Fall and Resurgence of Art in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde

Frederick Paul Chenderlin
Loyola University Chicago

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses

Part of the English Language and Literature Commons

Recommended Citation
Chenderlin, Frederick Paul, "Fall and Resurgence of Art in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde" (1954). Master's Theses. 943.
https://ecommons.luc.edu/luc_theses/943

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.
Copyright © 1954 Frederick Paul Chenderlin
FALL AND RESURGENCE OF ART IN CHAUCER'S
TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

by

Frederick P. Chenderlin, S. J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Loyola University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

February 1954
LIFE

Frederick Paul Chenderlin was born in Cincinnati, Ohio, September 23, 1923.

He was graduated from St. Mary's High School, Lorain, Ohio, June, 1941, and from Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, June, 1950, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

From 1943 to 1946 the author served in the United States Army. He entered the Society of Jesus in September, 1946, taking his first vows on September 8, 1948.

He began his graduate studies at Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois, in July of 1950.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter | Page
--- | ---

I. INTRODUCTION

A. The problem in general | 1
B. The aim of the paper | 4
C. The procedure to be followed | 5

II. THEORY OF ART TO BE APPLIED IN THIS PAPER | 6

A. The fine arts: definition | 6
B. Form as source of beauty: definition | 6
C. Artist's use of form, in general | 7
  1. Imitation | 7
  2. Selection | 10
D. Form as the source of beauty | 12
  1. Form as source of activity | 13
  2. Pure Act: the all-beautiful | 13
  3. Operations with high beauty | 14
E. Actual production of 'fine art.' | 14
  1. Artist's mental process | 16
  2. His external activity | 16
F. Poetry: the imitation of man's action | 18
  1. A natural expression of the metaphysical principles | 20
  2. Chaucer as poet and the esthetic reaction | 20

III. DETERMINATION OF THE MATTER TO WHICH THE GIVEN THEORY IS TO BE APPLIED | 22

A. Question: What was Chaucer's intention, to produce a romantic tragedy or a work of tragic irony | 22
B. Answer: romantic tragedy | 26
  1. Psychological proof: the medieval mind in general | 26
  2. Proof from Chaucer's personal case | 27
3. Reply to adversaries' objections: negative proof

C. Nature of this particular romantic tragedy

1. Determination of subject for the romantic hamartia
2. Romantic-tragic hamartia not real hamartia
3. Conclusion: Criseyde not from a-priori assumption criticizable as a real tragic heroine or in the light of a hamartia: character analysis needed, and determination of beauty from accidental forms
4. Criseyde, main figure of the work considered as a romance with realistic elements

IV. TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE MATTER: THE CHARACTER OF CRISEYDE

A. A first view: in the romantic tradition

B. The second book

1. The realistic Criseyde: Chaucer's own realism
2. Criseyde and the romantic game: Chaucer's own romanticism
3. Criseyde's motivations
4. Criseyde's self-deception: Chaucer's mixed realism

C. The game moves on, becomes more serious

1. Minor touches of pure Chaucerian realism
2. Proof of Criseyde's at least sub-conscious realization of the coming end: the romantic motivation
3. Romantic prelude to the consummation

D. Review of motivations in decisions leading up to the consummation

V. AN ARTISTIC ERROR

A. Scholastic definition of morality

B. Distinction between morality in art and morality of art (De Wulf)

C. Application of principles from first chapter to the notion of morality in art

1. Application of principles to the portrayal of the character of Criseyde as disclosed in the previous chapter, with reference to a specific act and her decisions leading up to it
2. General conclusion: Chaucer guilty of poor imitation of man in action; poor poetry, poor art .......................... 73
E. Disunity, an artistic flaw .......................... 75
F. Elements of disproportion particular to this work .......................... 77

VI. CHAUCER'S ARTISTIC GENIUS JUSTIFIED: FURTHER EVIDENCES OF DISUNITY .......................... 82

A. The fourth book: Criseyde's romantic game ends; her fall into reality .......................... 82
B. Chaucer's sub-surface, subconscious attempt completely to humanize Criseyde .......................... 84
1. By using her rejection of Troilus and exclusively romantic love .......................... 86
2. By using her acceptance of Diomede; various proofs .......................... 87
3. By forgiving her romantic failure .......................... 93
C. Summary and conclusion: character-portrayal different here from that earlier, implying a change in feeling on the part of the author. This change not fully intended, but caused by Chaucer's natural artistic genius and his Christian conscious .......................... 94
D. Consideration of the epilogue .......................... 95
1. A review of reasons against the idea of the intended allegorical or ironic significance of the poem .......................... 95
2. Prime motives for Chaucer's writing the epilogue .......................... 97
   a. Christian conscience .......................... 98
   b. Artistic genius tending toward good and high poetry .......................... 99

VII. CONCLUSION .......................... 100

BIBLIOGRAPHY .......................... 103
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A man can really and legitimately enjoy practically any work of art, even the poorer one, if he directs his attention to the right phase of that work. On the contrary, it is quite possible to rationalize the less valid aspects of an art-work into a non-existent proportion with the whole, to call what is a faulty work of art a good one. This is a misuse of the perceptive faculties which in time will dull the sense of values, perhaps eventually atrophy it. Art appreciation is an exalted exercise for man; it deserves the best of his attention.

