" of courtly love.

If, as these considerations indicate, "courtly love" is not indispensable for our appreciation of the significance of Troilus's actions, the likelihood that "loves art" bears any reference to the art of courtly love will be considerably reduced. The sense in which Arnaut seems to interpret "art d'amor" provides, however, an alternative key to the meaning of Chaucer's phrase. For Arnaut, the art of love signifies not so much the technique of love-making as a mode of literary expression. Rarely, if at all, does Arnaut discuss the "art d'amor" in such a way as to equate it with the former, while on the other hand, his work, as G. Toja has stated, contains more references to technical artistry than are to be found in the productions of any of his predecessors.¹¹ It is from these references, which figure prominently even in the few passages from Arnaut's poetry which we have cited in comparing him to Chaucer, that we should derive our conception.

of what is meant by "art d'amor," a phrase which will in turn suggest some possible interpretations of "love's art".

Linda Paterson, in her recent study, Troubadors and Eloquence, points out that the image of the poet as artisan, which occurs frequently in medieval works on rhetoric, is a common topos in the writings of the troubadors as well. In addition, she observes that images of polishing and sculpting in words are not employed by Arnaut alone, but also appear in poems by Marcabru, Giraut Bornelh and Raimbaut d'Aurenga: "Marcabru's lady sculpts false appearances with her words (Aus quel'ivern) and Giraut's love sculpts, and carves his lady's face for him in his imagination, XLIV.78-80: Si m desbois' e m'enthala. . . . Sas aviens faiasos."¹² Though none of these writers gives much positive evidence of being interested in the art of courtly love, their propensity to apply artistic metaphors to love demonstrates, nevertheless, that for them love was, in a fairly elaborate sense, an art. However, an important way in which the "art d'amor" of the troubadors differs from the "art" of courtly love is obviously in its relation to the actual experience of the lover. While it is generally assumed that the art of courtly love was based on putting adulterous impulses into action,¹³ there is nothing

to indicate, even when the troubadours were writing explicitly about illicit love, that they were describing reality rather than exercising imagination.¹⁴

Adultery was never taken lightly and was frequently punished as a capital offence in the Middle Ages. Benton, after citing several examples of legal mutilations inflicted on the bodies of men suspected of adultery, dismisses as highly improbable the idea that the troubadours roamed the countryside seducing other men's wives. He bases this opinion on the historical fact that the troubadours did not suffer the same punishments as adulterers: "The best proof that the lords of medieval Europe saw no threat in love songs, even when addressed to their wives, is that troubadours, trouvères, and minnesingers not only survived but made a living."¹⁵ Clearly these lords must have recognized that having courteous but not carnal intentions, the troubadours, in addressing their wives, were not trying to bring about opportunities for sexual gratification. This implies that the "art d'amor" was not designed or meant to manipulate reality, and therefore, that the whole experience and culmination of "love" was in its artistic expression.

To appreciate this as being likely is quite consistent with all that we know about the traditions of vernacular love poetry influenced by the troubadours. Repeatedly, in the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance, we

~~find that the most passionate-sounding lyrics are not even~~
 directed to real women but are surrounded by a context of
 fictitious persons and events. For example, Petrarch admits
 that Laura was the creature of his imagination and that
 he conceived of her name simply as an appropriate symbol
 for the goal of his poetic aspirations: "Quid ergo ais?
 finxisse me michi speciosum Lauree nomen re autem
 vera in animo meo Laurean nichil esse, nisi illam forte
 poeticam, ad quam aspirare me longum et indefessum
 studium testatur"¹⁶ ("What therefore is your opinion? I
 myself invented the beautiful name of Laura but in reality
 Laura was nothing but that poetic laurel which I had aspired
 after with unending labour"). In essence he is saying
 that Laura, the object of his love, is really only poetry
 itself and that his love for her is something which exists
 more on an aesthetic plane than in the world of physical
 reality. Similarly, it has never been satisfactorily
 established that Boccaccio and Dante had real persons in
 mind when they immortalized the names of Fiammetta and
 Beatrice. And in 1593, Giles Fletcher the Elder, still
 writing according to the literary themes and conventions
 which Petrarch and Dante had inherited from the troubadors,
 deprecated realistic and biographical interpretations of
 love poetry in his preface to the sonnet sequence, Licia.
 Discussing the identity of his own "vertuous and fayre"

Licia, Fletcher intimates that there is no necessary correspondence between the Licia who appears in his sonnets and some actual woman. Licia, he says, may be someone, something or even nothing: "If thou muse what my Licia is, take her to be some Diana, at the least chaste, or some Minerva, no Venus, fairer farre; it may be she is Learning's image, or some heavenlie wonder, which the prescisest may not mislike: perhaps under that name I have shadowed Discipline. It may be I meane that kinde courtesie which I found at the Patronesse of these Poems; it may be some Colledge; it may bee my conceit, and portende nothing. . . ."¹⁷ Fletcher's contemporary, Michael Drayton, displays a comparable indifference to realism in love poetry, for although his sonnet sequence Idea is filled with traditional themes about hopeless love, the lover's despair, and the lady's hard, unrelenting virtue, the title of the sequence indicates that it is about an abstraction and not a real woman. It is, finally, worth noting that an eminent critic has said of the Songs and Sonets of Donne: ". . . the autobiographical element in the Songs and Sonets has been greatly exaggerated and . . . it is quite unnecessary to assume that even those which are most dramatically convincing were inspired by actual experiences or directed to real persons."¹⁸

If one assumes that the troubadours understood the art of love to be the art of courtly love, it can only be at the expense of ignoring the evidence that neither they themselves, nor many of the poets who for centuries afterwards bear their indirect influence, seem in their poetry to have been interested in the pursuit of living mistresses. Because courtly love, as defined by Lewis, involves the lover's hopes of sexual gratification, it is hard to imagine how poems which are not based on real circumstances arising from real sexual desires can be properly taken as expressions of courtly love. Upon realizing that most love poetry written in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance contains a purely aesthetic vision of love, we become aware of the inadequacy, as a literary standard for interpreting this poetry, of courtly love, which is in its ultimate aim decidedly practical, realistic, and unaesthetic. There are two conclusions to be drawn from this; the first is that courtly love as such does not exist in medieval and Renaissance literature about love, and the second is that the type of calculated sexual opportunism which has been characterized as courtly love, when stripped of its incongruous aesthetic associations, can be redefined as vice, something which unquestionably did exist in the Middle Ages. To avoid the confusion which would arise from calling vice

"courtly love", however, we are well-advised to do as Benton urges and forget about courtly love altogether.

We are left with the problem of defining the meaning of "loves art" in the Troilus. This term has mixed meanings which are controlled by the angle of moral and aesthetic vision from which it is perceived, and it is important to know what these meanings are and how they interact with each other. Like many other concepts in the Troilus, such as "gentillesse," "trouthe," and "honour," "loves art" has ideal connotations which are clearly at variance with the practical significance which it possesses in the minds and actions of the characters in the poem.

Adrienne Lockhart, in a recent article, has demonstrated that by trying to translate the ideal of his love into reality, Troilus sets in motion a process of semantic degeneration whereby the words "gentillesse," "trouthe," and "honour" are misapplied in a way which reflects the concomitant moral debasement of the ideals represented by them.¹⁹ When Hector assures Criseyde that she may remain in Troy with "al th'onour that men may don you have" (Troilus and Criseyde I.120), "honour" signifies dignity and ethical integrity. But much later, when Criseyde refuses to flee with Troilus on the morally superficial grounds that his "honour which that now shyneth so clere" (IV.1575) will be

damaged, the original sense of the word "honour" has been perverted, indicating that the concept has come to mean merely good reputation. As Lockhart points out, there are many similar instances of this type of verbal modulation in the Troilus, suggesting that the basic aesthetic structure of the poem is one of semantic and moral deterioration from beginning to end.²⁰

The variations on the meaning of "loves art," however, form a structural pattern somewhat different from the one analyzed by Lockhart, even though "loves art" embodies the same conflict of ideal and practical connotations as words like "honour." Whereas Lockhart regards such words as being subject to a linear process of deterioration, which starts with their ideal meanings and leads eventually to their practical and debased ones, "loves art", as we shall see, seems throughout the poem to present itself simultaneously in both ideal and practical senses.

The narrator's modest admission, quoted earlier, that he lacks "felyng" in "loves art" expresses overtly his misgivings about his ability to practise successfully the poetic art of writing about love. This is evident because the context in which the reference to "loves art" occurs is explicitly verbal and aesthetic rather than sexual, its main emphasis falling on the matters of "wordes," "langage," and "speche." In the opening stanzas of the Troilus, verbal

art, as represented by the literary project upon which the narrator sees himself embarking, emerges as an index to the moral issues which are raised by the story. The use of words to describe the misguided adventures of lovers is thus an act of positive moral significance for which the narrator, somewhat ironically in view of his numerous failures of moral judgement, claims responsibility and credit. Moreover, the narrator considers his words to be conducive to charity and thus of profit to his own soul:

For hope I my sowle best avaunce,
To prey for hem that Loves servantz be
And write hire wo, and lyve in charite
(T&C. I.47-49)

The important moral function of words and writing in the Troilus, which, as the quotation shows, is apparent in one of the narrator's earliest utterances, should logically be assumed also to inform his very word-conscious remarks about "loves art." Therefore, the ideal significance of "loves art" would seem to consist in its representation of the power of poetry to create a moral perspective on sexual experience through the process of aesthetic detachment. The same spirit of aesthetic detachment from sexual experience, as we have observed, probably characterized the songs of the troubadors and the writings of most of the great European love poets from Petrarch to Donne. Petrarch's equation of love with the art of poetry is the reflection of his detachment as an artist from any real sexual passion

for Laura, and ideally "loves art," which in the Troilus is practised by a narrator who is not actually involved in the experience of sexual love ("Ne dar to Love for myn unliklynesse" Troilus and Criseyde I.15), denotes a vision of the shared identity of love and poetry similar to Petrarch's. We shall at length return to this subject after duly examining some of the less ideal connotations of "loves art."

In inviting his audience to correct his use of language, the narrator sets up a direct connection between "loves art" and the idea of verbal art or poetry. So far as this goes, he flatters the audience with the suggestion that they too are poets. Nevertheless, poetry is not all that is implied by the term "loves art", which additionally carries a pointed allusion to the narrator's lack of experience as a lover. Before apologizing for his want of the verbal skills that constitute "loves art," he declares his regret at not having sought for himself the solaces of carnal love which he is now describing at second hand:

O blisful nyght, of hem so longe isought,
 How blithe unto hem bothe two thow weere!
 Why nad I swich oon with my soule ybought,
 Ye or the leeste joie that was there

(T&C. III.1317-20)

From the perspective afforded by this passage, the narrator's deference to his audience's superior knowledge of love's art

appears to be founded on the assumption that they are more experienced in the physical acts of love-making than he is. Seen this way, "love art" comes to signify, in its practical sense, sexual technique instead of poetry, and this indicates that Chaucer also intended it to convey overtones of the amatory art set forth in Ovid's ironic manual on seduction, the Ars Amatoria.

These overtones give to "loves art" a significance in malo which is well illustrated in the first book of the Troilus where the hero, having been struck by love's arrow, retreats to his bedroom amid sighs and groans and loses himself in sexual fantasies about Criseyde. The narrator tells us that first Troilus "gan make a mirour his mynde, / In which he saugh al holly hire figure" (I.356-7) and that shortly thereafter he resolved to devote himself to studying the art of love or, as the narrator on this occasion calls it, "loves craft":

Thus took he purpos loves craft to suwe
And thoughte he wolde werken pryvely
First to hyden his desir in muwe
From every wight yborn, al outrely,
But the myghte ought recovered be therby
Remembryng hym that love to wide yblowe
Yelt bittre fruyt, though sweete seed be sowe.
(I.379-85)

The primary skill in loves craft" is for Troilus the concealment of desire, and his efforts to "hyden his desir in muwe" recall Andreas Capellanus's injunction to lovers to maintain secrecy. This injunction occurs towards the end of

the De Arte Honeste Amandi and is listed among the "Rules of Love" which, according to fable, were obtained for all lovers by a knight of Britain and which constitute an artificial system for practising the art of love.²¹ However, as D. W. Robertson has argued, these rules are intentionally absurd and are meant to reflect the hypocrisy and dishonesty that Andreas satirizes in concupiscence.²² Thus, to observe that Troilus's secretive behaviour is similar to the behaviour prescribed in Andreas's rules is not necessarily to speak favourably of Troilus.

On the contrary, it can be strongly argued that Troilus is acting in a thoroughly disreputable manner. His dissimulation of his real desires and motives is not very different from the fraudulence exhibited by one of the most unequivocally evil characters in the Roman de la Rose -- Faussemblant. Described by John Fleming as "the secret weapon in Amours' arsenal, the creeper-into-houses who can dispose of the troublesome Malebouche,"²³ Faussemblant is instrumental in undermining the Rose's defences and gaining for Amant the carnal solaces which he so desires. Faussemblant casts a revealing light on the essential hypocrisy of Amant, because although he serves the ostensibly idealistic cause of Love, he himself, he admits, is pragmatic, cynical and immoral (Roman de la Rose 6307-10). Accompanied by Forced Abstinence, Faussemblant effects an

entrance into the castle where the Rose dwells by strangling Malebouche and cutting out his evil tongue. In this respect he is remarkably like Troilus who, in Book III, also proves himself to be adept at the seductive art of creeping into houses²⁴ by stealthily making his way into Criseyde's bedroom while she is staying overnight at her uncle's residence. Pandarus's explanation to Criseyde of the sequence of events leading to Troilus's arrival, though literally untrue, gives appropriate emphasis to the surreptitious and underhanded way in which Troilus is acting:

This Troilus, right platly for to seyn,
Is thorough a goter by a pryve wente,
Into my chaumbre, come in al this reyn,
Unwist of every manere wight, certeyn.
(III.786-89)

Faussemblant's skill as a seducer is based on the success with which he cloaks his intentions under false pretences. Freely acknowledging his hypocrisy in the presence of Love's company, he proceeds to characterize himself as follows:

Ful wel I can my clothes chaunge,
Take oon and make another straunge.
.....
Ryght as me lyst, I me disgise.
Wel can I wre me undir wede;
Unlyk is my word to my dede.
(R.R. 6325-6360)

With this account of Fausseemblant's hypocrisy we may compare the description of Troilus's efforts to disguise his "sharp desir" and "hope of plesaunce" (III.425-6):

But in hymself with manhod gan restreyne
 Ech racle dede and ech unbridled cheere
 That alle tho that lyven, soth to seyne,
Ne sholde han wist, by word or by manere,
What that he mente, as touchyng this matere.
 From every wight as fer as is the cloude
 He was, so wel dissimulen he koude.

(III.428-434 italics mine)

A noticeable parallel between the methods of dissimulation used by Fausseemblant and Troilus emerges in the discrepancy between their words and deeds. Robert Miller notes that "according to St. Augustine the duplicity characteristic of the sinner in Spiritus sanctum is likely to appear in a discrepancy between words and deeds,"²⁵ and this does not speak very well for the type of "loves craft" which Troilus is practising. What may at first seem to be exemplary self-control on the part of Troilus, who with "manhod" restrains each "racle dede" that might betray his passion, proves upon closer examination to be mortal sin.

The inconsistency of Troilus's words with his deeds heightens the contrast between his version of love's art and the "loves art" in bono which the narrator of the poem identifies as the art of poetic expression. It is important to note, since "loves art" in bono refers to poetry, that, in the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales, Chaucer

the pilgrim states as a principle of literary decorum that the words of a poet should be "cousin" to the deeds which he relates. According to the naive Geoffrey, this means that the poet is bound by honour and integrity to repeat the words and deeds of his characters exactly as they were said and done:

. . . I pleyntly speke in this mateere,
 To telle you hir wordes and hir cheere,

 Whose shal telle a tale after a man,
 He moot reherce as ny as evere he kan
 Everich a word, if it be in his charge
 Al speke he never so rudeliche and large
 Or ellis he moot telle his tale untrewe
 Or feyne thing or fynde wordes newe.
 He may not spare, although he were his brother
 He moot as wel say o word as another
 Crist spak hymself ful brode in holy writ
 And wel ye woot no vileyne is it.
 Eek Plato seith, whoso that kan kym rede,
 The wordes moote be cosyn to the dede.
 (Gen. Prol. 731-42)

But Chaucer the pilgrim is guilty of an important misconstruction of the maxim that he is quoting. In enjoining that the word be kept cousin to the deed, Plato, in the Timaeus, and Christ, in Matthew 13:10-13, meant that a connection should be observed between outward forms and the inward truths which they are designed to express. Neither of them wished to defend literary realism, contrary to the belief of Chaucer the pilgrim. Genuine literary meaning can only be perceived when the spiritual relationship between word and deed is adequately understood. Inasmuch as Troilus, who is given to composing verses and

love songs (I.400-20; III.1744-71; V.631-44), assumes for himself the role of a poet,²⁶ we must interpret the discrepancy between his words and deeds as a violation of this important rule of the good type of "loves art." Furthermore, we should notice that he violates the rule by failing, like Chaucer the pilgrim, to perceive spiritual meaning in literature.

Having decided to "hyden his desir in muwe," Troilus, still languishing in his bedroom, begins to consider the various means at his disposal for obtaining Criseyde's affections and at last finds an outlet for his sorrow in the composition of a song:

And over al this, yet muchel more he thoughte
 What for to speke and what to holden inne;
 And what to arten hire to love he soughte
 And on a song anon -- right to bygynne,
 And gan loude on his sorwe for to wyne;
 (I.386-90)

It may seem remarkable that despite the passionate idealism which has often been attributed to Troilus,²⁷ he should still be capable of such a pragmatic analysis of his relationship to Criseyde as the foregoing passage describes;²⁸ but then, this sort of inconsistency is what we should expect in a character who has so much in common with Faussemblant. As for Troilus's song, we cannot properly assess its significance as a work of love's art without first acknowledging the spirit of duplicity and moral inconsistency in which it is conceived. The narrator introduces the song by

declaring his intention of repeating, as accurately as possible, every word in it:

. . . in al that Troilus
Seyde in his song, every word right thus
As I shal seyn . . . (I.396-8)

This same intention is voiced by Chaucer the pilgrim in the speech from the General Prologue which has just been cited. To give accurate report to the words of others is, as Chaucer the pilgrim states, to keep the words "cosyn to the dede." Presumably therefore, the narrator of the *Troilus*, in setting a high value on accurate reporting, is also signifying that words and deeds should closely correspond to each other. If this is true, there is a certain irony in his alluding to this maxim before reciting the "Canticus Troili", (I.400-20) which is inspired by duplicity antithetical to the harmony of words and deeds.

The "Canticus Troili" is based on Petrarch's sonnet *S'amor non è*, No. 132 in the *Canzoniere*,²⁹ and is reckoned to mark the beginning of English Petrarchan love poetry.

The text of Chaucer's poem is as follows:

If no love is, O God! what fele I so?
And if love is, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whennes comth my woo?
If it be wikke, a wonder thynketh me,
Whenne every torment and adversite
That comth of hym may to me savory thynke;
For ay thurst I the more that ich it drynke.

And if that at myn owen lust I brenne,
 From whennes cometh my waillynge and my pleynte?
 If harme agree me, whereto plyne I thenne?
 I moot, ne whi unwery that I feynte.
 O quike deth! O swete harme so queynte!
 How may of the in me swich quantite
 But if that I consente that it be?

And if that I consente, I wrongfully
 Compleyne, iwis; thus passed to and fro,
 Al steereles withinne a boot am I
 Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
 That in contrarie stonden evere mo.
 Allas! what is th wonder maladie?
 For hete of cold, for cold of hete, I dye.

Despite the conscientious resolution of the narrator of the Troilus to record Troilus's song exactly "as writ myn auctor called Lollius", critics, both in the Renaissance and in modern times, have recognized various "misunderstandings" and mistranslations of the Italian text in the "Canticus Troili." Ernest Hatch Wilkins pointed out in 1949, that the lines from the first stanza, "if no love is" and "if love is", do not properly represent their Petrarchan counterparts "s'amor non è" and "s'egli e amor", which mean respectively "if this be not love" and "if it be love."³⁰ Wilkins also noted that the second line in the first stanza, which asks of love "what thing and which is he," is an incorrect translation of the line from the original "che cosa e quale", which means "what is this experience of mine?" From the evidence of these and other discrepancies between the Chaucerian and Petrarchan versions of the poem, Patricia Thomson concluded, some ten years

after the publication of Wilkins's article, that "the first stanza of the 'Canticus Troili' is more theoretical and remote from the intensities of uniquely individual experience than its original."³¹ The main trend of Thomson's discussion is to show that the "Canticus Troili" is very much inferior to Petrarch's sonnet and that its "loss of concentration and richness . . . points forward to future Petrarchan insipidities" in English poetry.³²

However, I would like to suggest that Chaucer's departures from Petrarch's text are not genuine misunderstandings or artistic failures and that those that can be explained no other way can be accounted for in terms of the irony involved in Troilus's distortion of the proper meaning of "loves art." Thomson concedes that the question which Chaucer has put into Troilus's mind (Does love exist or not?) "could perhaps be argued as consistent with Chaucer's narrative and its hero," since Troilus, recently a scoffer at love, has suddenly been forced to reconsider his scorn and skepticism.³³ On these grounds, she admits, Chaucer's generalizations of the more subjective and particular language of Petrarch's experience, could be explained and justified. We may thus rule out objections to Chaucer's poem which are based on his abstract interpretation in the first stanza of lines to which Petrarch gives a seemingly personal significance. This includes lines like

those which were referred to in the previous paragraph as having been among the discrepancies noted by Wilkins.

