What Chaucer Really Did to "Il Filostrato"
by C. S. Lewis

A great deal of attention has deservedly been given to the relation between the Book of Troilus and its original, Il Filostrato, and Rossetti’s collation placed a knowledge of the subject within the reach even of undergraduate inquirers. It is, of course, entirely right and proper that the greater part of this attention has been devoted to such points as specially illustrate the individual genius of Chaucer as a dramatist and a psychologist. But such studies, without any disgrace to themselves, often leave singularly undefined the historical position and affinities of a book; and if pursued intemperately they may leave us with a preposterous picture of the author as that abstraction, a pure individual, bound to no time nor place, or even obeying in the fourteenth century the aesthetics of the twentieth. It is possible that a good deal of misunderstanding still exists, even among instructed people, as to the real significance of the liberties that Chaucer took with his source. M. Legouis, in his study of Chaucer to which we all owe so much, remarks that Chaucer’s additions ‘implied a wider and more varied conception’ than those of Boccaccio; and again ‘Chaucer’s aim was not like Boccaccio’s to paint sentimentality alone, but to reflect life’. I do not wish to contradict either statement, but I am convinced that both are capable of conveying a false impression. What follows may be regarded as a cautionary gloss on M. Legouis’s text. I shall endeavour to show that the process which Il Filostrato underwent at Chaucer’s hands was first and foremost a process of medievalization. One aspect of this process has received some attention from scholars,¹

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but its importance appears to me to be still insufficiently stressed. In what follows I shall, therefore, restate this aspect in my own terms while endeavouring to replace it in its context. /57/

Chaucer had never heard of a renaissance; and I think it would be difficult to translate either into the English or the Latin of his day our distinction between sentimental or conventional art on the one hand, and art which paints 'Life'—whatever this means—on the other. When first a man of letters, he was, no doubt, aware of a difference between its contents and those of certain English and French manuscripts which he had read before. That some of the differences did not please him is apparent from his treatment. We may be sure, however, that he noticed and approved the new use of stanzas, instead of octosyllabic couplets, for narrative. He certainly thought the story a good story; he may even have thought it a story better told than any that he had yet read. But there was also, for Chaucer, a special reason why he should choose this story for his own retelling; and that reason largely determined the alterations that he made.

He was not yet the Chaucer of the Canterbury Tales: he was the grant translateur of the Roman de la Rose, the author of the Book of the Duchesse, and probably of 'many a song and many a lecherous lay'. In other words he was the great living interpreter in English of l'amour courtou. Even in 1390, when Gower produced the first version of his Confessio Amantis, such faithful interpretation of the love tradition was still regarded as the typical and essential function of Chaucer: he is Venus' 'disciple' and 'poete', with whose 'ditees and songes glade ... the lond fulfild is overal'. These expectations were, of course, disappointed; and it is possible that that disappointment, rather than to a hypothetical quarrel (for which only the most ridiculous grounds have been assigned), that we should attribute Gower's removal of this passage from the second text of the Confessio Amantis. It had become apparent that Chaucer was following a different /58/ line of development, and the reference made to him by Venus had ceased to be appropriate.

It was, then, as a poet of courtly love that Chaucer approached Il Filostrato. There is no sign as yet that he wished to desert the courtly tradition; on the contrary, there is ample evidence that he still regarded himself as its exponent. But the narrative bent of his genius was already urging him, not to desert this tradition, but to pass from its doctrinal treatment (as in the Romance of the Rose) to its narrative treatment. Having preached it, and sung it, he would now exemplify it: he would show the code put into action in the course of a story—without prejudice (as we shall see) to a good deal of doctrine and pointing of the amorous moral by the way. The thing represents a curious return upon itself of literary history. If Chaucer had lived earlier he would, we may be sure, have found just the model that he desired in Chrestien de Troyes. But by Chaucer's time certain elements, which Chrestien had held together in unity, had come apart and taken an independent life. Chrestien had combined, magnificently, the interest of the story, and the interest of erotic doctrine and psychology. His successors had been unable or unwilling to achieve this union. Perhaps, indeed, the two things had to separate in order that each might grow to maturity; and in many of Chrestien's psychological passages one sees the embryonic allegory struggling to be born. Whatever the reason may be, such a separation took place. The story sets up on its own in the prose romances—the 'French book' of Malory: the doctrine and psychology set up on their own in the Romance of the Rose. In this situation if a poet arose who accepted the doctrines and also had a narrative genius, then a priori such a poet might be expected to combine again the two elements—now fully grown—which, in their rudimentary form, had lain together in Chrestien. But this is exactly the sort of poet that Chaucer was; and this (as we shall see) is what Chaucer did. The Book of Troilus shows, in fact, the /59/ very peculiar literary phenomenon of Chaucer groping back, unknowingly, through the very slightly medieval work of Boccaccio, to the genuinely medieval formula of Chrestien. We may be thankful that Chaucer did not live in the high noon of Chrestien's celebrity; for, if he had, we should probably have lost much of the originality of Troilus. He would have had less motive for altering Chrestien than for altering Boccaccio, and probably would have altered him less.