There is no Elect in this matter, who can finger an art-work in an aloof manner, make a wrong judgment, and have no fear of the consequences. Each new matter for critical judgment is a new test of the faculties of perception. Because of this, and because of other exalted implications of art-appreciation, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde is especially worthy of consideration. The work has aroused a good deal of controversy in various respects. The intention of its author
in writing it, the nature of the work itself, the characterization of Crisseyde and that of Pandarus—these and scores of finer or at least more particular points are disputed. The thought may occur disturbingly that such a variety of opinion in some of the questions mentioned is not a good indication of artistic unity. Consider Crisseyde: can any work of characterization be really notable when it has said of it what Grierson says of her?

The character of Crisseyde so developed that two distinguished critics, the late Professor Legois and the Harvard Professor Root, have taken diametrically opposite views of the heroine, the former regarding her as the innocent victim of the designs of her lecherous old uncle and of her pity, the invariable romantic preliminary to love, for her lover; while Root is convinced that she understands the whole business from the beginning and is skilled hand at the game.¹

There is little doubt what the author wanted to do in the case of a Medea, a Dido, Lady Macbeth, Juliet, Desdemona, Rosalind, or even St. Joan as portrayed by Bernard Shaw. At least, there is little doubt as to what the author did. We know what kind of characters these are, and their state of mind toward the question at hand. Furthermore, we are not confronted in the Troylus with a case of madness or feigned madness, as in the case of Hamlet. Grierson says in the passage just cited that this is a matter of 'development' of this

character. The possibility that it is one of confusion—or better, of insufficient clarification—could also be considered.

Perhaps the variability in the criticism of this work has its source in the tendency to oversimplify. A critic approaches a work in which various elements are commingled. He is liable, once seated on his judicial bench, to center his attention on one element or the other, to judge the whole using as criteria an insufficient number of parts. If it can be proved, of course, that the work does center about one aspect to the practical exclusion of the others as matter for criticism, then he is using an altogether proper approach. At the very least he may make his decision entirely from material presented by other critics, but even then the tendency to oversimplification remains.

Of Criseyde again—the attention to her is significant, for she is the character this paper will be principally concerned with—John Lowes says that

it is precisely Chaucer's transformation of Criseyde from the typical figure of the woman quickly won to the complex, bafflingly subtle, lovely and hesitant creature he has made which sets the two central books of his poem among the masterpieces. 2

A woman who plays tricks with herself in her own mind makes a

most fascinating study in character. But as it struck Professor Root that Criseyde is less confused than deliberate, so it has struck many critics—as will be seen in the body of this paper—if not to doubt, at least to differ as to just what Criseyde meant, what Chaucer meant, and especially, what the combination of the two mean as they stand before the reader in the narrative.

It is the aim here to determine what Chaucer did mean, and to find out what kind of work of art he has produced in the Troilus. This paper will, of course, be no determining factor in the overall criticism of that poem; but it is hoped that it may at least advance plausible explanations, and so perhaps be of some little help to someone in future considerations of the matter.

To achieve the end that has been decided upon, in any ordered manner, it will be necessary in the first chapter to state the principles upon which the critical judgments will be founded. These principles will be essentially the Thomist principles of aesthetics. Treatment of them will be rather full, at least considering the length of the paper, in order to show the exact metaphysical process by which the principles of morality—to be applied in later chapters—are attained and related to the Thomistic aesthetic. The notion of the moral act is widely different in different philosophic systems, and
even among Thomists the relations of art and morality are still not absolutely set in order. It is hoped that there is sufficient matter presented in Chapter II to make clear this author's reasons for adopting the opinions of the authors used as authority, specifically Jacques Maritain and Maurice De Wulf.

The third chapter contains a delineation of the various problems that have arisen with critical reference to this work, with an attempt to probe to the fundamental question that seems to be at issue in most cases. The aim of the paper still remains to determine what kind of work of art Chaucer has produced here. After the naming of the principle subject matter for criticism—it will be the character of Criseyde—a chapter is devoted to analysis of that subject matter in order to provide material for criticism and application of the principles outlined and developed in Chapter II. Chapter V applies the principles to the matter so provided, so that what this author considers an artistic flaw appears.