Since Thomson states that the second stanza of the "Canticus Troili" follows Petrarch closely, her case for Chaucer's ineptitude in handling Petrarchan material must rest largely on that occurs in the third stanza. Here Chaucer develops the metaphor of love as a sea voyage which is contained in Petrarch's sestet:

E s'io 'l consento, a gran forto mi doglio
Fra si contrari venti in frale barca
Mi trovo in alto mar, senza governo,
Si lieve si saver, d'error si carica,
Ch'i' medesmo non so quel ch'io mi voglio;
E tremo a mezza state, ardendo il verno.

(Thus being tost with winds of sundry sorte
Through dangerous Seas but in a slender Boat,
With errour stuff, and driv'n beside the porte
Where voide of wisdoms freight it lies afloat,
I wave in doubt what helpe I shall require,
In somer frieze, in winter burne like fire.)³⁴

(Thomas Wilson's translation)

Thomson observes that Chaucer omits the fourth line of the sestet which describes the lover as a storm-tossed boat with no ballast of wisdom, but loaded with error: "Si lieve di saver, d'error si carica." In place of this line, she notes, we find in the "Canticus Troili" the exclamation: "Allas! what is this wondre maladie?" Thomson's objection to Chaucer's translation of the sestet is that through such omissions as we have mentioned, the seafaring metaphor is rendered slight and trivial because it lacks the weight of

moral judgement, whereas with Petrarch it does not:

"Petrarch no less than Troilus, is tossed to and fro by conflicting winds of feeling; but he gives reasons for this emotional floundering: lack of reason ('governo') and wisdom ('saver') and a propensity to 'error'."³⁵ We, however, should not be too ready to assume that Chaucer has erred in his rehandling of Petrarch's seafaring image. If he omitted Petrarch's moral analysis of the speaker's condition, it seems unlikely that he did so for no reason. Moral analysis, after all, is the main preoccupation of the sestet and it is barely possible that Chaucer, who was always attuned to the moral significance of human actions, could have failed, in this instance, to notice its importance.

The best explanation for the peculiarities of Chaucer's translation is that in adapting Petrarch's sonnet to the voice and character of Troilus, Chaucer was governed by an awareness of the circumstances in which Troilus utters his song. Like the Lover in the Roman de la Rose, Troilus has foresworn the advice and company of Reason. It is therefore quite fitting that he should, instead of interpreting his emotional condition articulately and rationally, merely exclaim: "Allas! what is this wondre maladie?" The content of the "Canticus Troili" was, clearly, meant by Chaucer to be understood as a reflection of the state of

Troilus's mind at a particular stage in his experience of foolish love.

Troilus's inability to impose a coherent verbal or intellectual structure on his feelings and thoughts about love is one of the results of his abuse of language. By wilfully divorcing his words from his deeds, he weakens the power of language to grasp and define reality, making it instead the instrument of illusion and falsehood. We shall subsequently discuss the problem of language and the interpretation of reality in greater detail.³⁶ For the present, suffice it to say that Chaucer shows us how Troilus, who uses words to create illusions rather than to express truth, cannot, in his song, find words to express the moral realities of his situation. He is, in this respect, somewhat like another hypocritical manipulator of words, the Pardoner, who is ironically silenced, after his voluble sermon to the pilgrims, by an insult from Harry Bailly. ("This Pardoner answerede nat a word; / So wrooth he was, no word wolde he seye." Pardoner's Tale 956-7.)

That the "Canticus Troili" tends towards language which Thomson describes as "inane, purely decorative, or merely emotional"³⁷ is hence not a shortcoming on Chaucer's part; rather it is a sign of the perversion of "loves art" embodied in Troilus's duplicity and in his tactics of seduction. During the affair of Troilus and Criseyde we

see "loves art" degenerate from an aesthetic ideal into a sordid and dishonest sexual experience. The first stages of this process of degeneration are manifested in the moral and aesthetic limitations of the "Canticus Troili", which seemingly are intended by Chaucer to represent the corruption of poetic language. According to St. Augustine, the language that men use declines in integrity and value as it recedes from the perfect truth of the divine Word of God. The "many elements of unlikeness" described by St. Augustine between man's word and God's Word are founded on the distortions arising from mendacity and misunderstanding to which the former is subject;³⁸ and in the De Trinitate St. Augustine even admits that the lack of truth in man's word disqualifies it to be called a word: "It may be objected that what is not true ought not to be called a word; and to that I willingly agree. But even when our word is true and so rightly called a word, can we say that as it may be called vision from vision, or knowledge from knowledge, it may also be called essence from essence -- as the word of God is chiefly and most rightly called? It cannot. . . ."³⁹ If we consider the flaws of the "Canticus Troili" in the light of these remarks about the flaws of human language itself, it will be readily apparent that the same lack of truth and knowledge which St. Augustine attributes to man's word is the cause

of the empty emotionalism in Troilus's self-expression. Not only is the song a product of mendacity; its failure to define and interpret the experience with which it is concerned exposes in it, furthermore, the absence of what St. Augustine calls "vision from vision." As a work of "loves art" in the positive sense, the song is a failure because it does not achieve the level of truth and knowledge which real poetry, like the Word of God, should possess.⁴⁰ The failure of language in the "Canticus Troili" thus may be regarded as symbolic of the debasement of moral and aesthetic values which occurs through the practice of "loves art" in malo.

The difference between the good and bad meanings of "loves art" indicates that, as much as "honour", it is a term which fails to maintain its ideal definition when it is applied to real experience. Unlike "honour" however, "loves art" does not pertain to the behaviour and unstable moral condition of the characters of Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus; instead it provides the main focus for the narrator's and the audience's awareness of the analogous state of the poem as literature-- that is to say, the deterioration in the ethical integrity of the characters-- corresponds to the aesthetic degeneration of the poem itself in the minds of the narrator and his audience, the latter

process being revealed in the ambiguity which arises whenever love is referred to as an art in the Troilus.

The problem of aesthetic degeneration, which is of major concern to Chaucer in the Troilus, develops from the destruction of the ideals and forms of art by experience. Chaucer's feeling of anxiety about the possible distortions and misinterpretations which a work of art may suffer is disclosed at the end of the fifth book when, addressing his poem, he says:

So prey I God that non myswrite the
Ne themysmetre for defaute of tonge,
And red wherso thow be, or elles songe,
That thow be understonde, God I biseche.
(V.1795-98)

But although these openly expressed misgivings concern what may happen to the aesthetic integrity of his work in the course of time and changing circumstance, Chaucer has, in the meanwhile, shown a strong ironic awareness of the corruption taking place within the poem itself as a result of the narrator's blindness to the function and purpose of art. By failing to recognize the proper separation between art and experience, the narrator frequently sacrifices aesthetic detachment to the more limited and subjective perspective on events created by experience. He does this when he declares that he would have been willing to enjoy the least of the joys of fornication even at the price of his soul (III.1319-20). While the narrator's

statement certainly says a lot for the empathy with which he describes the bedroom activities of Troilus and Criseyde, it does little credit to his moral wisdom that he responds so directly and unreservedly to the experience of the lovers. A more aesthetically conceived view of carnal passion, would show in some degree the judicious awareness of its miseries which is contained in the narrator's initial characterization of himself as one who merely writes of love but stays uninvolved with it, preferring to live in charity. At the beginning of the poem, the narrator's feelings are not, as they tend to be in Book III, controlled by his impressionable sensitivity to the events of which he is telling; although his feelings are apparently engaged in the task of narration, they are evoked by the demands of rhetoric instead of by the immediate impact of recounted experience. Making his invocation to Thesiphone, the narrator states that he is weeping as he writes about the sorrow of Troilus and then observes that it befits him as the teller of a sad tale to affect an unhappy manner:

For wel sit it, sothe for to seyne,
A woful wight to han a dreery feere,
And to a sorwful tale a sory chere.

(T&C. I.12-14)

This, of course, is a reiteration of the commonplace of medieval rhetoric, stated by Geoffrey of Vinsauf, among others, that the manner of delivery in writing or speech should be suited to the author's theme and content: "De

et autem haec tria variere pronuncietor secundum varietatem materiae. Si materia fuerit de dolore, vox et vultus et gestus conformari materiae et testes esse doloris."⁴¹

Clearly, the narrator's "sory chere" is created by his sense of rhetorical propriety; he is not yet blinded by his loss of aesthetic distance from experience, but stands committed to the artist's detached outlook and concomitant purpose of providing moral instruction. Having no direct personal interest in the sexual experiences of his characters, he perceives his personal role and feelings as aesthetic devices which serve to highlight the woes of lovers

"... me that am the sorwful instrument, / That helpeth lovers, as I kan, to pleyne" (Troilus and Criseyde I.10-11).

The narrator, however, seems to possess very unstable moral convictions, because, by the time we reach Book III, he has completely reversed his former opinions about the sorrow of love. No longer speaking of it as a cause of unhappiness, he thinks its "blisse" worth the risk of damnation. His emotional responses to love, moreover, are now, as he begins to desire his own share of carnal solace, less intentionally rhetorical than spontaneous and realistic. What began as an aesthetically directed display of sympathy on the part of the narrator has become for him an uncontrolled emotional involvement in Troilus's misfortunes. On certain occasions he seems to lose sight entirely of the aesthetic barrier

which ought to separate him, in his role as a poet, from any direct emotional participation in the experience of the hero. As Troilus lies bedridden at his brother's house awaiting a visit from Criseyde, the narrator grows as uneasy about what Troilus should say to her as does the lover himself. Although he retains some of the artist's detachment when he addresses lovers as a group, a group to which, as many of his previous comments have shown, he does not belong, he is drawn paradoxically into a strong sense of personal identification with Troilus during the short speech which concludes Book II:

But now to you, ye loveres that ben here,
 Was Troilus nought in a kankedort,
 That lay, and myghte whisprynge of hem here,
 And thoughte, "O Lord, right now runneth my sort
 Fully to deye, or han anon comfort!"
 And was the firste tyme he shulde hire preye
 Of love: O myghty God, what shal he seye?
 (II.1751-57)

It is almost as though the narrator is personally anticipating some sort of subjective "confort" which depends on Troilus's saying the right things to Criseyde, for his apostrophe to "myghty God" has a tone sufficiently intense to suggest that it might be uttered on his own behalf.

Subsequently, when Criseyde forsakes Troilus for Diomedes, the narrator exhibits more personal distress than the detached role which he has selected for himself would seem to require. The proem to Book IV again reflects the

conflict within the narrator between his aesthetic function as an observer and moral commentator and his tendency to become vicariously involved in the world of sexual experience. This conflict is particularly noticeable in the third stanza:

For how Criseyde Troilus forsook,
Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde,
Moot hennesforth ben matere of my book,
As writen folk thorough which it is in mynde.
Allas that they sholde evere cause fynde
To speke hire harm, and if they on hire lye,
I wis, himself sholde han the vilanye. (IV.15-20)

Despite the recognizable rhetorical quality of the sorrow expressed in this stanza and in the last two lines from the previous stanza (And now my penne, allas! with which I write, / "Quaketh for drede of that I most endite" IV.13-14), it is apparent that the narrator does not have the aesthetic control over his material that he possesses in the opening stanzas of Book I. His sorrow, while it undoubtedly conforms to rhetorical convention, does not serve a purely aesthetic purpose but arises from the incompatibility of his responsibilities as an artist with the wish-fulfillment that governs a large part of his attitude towards experience. The aesthetic design of his story of Troilus and Criseyde, which is based on the "double sorwe" of Troilus, requires that the narrator proceed from documenting the consummation of the love affair to an account of Criseyde's infidelity. His reluctance,

however, to complete this design in that last two books of the poem reveals that his personal involvement in the experiences of Book III is threatening to undermine the task which he has set for himself as an artist.

At times the narrator's commitment to sexual experience is so strongly expressed that it leads him, groundlessly, to deny the truth of his sources. In the stanza quoted above he hints that for subjective, emotional reasons, he suspects his sources of false testimony concerning the behaviour of Criseyde, and in Book V he attempts to dissociate himself from the claim, advanced by his sources, that Criseyde gave Diomedes her heart!

I fynde ek in the stories elleswhere
 Whan thorough the body hurt was Diomedes
 Of Troilus, tho wepte she many a teere
 Whan that she saugh his wyde wowndes bleede;
 And that she took, to kepen hymn, good hede;
 And for to belen hym of his sorwes smerte,
 Men seyn -- I not -- that she yaf hym hire herte.
 (V.1044-50)

Since the "stories" referred to by the Narrator are the basis of his own aesthetic creation, the poem, its truth as well is presumably challenged by the vicarious indulgence in sexual experience that causes his unwillingness to admit Criseyde's guilt. Chaucer's narrator often has more in common with Troilus, love's fool, than with the discerning artist who understands love but stands aloof from it. The latter role is adopted by Chaucer himself in the famous

exhortation to youth at the end of the poem:

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

A spiritual independence of the affairs of this world, which is here commended, should, by ideal standards, determine poetic truth. But the narrator of the Troilus, although he resolves to "lyve in charite", cannot sufficiently dominate his own carnal instincts to avoid being drawn out of the artist's detachment and into the confused experience of the lover. Therefore, he vacillates for the greater part of the poem between the attitudes of the lover and the artist, outwardly professing a vision of truth appropriate to the latter but continually repudiating it through his obsessive preoccupation with physical sexuality. This vacillation in the mind of the narrator is a manifestation of the aesthetic degeneration taking place within the poem, because it reveals a partial failure of the ideal, voiced by the narrator in his role as an artist, of imposing a pattern on the morally unstructured sequence of the events that produce Troilus's sorrow.

Returning to the main direction of our discussion, we must ask how "loves art" is correlated to the theme of

aesthetic degeneration in the Troilus. The double sense of "loves art", which can be interpreted either as an allusion to a poetic ideal or as a term for carnal seduction, metaphorically reflects the dichotomy of art and experience in which the narrator's vacillation finds its source. It thus expresses a bifurcation in the narrator's consciousness of the aesthetic quality of his story, revealing his recognition of the divergence from his formal ideas about art of the art which he actually creates after responding emotionally to Troilus's experience. His ambiguous invitation to his audience to compensate for his incapacity in "loves art" by correcting his use of words, has, furthermore, a split significance for those to whom it is addressed.

If we imaginatively place ourselves among the members of the audience who first heard the Troilus read aloud and try to conceive of the impact which the narrator's speech about "loves art" would be likely to have had on the average person's moral conscience, we shall recognize that he would likely have reacted to it in one of two possible ways. If he did not interpret the remarks of the narrator as paying him the simple if dubious compliment of enjoying an authoritative familiarity with the art of fornication, he would have seen in them a serious moral challenge to detect and redress the aesthetic and moral confusion

resulting from the narrator's own failure to confront experience as a true artist should. Claiming to utter his words ". . . under correccion / Of you that felyng han in loves art" (III.1331-2), the narrator, by inviting his audience to participate in the act of aesthetic creation, is also imposing upon them the burden of the artist's moral responsibility and detachment. The audience thus has the option of voluntarily arresting the poem's internal aesthetic decay by reaffirming the ideal definition of "loves art" which the narrator himself has abnegated. As the narrator says, his audience possesses the freedom of attaching whatever meaning it chooses to his words:

And if that ich at Loves reverence,
Have any word in eched for the beste,
Doth therewithal right as youreselven leste.
(III.1328-30)

Should it so choose, the audience may discover and approve a merely carnal and unregenerate significance in the narrator's words about "Love" and "loves art"; but it may also decide, alternatively, to take an ironic view of the lapses of moral and aesthetic judgement whereby the narrator comes to present a debased conception of "loves art" in the first place. By responding in the latter way to the narrator's invitation, the audience of the Troilus is able to contribute to the preservation of the aesthetic ideals and perspectives which are threatened by his unstable attitude towards Troilus's passion.

It was mentioned previously that Chaucer's variations on the meaning of "loves art" are structurally patterned so as to allow for the simultaneous occurrence of ideal and debased conceptions of the term. The effect of this is to translate the theme of moral and aesthetic degeneration out of the historical time span of finished events and into the present tense of the audience's consciousness, where choices between good and evil are still being made. The deterioration of the ideals of "gentillesse", "trouthe," and "honour," because it develops in the actions of the characters rather than in the minds of the audience, follows the chronological narrative sequence that orders those actions. "Loves art", on the other hand, projects a concept of degeneration that involves the audience as much as the characters of the poem, and its double meaning in Book III helps to create a sense of the moral conflict concerning ethical responsibility that confronts the audience.⁴² Therefore, the degenerative aesthetic structure of allusions to "loves art",³⁹ both in Book III and elsewhere in the Troilus, is not one which gradually emerges from the development of the story of the lovers, but is, rather, contained in the static polarization of art and sexual experience which must occupy a permanent place in the audience's consciousness so long as it remains unresolved in the narrator's. The possibility that the audience should,

like the narrator, reject a firm commitment to the ideals of art in preference for a wishful participation in the joy of sex shows how this polarization, by its mere existence, promotes aesthetic degeneration.

2. The Role of the Audience in Troilus and Criseyde

The importance of the audience's role to the nature and definition of any medieval poem such as the Troilus can easily be underestimated. Having tentatively argued that the structural function of the ambiguous metaphor "loves art" operates to a significant degree within limits set by the audience's intellectual and emotional responses to the poem, we should appropriately pause at this juncture to consider some medieval theoretical assumptions about the primacy of the audience's responses as a basis for the interpretation of literary works. This will lend support to the argument that the consciousness of the audience is the medium for the degenerative structure of "loves art" in the Troilus and may also elucidate, indirectly, the aesthetic principles underlying that structure. First however, we must be aware of the difference between medieval and modern ideas about the relation of the audience to aesthetic form in poetry and other arts.

The most influential critical approach to literature

in our time is the formalistic or textual approach, otherwise known as the "new criticism." Formalistic interpretations of poetry generally emphasize organic unity and attempt to locate meaning in the self-contained form of the poem itself rather than in the reader's responses or the author's intentions. The new critic examines the way in which parts of a poem such as imagery and diction interact to constitute a coherent whole, and upon his analysis of their interaction he bases his interpretation of the poem's meaning. The roots of this approach to literature undoubtedly lie in the nineteenth-century romantic view, held by Coleridge, that a literary work is ontologically independent of historical and social factors beyond its own formal existence and that any poem stands solely on the merit of its intrinsic organization and the harmony of its parts.⁴³ Being essentially of romantic origin, formalistic criticism tends to yield its best results when applied to poetry written in the romantic tradition; and though its methods of close reading can greatly enhance our appreciation of medieval texts, we should treat with caution its assumptions that works of literature are ontologically self-sufficient and possess their "own kind of life."⁴⁴ Particularly when reading Chaucer, it is necessary, for the sake of hermeneutical accuracy, to remember that according to medieval aesthetics a poem should

be evaluated not for its form and unity but for its effect on its audience. D. W. Robertson's comments on the main differences between modern and medieval aesthetic principles may be cited in support of this contention:

. . . in the appreciation of medieval art the attitude of the observer is of primary importance, for no work of art was then self-contained or existed in a "world of its own." For this reason the "pure aesthetics" developed since the early nineteenth century has little validity as an approach to it. . . . To the more cultivated minds of the Middle Ages artistic works were things designed through their "numbers", through their figurative devices, or through their very workmanship, to lead the mind toward a beauty which transcends corporal modulations; such works were not merely attractive in themselves, but were intended to lead the mind toward something beyond.⁴⁵

Robertson makes clear that although people in the Middle Ages were quite conscious of literary form and the various rhetorical and technical devices which it comprises, they never saw form as a purpose in itself but instead thought it should be conducive to spiritual aspiration in the observing audience.