Approaching Il Filostrato from this angle, Chaucer, we may be sure, while feeling the charm of its narrative power, would have found himself at many passages, uttering the Middle English equivalent of 'This will never do!' In such places he did not hesitate, as he might have said, to amend and to reduc what was amis in his author. The majority of his modifications are corrections of errors which Boccaccio had committed against the code of courtly love; and modifications of this kind have not been entirely neglected by criticism. It has not, however, been sufficiently observed that these are only part and parcel of a general process of medievalization. They are, indeed, the most instructive part of
that process, and even in the present discussion must claim the chief place; but in order to restore them to their proper setting it will be convenient to make a division of the different capacities in which Chaucer approached his original. These will, of course, be found to overlap in the concrete; but that is no reason for not plucking them ideally apart in the interests of clarity.

I. Chaucer approached his work as an 'Historical' poet contributing to the story of Troy. I do not mean that he necessarily believed his tale to be wholly or partly a record of fact, but his attitude towards it in this respect is different from Boccaccio's. Boccaccio, we may surmise, wrote for an audience who were beginning to look at poetry in our own way. For them *Il Filostrato* was mainly, though not entirely, 'a new poem by Boccaccio'. Chaucer wrote for an audience who still looked at poetry in the medieval fashion—a fashion for which the real literary units were 'matters', 'stories', and the like, rather than individual authors. For them the *Book of Troilus* was partly, though of course only partly, 'a new bit of the Troy story', or even 'a new bit of the matter of Rome'. Hence Chaucer expects them to be interested not only in the personal drama between his little group of characters but in that whole world of story which makes this drama's context: like children looking at a landscape picture and wanting to know what happens to the road after it disappears into the frame. For the same reason they will want to know his authorities. Passages in which Chaucer has departed from his original to meet this demand will easily occur to the memory. Thus, in i. 141 et seq., he excuses himself for not telling us more about the military history of the Trojan war, and adds what is almost a footnote to tell his audience where they can find that missing part of the story—'in Omer, or in Dares, or in Dyte'. Boccaccio had merely sketched in, in the preceding stanza, a general picture of war sufficient to provide the background for his own story—much as a dramatist might put *Alarums within* in a stage direction: he has in view an audience fully conscious that all this is mere necessary 'setting' or hypothesis. Thus again, in iv. 120 et seq., Chaucer inserts into the speech of *Calchas* an account of the quarrel between *Phoebus* and *Neptunus* and *Lameadoun*. This is not dramatically necessary. All that was needed for *Calchas's* argument has already been given in lines 111 and 112 (cf. *Filostrato*, iv. xi). The Greek leaders did not need to be told about Laomedon; but Chaucer is not thinking of the Greek leaders; he is thinking of his audience who will gladly learn, or be reminded, of that part of the cycle. At lines 204 et seq. he inserts a note on the later history of *Antenor* for the same reason. In the fifth book he inserts unnecessarily

The whole 'matter of Rome' is still a unity, with a structure and life of its own. That part of it which the poem in hand /61/ is treating, which is, so to speak, in focus, must be seen fading gradually away into its 'historial' surroundings. The method is the antithesis of that which produces the 'framed' story of a modern writer: it is a method which romance largely took over from the epic.

II. Chaucer approached his work as a pupil of the rhetoricians and a firm believer in the good, old, and now neglected maxim of Dante: *omnis qui versificatur suos versus exornare debet in quantum potest*. This side of Chaucer's poetry has been illustrated by Mr. Manly so well that most readers will not now be in danger of neglecting it. A detailed application of this new study to the *Book of Troilus* would here detain us too long, but a cursory glance shows that Chaucer found his original too short and proceeded in many places to 'amplify' it. He began by abandoning the device—that of invoking his lady instead of the Muses—whereby Boccaccio had given a lyrical instead of a rhetorical turn to the invocation, and substituted an address to *Thesiphone* (*Filostrato*, i. i-v, cf. *Troilus*, i. 1-14). He added at the beginning of his second book an invocation of *Cleo* and an apology of the usual medieval type, for the defects of his work (ii. 15-21). Almost immediately afterwards he inserted a *descriptio* of the month of a May (an innovation which concerned him as poet of courtly love no less than as rhetorician) which is extremely beautiful and appropriate, but which follows, none the less, conventional lines. The season is fixed by astronomical references, and *Proigne* and *Tereus* appear just where we should expect them (ii. 50-64, 64-70). In the third book the scene of the morning parting between the two lovers affords a complicated example of Chaucer's medievalization. In his original (III. xlii) Chaucer read