Since this flaw, however, is not equally apparent in all parts of the work, a further discussion of the various aspects of Chaucer's art with reference to Criseyde's character is called for. This discussion is given in Chapter VI. The final chapter gives a summary of the partial conclusions reached, and an estimate of the worth of the poem.
"Art in general," says Jacques Maritain, "tends to make a work. But certain arts tend to make a work of beauty and thereby differ essentially from all the rest."¹ The French call the fine arts "beaux-arts" because it is these which are concerned with making a work of beauty. How does this work of beauty come to be; what is its essence? Mr. Maritain says that

to create a work of beauty is to create a work resplendent with the glitter of the brilliance, the mystery of a form, in the metaphysical sense of the word, a radiance of intelligibility and truth, an irradiation of the primal effulgence. And the artist no doubt perceives this form in the world of creation, whether interior or exterior; he does not discover it complete in the sole contemplation of his creative mind, for he is not, like God, the cause of things.²


6
What is this form "in the metaphysical sense" which is to be found in every work of art?

St. Thomas constantly affirms that the beautiful and the good, metaphysically, are the same thing in reality and differ only conceptually. . . . Wherever there is something existing there are being, form and proportion; and wherever there are being, form and proportion, there is some beauty.

Every being has some special form, depending exactly upon what kind of being it is. This form is a definite constituent of the being, and in itself (accidental circumstances may hinder its perfect operation) is adequately adapted to fit the particular being into its own special place in the order of creation. From this basic "substantial form" or "nature" come all the activities which the being exercises in its course of progress toward the end for which it is ordained. The human mind, grasping this perfect proportion of the thing with respect to its end, and in addition the proportion of all the accidental parts to the substantial whole, is struck by the order; and if the proper physical environment is provided, an aesthetic emotion will result.

The artist, the maker, may act from different motives: to make something useful, to make something with no use other than that of arousing this intellectual perception and subsequent emotional reaction, or to make something useful that will

3 Ibid., "Art and Beauty," note 63b, 172.
in a special way achieve this other end also. Whatever he does, he must put into the object of his art the form of the thing he is intending to imitate, whatever in the world of creation that may be. Whatever his intention, if he puts into the matter at hand the form that God put into its original, he will be giving occasion for the observer who appreciates the ordered place of the original in the scheme of creation, to remark upon the beauty of the art-work.

But because there is a divergence of operation and accidental form in, for example, a human being, and because to the perception of any viewer, reader, or hearer is definitely limited, an artistic presentation of that human being which is primarily meant to awaken such an aesthetic reaction cannot simply reproduce the whole human being as it comes from the hand of God. It is true that the substantial form and the summation of all the accidental forms that inhere in it—all the qualities and modifications of the human body, internal and external; all the actions of the human being, physical, intellectual, volitional—all these taken together are in themselves possessed of more proportion and beauty than any

---

4 It is assumed in this discussion that there is always present a "secondary substance" or substantial form in which the secondary, accidental forms inhere. The "whole" mentioned here is not merely the sum of accidental parts.
one of them, or any combination less than the whole. To God, who is infinitely perceiving, the most beautiful work of art is the work of His hands. But for humans, the most beautiful thing objectively is not the most beautiful thing subjectively, this form both quantitative and (often, at least) qualitative points of view. There is not what Maurice De Wulf calls "a perfect accord between the work of art and the one who perceives it."5 Man can attend to just one thing at one time, and can properly appreciate just one form at one time.

One accidental form, then, the artist strives to make strikingly apparent in his work. He may attempt to portray some notable quality of the human body in its completeness, or of one of the parts of the body—the hands, the head, the shoulders and head. He may present something not human at all: a piece of fruit, a fig, a grape, a bunch of grapes, or the collective form of a basket of fruit, receiving its proportion and beauty partially from the union of the parts—as every form of a concrete whole must—but more especially from its perfect adaptation to the place of such a collection in creation: the product of bountiful, colorful, orderly yet multi-

5 Maurice De Wulf, Art et Beaute, 2e ed., Louvain, 1943, 125. "... un accord parfait entre l'oeuvre et celui qui s'en imprègne." Translations from this work given here are by the author of this paper, since no published translation is available.
form nature, packaged in fittingly contoured packets and presented ready for enjoyment to the experienced, delighted taste of man. It may be, finally, some action of man, perhaps an intellectual action—a form with its own supreme proportion and high end, the supreme beauty of man's everyday visible universe. This high metaphysical beauty that the art of man is capable of embodying and showing forth from matter finds its most exquisite expression in the art-work that is poetry.