Nevertheless, critics of Chaucer's poetry frequently claim that Chaucer wrote as though he thought literature possessed its "own kind of life" and could function autonomously and self-sufficiently. Elizabeth Salter, whose views on the Troilus were considered in a previous chapter of this study, is fond of the image of Chaucer as a poet who is apt to lose control over his material and

whose poems end up dictating their own structure and direction while he looks on bewildered. Apropos of the Troilus Salter writes: ". . . as the poem moves to its bitter conclusion . . . the sad bewilderment with which Chaucer watches his poem shrink to a tale of treachery cannot be wholly remedied. . . ."46 A more recent example of the same kind of critical finding occurs in Donald Rowe's book, O Love O Charite! Contraries Harmonized in Chaucer's Troilus. Rowe, who observes correctly that "Troilus and Criseyde is in some sense a poem about poetry,"47 also subscribes to a version of the idea that, in Chaucer's mind, poetry exists in a world of its own. Referring to the final peroration in Book V, which denounces poetry as one of the false attractions of this world ("Lo here the forme of the olde clerkis speche / In poetrie, if ye hire bokes seche" V.1854-5), Rowe suggests that the narrator is underestimating his debt to the poem for its autonomously rendered services to him:

Perhaps he ought not so totally to condemn all that, since it is his presentation of all that and his imitation of Troilus that have brought him home to Christ. It is his poem about Troilus that has been his guide, not Christ, through this false world of this truth, just as Criseyde has been Troilus's guide. The false leads finally to the true, the world's tragedy to comedy.48

The idea that the false leads to the true in the Troilus should not provoke any objections, but we may easily query

some of the statements about the poem that are used to support and illustrate it. For example, the comparison of the poem to Christ, which follows from Rowe's characterization of it as a spiritual guide, is a gratuitous and unilluminating vagary of modern fancy. Art, in the fourteenth century, was not the surrogate religion that it became five hundred years later under the influence of Pater and Matthew Arnold,⁴⁹ and Chaucer would have been embarrassed at the opinion that his poem could in any manner provide a substitute for Christ as a guide to truth. We must remind ourselves that the Middle Ages recognized a clear distinction between things which are desirable for their own sake and things which should be used to attain to a loved object. St. Augustine, who formulated this distinction in De Doctrina Christiana, described these two classes of things as, respectively, things which are to be used and things which are to be enjoyed. Since God, according to Augustine, is the only thing in the universe that should be enjoyed, it is clear that poetry must be among things which are to be used.⁵⁰ Unfortunately Rowe's argument that the Troilus, as a poem, takes over the spiritual offices of Christ obscures the historical incommensurability of poetry and God. Poetry by medieval standards could point the way to truth, but it was not thought of as an alternative to the way of Christ. Poetry,

like all things intended to be used, was supposed merely to be the tool of God's higher purpose, a fact which is distorted by the modern tendency to regard all poetry as autonomous and self-contained.

To invest Chaucer's poem with an autonomous purpose and identity can therefore involve serious distortions of basic medieval philosophical doctrines about the nature of art. Moreover, such a view of the poem is unnecessary for the advancement of the argument that, though tainted with the values of this false world, the poem points the way to truth. Whatever the narrator and his audience finally discover about Christian truth, they must discover through the proper use of free will, since there is no justification to be found, either in Chaucer's text or in medieval aesthetic theory, for saying that they rely on the poem as a spiritual guide. In the case of the narrator, the simple evidence of the text contradicts the view that the poem acts as a guide. The narrator states at the beginning of the poem that his purpose is to tell of the adventures of Troilus and of his double sorrow, and he introduces each new section of his story with a proem containing a synopsis of the events which are to follow. Thus, he does not seem at any point to be under the guidance of his poem; on the contrary, he seems to be entirely responsible for its sequence, structure, and conclusion.

Where the audience is concerned, it is similarly apparent that the poem does not possess any sort of autonomy, moral or aesthetic, and that its meaning and value are largely created in the audience's response. Although the truth of this cannot be proven with a few summary remarks about medieval trends in literary theory, it tends to be borne out in the experience of reading the poem. Ultimately the audience of the Troilus is its centre of reference and not the poem or even the hero himself; Troilus, when all is done, emerges as an exemplar of the unhappy lover whose essential purpose is merely to warn others of the consequence of his foolish passion. Hence, the "yonge fresshe folkes " whom Chaucer advises to repair home to Christ from the wordly vanities that afflict Troilus are the true object of the poem; they are the servants of the God of Love for whose sake the poem is written (I.15-21) and represent the audience to whom its lessons are addressed. The narrator's intermittent appeals to the lovers in his audience for correction and advice, and his habit of apostrophizing them sententiously on central questions of love (I.22-28. 232-51; II.1331-37; III.130-37; IV. 1695-1701; V.1835-48), art (I.8-14; II.8-49; 1562-8; III.1331-37; IV.15-21; V.184-55), and ethics (I.22-49; V.1772-85) are, furthermore, constant reminders that in their conscience are set some of the most important scenes and

crises of the poem.

The exact nature of the audience's involvement, however, remains superficially ambiguous. As we have already noted, Chaucer does not always attempt to control his listener's moral judgements while he is telling his story, but through the agency of the narrator prompts each member of the audience to reach his own conclusions concerning the issues at hand. Whether or not the audience repudiates or approves Troilus's behaviour will determine whether, by rational standards, they are wisely or foolishly involved in the poem. In the Troilus, as in other works, Chaucer does not expect the audience to respond in a uniformly wise or foolish manner, but realizes that different individuals will exhibit different responses.

His outlook in this respect is comparable to that of earlier poets like Marcabru and Raimbaut d'Aurenga, both of whom observed a sharp division between their wise and foolish listeners. Raimbaut, in a rejoinder to Giraut's opinion that only a superficial and easy poem can have the merit of being understood by the public, declares that he does not desire the attention of those people who are insufficiently intelligent to understand poetry written in the obscure style referred to by the troubadors as trobar clus:

Giraut, non voill qu'en tal trepeil
 Torn mos trobars que ja ogan
 Lo lauzo. l bone e. l pauc e. l gran
 Ja per lo faz
 Non er lauzatz
 Car non conoi.sson ni lor cal
 So que plus car es ni mais val. 51.

(Giraut, I do not wish my poem to
 cause such an uproar that hence forth
 the noble and the few and the great would
 never praise it. It will never be praised
 by the fools, for they do not recognize or
 care about what is most valuable or
 precious.)

Were he to address himself to the foolish, he says, he
 would be ignored by the wise and discriminating audience
 whose attention he really seeks. Therefore he writes
 in such a way that only the wise individual can understand
 the meaning of his words. Marcabru, whose work served
 Raimbaut as a model, means essentially the same thing when
 he suggests that his words about the complexities of love
 must be unravelled through wisdom. Speaking in the role
 of a foolish lover, Marcabru declares:

qu'en mieg mon afar folesc
 non dic paraula follesca
 La musa port e. l badalh
 selh qu'en amar a fizansa
 qu'estra grat mus' e badalh (a)
 soven, so vos afizans;
 qu'amors adoncx entrebresca,
 enginhos desent rebresc. 52

(in the midst of my foolish condition,
 I do not speak foolish words. The man
 who puts his trust in bitter love possesses
 futile and illusory hopes, for he often
 hopes vainly and foolishly against his
 will, so I assure you; therefore what love
 entangles, the cunning man must disentangle.)

The task of the "cunning man" is to perceive the ironic disparity between the folly of the speaker's condition as a lover and the wisdom of his words about himself. By accomplishing this, he penetrates the illusory hopes and values of the lover and recognizes their essential worthlessness, whereas the foolish listener misunderstands the speaker's words and remains subject to the entanglements of love.

Chaucer, similarly, seems to maintain a tacit but firm distinction between the wise and the foolish audiences, which groups he differentiates on the basis of their ability to discern the truth behind love's illusions. The "yonge, fresshe folkes" of the poem's final stanzas, who are adjured to forsake worldly vanity, are obviously regarded by Chaucer as possessing sufficient discretion to benefit from the good advice, while the servants of the god of Love, intermittently addressed as "ye loveres", are, on the whole, given much less credit for their moral wisdom. All lovers, except those who lay their hearts "al holly" on Christ, are implicitly the victims of folly and illusion.

None the less, although it is clear that the "yonge fresshe folkes" and Love's servants represent two distinct entities, they are essentially just the interchangeable wise and foolish aspects of Chaucer's imaginary audience.⁵³

Even while he addresses the "yonge fresshe folkes" as the wise followers of Christ, Chaucer reminds them of their susceptibility to foolish love by asking them warningly: "What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?" Conversely, the carnal lovers "that bathen in gladnesse" are, despite their self-abandonment to passion, not considered entirely incapable of showing wisdom. When, in an opening stanza of Book I they are urged to take pity on other lovers, they are placed, for an instant, above the follies of Troilus and are invited to become detached spectators on the events set in motion by Love:

If any drop of pyte in you be,
 Remembreth you on passed hevynesse
 That ye han felt, and on the adversite
 Of othere folk, and thynketh how that ye
 Han felt that Love dorste you displese,
 Or ye han wonne hym with to gret an ese.
 (I.22-28)

Through the voice of the narrator, Chaucer is suggesting that it is possible for carnal lovers to learn wisdom by recalling the "passed hevynesse" from which they have suffered.

An attitude of pity and rational detachment towards lovers, also founded on the pain of personal experience it should be noted, is adopted by the wise Theseus in the Knight's Tale. Forgiving Palamon and Arcite who, for love of Emelye, have disobeyed his orders (one by breaking out

of prison and the other by returning to Athens after being exiled), Theseus reflects that as a sometime lover he himself has committed acts of folly due to love's pain:

But al moot ben assayed, hoot and cooled;
 A man moot ben a fool, or yong or oold, ---
 I woot it by my self ful yore agon,
 For in my tyme a servant was I oon.
 And therefore, syn I knowe of loves peyne,
 And woot how soore it kan a man destreyne,
 As he that hath ben caught ofte in his lass,
 I you foryeve al hooly this trespaas. . . .

(Kn.T. 1812-18)

Theseus does not, however, condone foolish love merely because he understands it. On the contrary, his pity expresses an adamant rejection of such love, and the lovers to whom the above-quoted stanza from the Troilus is directed are encouraged to feel the same kind of pity as Theseus.

What all this indicates is that the wise and foolish audiences in the Troilus are not mutually exclusive but instead tend to exchange roles with each other, the wise sometimes appearing foolish while the foolish are addressed as the wise. This kind of alternation may perhaps be seen as an illustration of the principle, enunciated by Theseus, that life is made up of varying extremes which must inevitably be experienced: "But al moot ben assayed, hoot and coold." Wisdom is learned by ordinary men in the course of submission to folly, and Chaucer's way of approaching his audience is governed by his consciousness of that fact and by the responsibilities as a moral

teacher which he accepts for himself. While Marcabru and Raimbault observe a strict difference between wise men and fools and disdainfully reject the attention of the latter, Chaucer's holistic conception of the interpenetrating elements of his audience expresses his desire to erase this difference by converting the foolish to wisdom.

Writing with this didactic intention, Chaucer does not allow his audience to engage only in a passive response to the poem, but instead demands a reaction involving a moral commitment through choice of will. However the members of the audience receive the author's words, whether foolishly or wisely, they must, through an aesthetically created necessity, accept full responsibility for what the poem says to them. The role in which Chaucer places his audience in the Troilus is, thus, not unlike the one described by Stanley Fish for the reader of Paradise Lost. Fish argues that Milton seeks to implicate his reader in the story of Adam's Fall in such a way that the reader's conscience, taking precedence over characterization, style of composition, and even the voice of the narrator, becomes the main focus of the poem. Milton, of course, shares with Chaucer and all other Christian poets, a strong awareness that he and those to whom he addresses himself, are the victims of original sin. By constantly impressing this fact upon his

readers, Milton, says Fish, ". . . leads us to feel again and again the conflict between the poem's assumed morality and our responses, and to locate the seat of that conflict in our fallen nature and not in any failure in composition."⁵⁴ From this, Fish draws the conclusion that Milton forces upon the reader the duty of choosing between the two forces in the conflict, namely, fleshly delights and the pride of life on one hand, and the love of Heaven on the other. More significant, insofar as the analogy between Milton and Chaucer is concerned, is Fish's statement that unavoidability of choice is built into the basic poetic structure of Paradise Lost: "Milton constructs his narrative . . . to make the avoidance of response and therefore of choice and (possibly) self-betrayal, impossible."⁵⁵ And Chaucer, in inviting his audience to do as they please with the words of the narrator ("Doth therewithal right as youreselven leste"), effectively places the audience in the same dilemma as Milton's reader by making the act of aesthetic response to the poem inseparable from a moral choice between the alternatives of wise and foolish love which are at issue. By sharpening his audience's awareness of these contradictory alternatives, x Chaucer supplees them with some initial incentive to decide in favour of wisdom rather than folly, since there is no possible excuse for making the wrong choice through an

error of understanding.

As these remarks indicate, the key factor in determining the moral significance of Chaucer's Troilus is the will of its audience. Although Chaucer intends his poem to communicate spiritual wisdom (and so declares in its final stanzas), he none the less realizes that the audience can wilfully give to it a significance which he never meant it to have. From his resultant concern over the possibility of this happening springs his exclamation "But litel book. . . . That thow be understonde, God I biseche!" (V.1789-98). Chaucer was, of course, able to conceive of his poem as a thing possessing its own identity and not existing simply as an extension of the mind of the audience, since he personifies it and addresses it as an ontologically independent entity in the envoy:

Go litel bok, go litel myn tragedye,
 Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye,
 So sende myght to make in some comedye!
 But subgit be to alle poesye;
 And kis the steppes, wher as thow seest pace
 Virgile, Ovid, Omer, Lucan and Stace.
 (V.1786-92)

Here the poem is presented in a variety of contexts and relationships which have no particular reference to the audience. The primary relationship referred to is that shared by the poem and its "makere", and we are additionally reminded of its ties with poetic tradition ("alle poesye"), with other authors, of whom some are mentioned, with other

literary genres such as comedy, and finally with God who is the source of creative power. However, all these relationships are obviously contingent upon the preservation of a stable identity for the poem, and because it is within the power of the audience to recognize or deny this identity, the relationship between poem and audience must ultimately supersede the others mentioned. Thus it is not surprising that Chaucer's apostrophe to his "litel bok" culminates in a plea for its good fortune at the hands of his audience ("So prey I God that non myswrite the . . . red wherso thou be or elles songe. . . ." V.1795-97). As Chaucer was later to complain to Adam, his scrivener, who in a definite sense represents a larger audience, a negligent or ill-considered response to the poem, even in a matter so comparatively small as the producing of inaccurate copies, seriously alters both the identity of the work itself and its relationship to the author:

Adam scriveyn, if ever it thee bifalle
 Boece or Troylus for to wryten newe,
 Under thy long lokkes thou most have the scalle,
 But after my making thou wryte more trewe;
 So ofte a-day I mot thy werk renewe,
 It eek to correcte and eek to rubbe and scrape
 And al is thorough thy negligence and rape.

(Chaucers Wordes unto Adam,
 His Owne Scriveyn)

Whatever discomfiture Chaucer experienced at seeing the Troilus miscopied, he must also have felt when he anticipated that it would be misunderstood. It is not by chance

that Chaucer speaks of miscopying and misunderstanding in the same terms in the envoy and, in one breath, asks God to forestall both calamities: "So prey I God that non myswrite the, . . . That thow be understonde, God I biseche" (V.1795-98). Should the audience respond foolishly, the poem will suffer aesthetic damage as surely as it would if it were miscopied or if some of its stanzas were lost or omitted. In fine, the aesthetic form of the poem, though exerting a strong influence on the moral pattern of the audience's response, is reciprocally subject to the influence of the audience, once that response has occurred.

Chaucer's aesthetic assumptions, in this regard, may with some justice be compared to those set forth by the fourteenth-century Spanish poet, Juan Ruiz, at the beginning of his long narrative poem about foolish love, the Libro de Buen Amor. Juan Ruiz, also personifying his book, but allowing it to speak on its own behalf instead of addressing it himself, asserts quite emphatically that the aesthetic value of what he has written is dependent on how the audience interprets it:

De todos instrumentos yo, libro, soy pariente:
bien o mal, qual puntares tal diré, ciertamente;
qual tú dezir queiesieres, y faz punto e tente;
si puntarme sopieres siempre me abras en miente.⁵⁶

(I, the book, am the father of all instruments;
according to the way you notate me, I will speak
well or badly; dwell upon what you want me to say.
If you know how to interpret me you will always be
mindful of me.)

Just as Milton and Chaucer do, Juan Ruiz puts his audience in the position of having to choose between the alternatives of wisdom and folly. The confrontation of these alternatives is a moral act which the poem demands and which cannot be eliminated from the dynamics of aesthetic response. Juan Ruiz pictures the pattern of response as a dialogue between the audience and the text in the course of which the audience interrogates the text and attempts to discover its true meaning. Implicit in this aesthetic design is the poem's attempt to conceal its meaning in order to make the audience reflect carefully on the choice of interpretations available to it:

Las de buen amor son razones encobiertas
 trabaja do fallares las sus senules ciertas;
 si la razón entiendes o cul el seso aciertas,
 non dires mal sel libro que agora rhiertas.

Do cuidares que miente dize mayor verdad;
 en las coplas pintadas yaze grand fealdad;
 dicha buena o mala por peintos lu juzgad
 las coplas con los pintos load o denostad.⁵⁸

The teachings of good love are hidden; try to learn its manifest signs; when you have penetrated the meaning and understood Love's teaching, you will not ridicule the book which you now belittle. Where you are sure the book is lying, there it is speaking the deepest truth; the false things are in the cleverest verses. You must judge whether something is said well or badly according to your counterpoint; praise or reject the verses according to the counterpoint.

But if the poem compels a certain kind of moral response from the audience, it is clear that the aesthetic condition of the poem itself can be modified by the audience's outlook on the subject of love. The recurrence of musical imagery in the above three stanzas ("instrumentes," "puntares," "los puntos") and the implication that the thoughts of the audience are like a counterpoint to the melody created by the text of the poem lend obvious aesthetic connotations to the terms "buena o mala" (well or badly) according to which the poem's utterances are to be judged. Consequently when the "libro" says to the audience "bien o mal, qual puntares tal dire, ciertamente" (according to the way you notate me, I will speak well or badly), its statement is meant to be interpreted with reference to the musical metaphor that organizes these stanzas. (The analogy between the poem and a musical instrument suggests that "buena o mala" denote two extremes of aesthetic quality.) Of course, these terms are also subject to a moral construction, since the larger context in which they are spoken concerns truth as defined by the strongly ethical concept of "buen amor" (good love). In this context, the audience's dialogue with the text and its search for the teaching of good love are supposed to occur, and as the double significance of "buena o mala" might lead us to expect, the results are reflected

aesthetically in the poem as well as morally in the audience. If the audience proves incapable of uncovering the wise, but hidden teachings of good love, the poem must undergo an aesthetic transformation for the worse, speaking "badly" from an aesthetic as well as from a moral point of view.

This is not to deny that on several occasions in the Libro de Buen Amor an opposition of beauty to moral truth is mentioned. After initially promising to speak in "undezir fermoso e saber sin pecado" (a fair form of speech and an art without blemish), Juan Ruiz, somewhat paradoxically, launches into a long apology for his book, claiming that its ugliness should be excused because it contains wisdom that is not ugly:

Non cuidedes que es libro de necio devaneo,
nin tengades por chufa algo que en el léo,
ca, segund buen dinero yaze en vil cooco,
assi en feo libro yaze saber non feo.

So la espina yaze la ross, noble flor;
en fea letra yaze saber de grand dotor;
como do mala capa yaze buen bevedor,
assi so mal tabardo yaze el buen amor. 59

(Do not think that this is a book of vain trifles or take anything lightly that I teach in it; for just as a good coin is found in a shabby purse, so wisdom is found in an ugly book. . . . Under the thorn one finds the wisdom of a great doctor. Just as a ragged coat hides a wine taster, so under a coarse garment there is Good Love.)

These words seem to imply that the poem, which appears beautiful on the surface, is, like Dante's siren

(Purgatorio XIX), ugly from a moral point of view. One

must, however, be careful not to take at face value Juan Ruiz's reference to the conflict between truth and beauty, because it overlies a basic congruence of the poem's moral and aesthetic values. In itself the poem is truly neither beautiful nor ugly, beauty in medieval art existing primarily in the mind of the beholder. For Juan Ruiz to say that the poem is ugly or beautiful means, in precise terms, that it is ugly or beautiful according to its effect on the audience. A poem which is conducive to sound moral behaviour is beautiful, just as one which has the opposite effect is ugly, and as Juan Ruiz declares to his audience, the Libro may, depending on their state of will, incite them to pursue either sin or virtue:

E assi este mi libro, a todo omne o muger; al cuerdo e al non cuerdo; al que entendiere le bien e escogiere salvacion e obrare bien amando a Dios, ostrossi al que quisiere le amor loco, en la carrera que andueliere, puede a cada uno bien dezir: Intellectum tibi dabo, et cetera.⁶⁰

Therefore this book of mine can truly say to any man or woman, to the wise and to the foolish, to the one who perceives the good and chooses salvation and acts well, loving God, and also to the one who desires to find foolish love along his way: I will instruct thee, et cetera.