Ma poich' e galli presso al giorno udiro
Cantar per l'aurora the surgea.

He proceeded to amplify this, first by the device of *Circuitio* or
CIRCUMLOCUTIO; galli, with the aid of Alanus de Insulis, became 'the sok, comune astrologer'. Not content with this, /62/ he then repeated the sense of that whole phrase by the device Expositio, of which the formula is Multiplici forma Dissimulatur idem: varius sis et tamen idem, and the theme 'Dawn came' is varied with Lucifer and Fortuna Minor, till it fills a whole stanza (iii. 1415-21). In the next stanza of Boccaccio he found a short speech by Griseida, expressing her sorrow at the parting which dawn necessitated: but this was not enough for him. As poet of love he wanted his alba; as rhetorician he wanted his apostropha. He therefore inserted sixteen lines of address to Night (1427-42), during which he secured the additional advantage, from the medieval point of view, of 'som doctryne' (1429-32). In lines 1452-70 he inserted antiphonally Troilus's alba, for which the only basis in Boccaccio was the line Il giorno che venia maledicendo (III. x liv). The passage is an object lesson for those who tend to identify the traditional with the dull. Its matter goes back to the ancient sources of medieval love poetry, notably to Ovid, Amores, i. 13, and it has been handled often before, and better handled, by the Provençals. Yet it is responsible for one of the most vivid and beautiful expressions that Chaucer ever used.

Accursed be thy coming into Troye
For every boren hath oon of thy brighte eyen.

A detailed study of the Book of Troilus would reveal this 'rhetorization', if I may coin an ugly word, as the common quality of many of Chaucer's additions. As examples of Apostropha alone I may mention, before leaving this part of the subject, iii. 301 et seq. (O tonge), 617 et seq. (But o Fortune), 715 et seq. (O Venus), and 813 et seq. where Chaucer is following Boethius.

III. Chaucer approached his work as a poet of doctrine and sentence. This is a side of his literary character which twentieth-century fashions encourage us to overlook, but, of course, no honest historian can deny it. His contemporaries and immediate successors did not. His own creatures, the pilgrims, regarded mirthe and doctrine, or, as it is elsewhere /63/ expressed, sentence and solas, as the two alternative, and equally welcome, excellences of a story. In the same spirit Hoccleve praises Chaucer as the mirour of fructuous entendement and the universal fadir in science—a passage, by the by, to be recommended to those who are astonished that the fifteenth century should imitate those elements of Chaucer's genius which it enjoyed instead of those which we enjoy. In respect of doctrine, then, Chaucer found his original deficient, and amended it. The example which will leap to every one's mind is the Boethian discussion on free will (iv. 946-1078). To Boccaccio, I suspect, this would have seemed as much an excrescence as it does to the modern reader; to the unjaded appetites of Chaucer's audience mere thickness in a wad of manuscript was a merit. If the author was so 'courteous beyond covenant' as to give you an extra bit of doctrine (or of story), who would be so churlish as to refuse it on the pedantic ground of irrelevance? But this passage is only one of many in which Chaucer departs from his original for the sake of giving his readers interesting general knowledge or philosophical doctrine. In iii. 1387 et seq., finding Boccaccio's attack upon gli avari a little bare and unsupported, he throws out, as a species of buttress, the exempla of Myda and Crassus. In the same book he has to deal with the second assignation of Troilus and Cressida. Boccaccio gave him three stanzas of dialogue (Filostrato, III. 1xvi-1xviii), but Chaucer rejected them and preferred—in curious anticipation of Falstaff's thesis about pitch—to assure his readers, on the authority of this clercs wyse (iii. 1691) that felicitee is felicitous, though Troilus and Criseyde enjoyed something better than felicitee. In the same stanza he also intends, I think, an allusion to the sententia that occurs elsewhere in the Franklin's Tale. In iv. 197-203, immediately before his historical insertion about Antenor, he introduces a sentence from Juvenal, partly /64/ for its own sake, partly in order that the story of Antenor may thus acquire an exemplary, as well as a historical value. In iv. 323-8 he inserts a passage on the great locus communis of Fortune and her wheel.