Poetry is, as was said more than two thousand years ago, imitation. . . . Poetry holds the outer world in common with the other arts; the heart of man is the province of poetry and of poetry alone. . . . Thus the objects of the imitation of poetry are the whole external and the whole internal universe, the face of nature, the necessities of fortune, man as he is in himself, man as he appears in society, all things which really exist, all things of which we can form an image in our minds by combining together parts of things which really exist. 6

There is a metaphysical reason why the ancients considered only the actions of men, only a few of these actions, as fitting subjects for the poetic art. The substantial form or nature is the source and principle of those actions by

6 Thomas Babington Macaulay, "The Doctrine of 'Correctness," " Critical Essays of the Early Nineteenth Century, with introduction and notes by Raymond M. Alden, New York, 1921, 354. Note that even our representations of Divine action can only be expressed in art as some action of a material substance. Man's ideas of God are expressed by analogy with nature; the ideas of His highest operations by analogy with man's highest apparent operations—all of which are known by sensible manifestations.
which every being attains to its own end in creation. These actions are themselves forms—accidental ones—and so have beauty of their own insofar as they are what they are supposed to be. They are that insofar as they are suited to the attaining of some end.

This applies to the actions of every created thing, man, brute, or the most insignificant atom of creation.

The nature of each thing is as though an inclination put into it by the first mover, directing it to its proper end... Natural objects act for an end, although they may not know the end, because they follow an inclination to end given by the first intelligence.

For St. Thomas, this end was, ultimately, for all creatures, God, the First Intelligence itself.

The entire universe, with all its parts, is ordained towards God as its end, inasmuch as it imitates, as it were, and shows forth the Divine Goodness, to the Glory of God. Reasonable creatures, however, have in some special and higher manner God as their end, since they can attain to Him by their own operations, by knowing and loving Him. Thus it is plain that the Divine Goodness is the end of all corporeal things.

7 Aquinas, In XII Met., 12, 3; "Et ipsa natura uniuscuiusque est quaedam inclinatione indita ei a primo movente, ordinans ipsam in debitem finem. Et ex hoc patet, quod res naturales agent propter finem, licet finem non cognoscant, quia a primo intelligentes sequeantur inclinationem in finem. (Commentary on Aristotle's A, 10, 1075a, 11-25.) Translated by the author of this paper from In Metaphysicorum Aristotelis Commentaria, 3rd ed. (Taurini), (Italia), 1935, 741.

In commenting on *Aristotle's Metaphysics*, W. D. Ross notes that for the great philosopher "the whole history of the sensible world is caused by the desire to approximate the divine life."9 These words, "divine life," mean a type of life that is only analogous to man's natural life, yet can in some way be understood by man. The life of the human being culminates in intellectual and volitional activities, and in these, especially when they are performed in the order of grace, he most closely approximates the Divine Life. Following in the footsteps of Aristotle as far as that thinker went, then carrying his principles farther than the Stagirite had opportunity to do, St. Thomas brings his reader to the sublime and inevitable conclusion that God is "Pure Act." He is never, as men are, in quiescence; yet, such is the concept—or better, the reality—He is never in a fever of activity. It can be seen from this whence beauty derives. For God is absolutely beautiful as the source of all beauty, and if He is pure act, it follows that the beauty comes from the nature of the activity that He is. Now the idea "form" is one aspect of the idea "act." The form which makes a human body appear as it does,

---

extended, is easily conceivable as 'rounding out' the given matter, as it were. Any operation such as intellection or loving is conceived as active. And actually, every form in some way imitates the Divine Activity, imitating which, it imitates the Divine Beauty. That is its end as created being, to imitate God. When it does that perfectly, then it is most beautiful. And—referring again to the ancients and their selection of subjects for artistic imitation—those activities which are more imitative of God than others are more beautiful than those others. Aristotle, speaking of happiness, said that

the activity of God, which is transcendent in blessedness, is the activity of contemplation; and therefore among human activities that which is most akin to the divine activity of contemplation will be the greatest source of happiness. . . . The whole life of the gods is blessed, and that of man is so in so far as it contains some likeness to the divine activity. . . .

The substitution of the word 'beauty' for 'happiness' is all that is needed to bring these words to the point at hand. But the most noteworthy aspect of the words is that God is in a special way active in the operations which man recognizes as peculiar to himself as a rational animal, the operations of loving and contemplating. In these God is beautiful. So, in

the world, for a stone to have its stone-form is for it to have beauty. For a tree to grow, to have its tree-life, is a higher beauty. For man to love, that is exalted beauty.

The work of the artist is to draw attention to the beauty that is inherent in form; is to imitate some form of created activity. How does the artist work? While keeping the basic, substantial form of the subject whole and true to the original, he must make the particular form he selects for special imitation shine forth single, startling, so obvious to the perceptive faculties of the observer that that observer must immediately admit in knowledge and consequently in emotion --if he knows the proper activity of that subject and has trained his emotions to follow the truth perceived—that "this is beautiful." For the artist it is a matter of selection and of craftsmanship. For the beholder, it is a matter of appreciation, cognositive and appetitive. For both, it is man's limited way of dealing nobly with the beauty in the world.