The essence of the above passage is summarized in a statement which occurs a few lines afterwards: "... las palabras sirven a la intencion e non la intencion e las palabras" (The words serve the intention and not the intention the words). Hence, if the poem is ugly, it

derives that quality solely from the intention with which the audience approaches its words, and Juan Ruiz, in speaking of his "feo libro" (ugly book), is describing the poem as it appears when it is read to provide instruction for foolish love. Interpreted this way, the author's remarks about the ugliness of his book do not attest to an incompatibility of its aesthetic merit with its moral teachings, as it is quite possible for the audience to make the poem's words serve a wise and virtuous intention and so to enhance its beauty.

Juan Ruiz believed, as did Boethius and Chaucer, that poetry could be written to good or to ill effect. When, in the De Consolatione, Lady Philosophy banishes the muses of poetry from the presence of the spiritually ailing narrator (I.pr.1), she does not act out of disapprobation for the aesthetic use of language. Philosophy herself uses poetry to instruct the narrator and states that so long as the sweetness of rhetoric does not contradict the truths of philosophy, it is spiritually useful and therefore not to be discouraged (II.pr.1). The moral premise of her remarks is the idea, commonplace in the Middle Ages, that nothing, natural or artificial, is either good or beautiful except insofar as it leads the mind to love God for His own sake.⁶¹ This, clearly, is also the

premise upon which Juan Ruiz's statements about art and beauty are predicated. He is fully conscious of the aesthetic as well as of the moral dimensions of poetry, as his rather specific observations about technical aspects of poetic art indicate. None the less, he unhesitatingly avers that true beauty and aesthetic appreciation begin and end in the service of God:

E composelo ostrossi a dar a algunos lecion e
 mministra de metrificar a eimar e de trobar,
 ca trobas e notas e rimas e ditados e versoz fiz
 complidamente, segund que esta ciencia requiere.
 E porque de toda buema obra is courienço a
 fundamento Dios, e la fe catolica, . . . por
 ende comencé mi libro en el nombre de Dios. . . . 62

(I composed this book to provide lessons and examples of prosody, rhyme, and invention, for I made the music, the poems, the rhymes, the rhythms, and the verses precisely as the rules of art demand. Finally, since God and the Catholic faith are the beginning and the foundation of any good work . . . for this reason I began my book in the name of God.)

There follows a prayer in which Juan Ruiz asks of God's grace that he may be granted the power to compose poetry, the aesthetic properities of which will bring men's souls to God. In the performance of this moral function lies, as he sees it, the beauty of the poem as a work of art:

Dios Padre, e Dios Fijo e Dios Espiritu Santo:
 El que nació de virgen esfuerce nos de tanto
 que siempre lo loemos en prosa e en canto; sea
 de nuestras almas cobertura e manto.

.
 The señor a Dios mio, que al omne formeste
 enforma e ayuda a mi, el tu acipreste que los
 cuerpos alegre e a las almas preste. 63

(God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost:
 may He who was born of the Virgin give us the
 strength to praise Him in poems and songs, and
 may He be the protection and mantle of our souls.
 . . . You my Lord and God, who created man,
 instruct and help me, your Archpriest so that
 I may write this Book of Good Love to delight
 the body and profit the soul.)

The beauty of art which does not serve this function is however, essentially spurious, like the false poetry which Boethius composes while under the influence of the muses whom Philosophy drives away. Aesthetic degeneration is thus in Juan Ruiz's terms what it is in Philosophy's: the devaluation of poetry's aesthetic potential through its moral misinterpretation. This ultimately, is the critical standard underlying the concurrent moral and aesthetic connotations which arise when Juan Ruiz speaks of good and bad poetic expression.

The 'double-meaning in Juan Ruiz's use of the words "buena o mala" is of particular importance in defining the similarity of his poetic strategy to the one which controls Chaucer's use of the theme and imagery of "loves art." For Chaucer, as for Juan Ruiz, the moral and the aesthetic aspects of literature are so closely interwoven that they cannot operate independently of each other; and as we pointed out earlier, the audience's moral responses, good or bad, to the dilemma created by the paradoxical connotations of "loves art" become, to the extent that

"loves art" can be construed as a metaphor for poetry, judgements of aesthetic quality. As has also been noted, the degenerative structure of "loves art" is a potential rather than a predetermined structure because, unlike the degenerative structure of the ideals denoted by "gentilesse," "trouthe" and "honour," it takes place in the present tense of the audience's consciousness, whereas the latter belongs to the historical past of the characters' actions. The audience is free to prevent aesthetic degeneration in the poem by assigning the proper moral significance to the narrator's words, but the characters of the poem are committed, on the basis of a series of past and irrevocable choices, to the pattern of moral degeneration that defines their thoughts and actions.

The relationship of Chaucer's audience to the characters of *Troilus and Criseyde* is, thus, rather like that of the living man Dante to the immortal souls in the Inferno. While Dante and the souls of the dead are subject to the same moral laws, only Dante, who belongs to the temporal world, retains the sense of option and contingency that accompanies free-will. Among the souls, who, as Erich Auerbach observes, have "cast off their status viatoris (their wayfarer's state) and entered into the status recipientis pro meritis (the state of those rewarded according to merit)", there is no longer any dimension of

time and, accordingly, no alternative to the structure of past events;⁶⁴ for Dante, who must eventually experience the same passage from the status viatoris to the status recipientis pro meritis, the act of witnessing the condition of the souls is a warning to avoid their fate. Analogously, the audience of the Troilus is made to see that the fixed degenerative structure of the characters' lives will inevitably come to define their own responses to the poem, unless they overcome the degenerative potential in the paradoxical metaphor of "loves art." To do this, they must cultivate aesthetic detachment and avoid vicarious carnal self-indulgence which is the obverse side of the metaphor.

The Troilus, clearly, will fall short of the aesthetic ideals set for it by its author insofar as it encourages its audience to admire acts of foolish love. This means that the division in the audience between the ranks of the wise and the foolish is a sign of the poem's aesthetic imperfection, for so long as part of the audience ignores or misinterprets its true moral vision, there is a danger that the poem will dissolve into the world of experience and lose the perspective of its aesthetic detachment. Consequently the unification of the audience, which is brought about when the foolish are converted to wisdom, ensures the preservation of the poem's integrity as a work

of art.

One last comparison may be drawn, in this connection, between Chaucer and Juan Ruiz: in the Libro de Buen Amor, as in the Troilus, wise and foolish members of the audience are distinguished from each other, but are nevertheless ultimately recognized as constituting a single group. Juan Ruiz stipulates at the beginning of the poem that his text is addressed to the wise and the foolish alike:

En general a todos fabla la eseritura;
los cuerdos, con buen seso, entendran la cordura;
escoja lo mejor el de buena ventura.65

(In general this work is suitable for everyone. Those who are wise and alert will perceive its meaning. Foolish youth should beware of folly. The man who has good luck should select the best.)

He goes on to reflect, after the same fashion as Chaucer's Theseus, that wisdom is often the end-product of foolish love and that he himself has not arrived at an understanding of good without first having experienced the evil of concupiscence:

E yo, porque so omne, co otro pecasor,
ore de las mugeres a vezes grand amor;
prova omne las cosas non es por ende peos,
e saber bien e mal, e usar lo mejos.66

(And I, because I am a man, a sinner like everyone else, have at times had great love for women. Man is not the worse for having experimented, for having known good and evil and for having chosen the better.)

This is the attitude taken by the narrator of the Troilus when he says that in telling the story of the lovers his purpose is only to "write hire wo and lyve in charite."

As we said before, such an attitude is based on a moral detachment from the experiences of foolish love, a detachment which can, paradoxically, be developed through an initial immersion in the self-indulgence that it eschews. We also observed that, if literary history and the text of the Troilus provide any basis for inferences regarding Chaucer's philosophy of art, a poet should ideally, according to Chaucer, possess a detachment not unlike that described by Juan Ruiz in the foregoing stanza. To the extent that this detachment, if it evolves from familiarity with folly as well as wisdom, is a synthesis of both extremes in which the experience of folly is subsumed in the knowledge of wisdom, a direct and necessary connection may be seen between the two stanzas quoted above. The catholic awareness of the wise and foolish elements in his audience which Juan Ruiz expresses in the first stanza provides the moral knowledge which is the basis for his detachment in the second. Thus he declares that, as a poet, his preference for wisdom and detachment to folly and experience comes through knowing that all human beings are capable of acting according to either norm. The same relationship exists between the unity of the audience and

the detachment of the artist-narrator in the Troilus. Aspiring to write of the woe of lovers while living in charity, the narrator proposes, by offering himself as an example, to show his audience how to transcend folly and gain wisdom. Ultimately the poem is directed towards the assimilation of foolish experience by wisdom, a purpose which, if realized, would unify the audience and dissolve the differences between the wise and foolish people in it. At the same time the poem's highest potential as an artistic work would have been realized, for its detachment from experience would have been confirmed.

3. Language as a Metaphor for Bondage and Chaos in Troilus and Criseyde

Thus far we have been concerned with the idea of "love's art" primarily as it functions in the consciousness of the audience of Troilus and Criseyde. In this sense, the meaning of the metaphor is essentially extrinsic to the characters and events of the poem. However, the conflict between the good and the bad definitions of love's art has important ramifications within the poem itself, and in the final section of this chapter, it is befitting for us to consider some of them.

We have seen that the outcome of the conflict is not predetermined in the minds of the audience and that they

are free either to interpret "loves art" as the spiritual teachings of true poetry or to interpret it as a set of rules for practising seduction. Troilus and Pandarus, on the other hand, both of whom have pretensions to the artist's role, are irrevocably committed, so far as their ontological status within the poem is concerned, to "loves art" in the negative sense. No longer possessing the freedom of moral choice which, as has been argued, is essential to creativity and true aesthetic perception, they are locked into a narrative structure that culminates in the extinction of the ideals of poetry and art. Unlike the audience, they cannot, through moral choice, reverse the progressive impairment of these ideals, and in the end their creative efforts are negated by the chaos produced by Fortune.

Adrienne Lockhart has expressed this idea with detailed reference to an analogy, which she believes to be implicit in the Troilus, between the art of Chaucer the poet on one hand, and that of Pandarus on the other. Because Pandarus's work of art, the love affair which he engineers, is not dedicated to God; it is more susceptible to the onslaughts of Fortune than is Chaucer's, and as a result of Pandarus's indifference to matters of truth and goodness, Lockhart argues, his art is doomed to destruction:

Both Pandarus and Chaucer have a similar artistic problem: they are concerned to translate an abstract ideal into a concrete reality. For Pandarus, the task is to devise a realistic expression of Troilus's love, and he is prepared to lie and plot elaborate stratagems in order that this love be fully and appropriately expressed. His creation is successful, but it does not take into account the instability of Fortune or the frailty and limitations of his human characters, and these together destroy the work on which he has spent so much labour. Chaucer, as artist, is aware of this hubristic temptation. His problem is to devise a poem which will show that truth and goodness are the properties of God. . . . 67

The destruction of Pandarus's work of art is manifested in the emotional chaos and bondage to the ills of Fortune which Troilus suffers. Troilus's experience after he loses Criseyde is psychologically comparable to that of Othello, who says prophetically to Desdemona, when he begins to doubt her fidelity: "But I do love thee! and when I love thee not, / Chaos is come again."⁶⁸ Lily B. Campbell has characterized Othello as a slave of passion,⁶⁹ an appellation which also fits Troilus because he too is afflicted by the chaos that comes about when reason gives way to passion.⁷⁰

Troilus's career and fortune, as John McCall demonstrates, are "parallel and even analogous to the career and fortune of the city in which he lives;⁷¹ and because Troy was considered in the Middle Ages to have been brought to destruction and chaos for obeying lust instead of reason, the allusions to the city's impending

"confusion" in the latter part of the poem (IV.122-3, IV.185-6), may be interpreted as bearing an oblique reference to the mental chaos which is shortly to overwhelm Troilus. This chaos is complemented by Troilus's conviction that he is caught in a web of evil destiny (IV.958-1078) from which he cannot escape. Hence arises the theme of bondage to evil Fortune which is symbolized in the spectacle of Troilus lying forlornly on his bed, "Ibounden in the blake bark of care", while he bemoans the proposed exchange of Criseyde for Antenor.⁷²

As the Troilus approaches its tragic climax therefore, the aesthetic metaphor of order and unity which initially represents the work of Pandarus yields to imagery of bondage and chaos. This process is accompanied by an interesting shift in the value of language in the poem, since words, in the form of Troilus's lies, songs and letters to Criseyde, are the principle vehicle for the aesthetic metaphor as it applies to the love affair. At the same time that Pandarus's work of art dissolves into bondage and chaos, language, which has been so important for the advancement of that art, begins to acquire connotations of bondage and chaos as well. The effect of this is to make us look back upon the words and deeds of both Pandarus and Troilus and ask ourselves to what extent, if any, Chaucer really considers them to be aesthetically creative. As the following pages will endeavour to show,

the language of the love affair, when studied closely, must be seen at every stage of the poem, not merely at its denouement, as antithetical to the true spirit of art.

Although Pandarus at the outset of events, seriously looks upon seduction as a creative undertaking, speaking of his actions in terms of the poet's power of forming and shaping ("And God toforn, yet shal I shape it so, . . . There as thou mayst thiself hire preye of grace" II.1363-5), there are, nevertheless, at least two rather ironic differences between the art of poetry and the art of seduction. The first concerns the obligation of poetry to illuminate the mind through the inculcation of charity. This is an obligation to which the narrator of the Troilus pays lip service (I.48-9) and which is ultimately based on St. Augustine's definition of Christian literature as literature which, when interpreted figuratively, brings the mind to a love and awareness of God. Seduction, on the contrary, does not inspire men's souls with God's truth, which is why Chaucer sees fit at the end of the poem to remind his audience that God is more worthy to be loved than objects of carnal desire, thereby making clear that his intention in writing the Troilus has not been to promote seduction. The second difference between Pandarus's art and the art of the poet is that the latter aspires to produce works that transcend the process of changing Fortune

and possess lasting significance (V.1793-99), whereas Pandarus not only ignores the dangers of trusting Fortune, but actually incorporates Fortune as the keystone of his art.

When Pandarus discovers in Book I that Troilus has fallen in love, he tries to comfort the hero by telling him that all things in the world are mutable and that just as the day follows the night, so sorrow must eventually give way to happiness: ". . . next the derke nyght the glade morwe; / And also joie is next the fyn of sorwe" (I.51-52). Troilus should not despair, Pandarus argues, because circumstances may in the future change in such a way that Criseyde, who is now the cause of his sorrow, may instead become his comfort and "joie" (I.44-45). This is of course no more than an invitation to trust in Fortune, as is evident from Boethius's warning that all things obtained through mutability are gifts of Fortune. If "joie" is the "fyn of sorwe", sorrow is also the out come of worldly joy. Hence, in the De Consolatione Lady Philosophy quotes Fortune as saying that it is part of her sport to take away the gifts which she has given and that people who choose to play with Fortune should not complain when her game goes against them: "Worth thou wilt, so it be by this lawe, that thou me holden ought that I do wroong, though thou descende adown whan the resoun of my pley axeth it"

(II.pr.2). Troilus, however, cannot understand, when it comes time for Criseyde to depart, why Fortune should deprive him of his "joie", and he tells the goddess so in an apostrophe which does not fall far short of the ridiculous:

Than seyde he thus, "Fortune, alas the while!

 Have I the nought honoured al my lyve,
 As thow wel woost, above the goddes alle?
 Whi wiltow me fro joie thus deprive. (IV.260-69)

Contrary to the opinions of critics like Siegfried Wenzel, who defends the Troilus of Book IV on the grounds that his protestations against Fortune are reasonable from a "chivalric" point of view,⁷³ it must be maintained that however we look at the content of the foregoing lines, Troilus is acting very foolishly indeed. He has agreed to follow Fortune and cannot reasonably expect Fortune to change the rules of her game as a special concession to him. Pandarus, who tells him to forget Criseyde after she is gone and to resign himself to the laws of chance ("... manly sette the world on six and sevene" IV.622) is actually behaving more meritoriously than Troilus in that he entertains no illusions about the right way of treating Fortune's gifts.

In the light of Pandarus's frank recommendation at the beginning of the poem that Troilus submit to Fortune and in that of his clear-sighted acceptance, at the end,

of the consequences of submitting, it is clear that Pandarus intentionally designs every detail in his work of art according to the pattern dictated by the movements of Fortune's wheel. Unlike Troilus, whose attitude to Fortune is completely unforeseeing, Pandarus fully knows what to expect from Fortune when he helps purchase her favour. In effect, Fortune, not Pandarus, is the real artist of the love affair, since he lets her control the direction and conclusion of the lovers' activities. Thus there is a distinct irony in the passage at the end of Book I which metaphorically alludes to the love affair as a well-built house of which Pandarus is the architect; for despite the narrator's assurances that all is carefully planned by Pandarus, we must remind ourselves, as we read the passage, that his work can be no more orderly than the caprices ("chaugynge stowndes") of Fortune on which it is based. The architectural figure used by the narrator to describe Pandarus's work is almost a literal translation of the Poetria Nova (ll.43-50) of Geoffrey of Vinsauf and appears in the Troilus as follows:

For everi wight that hath an hous to founde
 Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne
 With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,
 and set his hertes line out fro withinne
 Aldirfirst his purpos for to wynne.
 Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,
 And caste his werk ful wisely or he wroughte.
 (I.1065-71)

Geoffrey of Vinsauf employs this figure as an introduction to his discussion of the poetic art of ordering the material of verbal discourse, and the application of the figure to the activities of Pandarus is one of the strongest examples in the Troilus of the implicit analogy between the roles of the procurer and the artist. That this analogy is condemnatory in its reference to the character of Pandarus is shown clearly in the failure of the narrator of the Troilus to understand the moral significance attached to the architectural figure in the Poetria Nova. Although the narrator faithfully echoes all of Geoffrey of Vinsauf's instructions about planning the work beforehand and not rushing recklessly to the task of composition, he neglects to mention the one instruction given by Geoffrey which gives context and relevance to all the rest: the careful artist trusts "neither hand nor tongue to the guidance of Fortune":

Specter in hoc speculo quae lex sit danda poetis.
 Non manus ad calamum praeceps, non lingua sit ardens
Ad verbum: neutram manibus commite regendam
Fortunae. . . . 74

Pandarus's inversion of this rule that the artist should not trust Fortune indicates that he is not to be taken seriously as an artist. The true artist wishes to create order in the place of chaos and therefore resists the illusions of Fortune which, as Boethius explains in the

De Consolatione, are the cause of disorder in the temporal world (IV.pr.6). However, all that Pandarus does contributes to the ultimate debilitation of aesthetic order and the increase of temporal disorder. To liken Pandarus to an artist is, therefore, merely to emphasize these negative aspects of his character.

Though Pandarus has "an hous to founde," it is not the edifice of poetic art described in the Poetria Nova, and in order to ascertain the precise function of the architectural figure which Chaucer has borrowed from Geoffrey of Vinsauf, we must consider its relation to some of the stanzas in the Troilus which surround it. In the proem to Book II, which almost immediately follows the narrator's report about Pandarus's careful plans, we are told by the narrator that he is not writing the poem out of personal inspiration but that it is a translation: ". . . of no sentement I this endite, / But out of Latyn in my tonge it write" (II.13-14). He then goes on to discuss the subject of linguistic differences and the difficulties which these occasion for the translator:

Wherefore I wyl have neither thank no blame
Of al this werk, but prey you mekely,
Disblameth me, if any word be lame,
For as myn auctor seyde, so sey I.
Ek though I speeke of love unfelyngly,
No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is;
A blynd man kan nat jугgen wel in hewes.
Ye knowe ek that in forme of speche is chaunge

Withinne a thousand year, and wordes tho
 That hadden pris, now wonder nyce and straunge
 Us thinketh hem, and yet thei spake hem so,
 And spedde in love as men now do
 Ek for to wynnyn love in sondry ages,
 In sondry londes sondry ben usages. (II.15-28)

But the focus of attention in these stanzas is as much on the mutability and variety of human speech as on matters of translation; and this suggests that Chaucer discerns a definite thematic significance in the state of language itself. It is unlikely that, in making reference to the lack of uniformity in language, Chaucer could have been unmindful of the biblical myth of the Tower of Babel which is repeatedly cited by patristic and medieval authors not only to account for the existence of many tongues, but also to symbolize the source of such qualities as duplicity and treason, which play no small part in the Troilus.⁷⁵

If Chaucer did associate the contents of the proem to Book II with the story of Babel, we might well suppose that those lines concerning geographically determined differences in "forme of speche" recall verses like Genesis 11:9 wherein the penalty inflicted by God on the builders of the Tower is described: ". . . the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth." Moreover, since the Tower of Babel is a symbol of confusion, we might go one step further and suggest that Chaucer

may have identified it figuratively with the chaos engendered by Pandarus's art. This would make the "hous" which Pandarus builds analogous to the Tower of Babel.