In the light of this sententious bias, Chaucer's treatment of Pandarus should be reconsidered, and it is here that a somewhat subtle exercise of the historical imagination becomes necessary. On the one hand, he would be a dull reader, and the victim rather than the pupil of history, who would take all the doctrinal passages in Chaucer seriously: that the speeches of Chauntecleer and Pertainote and of the Wyf of Bath not only are funny by reason of their sententiousness and learning, but are intended to be funny, and funny by that reason, is indisputable. On the other hand, to assume that sententiousness became funny for Chaucer's readers as easily as it becomes funny for us, is to misunderstand the fourteenth century: such an assumption will lead us to the preposterous view that Melibee (or even the Parson's Tale) is a comic work—a view not much mended by Mr. Mackail's suggestion that there are some jokes too funny to excite laughter and that Melibee is one of these. A clear recognition that our own age is quite abnormally sensitive to the funny
side of sententiousness, to possible hypocrisy, and to dullness, is absolutely necessary for any one who wishes to understand the past. We must face the fact that Chaucer’s audience could listen with gravity and interest to edifying matter which would set a modern audience sleeping or sniggering. The application of this to Pandarus is a delicate business. Every reader must interpret Pandarus for himself, and I can only put forward my own interpretation very tentatively. I believe that Pandarus is meant to be a comic character, but not, by many degrees, so broadly comic as he appears to some modern readers. There is, for me, no doubt that Chaucer intended us to smile when he made Troilus exclaim

What knowe I of the queene Niobe?  
Lat be thyne olde enseamples, I thee preye.  

(I. 759)

But I question if he intended just that sort of smile which we actually give him. For me the fun lies in the fact that /65/ poor Troilus says what I have been wishing to say for some time. For Chaucer’s hearers the point was a little different. The suddenness of the gap thus revealed between Troilus’s state of mind and Pandarus’s words cast a faintly ludicrous air on what had gone before: it made the theorizing and the exempla a little funny in retrospect. But it is quite probable that they had not been funny till then: the discourse on contraries (i. 631–44), the exemplum of Paris and Oenone, leading up to the theme “Physician heal thyself” (652–72), the doctrine of the Mean applied to secrecy in love (687–93), the sentences from Solomon (695) and elsewhere (708), are all of them the sort of thing that can be found in admittedly serious passages, and it may well be that Chaucer ‘had it both ways’. His readers were to be, first of all, edified by Troilus’s state of mind and Pandarus’s words, and then (slightly) amused by the contrast between this edification and Troilus’s obstinate attitude of the plain man. If this view be accepted it will have the consequence that Chaucer intended an effect of more subtility than that which we ordinarily give him. For Chaucer ‘had it both ways’. His readers were to be, first of all, edified by Troilus’s state of mind and Pandarus’s words, and then (slightly) amused by the contrast between this edification and Troilus’s obstinate attitude of the plain man. If this view be accepted it will have the consequence that Chaucer intended an effect of more subtility than that which we ordinarily receive. We get the broadly comic effect — a loquacious and unscrupulous old uncle talks solemn platitude at interminable length. For Chaucer, a textuel man talked excellent doctrine which we enjoy and by which we are edified: but at the same time we see that this ‘has its funny, side’. Ours is the crude joke of laughing at admitted rubbish: Chaucer’s the much more lasting joke of laughing at ‘the funny side’ of that which, even while we laugh, we admire. To the present writer this reading of Pandarus does not appear doubtful; but it depends, to some extent, on a mere ‘impression’ about the quality of the Middle Ages, an impression hard to correct, if it is an error, and hard to teach, if it is a truth. For this reason I do not insist on my interpretation. If, however, it is accepted, many of the speeches of Pandarus which are commonly regarded as having a purely dramatic significance will have to be classed among the examples of Chaucer’s doctrinal or sententious insertions.13

IV. Finally, Chaucer approached his work as the poet of courtly love. He not only modified his story so as to make it a more accurate representation in action of the orthodox erotic code, but he also went out of his way to emphasize its didactic element. Andreas Capellanus had given instructions to lovers; Guillaume de Lorris had given instructions veiled and decorated by allegory; Chaucer carries the process a stage further and gives instruction by example in the course of a concrete story. But he does not forget the instructional side of his work. In the following paragraphs I shall sometimes quote parallels to Chaucer’s innovations from the earlier love literature, but it must not be thought that I suppose my quotations to represent Chaucer’s immediate source.