The artist is not concerned with the quality or intensity--the essential notes--of the accidental form itself. That must be taken from nature, must be true to nature. The artist is selective. His work of art considered adequately will not be true to nature. He must so subdue all the other

forms that were in the original natural concrete whole that only this form, in all its natural beauty, will be predominant. In the beginning the form is in the artist's imagination--and abstracted, in his mind--as in the mind and imagination of everyone. However, unlike other men, the artist somehow isolates that form in his imaginative representation of it, where it exists--together with other forms like itself--in its substance. Leaving it in its natural habitat, in its substance, he points it up for himself precisely by toning down all the other accidental forms naturally conjoined with it in that habitat, as though he were working not in the clay he will soon use but upon a death mask, simply erasing the unwanted furrows and bumps. In his psychological process--the necessary preliminary to his external activity: "[A]rt is a principle of movement in something other than the thing moved"--he is indeed working from a mask of nature, for he works from his perceptions of nature. His psychic activity is centered around that given form. So it remains centered when he turns to external activity, and, taking a formless lump of matter, proceeds to invest it with the form that burns in his imagination. When he has brought the figure in plaster to a perfect

conformity with the figure he has envisioned, then he has achieved his end. He has placed within matter the forms that existed there in nature's original, but with one form predominant. What he imagined more vividly, what he planned as the dominant feature, has become as he imagined and planned it. He has made a work of art.

The artist's excellence as a maker of fine-art will depend directly upon his ability to make the best use of the entity, the given form. If he loses sight of it or never comprehends it in the first place, if he puts it imperfectly into his material, or if the forms that must be put in with it to make up the totality of the concrete whole are too strongly chiseled—in other words if they are too realistic, if he gives them too much entity—then he will indeed be doing art work in the wide, Aristotelian sense of the word, but not work that would usually be termed "fine-art."

An example by way of contrast may be worth considering. The modern artistic representation of a slum area is commonly recognized. There are tipsy garbage cans, caved-in back porches, broken and cardboarded windows, networks of pulleyed clothes-lines strung unevenly with sooted, ragged wash. What is imitated here fundamentally is an area whose

13 Cf. p. 6.
purpose is to furnish human beings with a place to practice their freedoms. But the special aspect of the living quarters which the artist is striving to make explicit is that of disorder, a pseudo-form which in its own line is analogous to sin in a human being.\textsuperscript{14} Now the philosophic conception of disorder is that of a privation, an actual absence of entity. There is in such a scene, to be sure, an amount of positive physical entity—the articles mentioned above have entity, and their various awkward positions have entity. But—and this is an all-essential point—they do not have entity considered as awkward. They are awkward, as sin is evil, only in relation to what they should be. Their awkwardness, considered in itself, it precisely something that is not there, which is just another way of saying that it is no thing at all.

In presenting his reader or viewer with such a scene the artist is starting out with a heavy handicap. Actually, the better he gets his idea across, the less beauty he will get across. The \textit{per se} effect of his work will be to leave an impression of dismay, disgust, repulsion—anything but the reaction of pleasure that the \textit{beaux-arts} are intended to leave. And since "the aesthetic phenomenon consists in a perfect ac-

\textsuperscript{14} The question of sin will be taken up \textit{again} in a succeeding chapter. Cf. p. 69.
ord between the work of art and the one who perceives it, the more cultured the taste of the perceiver, the nearer to this per se effect the subjective reaction will be.

The explanation given in the preceding two paragraphs can be expanded to deal with such matters as semi-aesthetic reactions from such un-aesthetic works of art. For example, though one cannot admire such a work in its representative, fine-art aspect, one can certainly admire the execution of it, which as he realizes from the very same distasteful effect the work leaves upon him, must have been very artistic in the wide sense of the word. Further, though such a work may not be intended as fine-art, it can have some didactic, propaganda purpose, and so can be extremely effective. From the various reactions that are evoked in such an instance, elements of grim pleasure can easily be transferred from their proper objects to the work itself.

It is noteworthy also that such a technique can readily be incorporated into a work of fine-art, where by way of contrast it can enhance the aesthetic value to a high degree. This is a universal and highly legitimate application of the technique.