In order to test the validity of these suppositions, we must ask whether there are any allusions to Babel among works recognized as possible sources for the proem to the second book of the Troilus. Robinson lists Horace's Ars Poetica (70-71) and Seneca's Epistle XIX, 5, 13 as works which bear resemblances to Chaucer's proem, but suggests that Chaucer's immediate source would likely have been either John of Salisbury's Metalogicon i, 16: iii, 3 or Dante's Convivio II. 14, 83-89.⁷⁶ None of these works, however, refers to the Tower of Babel in a context which could have directly influenced Chaucer's remarks about the diversity of language. Another source, as Howard Schless points out in his doctoral thesis on the literary relationship of Chaucer to Dante, may have been the Convivio I. v. 9.⁷⁷ Although this passage in the Convivio does not contain a reference to the Tower of Babel either, it has some striking similarities to lines in Chaucer's proem and seems as probable a source as any yet proposed for what Chaucer says about changes in "form of speche." In addition, it refers the reader to a work by Dante, at the time still unwritten, which treats the subject of language in fuller detail: "Di questo si parlerer altrove

più compisitamente in uno libello ch'io intendo di fare,
 Dio concedente, di Volgare Eloquenza" (This will be much
 more fully discussed elsewhere in a book which I intend
 to compose, God permitting, on the Eloquence of the Vulgar
 Tongue).⁷⁸

The De Vulgari Eloquentia, as it was later titled,
 is not considered by Schless to have had any significant
 influence on the composition of Chaucer's proem and, so far
 as I have been able to determine, has not previously been
 acknowledged as an important source for this particular
 section of the Troilus. Yet Dante's reference to the
De Vulgari Eloquentia in a passage which very likely did
 serve Chaucer as a source indicates that Chaucer must have
 been aware of it when he wrote about the instability of
 language and its conventions. Furthermore, Chaucer's use
 of the proverb "a blynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewes"
 (II.21) may well have been due to the influence of the
De Vulgari Eloquentia, where it is used by Dante in a
 discussion of word arrangements in the canzone: "Pudeat
 ergo, pudeat idiotas tantum andere deinceps ut ad cantiones
 protumpant; quos non aliter deridemus quam caecum de
 coloribus distinguentem. (Let therefore, illiterate persons
 be ashamed -- I say, let them be ashamed of being henceforth
 so bold as to burst forth into Canzoni, for we laugh at a
 blind man distinguishing between colours. De Vulgari

Eloquentia, II.vi,27).⁷⁹ While this proverb was widely known in Chaucer's time,⁸⁰ its application to the subject of words in both the Troilus and the De Vulgari Eloquentia tempts one, as John Livingston Lowes has said, "to suppose that Dante's use of the phrase suggested Chaucer's."⁸¹ This parallel between Chaucer's diction and Dante's is, admittedly, not in itself conclusive evidence that Chaucer had read and borrowed from the De Vulgari Eloquentia. However, when we look at it in conjunction with Dante's reference to the De Vulgari Eloquentia in the passage from the Convivio which was seminally important for the development of Chaucer's proem, the parallel acquires a more pronounced significance. Indeed, the appearance of a line from the De Vulgari Eloquentia in a stanza of the Troilus directly preceding a stanza which was derived from a section of the Convivio in which the former work by Dante is cited, suggests rather strongly that the De Vulgari Eloquentia should be counted as one of the sources for the Troilus II. (51-28).

It is when we try to locate the section of the De Vulgari Eloquentia which seems to have contributed most to Chaucer's remarks about language in the proem to Book II, that we begin to discover comments concerning the variety of human language and custom that are based on the story of Babel. Dante, interestingly, in describing the erection

of Babel and the dispersion of races and tongues which followed that event, calls the tower a work of man's presumptuous art: "Praesumpsit ergo in corde suo incurabilis homo, sub persuasione gigantis, arte sua non solum superare naturam, etiam ipsum naturantem, qui Deus est; et evepit aedificare turrim . . . qual postea dicta est Babel, hoc est confusio, per quam coelum sperabat ascendere."⁸² He then goes on to interpret the mutability of language and custom as resulting directly from the art which Babel represents. Like Chaucer, he comments on the way in which these things vary according to differences of time and place and explicitly attributes their variations, as Chaucer does not, to the "confusion" brought about by Babel: "post confusionem . . . nec durabilis nec continua esse potest; sed sicut alia qual nostra sunt (puta mores et habitus), per locorum temporumque distantias variari oportet."⁸³

Due to the apparent influence of the De Vulgari Eloquentia on the Troilus, a certain symbolic relationship may be observed between the "hous" of Pandarus's art and the mutability of language and custom dealt with in the opening stanzas of Book II. While it would be too much to say that Pandarus's "hous" and the Tower of Babel are figuratively equivalent, they are both architectural metaphors for the linguistic chaos engendered by misdirected art. The terms

used by Dante to characterize the art through which the Tower of Babel was constructed can, furthermore, be applied with equal relevance to the art represented by Pandarus's "hous."

This becomes clearer when we recall the concrete significance of the house as the story develops. Although it is at first simply a rhetorical figure taken from Geoffrey of Vinsauf, its identity later merges with the actual residence of Pandarus, where Troilus's first assignation with Criseyde occurs. Thus, early in Book III, Pandarus tells the bedridden Troilus, who for love of Criseyde is ludicrously unable to walk, that when he is successfully perambulating again, he will meet his lady "at myn hous." The passage in which Pandarus says this also contains notable overtones of his pretensions as an artist, since he speaks in aesthetic terms of "shaping" the assignation:

. . . thow Troilus, whan thow mayst goon,
That at myn hous ye ben at my warnynge,
For I ful well shal shape youre comynge.
(III.194-6)

These overtones place the image of the house in the same frame of reference which it occupies in the stanza borrowed from the Poetria Nova. In each case the image signifies the specious art of Pandarus, and Chaucer clearly means the second to serve as a reminder of the first. However, the

realistic dimension which is added to the image in the second instance through its association with an actual building shows how far Pandarus has come in putting his art into practice. The setting of Book III therefore, which for the most part comprises scenes in Pandarus's home that prepare for the consummation of Troilus's passion, represents the translation of the "hous" from aesthetic metaphor to the world of sexual reality. The process of translation is emphasized by the sense of unity of place created by the narrator's recurrent references to the house of Pandarus, while he is reporting on the arrangements for the lovers' assignation. The location of the assignation, indeed, appears to be almost as important as the assignation itself, for the narrator never allows us to forget where Troilus and Criseyde are meeting. Although he has already let us know that they are going to see each other at Pandarus's house, he reminds us of it a second time just before Pandarus invites Criseyde to supper:

That Pandarus, that evere dide his myght
 Right for the fyn that I shal speke of here,
 As for to bryngen to his hows some nyght
 His faire nece and Troilus yfere . . .
 (III.512-515)

And when, a few lines later, Pandarus delivers the supper invitation that is to culminate in Criseyde's confrontation with Troilus, our attention is once more drawn to Pandarus's

house:

And firmly he swor and gan hire seye
 But certeynly she moste, by her leve,
 Come soupen in his hous with hym at eve.
 (III.556-560)

After supper Criseyde is prevented by a rainstorm from going home, and Chaucer uses this occasion to stress again the importance of the house, as Pandarus encourages his niece to spend the night with him and to make herself feel at home:

'But goode nece, if I myghte evere plesse
 You any thyng than prey ich yow' quod he,
 To don myn herte as now so gret an ese
 As for to dwelle here al this nyght with me
 For -- whi this is youre owen hous, parde.
 (III.631-635)

Pandarus then adds that he himself will sleep in the outer part of the house as guardian for Criseyde's women: "And I wol in that outer hous allone / Be wardein of youre wommen everichone" (III.664-5).

The cumulative effect of all these references to Pandarus's house cannot be ignored; nor can their existence be considered accidental. The basic metaphor for Pandarus's plans is architectural, and for Chaucer to give an architectural context to the machinations whereby he carries out his plans is not only appropriate but poetically necessary. That Chaucer is deliberately creating such a context in the early part of Book III is shown in the narrator's description of Pandarus's partially executed

plans in terms of a building in process of construction:

For he with gret deliberacioun
 Hadde every thyng that herto myght availle
 Forncast and put in execucioun
 And neither left for cost ne for travaile.

This tymbur is al redy up to frame;
 Us lakkeþh nought but that we witen wolde
 A certeyn houre, in which she comen sholde.

(III.519-532).

This stanza is intended, evidently, to express continuation of the action initially undertaken by Pandarus at the end of Book I: that of designing a house of illegitimate love. There it was said that Pandarus "caste his work ful wisely er he wroughte" (I.1071), whereas he is now spoken of as having fulfilled the demand for careful foresight and preparation, and as having come up with a finished blueprint. At the same time, his work as an architect has ceased to be strictly metaphorical.

The significance of the reification of Pandarus's artistic designs has been summed up by Adrienne Lockhart as an attempt, which necessarily fails, to emulate God's power to create without corruption. By trying to elevate their love to the status of an ideal," she observes, the lovers, aided by Pandarus, "pervert caritas into cupiditas".⁸⁴ This, of course, is the sin which Dante, in the passage from the De Vulgari Eloquentia quoted above, attributes to incorrigible man (incurabilis homo) for hoping to ascend to heaven by his own means.⁸⁵ Thus it is not inappropriate

to stress a parallel between Pandarus's house and the Tower of Babel that is based on their common function as symbols of irrational aspiration. Pandarus, in the scenes which take place at his house, is literally attempting to enable Troilus to reach heaven through a sexual encounter with Criseyde. References to heaven and hell in Chaucer's poem, it has been noted, tend to be literal rather than merely figurative in meaning;⁸⁶ and when Pandarus, inviting Troilus to join Criseyde in bed, announces: ". . . thow shalt into hevne blisse wende" (III.704), he is repeating the moral offence of the builders of Babel who also wished to make a literal and physical ascent into heaven. To say that what Pandarus is doing is incompatible with the natural use of human sexual instincts will not seem surprising to anyone who is familiar with Chaucer's ideas about nature,⁸⁷ and we must regard the things that happen in Pandarus's house as being in Chaucer's view what the Tower of Babel was in Dante's: unnatural and spiritually presumptuous.

Once the connection between Pandarus's house and the Tower of Babel has been recognized, it becomes easier to appreciate the symbolic function of language and speech in the Troilus. There is much in the poem to indicate that Chaucer invested the language of the love affair with qualities which are intended to represent the chaos mis-

understanding, and unintelligibility inherent in verbal communication post confusionem. The three principal characters, for example, are invariably at cross-purposes in their attempts to communicate and be understood.

Pandarus expresses himself in such a way that Criseyde is baffled by his speech and has to ask: "Lat be to me youre fremde manere speche, / And sey to me, youre nece, what you liste" (II.248-9). After Pandarus has explained, in answer to this request, that what he is trying to say is that Troilus wants to have an affair with her, he is obliged to counter her resultant display of indignation by insisting that she has misread his motives: "'O mercy dere nece', anon quod he, / 'What so I spak, I mente naught but wel . . .'" (II.591-2). For the most part the whole love affair is conducted at this level of communication.. Nobody is ever sure of what anyone else means, and all verbal predications about character and motive are equivocal. Criseyde does not, for example, know whether Troilus is as sincere in his infatuation as Pandarus says he is, but deciding that it would be a pity to "sleen swich oon if that he mente trouthe" (II.665), she agrees to send him a letter. In so doing she carefully shrouds her words in ambiguity, thus causing Troilus the same kind of bafflement that she herself has experienced in speaking to Pandarus. As Troilus reads the letter, he is unable to distil any

precise meaning from its deliberate obscurity, and so merely decides that it says what he wants it to say:

But ofte gan the herte glade and quake
Of Troilus, whil that he gan it rede,
So as the wordes gave hym hope or drede.

But finally, he took al for the beste
That she hym wroot, for somewhat he byheld,
On which hym thoughte he myghte his herte reste,
Al covered she the wordes under sheld.

(II.1321-27)

Troilus, though on this occasion in the position of being unable to understand the words of someone else, is, for his own part, as adept as Pandarus and Criseyde at making words inscrutable to others. In obedience to Pandarus's injunction that he hide his passion from public view, Troilus tries to make his speech as misleading as possible in everything that concerns his personal state of mind. He so expresses himself that nobody "ne sholde han wist, by word or by manere, / What that he mente . . ." (III.431-2).

An important manifestation of the corruption of language in the Troilus is thus seen in the pervasive tendency of words to assume ambiguous meanings. In Book IV when Criseyde is trying to comfort Troilus before her departure from Troy, she tells him that she will persuade her father that he has been misled by the words of the Delphic oracle and that fear "made hym amys the goddes text to glose" (IV.1410). She also argues that the words of the gods have been misinterpreted by Calchas because of

their ambiguity:

He hath nat wel the goddes understonde;
 For goddes speken in amphibologies
 And, for a sooth, they tellen twenty lyes
 (IV.1405-07)

Diomede, at a later stage in the poem, also mentions the possibility that Calchas's predictions are ambiguous and untrustworthy, but clearly he does not take the possibility very seriously. Assuring Criseyde that Troy is bound to fall, he only admits rather lightly that her father's words may be two-faced:

The folk of Troie, as who seyth, alle and some
 In prisoun ben, as ye youreselven se;
 Nor thennes shal nat con on-lyve come

 And but if Calkas lede us with ambages
 That is to seyn, with double wordes slye,
 Swich as men clepen a word with two visages,
 Ye shal wel knowen that I naught ne lye.
 (V.883-900)

As a comparison of Criseyde's speech with Diomede's will reveal, the epistemological uncertainty caused by the ambiguous words of the gods is greater within the walls of Troy than outside them. This is quite appropriate, for Troy is the scene of the love affair and is properly associated with distorted language and communication, these being the things on which the affair rests. The "amphibologies" which Criseyde sees in the utterances of the gods are really no more than an extrapolation to a supramundane level of the ironically observed deficiencies of human communication in the city. Ambiguity was not, after all,

the literary virtue in the Middle Ages that is nowadays. In fact, it is listed in the Etymologiae of Isidore of Seville as one of the vices of grammar "quae in eloquiis cavere debemus";⁸⁸ and so far as its significance in the Troilus is concerned, verbal ambiguity is not only a bar to effective communication but also an example of the variability of language which arouses the narrator's anxiety in the proem to Book II and which causes Chaucer himself to lament "the gret diversite / In England and in writyng of oure tonge" (V.1793-5). As is implied in Diomede's definition of "ambages" as words that have two faces, ambiguity is contrary to principles of verbal consistency and uniformity -- principles which, according to Dante, governed all language before the founding of Babel: ". . . quod unum fuerit. . . Quae quiden convenientia x psi confusioni repugnat, quae ruit coelem in aedificatione Babel."⁸⁹

Diversity, however, is more than just a characteristic of the confused state of human language in the Troilus; in a broader sense it defines the whole order of the postlapsarian world in which the characters act. At one stage in Book IV, Troilus, believing that Criseyde has died of sorrow at having to leave Troy, denounces Jove and Fortune for the complex unpredictability of the world and prepares, melodramatically, to kill himself:

His swerd anon out of his shethe he twichte
 Hymself to slew, how sore that hym smerte,

 Syn Love and cruel Fortune it ne wolde,
 That in this world he lenger lyven sholde
 Thanseyde he thus, fulfild of heigh disdayn:
 "O cruel Jove, and thow, Fortune adverse,
 This al and som, that falsly have ye slayn
 Criseyde, and syn ne may do me no werse,
Fy on youre myght and werkes so diverse.
 (IV.1185-96)

Troilus, in his overwrought emotional condition, blames the confusion and disarray of the elements of his life on the diverse works of Fortune. Yet we have only to recall the remarks of Boethius about the reasons for the diversity of man's existence to recognize the bathetic undertone in Troilus's "heigh desdayn." In the De Consolatione Lady Philosophy explains carefully that man alone is responsible for mundane diversity, because, through the perversity of his own will, he has sundered the unity of God's creation: "'Thilke thyng thanne, quod sche, 'that is oon and symple in his nature, the wikkidnesse of men departeth it and divideth it'" (III.pr.9). Diversity is antithetical to God who is the sovereign good ("thynges thanne that ben sovereynly gode ne mowe by no weie be divers" III.pr.10), and Troilus has no one but himself to blame for his alienation from the sovereign good. He has chosen to follow Fortune and must accept the chaotic diversity of her rule.⁹⁰

Nonetheless, Troilus resents Fortune's "werkes so diverse" and repeatedly tries to reduce the illusion and

multiplicity of the world which surrounds him to the singleness and unity of God's Truth. His desire for unity receives what may be its most emphatic expression at the end of Book III where, in celebration of the consummation of his love for Criseyde, Troilus paraphrases the De Consolatione (II.m.8):

x Love, that of erthe and se hath governance,
 Love, that his hestles hath in hevenes hye,
 Love, that with an holsom alliaunce
 x Halt, peples joyned, as hem lest hem gye,
 Love, that knitteth lawe of compaignie
 And couples doth in vertu for to dwelle,
 Bynd this accord, that I have told and telle.
 (III.174-50)

In an earlier chapter of this thesis, it was pointed out that the cosmological love of God, which is the subject of this invocation, does not govern the amorous passion of Troilus, and although Troilus concludes his invocation with the hopeful prayer, "So wolde God, that auctor is of kynde, . . . / To cerclen hertes alle and faste bynde" (III.1765-7), he is obviously misguided in his search for unity. Troilus, ironically desires the impossible: to transcend diversity by means of a love affair based on Fortune, the source of all diversity.

In the course of his stubborn and prolonged refusal to accept the manifold and changing aspects of the temporal world, Troilus, who is usually more than ready to put his feelings into words, uses verbal self-expression as a way of coping with the diversity of human experience. Through

language, he attempts to construct an objective image of the unity that exists in his private fantasies and dreams of wish-fulfillment, thereby hoping to come to terms with and gain control over a reality which is intractable to his wishes. Troilus's hymn to cosmological love, quoted above, is one instance in which language is used to this end, but there are several others in the poem. When Troilus is perplexed or thwarted by events, he frequently reacts by writing songs and letters. A typical example of this behaviour occurs in Book V after Criseyde's departure. Languishing "bitwixen hope and drede" (V.630), Troilus composes a song for the purpose of explaining what the narrator refers to as the cause of his sorrow ("th' enchesoun of his wo")

For which hym likede in his songes shewe
Th' enchesoun of his wo, as best he myghte,
And made a songe of wordes fewe,
Somwhat his woful herte for to lighte.

(V.631-4)

The song, in which Troilus bewails his separation from Criseyde amounts to a plea for the restoration of that sense of spiritual unity, now lost, which he believes he has experienced in her company. Unfortunately the song is unavailing and Troilus continues to be obsessed by their separation ("Alas! whi twynned be we tweyne?" V.679)⁹¹ in which he sees epitomized the diversity that arises from Fortune. A new solution to the problem of diversity is

therefore proposed by Pandarus. This solution is also based on the idea of reaching unity and truth through language.

Pandarus suggests that Troilus write to Criseyde in order to find out why she has not fulfilled her promise to return to Troy; if Troilus's letter receives no answer, he will know that Criseyde has been unfaithful, but, if for reasons beyond her own control, Criseyde's return has been delayed, she will send him a reply explaining her situation. Thus, insists Pandarus, Troilus's doubts will be resolved, and he will know "a soth of al" (V.1309). Once again, however, the attempt to use language to order the diverse elements of reality fails. Troilus's letter does not elicit a clear-cut answer to his doubts, for Criseyde, although she is unfaithful, does, contrary to Pandarus's hypothetical prediction, reply to Troilus. To complicate matters further, her reply does not acknowledge her infidelity but preserves a thoroughly ambiguous tone. Though she reaffirms her intention to return, she refuses to say when and will not explain why she refuses. In addition, she praises Troilus's "gentillesse" while at the same time telling him that she suspects him of having deceived her; and, with an appropriate remark concerning the futility of verbal communication, she concludes: "Th' entente is al, and nat the lettres space" (V.1630). Troilus, unhappily, is nevertheless unable to perceive the "entente" and, until the very end of the poem,

trusts foolishly in whatever shreds of hope he can find in Criseyde's actual words.