1. Boccaccio in his induction, after invoking his mistress instead of the Muses, inserts (I. vi) a short request for lovers in general that they will pray for him. The prayer itself is disposed of in a single line.

Per me vi prego ch’amore preghiate.

This is little more than a conceit, abandoned as soon as it is used: a modern poet could almost do the like. Chaucer devotes four stanzas (i. 22–49) to this prayer. If we make an abstract of both passages, Boccaccio will run ‘Pray for me to Love’, while Chaucer will run ‘Remember, all lovers, your old unhappiness, and pray, for the unsuccessful, that they may come to solace; for me, that I may be enabled to tell this story; for those in despair, that they may die; for the fortunate, that they may persevere, and please their ladies in such manner as may advance the glory of Love’. The important point here is not so much that Chaucer expands his original, as that he renders it more liturgical: his prayer, with its careful discriminations in intercession for the various recognized stages of the amorous life, and its final reference ad Amoris majorem gloriam, is a collect. Chaucer is emphasizing that parody, or imitation, or rivalry — I know not which to call it — of the Christian religion which was inherent in traditional Frauentien. The thing can be traced back /67/ to Ovid’s purely ironical worship of Venus and Amor in the De Arte
Amatoria. The idea of a love religion is taken up and worked out, though still with equal flippancy, in terms of medieval Christianity, by the twelfth-century poet of the Concilium Romaricinonis,\textsuperscript{14} where Love is given Cardinals (female), the power of visitation, and the power of cursing. Andreas Capellanus carried the process a stage further and gave Love the power of distributing reward and punishment after death. But while his hell of cruel beauties (Sicittas), his purgatory of beauties promiscuously kind (Humiditas), and his heaven of true lovers (Amoendas)\textsuperscript{15} can hardly be other than playful, Andreas deals with the love religion much more seriously than the author of the Concilium. The lover's qualification is morum probitas: he must be truthful and modest, a good Catholic, clean in his speech, hospitable, and ready to return good for evil. There is nothing in saeculo bonum which is not derived from love;\textsuperscript{16} it may even be said in virtue of its severe standard of constancy, to be 'a kind of chastity'—redditi hominem castitatis quasi virtute decoratum.\textsuperscript{17}

In all this we are far removed from the tittering nuns and clerici of the Concilium. In Chrestien, the scene in which Lancelot kneels and adores the bed of Guinevere (as if before a corseynt)\textsuperscript{18} is, I think, certainly intended to be read seriously: what mental reservations the poet himself had on the whole business is another question. In Dante the love religion has become wholly and unequivocally serious by fusing with the real religion: the distance between the Amor deus omnium quotquot sunt amantium of the Concilium, and the segnore di pauroso aspetto of the Vita Nuova,\textsuperscript{19} is the measure of the tradition's real flexibility and universality. It is this quasi-religious element in the content, and this liturgical element in the diction, which Chaucer found lacking /68/ in his original at the very opening of the book, and which he supplied. The line

\begin{quote}
That Love hem bringe in hevene to solas
\end{quote}

is particularly instructive.

2. In the Temple scene (Chaucer, i. 155–315. Filostrato, i. xix–xxxii) Chaucer found a stanza which it was very necessary to reducen. It was Boccaccio's twenty-third, in which Troilus, after indulging in his 'cooling card for lovers', mentions that he has himself been singled with that fire, and even hints that he has had his successes; but the pleasures were not worth the pains. The whole passage is a typical example of that Latin spirit, which in all ages (except perhaps our own) has made Englishmen a little uncomfortable; the hero must be a lady-killer from the very beginning, or the audience will think him a milksop and a booby. To have

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abashed, however temporarily, these strutting Latinisms, is not least among the virtues of medieval Frauendienst: and for Chaucer as its poet, this stanza was emphatically one of those that 'would never do'. He drops it quietly out of its place, and thus brings the course of his story nearer to that of the Romance of the Rose. The parallelism is so far intact. Troilus, an unattached young member of the courtly world, wandering idly about the Temple, is smitten with Love. In the same way the Dreamer having been admitted by Ydelnesse into the garden goes 'pleying along ful merily' until he looks in the fatal well. If he had already met Love outside the garden the whole allegory would have to be reconstructed.