15 De Wulf, Art Et Beaute, 125. Cf. note 5, p. 9 of this paper for the French.
When Macaulay said, "Poetry is, as was said more than two thousand years ago, imitation," he was harking back to Aristotle, who himself had said, "Epic poetry and Tragedy, Comedy also and Dithyrambic poetry, and the music of the flute and of the lyre in most of their forms, are all in their general conception modes of imitation," and "[T]he objects of imitation are men in action." Aristotle was a philosopher, and he put down the rules formally and well; but it was the poets themselves who first decided what he was to say, the poets who—made by the same Divine Hand that made the beautiful things they saw about them—were impelled to cry out in delight, and so mold and shape matter as to embody the forms of nature and nature's actions in their own art-works, that other, less sensitive souls might be impelled to cry out too. "Poetry is the image of man and nature." What they saw was beautiful because it imaged in its turn, imaged the original and everlasting Beauty, God, the All-beautiful.

16 Macaulay, "The Doctrine of 'Correctness,'" Critical Essays, 354. Cf. note 6, p. 10 of this paper.


18 Ibid., II, 1, 1448a, 1; 11.

All men are driven to cry out at the sight of beauty. "You will find that this love of beauty is an essential part of all healthy human nature."20 "The sense of beauty is common enough (it is connatural to man; it is the very stuff of his mind)."21 For Shelley, "to be a poet is to apprehend the true and the beautiful."22 And Wordsworth:

The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgement of the beauty of the universe. . . .23

When Geoffrey Chaucer began his work on Troilus and Criseyde, he had some interest in pleasing his public. Pleasure, of course, can come from various art-forms, and from various literary forms. What was to be Chaucer's medium for presenting admirable natures to the admirers' attention? This particularization will be dealt with in the following chapter. As was


noted in the Introduction, that chapter will outline some of the major problems that have arisen with reference to the poem under discussion, and attempt to specify a fundamental question that seems to be at issue in most cases. Again, the general aim of this whole paper—to determine what kind of work of art Chaucer has produced in the *Troylus*—together with the principles collated and developed in the chapter just concluded, must be kept in mind.
CHAPTER III

DETERMINATION OF THE MATTER TO WHICH THE GIVEN THEORY IS TO BE APPLIED

The pleasure that Chaucer intended for his reader is a tragic pleasure. In his introduction he asks his Muse,

Help me, that am the sorrowful instrument
That helpeth lovers, as I can, to playne;
For wel sit it, the sothe for to seyn,
And, to a sorrowful tale, a sory chere.

"Go, litel book," says Chaucer, when it is all over; "go litel myn tragedie." His tragedy is a 'medieval tragedy,' or the equivalent of this, a 'romantic tragedy.' There is a matter of lovers, and as far as the ending of this love story is concerned, from every romantic point of view, there is nothing but tragedy. However, Mr. John Lowes has approached


2 V, 1736, 414.
the subject on another plane, as have many of the modern realistic school of Chaucer interpretation. Mr. Lowes is arguing strenuously for the artistic worth of the poem, and for Chaucer's sincerity—sincerity and valid artistic outlook—in the closing stanzas.

Is Chaucer, in the torrent of feeling with which the poem ends, repudiating his own masterpiece? No notion, I think, could be farther from the truth. He has depicted, with what he must have known to be almost supreme art, the tragic irony of life.\(^3\)

The position taken in this paper has a similarity with the one of Mr. Lowes in that it will hold Chaucer aware indeed of the tragic irony of life; however, it will differ in the aspect that for Mr. Lowes is all important; namely that Chaucer considered his work as his own artistic expression of that tragic irony as though to express it had been his intention.

Perhaps the medieval attitude is not quite comprehensible, or better, comprehended in the modern era. Certainly Chaucer, when he began his poem, must have known that it would end the way it did. Yet it is entirely possible and entirely likely that he was able completely to dissociate himself from that ending as he proceeded through the story, only writing it as he did when the exigencies of source material placed him,

---

together with Criseyde, in the restricted quarters of the Greek camp, whence for him, as for the besieged from Troy on the last fiery night, there could be no escape. Not that Chaucer at least would have desired a complete escape. The medieval mind was quite at home contemplating the tragic irony of life, but no less at home—and with little temporal distinction—contemplating and taking great pleasure in the dalliances of courtly love. "Perhaps the largest fact about the Middle Ages," says Chesterton,

is that two forces worked and to some extent warred in that time. One was that mystical vision, or whatever we call it, which Catholics call the Faith; the other was the prodigious prestige of Pagan Antiquity. Neo-Pagans of the Swinburnian interlude imagined that Paganism stood merely for light and liberty, and Catholicism merely for superstition and slavery. But the case was much more complex, upon any reading. 4

He adds,

Of the many minor trades that Chaucer seems to be practising before us, perhaps the one he enjoys most is that of an architect of heathen temples. He never used better his beautiful sense of design than when fitting up those shrines with the ivory statue of Venus or the red metal of Mars. 5