Troilus's delusion about the efficacy of language as a standard for interpreting reality arises from his inability to see that the very diversity which Boethius attributes to the postlapsarian world is inherent in verbal communication. As a result of this failure in perception, he treats Criseyde's words not as the reflection of temporal chaos that they actually are, but as an embodiment of unity and truth, comparing them, indeed, to the divine words of the gospels:

God wot, I wende, O lady bright, Criseyde,
That every word was gospel that ye seyde!
But who may bet bigile, yf hym lyste,
That he on whom men weneth best to triste
(V.1264-67)

In identifying Criseyde's words with the Word of God, Troilus is carrying to its logical conclusion his erroneous assumption that human language offers an escape from diversity. St. Athanasius points out that man's word, for the very reason that it is "many and various" cannot be like the word of God which is One and unchanging:

Nec vero quaerenda est ratio cur Dei Verbum
non tale sit quae nostrum: quandoquidem non
talis est Deus quales nos. . . . Dei Verbum
proprium ex ille est, nec opus aliquod est, nec
etiam velut hominum verbum. Alioquin Deum
hominem esse omino esset intelligendum.
Et inem plurima et diversa hominum verba quotidie
praeterunt. . . . Nempe conveniebat unius Dei
unam esse imaginem, unum Verbum, unum sapientiam 92

As St. Athanasius says, we suppose God to be man if we pretend that His Word is akin to man's. Hence, in his belief that human language can share the unitive characteristics of the divine word, Troilus displays the same idolatrous spirit that prompts him to worship Criseyde as divine. This is self-evident when he refers to Criseyde's word as gospel, but it is not so readily noticed on the various other occasions where Troilus asserts his faith in language.

The high point in Troilus's linguistic strategy comes when he begins to conceive of his experiences as suitable material for a book. In the midst of his sorrow at losing Criseyde, Troilus outlines the possibilities of such a literary venture in a silent invocation to Cupid:

Thanne thoughte he thus, "O blisful lord Cupide,
Whan I the proces have in my memorie,
How thow me hast wereyed on every syde,
Men myghte a book make of it, like a storie.
(V.582-5)

These lines perhaps contain an allusion to Christ's injunction to St. John in the Book of Revelation to record in a book the details of the vision which he is there vouchsafed ("Quod vides scribe in libro" I.11). The contrast between John's literary service to Christ and Troilus's to Cupid presents an irony too obvious to require much comment; but whether or not Chaucer's lines do allude to the Book of Revelation, it is none the less clear that

the book which Troilus has in mind will not be written for the greater glory of God. Troilus, as usual, wants to interpret and unify his experience as a lover, and a book, like songs and letters, offers him a means to this end. Troilus is proposing that his experiences should be looked at in the figurative context of literary truth rather than in the literal context of history, since the word "proces", in the passage quoted above, means roughly the "course of events". Tatlock and Mackaye thus translate the passage as follows: "O blessed lord Cupid, when I remember the history, how thou hast warr'd against me on every side, men might make a book of it like a tale."⁹³

The distinction between poetic truth and historical truth was a very real one in the Middle Ages. St. Augustine, like Aristotle, considers the significance of history to be literal, whereas poetry, he says, requires figurative interpretation.⁹⁴ The same distinction is quoted by the author of the rhetorical treatise Ad Herennium,⁹⁵ whose work was the primary source for Geoffrey of Vinsauf. In voicing the desire to transmute history into poetry, Troilus would have brought to the minds of a medieval audience various commonplace ideas about these genres -- ideas based on rhetorical theory and principles of scriptural exegesis; and since Troilus's assumptions about the figurative lessons of poetry are sharply at variance

with those of the best medieval authorities, his historical audience would likely have perceived a certain irony in them. In differentiating poetry from history, St. Augustine, for example, says that to define the sense of poetry as figurative is to say that it must be interpreted for the end of charity. This concept of figurative meaning is also put forth emphatically by Chaucer's contemporary, Boccaccio,⁹⁶ which shows that it is a concept that was current in the fourteenth century and therefore known, in all probability, to Chaucer's audience. If Troilus wishes to construct a figurative meaning for his personal history by seeing it recreated as a work of imaginative literature, he does not want it to serve the cause of charity as works of imaginative literature were, in the Middle Ages, supposed to do. The cupidinous basis of the envisioned book about Troilus's life and hard times is plainly revealed in a concluding line from the aforementioned invocation to Cupid: ". . . I am thyn and holly at thi wille" (V.587). Instead of charity, Troilus is looking in the idea of literature for a figurative justification of his carnal passion for Criseyde and is thereby inverting the accepted medieval definition of figurative meaning.

This approach to literature reflects, once again, Troilus's abiding but futile desire to give to human language the authority of the Word of God. Although

literature is supposed to impart the doctrine of charity and thus to imitate the word of God which is expressed in Holy Writ,⁹⁷ Troilus wants to create for literature a carnal doctrine independent of both God and Scripture.

At the same time however, he wants through literature to establish a unified vision of reality, something which can, ironically, only be accomplished by the agency of God's Word. For Troilus, literature, as opposed to history, offers an opportunity to transcend the boundaries and limitations of a world view controlled by time. The division of human consciousness, through time, into the past, present, and future tenses is of course another important image of mundane diversity in the poem. This image is strengthened by Troilus's anxious obsession with time in Book V as he counts the days until Criseyde's return and by the concomitant powerlessness of both Troilus and Criseyde to control the future.

While Criseyde languishes among the Greeks, regretting her decision not to flee with Troilus, she reflects that she has always lacked one of the three eyes of Prudence: the ability to foresee the future:

Prudence, alas, oon of thyne even thre
 Me lakked alwey, er that I come here!
 On tyme ypassed wel remembred me,
 And present tyme ek koud ich wel ise,
 But future tyme, er I was in the snare,
 Koude I nat sen that causeth now my care

(V.744-49)

Troilus, for his part, also attributes his distress to the intractability of future time. In the second "Canticus Troilli", his predictions as to his personal future support his efforts, mentioned earlier, to achieve unity of consciousness and being by explaining "th' enchesoun of his wo". However, Troilus recognizes that he is unable to control the future, just as Criseyde knows that she is helpless to foresee it:

O sterre, of which I lost have al the light,
 With herte soor wel oughte I to bewaille,
 That evere derk in torment nyght by nyght,
 Toward my deth with wind in steere I saille;
 For which the tenthe nyght if that I faille
 The gyding of the bemes bright an houre,
 My ship and me Caribdis wil devoure (V.638-44)

The hope of establishing some sort of meaningful relation between the uncertain future and the historical past which he has "in memorie" is the source of Troilus's notion that a book "lik a storie" might be composed on the subject of his personal experience as a lover. Such a unification of the past and future tenses of that experience would clearly constitute a triumph over diversity.

Interestingly, Richard de Bury, the fourteenth-century bibliophile, expresses a view of the power of books to transcend time which is very similar to the one which Troilus seems to advance in Book V. By the aid of books, Richard de Bury explains, man controls the fluctuation and changing patterns of life created by time: "Per libros

praeteritorum reminiscimur, de futuris quodammodo propheta-
 mus, praesentia quae labuntur et fluunt scripturae
 memoria stabilimus."⁹⁸ However, this power is seen to rest
 not, as Troilus thinks, on the authority of human language
 itself, but on the example provided by the Word of God.
 Himself deigning to "stoop down" to practise the art of
 writing, God, who inscribes the "just in the book of the
 living", is the source of the meaning and value of written
 expression: "O scripturae serenitas singularis, ad cuius
 fabricam inclinatur artifex orbis terrae, (in cuius fabricam
 inclinatur artifex orbis terrae,) in cuius tremendo nomine
 flectitur omne genu. . . . Scribit iustos in libro
 viventium Deus ipse. . . ." ⁹⁹ God, Richard continues,
 enjoins those who are obedient to his will to follow his
 example by recording their experience in books. St. John
 of the Book of Revelation is cited as a case in point along
 with Isaiah and Joshua: "Quod vides scribe in libro,
 Christus Ioanni praecipit caro suo: Apoc." primo. "Sic
 Isaiae, sic Iosuae officium scriptoris iniungitur, ut tam
 actus quam peritia futuris in posterum commendetur."¹⁰⁰

But Troilus is not among the makers of books whose
 works are obedient to God's will. Troilus serves only the
 law of his own concupiscent desires, which, far from
 elevating him to an intellectual vantage point from which he
 can watch the course of temporal events without being caught

up in their mutability and diversity, only helps to ensnare him in the world of time. The true model for his literary endeavours is thus, to borrow a distinction used by Richard de Bury, not the divine writing of God so much as the ephemeral mass of confused and solecistic writing engendered by the tower of Babel.

Richard, expressing himself in a vein similar to the one in which Chaucer addresses his complaints to Adam the scrivener, attributes the misinterpretation and faulty transcription which the world inflicts on books to the absence of "one kind of speech" (*unica sermonis species*) for the whole human race.¹⁰¹ Personifying books, he accordingly gives voice to their indignation at the degraded condition that they must endure as a consequence of man's construction of Babel:

Heu, quam falsis scriptoribus nos ~~ex~~carandos
commititis; quam corrupte nos legitis et
medicando necatis, quos pro zelo corrigere
credebatis! Interpretes barbaros sustinemus
multotiens et qui linguarum idiomata nesciunt
nos de lingua ad linguam transferre praesumunt;
sicque proprietate sermonis ablata fit sententia
contra sensum actoris turpiter mutilata. Bene
gratiosa fuisset librorum conditio si turris
Babel nullatenus obfuisset praesumptio, si totius
humani generis unica descendisset sermonis species
propagata.¹⁰²

The complaints in this passage about "treacherous copyists" (*falsis scriptoribus*), "barbarous interpreters" (*interpretes barbaros*), and ignorant translators have various parallels in Chaucer's poetry, one of the most outstanding of which

is the stanza on language at the end of the Troilus that has been subjected to comment several times already in the course of this chapter ("And for theris so gret diversite / In Englissh and in writyng of oure tonge. . . ." V.1793-99). Here the poet expresses anxiety lest his work, because of a lack of uniformity in the conventions of written English, should be miscopied or misunderstood; and although we have examined the subject of the stanza in relation to the roles of the narrator and the audience of the Troilus, its bearing on the hero's capacity as a writer has hitherto gone unnoticed. It should therefore be pointed out that as a servant of Fortune, Troilus not only fails to achieve the unified literary vision of the writer who imitates God's writing, but that in addition he propagates the literary vices which, as Chaucer asserts, stem from "diversite", the main product of Fortune. Troilus, as his corrupt translations of Petrarch reveal, is one of the "interpretes barbaros" against whom Richard de Bury inveighs, and we are not encouraged by his accustomed standard of literary performance to believe that his plans for a book promise much either in the way of content or stylistic merit. Not until Troilus actually dies and ascends to the eighth sphere does he acquire the depth of figurative insight into his personal experiences that would be necessary for a successful book. By that time however, his dependence on

language as an instrument for epistemological exploration has been abandoned, and he is able to perceive truth without being misled by the ambiguity and confusion of words.

Another example of the degenerative symbolism of language in the Troilus is the identification of words with imprisonment and bondage. At an early stage in Book II, Criseyde, who discerns a threat to her personal liberty in the imminence of a love affair, tells Pandarus that Troilus will never have cause to boast that he binds her under the sentence of exclusive personal possession:

.Ne als I nyl hym nevere so cherice
That he may make avaunt, by juste cause;
He shal me nevere bynde in swich a clause
(II.726-28)

Like the Wife of Bath, Criseyde then declares her sexual independence and proceeds to explain that she will not be dominated by the commands of a husband:

I am myn owene womman, wel at ese,
I thank it God, as after myn estat,
Right yong, and stonde unteyd in lusty leese,
Withouten jalousie or swich debat:
Shal noon housbonde seyn to me "chek mat"
(II.750-53)

In both these passages, Criseyde's idea of sexual bondage is described as a loss of personal freedom resulting from forms of verbal restriction, and although the sexual bondage from which Troilus and Criseyde actually suffer is not that of marriage, their condition as lovers is frequently

represented metaphorically by the imprisonment which words impose upon them: Troilus becomes the slave of Criseyde's empty verbal promises, just as Criseyde is constrained and manipulated by the words of Pandarus. A symbolically portentous incident involving this aspect of the relationship of Pandarus and Criseyde occurs near the end of Book II, when he prevails upon her to respond to a letter from Troilus (II.1210-31). The narrator explains how Criseyde retires to a closet to write a letter in which she releases her feelings from "desdaynes prison" in a tentative display of concern for Troilus:

"Depardieux," quod she, "God leve al be wel!
 God help me so, this is the firste lettre
 That evere I wroot, ye, al for any del."
 And into a closet, for t'avise hire bettre,
 She wente allone, and gan hire herte unfettere
 Out of desdaynes prison but a lite,
 And sette hire down, and gan a lettre write.
 (II.1212-18)

There is a fair amount of significance in the place which Criseyde chooses in which to write her letter. Stephen Barney has pointed out that confined spaces, such as small rooms and closets, generally reinforce the theme of bondage in the Troilus. Barney writes:

Troilus constantly finds himself in confined spaces: his bed within his chamber, the temple in which he meditates, the closet from which he issues to meet Criseyde, the walls of Troy itself. The sickbed chamber at Deiphebus' house is described as cramped (II.1646). When he learns of Criseyde's exchange for Antenor, Troilus goes immediately to his bed . . . and proceeds to en-

close himself. . . . He goes on to batter himself and the chamber walls, like a fatally wounded bull. These stanzas . . . depict . . . Troilus' wish to be bound. . . .103

Certainly the closet into which Criseyde retires to write to Troilus can be viewed as part of this continuum of images linking confined spaces with bondage; and it is ironic that Criseyde should enclose herself in a closet in order to unlock her heart. The dangerous ambiguity in the latter gesture is reflected in its juxtaposition with the first and is borne out in the paradoxically imprisoning effect of Criseyde's words on the mind of Troilus: from the instant that he receives the letter, his enslavement to passion is confirmed, and he becomes a human puppet whose movements are completely controlled by the verbal utterances of someone else:

But ofte gan the herte glade and quake
Of Troilus, whil that he gan it rede,
So as the wordes yave hym hope or drede
(II.1321-23)

But the larger irony of the situation is that Criseyde is the slave of Pandarus's eloquence even while she subjugates Troilus with her own. It is the "paynted proces" (II.424) of this eloquence that is chiefly responsible for her acquiescence in her uncle's demands, and although we can argue that Criseyde does nothing against her will, yet it must be remembered that her will is shaped to begin with by the verbal temptations of Pandarus. Consequently there

is a poignant truth in the exclamation which she addresses to him upon having completed her letter to Troilus: "I nevere dide thing with more peyne / Than writen this, to which ye me constreyne (II.1231-32)."

The linguistic dimension to the theme of bondage, whereby words become chains instead of a means of communication, signifies, like the imagery of Babel in the poem, a perversion of the proper use of language. Geoffrey of Vinsauf, in a passage of the Poetria Nova which Chaucer undoubtedly knew, describes words as keys to "unlock the closed mind". He asserts that one who uses words to obfuscate communication does an injury to them by making "a lock out of a key":

Ut quaedam claves animi: qui vult aperire
Rem clausam, nolit verbis inducere nubem;
Si tamen induxit, facta est injuria verbis:
Fecit enim de clave seram. Sis claviger ergo
Rem citius verbis aperi.104

Geoffrey's rule against drawing a "cloud over words" (nolit verbis inducere nubem) requires us to condemn Criseyde when she covers her "wordes under sheld" (II.1327) and so points to an implicit connection between the ideas of verbal confusion and verbal bondage in the Troilus. In concealing the meaning that underlies her words, Criseyde, besides contributing to the Babel of misunderstanding that exists in Troy, is increasing the power of language to cause mental imprisonment; in Geoffrey's terms, she is making a lock out

of a key.

Another person, who, like Criseyde, is enslaved by language and guilty of using words as locks instead of keys, is the narrator of the poem. The narrator invariably insists that he is the prisoner of his sources (IV.13-20), that he has no control over the pattern of the story he relates, and that his author, Lollius, is a more trustworthy authority on the story's events than he is himself (I.394; II.8-49; III.1324-25; III.1814-17; V.1088-89; V.1650-54). Furthermore, he sees himself as Venus's clerk rather than as a creative love poet in his own right (Now lady bryght, . . . / Whos clerik I am so techeth me devyse III.39-41), and this reinforces our sense of the pusillanimity of his own artistic will and of his dependency on the words of others.

However, there is a distinction between Chaucer the poet's conception of the Troilus and the conception put forward by the narrator. The former consistently perceives the work as a poem, that is, in medieval terms, as a fiction embodying a moral purpose.¹⁰⁵ It is the voice of the poet that we hear in the final stanzas, conscientiously exhorting young people to embrace Christ and dedicating the work to "moral Gower" and "philosophical Storde". The same voice unequivocally identifies the genre of the Troilus as that of tragic poetry: "Go litel bok, go litel myn tragedye V.1786." The narrator, on the other hand, tends not to refer to his

writing as poetry, preferring instead to present it as history. Book II, in which Chaucer is perhaps more innovative in his adaptation of Il Filostrato than he is anywhere else in the Troilus, begins, paradoxically, with an invocation to Clio, the muse of history, along with various protestations from the narrator of his close dependence on his sources.

Generally the narrator conforms to the outlook taken at the beginning of Book II, pretending to be bound by the duty of transcribing words representing bare events. The motive for this seems to lie in his characteristic attempts to evade the moral responsibility of the poet's role, since according to the Augustinian definition widely held in Chaucer's time, history merely describes what has been done, whereas poetry instructs as to what should be done.¹⁰⁶ Certainly the narrator's reluctance and incapacity to assume the authority to pass value judgements is revealed in his desire to acquit himself of any moral bias or intention which might conceivably ruffle the complacency of his audience ("Disblameth me if any word be lame, / For as myn auctor seyde, so sey I." II.18-19; ". . . al be that Criseyde was untrewed, / That for that gilt . . . be nat wroth with me." V.1774-5). Nevertheless, the hope of achieving freedom from the pressure of moral issues by anonymously taking refuge in the literal language

of the historian brings bondage rather than freedom to the narrator. St. Augustine, echoing St. Paul, states: "He is a slave to a sign who uses or worships a significant thing without knowing what it signifies,"¹⁰⁷ a statement which has a great deal of relevance to the status of the narrator. Refusing to see the moral significance of the words that he claims to be transcribing, the narrator becomes a slave to them. Moreover, he threatens the minds of the foolish with enslavement insofar as he invites them to perceive only the literal significance of those words. Words in themselves, writes St. Augustine, unless they reveal spiritual truth, are as useless as a gold key which will unlock nothing.¹⁰⁸

This brings us to the end of our discussion of the metaphoric function of love as an art in the Troilus. We have examined the various meanings, good and bad, that Chaucer attaches to "loves art" and we have seen how the metaphor operates both within the affective context of the audience's responses and as a component of the formalistic structure of the poem itself. Here also, we reach the terminus ad quem of this thesis as a whole and must now proceed to a concise summary of its aims and conclusions.

CONCLUSION

As I pointed out in the Introduction, interpretative originality was not, per se, my intention when I chose to write a thesis on so worn and commonplace a topic as "Chaucer the love poet". What I wished to offer was an historically valid interpretation of the poetic function of love in Chaucer's work -- one which would treat the subject of love from a variety of angles without sacrificing internal coherence or a consistent moral point of view. These specifications were dictated to me by a need which I felt to refute the common assumption that to approach Chaucer on a conceptual or historical level is to ignore the purely literary aspect of his work.¹

In each section of this thesis therefore, I attempted to develop a perspective on Chaucer's love poetry that was methodologically different from, yet intellectually and morally consistent with the preceding. Chapter I reviewed the historical background of Chaucer's ideas on love; Chapter 2, the emphasis of which was primarily philosophic, attempted to examine certain aspects of those ideas in detail in order to assess their poetic function in Troilus and Criseyde, the Parliament of Fowls, and the Knight's Tale;

and Chapter 3, which was basically devoted to formalistic interpretation of Troilus and Criseyde, dealt with love as an aesthetic factor in Chaucer's verse. By encompassing this range of perspectives on love, I intended to demonstrate that one perspective is a necessary supplement to another -- that we cannot, for example, talk sensibly about the aesthetic virtues of Chaucer without a thorough knowledge of his historical and intellectual background. Whether my demonstration was successful, I will leave to the reader's judgement to decide.