3. A few lines lower Chaucer found in his original the words

\begin{quote}
Più ch'alcun altro, pria del tempio uscisse.
\end{quote}

(il. xxv)

Amor trafisse in Boccaccio is hardly more than a literary variant for 'he fell in love': the allegory has shrunk into a metaphor and even that metaphor is almost unconscious and fossilized. Over such a passage one can imagine Chaucer /69/ exclaiming, tantamne rem tam negligenter? He at once goes back through the metaphor to the allegory that begot it, and gives us his own thirtieth stanza (I. 204–10). on the god of Love in anger bending his bow. The image is very ancient and goes back at least as far as Apollonius Rhodius.\textsuperscript{21} Ovid was probably the intermediary who conveyed it to the Middle Ages. Chrestien uses it, with particular emphasis on Love as the avenger of contempt.\textsuperscript{22} But Chaucer need not have gone further to find it than to the Romance of the Rose,\textsuperscript{23} with which, here again, he brings his story into line.

4. But even this was not enough. Boccaccio's Amor trafisse had occurred in a stanza where the author apostrophizes the Ceciità delle mondane menti, and reflects on the familiar contrast between human expectations and the actual course of events. But this general contrast seemed weak to the poet of courtly love: what he wanted was the explicit erotic moral based on the special contrast between the ἕβπυς of the young scoffer and the complete surrender which the offended deity soon afterwards extracted from him. This conception, again, owes much to Ovid; but between Ovid and the Middle Ages comes the later practice of the ancient Epithalamium during the decline of antiquity and the Dark Ages: to which, as I hope to show elsewhere, the system of courtly love as a whole is heavily indebted. Thus in the fifth century Sidonius
Apollinarus, in an Epithalamium, makes the bridegroom just such another as Troilus: a proud scoffer humbled by Love. Amor brings to Venus the triumphant news

Nova gaudia porta
Felicia praeda, genetrix. Calet ille superbus
Ruricius.24

Venus replies

gaudemus nate, rebellem
Quod vincis.

In a much stranger poem, by the Bishop Ennodius, it is not the ðððð of a single youth, but of the world, that has stung /70/ the deities of love into retributive action. Cupid and Venus are introduced deploring the present state of Europe.

Frigida consumens multorum possidet artus
Virginitae.25

and Venus meets the situation by a threat that she'll 'larn 'em':

Discant populi tunc crescere divam
Cum neglecta iacet.26

They conclude by attacking one Maximus and thus bringing about the marriage which the poem was written to celebrate. Venantius Fortunatus, in his Epithalamium for Brunchild, reproduces, together with Ennodius's spring morning, Ennodius's boastful Cupid, and makes the god, after an exhibition of his archery, announce to his mother, mihi vincitur alter Achilles.27 In Chrestien the role of tamed rebel is transferred to the woman. In Cligès Soredamours confesses that Love has humbled her pride by force, and doubts whether such extorted service will find favour.28 In strict obedience to this tradition Chaucer inserts his lines 214–31, emphasizing the dangers of ðððð against Love and the certainty of its ultimate failure; and we may be thankful that he did, since it gives us the lively and touching simile of proude Bayard. Then, mindful of his instructional purpose, he adds four stanzas more (239–66), in which he directly exhorts his readers to avoid the error of Troilus, and that for two reasons: firstly, because Love cannot be resisted (this is the policeman's argument—we may as well 'come quiet'); and secondly because Love is a thing 'so vertuous in kinde'. The second argument, of course, follows traditional lines, and recalls Andreas's theory of Love as the source of all secular virtue.

5. In lines 330–50 Chaucer again returns to Troilus's scoffing—a scoffing this time assumed as a disguise. I do not wish to press the possibility that Chaucer in this passage is attempting, in virtue of his instructional purpose, to stress /71/ the lover's virtue of secrecy more than he found it stressed in his original; for Boccaccio, probably for different reasons, does not leave that side of the subject untouched. But it is interesting to note a difference in the content between this scoffing and that of Boccaccio (Filostrato I. xx, xxii). Boccaccio's is based on contempt for women, fickle as wind, and heartless. Chaucer's is based on the hardships of love's lay or religion: hardships arising from the uncertainty of the most orthodox observances, which may lead to various kinds of harm and may be taken amiss by the lady. Boccaccio dethrones the deity: Chaucer complains of the severity of the cult. It is the difference between an atheist and a man who humorously insists that he is not of religioun'.