It may seem puzzling to a modern, this medieval preoccupation with such widely divergent subjects, and within such a narrow

5 Ibid., 254-255.
framework as the Troilus. Yet, moderns can act the same way with respect to such matters as sports. Heated conversations on small points of baseball go on for an hour or more; to observe the emotional reactions, to follow the intellectual gyrations that are gone through to make a point about a batting average, one would think that the deepest theological issue were at stake. Ten minutes later the same men may be actually involved in discussions on theological issues, and showing grimace for grimace, gesture for gesture, syllogism for syllogism, the same emotions and logical gymnastics they displayed over the sports page. With moderns as with medieval it is quite probably a matter of values certainly known but not attended to. Baseball is not as high in the scale of universal values as this generation makes it seem, and courtly love was certainly not as high in that scale as the romance poets made it seem in their literature. Indeed, it was—as the Church frequently pointed out—much less than high in the scale; it was wrong in its most fundamental points. That, perhaps, is why the men of this century of the last cannot see how it could enter even into the 'literary lives' of the people to such a

6 Cf. Chesterton, Chaucer, 254, 255.

7 Chesterton, Chaucer, 254.

degree. The question may partially resolve itself if it be considered that courtly love in many of its aspects is quite innocent and quite charming; that human nature will always find it easy to excuse what is in any way innocent and charming. In addition, the literature on the subject was written for and read principally by the sophistici,ates of the time, and sophistici,ates easily find many reasons for doing things that the ordinary man could never excogitate.

So, when he sat down to write his first lines, Chaucer was intent on writing a tragedy—not necessarily a tale of the tragic irony of life, but a "sorrowful tale" about lovers. This might well be expected of this man who was not only a man of his time, but, when he wrote the Troilus,

the great living interpreter in English of l'amour courtois. . . . Gower still hopes that Chaucer's existing treatments of Frauen,dienst are only the preludes to some great 'testament' which will 'sette an ende of alle his werk.'

This is not to say that Chaucer, by this time, did not have his own little touches for writing medieval romances, or that he would not have a few special ones for this medieval tragedy. Indeed, were it not for something very special in this particu-

9 I, 14, 153.

lar poet of the courtly tradition, there would be no particular problem of criticism for this poem. But as is obvious to Mr. Lowes, there is a difference in this work. Viewed from one aspect it is romantic; from another, it is not. It seems reasonable to remark, with Lewis, that when Chaucer sat down to the Troilus "the narrative bent of his genius was already urging him, not to desert this tradition [the romantic one], but to pass from its doctrinal treatment (as in the Romance of the Rose) to its narrative treatment..."11 In a parallel manner it may be added that by the time he was well into the composition, the realistic side of him was urging him, not to desert the narrative tradition, but to insert within its framework the sympathetic portrayals of character which have become his chief note of fame among modern critics.12 Finally, there was the Christian side of the man which urged him to write the closing lines of the poem.

In their efforts to explain this romantic, realistic, Christian anomaly that is Troilus and Criseyde, critics have deduced some involved theories. According to Mr. Stroud,

11 Ibid., 58.

Chaucer, it would seem, has constructed a romance, intensely pathetic, faintly satirical, to which he added a level commingling the functions of an illustration for a thesis and of an allegory concerning man's quest for the moral laws of the universe.\textsuperscript{13}

Quoting from B. L. Jefferson, he says, "Many readers agree that the poem is, in essence, 'a practical study in real life of the working out of the Boethian teaching.'"\textsuperscript{14}

Mr. Coghill in his volume \textit{The Poet Chaucer}, remarks, "Troilus and Criseyde is a Boethian book."\textsuperscript{15}

It must certainly be admitted that Boethius had an influence on this poem. However, the introduction of long sections from philosophers is not the least of the ordinary ornaments of medieval writing. Chaucer filled his works with them. Especially was he fond of Boethius. It is all a part of what Goffin calls the "moral preoccupation"\textsuperscript{16} of the Middle Ages.

For Mr. Coghill, though, it is more than mere quotation for ornament or moralizing. He adds to the sentence

\textsuperscript{13} T. A. Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus," \textit{Modern Philology}, Chicago, XLIX, August, 1951, 6.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 1; quotation from B. L. Jefferson, \textit{Chaucer and the "Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius"}, Princeton, 1917, 120.

\textsuperscript{15} Nevill Coghill, \textit{The Poet Chaucer}, London, 1949, 69.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, xvi.
quoted above.