There is one other matter that I should like to touch on briefly before taking leave of the reader, and that concerns the remarks that were made at the beginning of the thesis about the irrelevance of romantic love to any discussion of Chaucer. To say that Chaucer's vision of love cannot be understood without mental exertion and a serious effort of historical imagination may sound unfeeling and anti-humanistic to some ears; for we are romantically accustomed to regard love as universal and instinctive -- the most unchanging and the most distinctively human of emotions. If, however, any of the main points in this thesis have been convincing, it will be obvious that the conventions of romantic love are as ephemeral as everything else that is human. These conventions did not exist in Chaucer's day, and we have no reason to expect that they will survive in-

definitely in time yet to come. As Joseph Wood Krutch has expressed it: "... the ability to live for love in any form was a relatively recent accomplishment of the human race. ... Love is ... not a fact of nature of which we become aware, but rather a creation of the human imagination. ... "2 Whether or not the conclusions of the present study appeal to the predilections of modern sensibility, they should not therefore be dismissed on the grounds that they violate humanistic interests. Although the methods of historical criticism have been condemned for "dehumanizing ... the works of the human mind and spirit",³ they are designed only to further our understanding of the creations of the "human imagination" and thereby to realize the most humanistic of all ideals -- that of knowing ourselves.

NOTES TO INTRODUCTION

¹D. W. Robertson Jr., "Historical Criticism", in Alan S. Downer, ed., English Institute Essays: 1950 (New York: AMS Press Inc., 1965), p. 1.

²See Walter Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind 1830-1870 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 341-93 on the subject of love in the Victorian era.

³Joseph Wood Krutch, The Modern Temper (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), p. 107.

⁴Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 120.

⁵Houghton, op. cit., p. 375.

⁶Robertson, op. cit., p. 4.

⁷Nina Epton, Love and the French (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1959), p. 56.

⁸James Cleugh, Love Locked Out: A Survey of Love, Licence and Restriction in the Middle Ages (London: Anthony Blond Ltd., 1963), p. 296.

⁹See Paul A. Olson, "Chaucer's Merchant and January's 'Hevene in Erthe Heere'", ELH, 28 (1961), 203-215 and Alan T. Gaylord, "The Promises in the Franklin's Tale", ELH, 31 (1964), 331-66.

¹⁰D. W. Robertson Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 3-51.

¹¹See the following chapter passim.

¹² The nineteenth century idealism surrounding nature and art is summed up in Landor's quatrain written on the occasion of his seventy-fifth birthday:

I strove with none for none was worth my strife:
Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art:
I warm'd both hands before the fire of Life;
It sinks; and I am ready to depart.

See The Poetical Works of Walter Savage Landor, ed. Stephen Wheeler (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937), II, 464.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

¹ John Gardner, The Life and Times of Chaucer (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 10.

² See F. L. Utley's review of scholarship on courtly love, "Must We Abandon the Concept of Courtly Love?", Medievalia et Humanistica, 3 (1973), 299-322.

³ C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), pp. 9-10.

⁴ Ibid.; pp. 2, 12.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 197, 176. See also C. S. Lewis's essay "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato" in Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, 17 (1932), 56-75, reprinted in R. J. Schoeck and J. Taylor, eds., Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II: Troilus and Criseyde and the Minor Poems (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), pp. 16-33. This reprinting will be cited in all subsequent references to Lewis's essay.

⁶ Ibid., p. 27.

⁷ Lewis, The Allegory of Love, p. 183.

⁸ Ibid., p. 176.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 163-64.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 33.

¹¹ D. W. Robertson Jr., "The Subject of the De Amore of Andreas Capellanus", Modern Philology, 50 (1952-53), 145-61.

¹² D. W. Robertson Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 400.

¹³ Ibid., p. 473.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 487.

¹⁵ Utley, "Must We Abandon the Concept of Courtly Love?", 299.

¹⁶ See E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Myth of Courtly Love", in Speaking of Chaucer (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), pp. 154-63; John F. Benton "Clio and Venus: An Historical View of Medieval Love", in F. X. Newman, ed., The Meaning of Courtly Love (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1968), pp. 19-42, and John V. Fleming, The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), passim.

¹⁷ See, for example, Stephen Barney, "Troilus Bound", Speculum, 47 (1972), 445-458; Whitney Bolton, "Treason in Troilus", Archiv, 203 (1967), 255-62; Charles Dahlberg, "Love and the Roman de la Rose", Speculum, 44 (1969), 568-584; Alan T. Gaylord, "Gentilesse in Chaucer's Troilus", SP, 61 (1964), 19-34; Christopher Kertesz, "The De Arte Honeste Amandi of Andreas Capellanus", TSL, 13 (1971), 5-16; John F. McCall, "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's Troilus", ELM, 29 (1962), 263-275; Paul Olson, "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage", ELH, 24 (1957), 95-119.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Salter, "Troilus and Criseyde: A Reconsideration", in John Lawlor, ed., Patterns of Love and Courtesy (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 86.

- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 87.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 101.
- ²¹ Ibid.
- ²² Lewis, Allegory of Love, p. 196.
- ²³ Donald Howard, "Literature and Sexuality: Book III of Chaucer's Troilus", Massachusetts Review, 8 (1967), 454.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 443.
- ²⁵ Robertson, Preface, pp. 276-77.
- ²⁶ Donald Howard, The Three Temptations: Medieval Man in Search of the World (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 30.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 89.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 101.
- ²⁹ Aldo Scaglione, Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), p. 16.
- ³⁰ Utley, "Must We Abandon the Concept of Courtly Love?", 322.
- ³¹ Alan M. F. Gunn, The Mirror of Love (Lubbock, Texas: Texas Technological Press, 1952), pp. 413-14.
- ³² Ibid., p. 437.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 435.
- ³⁴ Howard, The Three Temptations, p. 152.
- ³⁵ E. Talbot Donaldson, "The Ending of the Troilus", in Speaking of Chaucer, p. 96.

- ³⁶ Peter Heidtmann, "Sex and Salvation in Troilus & Criseyde", The Chaucer Review, 2 (1968), 251.
- ³⁷ Chauncey Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 190-91.
- ³⁸ Alfred David, "The Hero of the Troilus", Speculum, 37 (1962), 570.
- ³⁹ Robertson, Preface, pp. 395-96.
- ⁴⁰ Walter Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 390.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 388.
- ⁴² The French term for courtly love, "amour courtois", was coined in the late nineteenth century by Gaston Paris. See Henry A. Kelly, Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 1975), p. 20 for a brief account of the origin of the term.
- ⁴³ M. G. Luria and R. L. Hoffman, eds., Middle English Lyrics (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1974), p. xi.
- ⁴⁴ Robert Hollander, Allegory in Dante's Commedia (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 107.
- ⁴⁵ Norman Eliason, "Chaucer the Love Poet" in Jerome Mitchell and William Provost, eds., Chaucer the Love Poet (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1975), p. 18.
- ⁴⁶ Mythographus Vaticanus Tertius, in G. H. Bode, ed., Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum (Cellis, 1834), p. 229.
- ⁴⁷ For a full discussion of this idea see D. W. Robertson Jr., "Chaucerian Tragedy", ELH, 19 (1952), 1-37.

- ⁴⁸Robertson, Preface, p. 22.
- ⁴⁹J. B. Leishman, The Monarch of Wit (6th ed.; London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 43.
- ⁵⁰Robertson, Preface, pp. 120-30.
- ⁵¹Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936), pp. 83-4.
- ⁵²See Heidtmann, op. cit.
- ⁵³John V. Fleming, The Roman de la Rose: A Study in Allegory and Iconography (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 209.
- ⁵⁴Ibid.
- ⁵⁵Pamela Gradon, Form and Style in Early English Literature (London: Methuen, 1961), p. 252.
- ⁵⁶Ibid.
- ⁵⁷Consider, for example, the unanimous insistence on charity, the love of all things for God's sake, expressed in the following passages from Bernard of Clairvaux, Richard of St. Victor, William of St. Thierry, and Aelred of Rievaulx:

It follows then that he who loves God is with God according to the measure of his love. Insofar as he fails to love, to that extent he is yet in exile. He shows less love of God when he is occupied with bodily necessities. The Works of Bernard of Clairvaux, vol. 1: On Precept and Dispensation (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1970), p. 149.

But if we have an affection for something which we do not love for God's sake, the adulterous affection immediately breaks the constancy of the highest charity and diminishes its strength in proportion as it draws or drives the soul to extraneous desires.

Richard of St. Victor, Of the Four Degrees of Passionate Charity, in Selected Writings on Contemplation, trans. Clare Kirchenberger (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), p. 223.

When the will mounts on high like fire going up to its proper place, . . . it is charity, it is unity of spirit, it is God. For God is charity. . . . When the will turns aside to things of the flesh, it is carnal concupiscence. The Works of William of St. Thierry, trans.

Theodore Berkeley, vol. IV: The Golden Epistle II:8, in The Works of William of St. Thierry, trans. Theodore Berkeley (Spencer, Mass.: Cistercian Publications, 1971), IV, 295-36.

. . . we are the offspring of God because man's soul, created in God's image, can share in his wisdom and blessedness. It is charity which raises our soul towards its destiny, but it is self-centred desire which drags it down to the things to which without God's help it would certainly be drawn. Aelred of Rievaulx, The Mirror of Charity I:7, trans. G. Webb and A. Walker (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 68.

⁵⁸ Sophocles, Antigone, trans. Elizabeth Wyckoff, in David Grene and Richmond Latimore, eds., Greek Tragedies, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), I, 208-09.

⁵⁹ Euripides, Hippolytus, trans. David Grene, in Greek Tragedies, I, 252.

⁶⁰ F. M. Cornford, Plato and Parmenides (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1939), p. 49.

⁶¹ Peter Dronke, "L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle", Studi Medievali, 6 (1965), 314.

⁶² For some useful discussions of discordia concors in the context of the history of ideas see Earl Wasserman, The Subtler Language (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1959), pp. 95-115; Edgar Wind, Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Inc., 1967), pp. 180-88, and Erwin Panofsky, Studies in Iconology (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1967), pp. 160-63.

⁶³Wind, Mysteries, p. 94.

⁶⁴Helle Lambrides, Empedocles: A Philosophical Investigation (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1976), p. 59.

⁶⁵See Chauncey Wood, Chaucer and the Country of the Stars (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), pp. 108-115.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 113.

⁶⁷Lucretius, De Rerum Natura Libri Sex, 1-30 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908), p. 1.

⁶⁸Lucretius, On Nature, trans. A. Geer (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1965), p. 4.

⁶⁹Robertson, Preface, p. 135.

⁷⁰For a brief description of medieval knowledge of Lucretius see Dronke, "L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle", 314.

⁷¹Sir James Frazer, ed., The Fasti of Ovid (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1929), V, 188.

⁷²E. H. Alton, "The Medieval Commentaries on Ovid's Fasti", Hermathena, 44 (1926), 136.

⁷³Apuleius, Apulei Apologia 12:1-20, ed. H. E. Butler and A. S. Owen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1914), unpaginated.

⁷⁴St. Augustine, The City of God XIV:27, in Whitney J. Oates, ed., Basic Writings of St. Augustine (New York: Random House, 1948), II, 274.

⁷⁵G. H. Bode, ed., Scriptores Rerum Mythicarum, p. 239.

⁷⁶ Boccaccio, The Book of Theseus, trans. B. McCoy (Sea Cliff, N.Y.: Teasdale Publishing Co., 1974), p. 199.

⁷⁷ See R. A. Pratt, "Conjectures Regarding Chaucer's Manuscript of the Teseida", SP, 42 (1945), 745-63.

⁷⁸ See Wood, Country of the Stars, p. 72.

⁷⁹ Panofsky, Studies in Iconology, p. 109.

⁸⁰ St. Augustine, The City of God XIV:7, in Oates, ed., Basic Writings, II, 246.

⁸¹ Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae I, 34, 13, in J. P. Migne, ed., PL, LXXXII, 109. For a discussion of the medieval idea of irony see Robertson, Preface, p. 288.

⁸² This sort of rebellion did occur in the nineteenth century if not in the fourteenth -- a fact to which such literary productions as Lord Alfred Douglas's poem "Two Loves" bear witness. The traditional Christian categories of charity and cupidity have been replaced by romantic love and paederasty in Lord Alfred's scheme of things. The author's intention is clearly to shock:

. . . I am ture love, I fill
The hearts of boy and girl with mutual flame'
Then sighing, said the other, 'Have thy will,
I am the love that dare not speak its name'.

These lines produced their intended effect. They were read by the Crown prosecutor at Oscar Wilde's first court indictment for his homosexual liaison with Lord Alfred Douglas. The response was derisive hissing from the public gallery with some mingled applause. In historical retrospect the scandal of Wilde's personal life is interesting mainly for what we can learn from it about the hypocrisy of Victorian values. The same society that condemned and imprisoned Wilde for sexual licence and lack of moral restraint made a religion out of romanticism or, as Pater once called it, the "assertion of the liberty of the heart." In the Middle Ages, however, the rebelliousness of the passions was generally not idealized but condemned. Consequently there could have been little room for a double standard in ethics like the one that led to Wilde's down-

fall. To interpret Chaucer's Troilus, in whole or in part, as an assault on orthodox medieval ethics is to imply that Chaucer wrote the poem in a frame of mind not unlike that which inspired Lord Alfred Douglas's "Two Loves". Clearly this creates a risk of interpreting Chaucer in an unhistorical context. See Karl Beckson, ed., Aesthetes and Decadents of the 1890's (New York: Random House, 1966), pp. 80-82.

⁸³ Dronke, "L'amor che move il sole e l'altre stelle", 399.

⁸⁴ Plato, Symposium 203-205, in The Collected Dialogues of Plato, eds. E. Hamilton and H. Cairns (New York: Botlinger Foundation, 1961), p. 732.

⁸⁵ Aristotle, Metaphysics A7¹⁰⁷²b 14-30 in Richard McKeon, ed., The Basic Works of Aristotle (New York: Random House, 1941), p. 879.

⁸⁶ C. J. De Vogel, "Amor quo caelum regitur", Viviarum, I (1963), 2-34.

⁸⁷ Dronke, op. cit.

⁸⁸ Plotinus, Enneads III, 5, 2, trans. S. Mackenna (4th ed.; London: Faber & Faber, 1969), p. 193.

⁸⁹ Proclus, Alcibiades I 51:1; 52:12-14; 53:6-10, trans. W. O'Neill (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1965), p. 32.

⁹⁰ Proclus, Alcibiades I 57:1-5.

⁹¹ John McCall, "The Trojan Scene in the Troilus", ELH, 29 (1962), 263-75.

⁹² Whitney Bolton, "Treason in Troilus", Archiv, 203 (1967), 255-62.

⁹³ St. Augustine, The City of God XV:4, in Oates, ed., Basic Writings, II, 278.

⁹⁴ John Scotus, De Divisione Naturae 74 in J. P. Migne, ed.; PL, CXXII, 519B.

⁹⁵ See Richard A. Dwyer's Boethian Fictions: Narratives in the Medieval French Versions of the Consolatio Philosophiae (Cambridge, Mass.: Medieval Academy of America, 1976) for an introduction to commentaries and glosses on the De Consolatione.

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Salter, Chaucer: The Knight's Tale and the Clerk's Tale (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1962), p. 33.

⁹⁷ Salter, "Troilus and Criseyde: A Reconsideration", p. 106.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

⁹⁹ Salter, The Knight's Tale and the Clerk's Tale, p. 35.

¹⁰⁰ Wood, Country of the Stars, p. 72.

¹⁰¹ Robertson, Preface, p. 110.

¹⁰² St. Jerome, Adversus Rufinum III:2, in J. P. Migne, ed., PL, XXIII, 458.

¹⁰³ James Thomson, The Seasons (1730).

¹⁰⁴ St. Augustine, Confessions XII:11, in Oates, ed., Basic Writings, I, 209.

¹⁰⁵ W. C. Curry, Chaucer and the Medieval Sciences (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1960), p. 163.

¹⁰⁶ For a detailed discussion of the question of free will and determinism in The Knight's Tale, see Wood, Country of the Stars, pp. 69-70.

¹⁰⁷ Richard Hoffman, Ovid and the Canterbury Tales (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), pp. 49-50.

¹⁰⁸ Salter, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁰⁹ Salter, "Troilus and Criseyde: A Reconsideration",
p. 88.

¹¹⁰ Robertson, Preface, pp. 22-5.

¹¹¹ Lewis, Allegory of Love, p. 197.

¹¹² D. W. Robertson Jr., "Chaucerian Tragedy", ELH,
19 (1952), 1-37, reprinted in R. J. Schoeck and J. Taylor,
eds., Chaucer Criticism, vol. II: Troilus and Criseyde
and the Minor Poems, pp. 86-122. Subsequent references to
this reprint.

¹¹³ Salter, op. cit., pp. 86-87.

¹¹⁴ The term "narrator" is here used advisedly.
There is no character in the poem who occupies that role
or who might be compared to Chaucer the pilgrim in
The Canterbury Tales. On the other hand, it is frequently
acknowledged that Chaucer does not address himself to us
in propria persona in his love poetry, but rather writes
in a state of tension between his "pose of detachment and
his identification with his subjects". See Dorothy Bethurum,
"Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Love Poems",
PMLA, 74 (1959), 511-520, reprinted in Schoeck and
Taylor, Chaucer Criticism, vol. II: Troilus and Criseyde
and the Minor Poems, pp. 211-32.

¹¹⁵ See Stephen Barney, op. cit.

¹¹⁶ See Sanford Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus
(Syracuse, N.Y., 1959), pp. 320-323.

¹¹⁷ See Stephen Barney, op. cit.

¹¹⁸ For a more sophisticated and detailed analysis
of the poem's structure, see Gerry Brenner, "Narrative
Structure in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde", AnM, 6 (1965),
5-18.

¹¹⁹ See Theodore Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on
Chaucer's Troilus", MP, 49 (1951-52), 1-9.

¹²⁰ Erich Auerbach, Dante as Poet of the Secular World, trans. Ralph Mannheim (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 120-130.

¹²¹ See Wood, Country of the Stars, pp. 272ff.

¹²² D. G. Brewer, "Love and Marriage in Chaucer's Poetry", MLR, 49. (1954), 464.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ For the opinions of critics who regard these tales as ironic see Whitney Bolton, "The Miller's Tale: An Interpretation", MS, 24 (1962), 212-27; Paul Olson, "Chaucer's Merchant and January's 'Hevene in Erthe Heere'", ELH, 8 (1961), 203-15.

¹²⁵ E. K. Rand, Ovid and His Influence (London: Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1925), p. 146.

¹²⁶ L. P. Wilkinson, Ovid Recalled (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), pp. 442-44.

¹²⁷ D. W. Robertson Jr., "The Book of the Duchess", in Beryl Rowland, ed., A Companion for Chaucer Studies (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 336-37.

¹²⁸ This tendency in nineteenth-century literary taste is well revealed in Matthew Arnold's famous dismissal of neoclassical poetry as prosaic and tedious in spirit and conception. See also Wilkinson's comments in Ovid Recalled, p. 443.

¹²⁹ E. K. Rand, "Ovid and the Spirit of Metamorphosis", in Harvard Essays of Classical Subjects (Cambridge, Mass., 1912), p. 229.

¹³⁰ Douglas Bush, Mythology and the Renaissance Tradition (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1932), p. 18.

¹³¹ See Jessie Crossland, "Ovid's Contribution to L'Amour Courtois", MLR, 42 (1947), 199-206.

¹³² One such medieval critic was Jean Gerson, who condemned Ovid for providing a stimulus to lechery and who recommended that all his books should be burned. Opera (Hague Comitum, 1728), III, 923.

¹³³ Rand, Ovid and His Influence, p. 145.

¹³⁴ Cf. Derek Brewer, "Love and Marriage in Chaucer's Poetry", MLR, 49 (1954), 464.

¹³⁵ Hugh of St. Victor, On the Sacraments of the Christian Faith, trans. R. J. Deferrari (Cambridge, Mass.: The Medieval Academy of America, 1951), p. 325.

¹³⁶ Boccaccio, The Book of Theseus, trans. B. McCoy, p. 199.

¹³⁷ See also the following references to marriage, all of which cast ironic reflection on the characters concerned T&C. II.750-56; IV.1536; V.337-40; V.974-78.

¹³⁸ St. Augustine, Against Julian 3:7, in The Fathers of the Church, trans. M. Schumacher (New York: Father's of the Church Inc., 1957), p. 119.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁴⁰ Paul Olson, "A Midsummer Nights' Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage", ELH, 24 (1957), 100.

¹⁴¹ Robertson, Preface, p. 477.

¹⁴² Ibid., p. 375.

¹⁴³ R. E. Kaske, "The Knight's Interruption of the Monk's Tale", ELH, 24 (1957), 249-68.