6. In the first dialogue between Troilus and Pandarbus the difference between Chaucer and his original can best be shown by an abstract. Boccaccio (II. vi–xxviii) would run roughly as follows:

T. Well, if you must know, I am in love. But don't ask me with whom (vi–viii).

P. Why did you not tell me long ago? I could have helped you (ix).

T. What use would you be? Your own suit never succeeded (ix).

P. A man can often guide others better than himself (x).

T. I can't tell you, because it is a relation of yours (xv).

P. A fig for relations! Who is it? (xvi).

T. (after a pause) Griseida.

P. Splendid! Love has fixed your heart in a good place. She is an admirable person. The only trouble is that she is rather pie (onestity): but I'll soon see to that (xxiii). Every woman is amorous at heart: they are only anxious to save their reputations (xxvii). I'll do all I can for you (xxviii).

Chaucer (I. 603–1008) would be more like this:
T. Well, if you must know, I am in love. But don't ask me with whom (603–16).

P. Why did you not tell me long ago? I could have helped you (617–20).

T. What use would you be? Your own suit never succeeded (621–3).

P. A man can often guide others better than himself, as we see from the analogy of the whetstone. Remember the doctrine of contraries, and what Oenone said. As regards secrecy, remember that all virtue is a mean between two extremes (624–700).

T. Do leave me alone (760).

P. If you die, how will she interpret it? Many lovers have served for twenty years without a single kiss. But should they despair? No, they should think it a guerdon even to serve (761–819).

T. (much moved by this argument, 820–6) What shall I do? Fortune is my foe (827–40).

P. Her wheel is always turning. Tell me who your mistress is. If it were my sister, you should have her (841–61).

T. (after a pause) —My sweet foe is Criseyde (870–5).

P. Splendid: Love has fixed your heart in a good place. This ought to gladden you, firstly, because to love such a lady is nothing but good: secondly, because if she has all these virtues, she must have Pity too. You are very fortunate that Love has treated you so well, considering your previous scorn of him. You must repent at once (874–935).

T. (kneeling) Mea Culpa! (936–8).

P. Good. All will now come right. Govern yourself properly: you know that a divided heart can have no grace. I have reasons for being hopeful. No man or woman was ever born who was not apt for love, either natural or celestial: and celestial love is not fitted to Criseyde's years. I will do all I can for you. Love converted you of his goodness. Now that you are converted, you will be as conspicuous among his saints as you formerly were among the sinners against him (939–1008).

In this passage it is safe to say that every single alteration by Chaucer is an alteration in the direction of medievalism. The Whetstone, Oenone, Fortune, and the like we have already discussed: the significance of the remaining innovations may now be briefly indicated. In Boccaccio the reason for Troilus's hesitation in giving the name is Criseida's relationship to Pandaro: and like a flash comes back Pandaro's startling answer. In Chaucer his hesitation is due to the courtly lover's certainty that 'she nil to noon suich wrecche as I be wonne' (778) and that 'full harde it wer to helpen in this cas' (836). Pandaro's original

'se quella ch'ami fosse mia sorella
A mio potere avrai tuo piazer d'ella
(xvi)'

is reproduced in the English, but by removing the words that provoked it in the Italian (E tua parenta, xv) Chaucer makes it merely a general protestation of boundless friendship in love, instead of a cynical defiance of scruples already raised (Chaucer 861). Boccaccio had delighted to bring the purities of family life and the profligacy of his young man about town into collision, and to show the triumph of the latter. Chaucer keeps all the time within the charmed circle of Frauentien and allows no conflict but that of the lover's hopes and fears. Again, Boccaccio's Pandaro has no argument to use against Troilo's silence, but the argument 'I may help you'. Chaucer's Pandarus, on finding that this argument fails, proceeds to expound the code. The fear of dishonour in the lady's eyes, the duty of humble but not despairing service in the face of all discouragement, and the acceptance of this service as its own reward, form the substance of six stanzas in the English text (lines 768–819): at least, if we accept four lines very characteristically devoted to 'Ticius' and what 'bokes telle' of him. Even more remarkable is the difference between the behaviour of the two Pandars after the lady's name has been disclosed. Boccaccio's, cynical as ever, encourages Troilo by the reflection that female virtue is not really a serious obstacle: Chaucer's makes the virtue of the lady itself the ground for hope—arguing scholastically that the genus of virtue implies that species thereof which is Pitee (897–900). In what follows, Pandarus, while continuing to advise, becomes an adviser of a slightly different sort. He instructs Troilus not so much on his relationship to the Lady as on his relationship to Love. He endeavours to awaken in Troilus a devout sense of his previous sins against that deity (904–30) and is not satisfied without confession (931–8), briefly enumerates the commandments /74/
(953–9), and warns his penitent of the dangers of a divided heart.

In establishing such a case as mine, the author who transfers relentlessly to his article all the passages listed in his private notes can expect nothing but weariness from the reader. If I am criticized, I am prepared to produce for my contention many more evidential passages of the same kind. I am prepared to show how many of the beauties introduced by Chaucer, such as the song of Antigone or the riding past of Troilus, are introduced to explain and mitigate and delay the surrender of the heroine, who showed in Boccaccio a facility condemned by the courtly code.29 I am prepared to show how Chaucer never forgets his erotically didactic purpose; and how, anticipating criticism as a teacher of love, he guards himself by reminding us that

For to winne love in sondry ages
In sondry londes, sondry ben usages.30

(ii, 27)

But the reader whose stomach is limited would be tired, and he who is interested may safely be left to follow the clue for himself. Only one point, and that a point of principle, remains to be treated in full. Do I, or do I not, lie open to the criticism of Professor Abercrombie's 'Liberty of Interpreting'?31

The Professor quem honoris causa nominor urges us not to turn from the known effect which an ancient poem has upon us to speculation about the effect which the poet intended it to have. The application of this criticism which may be directed against me would run as follows: 'If Chaucer's Troilus actually produces on us an effect of greater realism and nature and freedom than its original, why should we assume that this effect was accidentally produced in the attempt to conform to an outworn convention?' If the charge is grounded, it is, to my mind, a very grave one. My reply /I75/ is that such a charge begs the very question which I have most at heart in this paper, and for which I should regard my analysis as the aimless burrowings of a thesismonger. I would retort upon my imagined critic with another question. This poem is more lively and of deeper human appeal than its original. I grant it. This poem conforms more closely than its original to the system of courtly love. I claim to prove it. What then is the natural conclusion to draw? Surely, that courtly love itself, in spite of all its shabby origins and pedantic rules, is at bottom more agreeable to those elements in human, or at least in European, nature, which last longest, than the cynical Latin gallantries of

What Chaucer Really Did

Boccaccio? The world of Chrestien, of Guillaume de Lorris, and of Chaucer, is nearer to the world universal, is less of a closed system, than the world of Ovid, of Congreve, of Anatole France.

This is doctrine little palatable to the age in which we live: and it carries with it another doctrine that may seem no less paradoxical—namely, that certain medieval things are more universal, in that sense more classical, can claim more confidently a securus judicat, than certain things of the Renaissance. To make Herod your villain is more human than to make Tamburlaine your hero. The politics of Machiavelli are provincial and temporary beside the doctrine of the jus gentium. The love-lore of Andreas, though a narrow stream, is a stream tending to the universal sea. Its waters move. For real stagnancy and isolation we must turn to the decorative lakes dug out far inland at such a mighty cost by Mr. George Moore; to the more popular corporation swimming-baths of Dr. Marie Stopes; or to the teeming marshlands of the late D. H. Lawrence, whose depth the wisest knows not and on whose bank the hart gives up his life rather than plunge in:

pær maeg nihta gehwaem niwundor seon
Fyr on flode!

Notes

1. v. Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, 1913.
2. C.T., I 1086.
4. v. Lancelot, 369–81, 2844–61; Ysain, 6001 et seq., 2639 et seq.; Cligés, 5855 et seq.
7. Canterbury Tales, B 2125.
8. Ibid., A 798.
10. This might equally well have been treated above in our rhetorical section. The instructed reader will recognize that a final distinction between doctrinal and rhetorical aspects, is not possible in the Middle Ages.
11. C.T., F 762.
13. From another point of view Pandarus can be regarded as the 

Velas of the R. R. (cf. Thessaly in Cligés) taken out of allegory into drama 

and changed in sex so as to ‘double’ the roles of Velas and Froid.

15. Andreas Capellanus, De Arte Honestis Amantis, ed. Trojel, i, 6 D1 (pp. 91–106).
16. Ibid., i, 6 A (p. 28).
17. Ibid., i, 4 (p. 10).
18. Lancelot, 4670, 4734 et seq.
21. Argonaut, iii, 275 et seq.
22. Cligés, 460; cf. 770.
23. R. R. 1333 et seq.; 1715 et seq.
26. Ibid. 84.
27. Venant. Fret. VI, i.
29. A particularly instructive comparison could be drawn between the Chaucerian 

Cresseide’s determination to yield, yet to seem to yield by force and deception, and 

30. Cf. ii, 1023 et seq.
Chaucer's *Troilus*

*Essays in Criticism*

edited by

**Stephen A. Barney**

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