¹⁴⁴ See Edmund Reiss, "The Symbolic Surface of the Canterbury Tales: The Monk's Portrait", Chaucer Review, 2 (1967-8), 254-72.

145 This fact has been insufficiently stressed in previous interpretations of The Monk's Tale such as R. E. Kaske's "The Knight's Interruption" and Alan T. Gaylord's "Sentence and Solaas in Fragment VII of the Canterbury Tales: Harry Bailly as Horseback Editor" PMLA, 82 (1967), 226-35.

146 Ida L. Gordon, The Double Sorrow of Troilus (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 70-71.

147 Stephen Barney, op. cit.

148 Roberston, Preface, pp. 472-73.

149 See Vance Ramsey's survey of the subject of irony in Chaucer criticism, "Modes of Irony in the Canterbury Tales", in Rowland, ed., A Companion to Chaucer Studies, pp. 291-312.

150 Robertson, Preface, p. 288.

151 See Henry Ansgar Kelly, Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer, chap. 3.

152 Edgar F. Shannon, Chaucer and the Roman Poets (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1929), pp. 167-68.

153 Constance Saintonge, "In Defence of Criseyde", MLQ, 15 (1954), 320.

154 Ovid, Ars Amatoria III:228-35, trans. J. H. Mozley (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), pp. 134-5.

155 Alan T. Gaylord, "Friendship in Chaucer's Troilus", MLQ, 23 (1962), 262.

156 Rand, Ovid and His Influence, p. 116.

157 Ibid., p. 127.

NOTES TO CHAPTER II

¹It should be remembered that there were different aspects to the relationship of Nature to reason in the Middle Ages. For Alain de Lille, reason is the gift of unfallen Nature, whereas Jean de Meun personifies Nature as a goddess who has no authority over man's reason. Boethius is closer to Alain than to Jean in this respect.

²Robertson, Preface, pp. 317-330. See previous chapter.

³Ibid., p. 328.

⁴F. N. Robinson, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 727.

⁵Alain de Lille, The Complaint of Nature, trans. D. M. Moffat (New York: Holt & Co., 1908), p. 25.

⁶Robertson, Preface, p. 301.

⁷Ibid., p. 397.

⁸J. A. W. Bennett, The Parlement of Foules (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 116.

⁹George D. Economou, The Goddess Natura in Medieval Literature (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 132.

¹⁰See E. C. Knowlton, "Nature in Middle English", JEGP, 20 (1921), 186-207.

¹¹B. F. Huppé and D. W. Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 116-117.

¹²Economou, The Goddess Natura, p. 202.

¹³Ibid., p. 129.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 201. See also Bertrand Bronson, "In Appreciation of Chaucer's Parlement of Foules", UCPE, 3 (1935), 193-224 and "The Parlement of Foules Revisited", ELH, 15 (1948), 247-60.

¹⁵Bronson, "In Appreciation of Chaucer's Parlement of Foules", 205.

¹⁶Bennett, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁷Whitney Bolton, "Treason in Troilus", Archiv, 203 (1967), 255-62.

¹⁸Elizabeth Salter, "Troilus and Criseyde: A Reconsideration", in Patterns of Love and Courtesy, p. 101.

¹⁹Bennett, op. cit., p. 57.

²⁰Fleming, op. cit., p. 204.

²¹Bennett, op. cit., p. 120.

²²Ibid., pp. 188-89.

²³G. L. Kittredge, "Chaucer's Lollius", Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, 28 (1917), 50-51.

²⁴See John P. McCall, Classical Myth in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde (unpublished Princeton dissertation, 1955), pp. 256-317.

²⁵Middle English Dictionary, ed. Hans Kurath, et al. (Ann Arbor, 1956-), 5V feined.

²⁶John M. Steadman, Disembodied Laughter (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 115-116.

- ²⁷ Alfred David, "The Hero of the Troilus", 578.
- ²⁸ John P. McCall, op. cit., p. 275.
- ²⁹ See note 25 above.
- ³⁰ Bennett, op. cit., p. 57.
- ³¹ If Bennett is referring to an anthropomorphic planet as he seems to be, he does not make this explicit to the reader. Moreover, it is worth noting that in early pictorial representations of the planet Venus as a woman, she is not customarily seen holding a firebrand. Sometimes the female figure of the moon is depicted with a firebrand, while Venus is not. See S. Samek Ludovici, Il "De Sphaera estense E L'Iconographia Astrologica" (Milano: Aldo Martello Editore, n.d.), pp. 51, 43.
- ³² Bennett, op. cit., p. 58.
- ³³ Charles Singleton, ed., The Divine Comedy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), VI, 582.
- ³⁴ R. Freyhan, "The Evolution of the Caritas Figure", JWCI, XI (1948), 73.
- ³⁵ Alan Gunn, op. cit., p. 495.
- ³⁶ See Fleming, op. cit., passim.
- ³⁷ John of Salisbury, Policraticus, trans. F. Dickinson (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927), p. 206.
- ³⁸ Aelred of Rievaulx, The Mirror of Charity, trans. G. Webb & A. Walker (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 106.
- ³⁹ Economou, op. cit., p. 139.
- ⁴⁰ Cicero, "Scepio's Dream", in The Basic Works of Cicero, ed. Moses Hadas (New York: Random House, 1951), p. 169.

⁴¹ The lines in Dante's Inferno are:

Per me si va ne la citta dolente
 Per me si va ne l'etteruo dolore
 Par me si va tra la perduto gente,

 Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate.
 (Inf. III.1-3)

⁴² Huppé and Robertson, Fruyt and Chaf, p. 125.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 127.

⁴⁴ See the prose commentarium to the Anticlaudianus quoted by John Fleming, The Roman de la Rose, p. 194.

⁴⁵ St. Augustine, The City of God IV:23, in Oates, ed., Basic Writings, II, 215.

⁴⁶ Alain de Lille, The Complaint of Nature, trans. F. M. Moffat, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Fleming, op. cit., p. 197.

⁴⁸ "Corruption", ll. 15-16.

⁴⁹ Ida Gordon, op. cit., p. 68. Gordon herself cites Bennett, op. cit., pp. 194-212.

⁵⁰ Gordon, op. cit., p. 69.

⁵¹ See Fleming, op. cit., pp. 196-7.

⁵² Ibid., pp. 196-202.

⁵³ Aquinas, Commentary on Sentences I, d.27q 1., Al-4, in An Aquinas Reader, ed. Mary Clark (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1972), p. 263.

⁵⁴ Aquinas, Summa of Theology I-II.q.91,a2c, in An Aquinas Reader, p. 361.

⁵⁵Robertson, Preface, p. 476.

⁵⁶Gordon, op. cit., p. 65.

⁵⁷Robertson, Preface, pp. 254, 394, 497.

⁵⁸Gordon offers no evidence. Her argument rests entirely on her interpretation of Chaucer's alleged verbal ambiguity.

⁵⁹Gordon, op. cit., p. 70.

⁶⁰F. N. Robinson, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 830.

⁶¹Wood, Country of the Stars, p. 70.

⁶²F. N. Robinson, ed., The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 157.

⁶³Hoxie N. Fairchild, "Active Arcite, Contemplative Palamon", JEGP, 26 (1927), 285-93.

⁶⁴W. H. French, "The Lovers in the Knight's Tale", JEGP, 48 (1949), 320-28.

⁶⁵J. R. Hulbert, "What Was Chaucer's Aim in the Knight's Tale", SP, 26 (1929), 375-85.

⁶⁶William Frost, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's Knight's Tale", RES, 25 (1949), 289-304.

⁶⁷R. M. Lumiansky, "Chaucer's Philosophical Knight", Tulane Studies in English, 3 (1952), 47-60.

⁶⁸For an analysis of Boethian elements in the Troilus, see Theodore Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus", MP, 49 (1951-52), 1-9.

⁶⁹ For reasons outlined in the previous chapter, Saturn's intervention in human affairs should not be taken as evidence of a lack of free will amongst human beings. Therefore we may here bypass the issue of determinism and acknowledge Arcite's responsibility for what happens to him.

⁷⁰ Galen, On the Natural Faculties, trans. A. J. Brock (London: William Heinemann, 1928), p. xxvi.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁷² Ibid., p. 197.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 199.

⁷⁴ All this suggests that Arcite's physical wounds have strong figurative significance. A passage from John Gower's Vox Clamantis may shed some light on the figurative and spiritual implications of Arcite's incurability, especially in view of the reference to Galen in the last sentence: "A knight does not rightly have to fear a bodily wound, since he should receive the world's praises for it. But he should fear the wounds of the spirit which blind, incurable lust inflicts with fiery darts. Bodily wounds are to be healed, but not even Galen will make a man well who is sick with love". See Vox Clamantis V:4 in The Complete Works of John Gower, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), IV, 207.

⁷⁵ Frederick Copleston, A History of Philosophy: Mediaeval Philosophy Part I (New York: Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1962), II, 193.

⁷⁶ Cicero, De Legibus I:15-16, trans. C. W. Keyes (New York: William Heinemann, 1928), pp. 344-47.

⁷⁷ Copleston, op. cit., p. 194.

⁷⁸ Aquinas, Summa of Theology I-II, q.91, a.3, c., in An Aquinas Reader, p. 362.

⁷⁹ Summa of Theology, I-II, q.95, a.2, in An Aquinas Reader, p. 371.

⁸⁰ See Richard Hamilton Green, "Classical Fable and English Poetry"; in D. Bethurum, ed., Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 131.

⁸¹ H. J. Webb, "A Reinterpretation of Chaucer's Theseus", RES, 23 (1947), 289.

⁸² Ibid., 296.

⁸³ Copleston, op. cit., p. 194.

⁸⁴ It is perhaps worth noting that the Wife of Bath, whose philosophy is that "all is for to selle" (WBP.414), is the only character in Chaucer's poetry who demands ransoms (WBP.411). This certainly helps to establish a connection between the sin of cupidity and the practise of holding for ransom a person or a thing. Theseus is clearly innocent of any such sin.

⁸⁵ Cf. Hoxie Fairchild, op. cit., and William Frost, op. cit.

⁸⁶ Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, in E. Faral, ed., Les Arts Poetiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle (Paris: Librairie Honore Champion, 1958), p. 204.

NOTES TO CHAPTER III

¹ Lewis, The Allegory of Love, pp. 1-43.

² Ibid., p. 35.

³ Ibid., p. 192.

⁴ Benton, op. cit., pp. 36-7.

- ⁵ Lewis, The Allegory of Love, pp. 40-43.
- ⁶ Fleming, The Roman de la Rose, p. 97.
- ⁷ F. Goldin, ed., Lyrics of the Troubadors and Trouveres (New York: Anchor Press & Doubleday, 1973), p. 216. See also Linda Paterson, Troubadors and Eloquence (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 186-90.
- ⁸ Benton, op. cit., p. 30.
- ⁹ Cf. Robinson, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 388. Robinson says: "Love was a fine art and its pursuit was held to ennoble the character".
- ¹⁰ Robertson, Preface, p. 478.
- ¹¹ Gianluigi Toja, Arnaut Daniel: Canzoni (Firenze: Sansoni Editore, 1960), p. 74.
- ¹² Paterson, op. cit., p. 189.
- ¹³ Lewis, op. cit., chap. 1.
- ¹⁴ Benton, op. cit., p. 30.
- ¹⁵ Benton, op. cit., p. 27.
- ¹⁶ E. H. Wilkins, The Making of the Canzoniere and Other Petrarchan Studies (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1951), p. 26.
- ¹⁷ Giles Fletcher, The English Works of Giles Fletcher the Elder, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964), pp. 79-80.
- ¹⁸ Leishman, op. cit., p. 166.
- ¹⁹ Adrienne Lockhart, "Semantic, Moral and Aesthetic Degeneration in Troilus and Criseyde", Chaucer Review, 8 (1973), 101.

- ²⁰ Ibid., 118.
- ²¹ Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. J. J. Parry (New York: W. W. Norton & Co. Inc., 1969), p. 185.
- ²² Robertson, Preface, p. 446.
- ²³ Fleming, The Roman de la Rose, p. 170.
- ²⁴ Troilus and Faussemblant are representatives of a well-known character type in medieval literature, who also appears in Piers Plowman xx.338 as a seductive friar called Sir penetrans domos.
- ²⁵ Robert Miller, "Chaucer's Pardoner and the Scriptural Eunuch", Speculum, 30 (1955), 180-99, reprinted in Schoeck and Taylor, eds., Chaucer Criticism, I, 232.
- ²⁶ See Stephen Barney, op. cit., 446-7. See also Robert O. Payne, The Key of Remembrance (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1963), chap. 6. Payne notes that eight out of ten lyric inserts in Chaucer's poem are given to Troilus.
- ²⁷ See, for example, Alfred David, op. cit., 566-81; Siegfried Wenzel, "Chaucer's Troilus of Book IV", PMLA, 79 (1964), 542-47.
- ²⁸ It is possible that the word "arten" carries an intentional double entendre. Literally the word means "to urge or constrain", but in the context of the "loves art" motif in the Troilus, it may also refer to the deftness and artful sleight of hand whereby Troilus arranges for the seduction of Criseyde.
- ²⁹ E. H. Wilkins, op. cit., pp. 309-10.
- ³⁰ Ibid., p. 307.
- ³¹ Patricia Thomson, "Chaucer and Petrarch", CL, 11 (1959), 322.

³² Ibid., 317.

³³ Ibid., 318.

³⁴ Ibid., 322.

³⁵ Ibid., 318.

³⁶ See pp. 335-60 of this chapter.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ St. Augustine, De Trinitate, in The Library of Christian Classics, trans. J. Burnaby (London: SCM Press, 1966), VIII, 154.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ The moral defects of Troilus's song typify what several medieval authors refer to as vitiis in linguae. Vincent of Beauvais, in the fourth book of the Speculum doctrinale has a section on vitiis linguae of which the first is mendacium -- a sin not at all unfamiliar to Troilus. Guilelmus Peraldus in the Summa de vitiis et virtutibus lists the seven deadly sins and adds an eighth sin: peccatum linguae. See selections in K. O. Petersen, The Sources of the Parson's Tale, Radcliffe College Monographs, No. 12 (Boston: Gunn and Co., 1901), pp. 80-90. See also Morton Bloomfield, The Seven Deadly Sins (Michigan State College Press, 1952), pp. 190-220.

⁴¹ Geoffrey of Vinsauf, De Modo et Arte Dictandi et Versificandi, in E. Faral, ed., Les Arts Poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle, p. 318.

⁴² See Ida Gordon, op. cit. Gordon makes a case for the moral function of ambiguity in the Troilus.

⁴³ Wilbur Scott, ed., Five Approaches of Literary Criticism (New York: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1962), p. 179.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Robertson, Preface, pp. 136-37.

⁴⁶ Salter, op. cit., p. 105.

⁴⁷ Donald Rowe, O Love! O Charite! Contraries Harmonized in Chaucer's Troilus (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976), p. 152.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 66.

⁴⁹ Matthew Arnold's strictures upon Chaucer are based on the expectation that poetry should give to our "spirits what they can rest upon" -- in other words, that it should provide the kind of solace that religion offered in Chaucer's time and which Arnold finds lacking in Chaucer's verse. See Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry", in S. R. Littlewood, ed., Essays in Criticism: Second Series (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1960), pp. 19-20.

⁵⁰ Robertson, Preface, p. 65.

⁵¹ F. Goldin, Lyrics of the Troubadors and Trouveres, p. 203.

⁵² Cf. Marcabru's lyric "Contra liuèrn que s'enensa" from which these lines are quoted, XIV in J. M. L. Dejeanne, ed., Poesies Complètes du Troubadour Marcabru (Toulouse: Edouard Privat, 1909), p. 57.

⁵³ See Alice Miskimin, The Renaissance Chaucer (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1975), pp. 96-115 for a discussion of Chaucer's imaginary audience.

⁵⁴ Stanley Fish, Surprised by Sin: The Reader in Paradise Lost (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1967), p. 39.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 88.

⁵⁶ Juan Ruiz, Libro de Buen Amor, ed. Joan Corominas (Madrid: Editorial Gredos, S.A., 1967), p. 99.

⁵⁷ Cf. the Augustinian theory of interpreting scripture On Christian Doctrine II.6-7, ed. D. W. Robertson (New York: Bobbs Merrill, 1958), p. 37.

- 58 Juan Ruiz, op. cit., p. 102.
- 59 Ibid., pp. 82-3.
- 60 Ibid., p. 79.
- 61 Robertson, Preface, p. 65.
- 62 Juan Ruiz, op. cit., p. 79.
- 63 Ibid., p. 80.
- 64 Erich Auerbach, op. cit., p. 142.
- 65 Juan Ruiz, op. cit., p. 99.
- 66 Ibid., p. 101.
- 67 Adrienne Lockhart, op. cit., 117.
- 68 Othello III.iii.90-92.
- 69 Lily B. Campbell, Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes
(New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1952), pp. 165-77.
- 70 Robertson, Preface, pp. 74-5.
- 71 McCall, op. cit., 264.
- 72 Barney, op. cit., 445.
- 73 Siegfried Wenzel, op. cit., 543.
- 74 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, in Faral ed.,
Les Arts Poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe Siècle, p. 198.
- 75 Bolton, op. cit.
- 76 Robinson, The Complete Works of Geoffrey Chaucer,
p. 818.

77 Howard Schless, Chaucer and Dante: A Revaluation (unpublished Pennsylvania dissertation, 1956), p. 170.

78 Dante, Il Convivio, a cura di Maria Simonelli (Bologna: Casa Editrice Prof. Ricardo Patron, 1966), p. 11.

79 Dante, De Vulgari Eloquentia II:6, in Opere di Dante Alighieri, a cura di Moore e Toynbee (4th ed.; Oxford: nella stamperia dell'universita, 1924), p. 394.

80 W. W. Skeat, Early English Proverbs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1910), p. 66.

81 John Livingston Lowes, "Chaucer and Dante", MP, 14 (1917), 711.

82 Dante, De Vulgari Eloquentia I:7, in Opere di Dante Alighieri, p. 382.

83 Ibid., I:9, in Opere di Dante Alighieri, p. 384.

84 Lockhart, op. cit., 101.

85 See also Rabanus Maurus, Commentariorum in Genesim, in J. P. Migne, ed., PL, CVII, 11.

86 Stephen Barney, op. cit., 447.

87 Cf. preceding chapter.

88 Isidore of Seville, Etymologiae I:34:13, in Migne, ed., PL, LXXXII, 109.

89 Dante, De Vulgari Eloquentia, I:9.

90 It is possibly of importance that the Greeks, who are the agents of Fortune in bringing about the destruction of Troy, do so "in diverse wise" (T&C. I.61). See also John Gardner, The Poetry of Chaucer (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977), pp. 96-148.

⁹¹ See, on the subject of Troilus as poet, Robert W. Hanning, "The Themes of Art and Life in Chaucer's Poetry" in Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. George Economou (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 1975), pp. 15-37. See particularly his comments on the line, "Allas why twynned be we tweyne?".

⁹² St. Athanasius, Oratio II Contra Arianos 36, in Migne, ed., PG, XXVI, 223.

⁹³ John S. P. Tatlock and Percy Mackaye trans., The Modern Reader's Chaucer (New York: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1912), p. 494.

⁹⁴ St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, III.12.20, p. 91.

⁹⁵ Rhetorica ad Herennium, I, VII; 13, trans. Harry Caplan, Loeb Classical Library (London & Cambridge, Mass.: Heinemann Ltd., 1954), pp. 22-25.

⁹⁶ Boccaccio, Boccaccio on Poetry: Being the Preface and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Books of Boccaccio's Genealogia Deorum Gentilium, ed. Charles G. Osgood (New York: Bobbs Merrill & Co. Inc., 1956), p. 61.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Richard de Bury, Philobiblon, ed. M. MacLagan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1960), p. 142.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 149.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 48.

¹⁰³ Barney, op. cit., 457.

¹⁰⁴ Geoffrey of Vinsauf, Poetria Nova, in E. Faral, ed., Les Arts Poétiques du XIIe et XIIIe Siècle, p. 230.

¹⁰⁵ Boccaccio, Boccaccio on Poetry, pp. 39-42.

¹⁰⁶ St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine II.28.44, p. 64.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., III.9.13, p. 86.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., IV.11, 26, p. 136.

NOTES TO CONCLUSION

¹ This assumption is reflected in E. Talbot Donaldson's remarks on the appreciation of poetry. For Donaldson, to approach medieval poetry historically is to avoid "the awful business of facing a poem directly." See E. Talbot Donaldson, "Patristic Exegesis: The Opposition", in Critical Approaches to Medieval Literature, ed. D. Bethurum, p. 25.

² Joseph Wood Krutch, op. cit., pp. 86-88.

³ Donald Howard, The Three Temptations, p. 30.

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