But it was the system itself, not the lovers, that was to blame. Chaucer had been careful to deal justly by the system [of courtly love] and it is with compassion and regret that he said farewell to it. He did not condemn it as unchristian. He simply showed that it would not work, even in a pagan world, and with the noblest protagonists.17

According to the three authors cited, the philosophical termination of the Troilus is part and parcel of Chaucer's intention in writing the poem. In other words, when he began the poem he meant this "allegory."18

The Troilus would be an interesting bit of applied philosophy if this were completely the case. But it is difficult to conceive of Chaucer's planning "to deal justly by the system,"19 or to add a level "commingling the functions of an illustration for a thesis and of an allegory concerning man's quest for the moral laws of the universe."20 Once again, it is the matter of the modern's interpretation of the medieval. Chaucer might have written a separate work on the said moral laws, or he might have—as he did—put them into practically any work he wrote, as a matter of course, as good nuggets of

17 Coghill, The Poet Chaucer, 82-83.
18 Cf. note 13, page 28.
19 Coghill, The Poet Chaucer, 82-83; cf. note 17, this page.
20 Stroud, "Boethius' Influence," Modern Philology, 6; cf. notes 13 and 18 of this paper.
But investigation of other of his works shows that he was no man to write subtle allegory. Chaucer's allegory is so obvious that it leaves the modern absolutely cold. Despite that, however, Chaucer liked it, and so did his contemporaries. He and they thought it a quite effective didactic and even literary device.\textsuperscript{21} Goffin speaks of "the medieval notion of the end of all rhetoric, and its transference to poetry, which also aims to persuade morally."\textsuperscript{22} Chaucer enjoyed being sententious, and liked to prefix his allegory with a word of introduction making clear his intent to allegorize.\textsuperscript{23} He would have been the last man in the world to produce a work that would not be pellucid to his contemporaries. He wrote to be read, and at first hand.

Dante himself wrote allegory, extensive, mystical; but it was quite obviously allegory. There may be difficulty with regard to the significance of it, but that it is there is


\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, xii.

\textsuperscript{23} Cf. Bartlett Jere Whiting, Chaucer's Use of Proverbs, Cambridge, Mass., 1934, 113. Mr. Whiting also notes in his section on \textit{Troilus} that "Chaucer uses a greater proportion of proverbs and sententious remarks in the \textit{Troilus} than in anything else he wrote." (49). Were the whole an allegory, the author would be heaping moral upon moral.
Two hundred years later, in frank, simple England (even at that date the England of Locke and Common sense), Spenser was again writing allegory, and even then it was anything but suitable. The medieval made the devil look like the devil, God like God, allegory like allegory, and romance like romance. When Chaucer could no longer restrain his tendency to realistic outcroppings in his works, he wrote the Canterbury Tales, whose frame is realistic and quite openly so.

One might say, "But Chaucer treats romance humorously, why not admit the possibility of his treating it allegorically?"

It can be answered simply that allegory is recognizably serious and humor is recognizably not. As W. L. Renwick says in a brief remark about one of Spenser's minor poems, "Muiopotmos."

---


25 Early in the General Prologue he begins his realistic program with the lines:
Me thynketh it accordant to resoun
To telle you al the condicioun
Of eech of hem, so as it semed me,
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,
And eek in what array that they were inne... General Prol., 37-41. (Chaucer's Complete Works, Student's Cambridge Edition, 19).
It is mock-heroic as the Culex is mock-elegiac, and it has been interpreted as an allegorical allusion to his [Spenser's] own fate at the hands of Burleigh; yet the lighthearted tone of the poem—most unusual in our sage and serious Spenser—seems to contradict the idea of allegory. ²⁰

Two points may be noted here. First, the larger allegory under discussion here—the type that Stroud would have Chaucer engage in in the Troilus—is not to be confused with the rhetorical-philosophical tidbits and the moralizing which, as has been remarked, are to be found throughout Chaucer’s work, whether with humor or without it. Second, Chaucer can mix humor with romance, though he cannot mix allegory, because, as Chesterton says "The medieval romanticist was much more of a realist than the modern romanticist."²⁷ He had a scale of values, as an orthodox medieval Catholic,²⁸ and he recognized what "serious" subjects could be treated both seriously and humorously, what ones just seriously.

To return to Mr. Coghill’s opinions. Chaucer did much more than deal justly by the system of courtly love. He relished it and presented it to others that they might relish it. His relish, too, was not just a passing thing. Mr. Lewis

²⁷ Chesterton, Chaucer, 243.
²⁸ Ibid., 143.
says—and his investigations bear the stamp of careful textual criticism—"The majority of his modifications are corrections of errors which Boccaccio had committed against the code of courtly love." Karl Young notes cautiously, or perhaps politely, that a 'reconsideration of Chaucer's actual procedure in composing it the Troilus may persuade us that he meant to write a romance, and that he succeeded in doing so.'

Probably, after all, the most conspicuous indication that Chaucer was consciously writing in the traditions of the romance is the succession of brilliant and moving scenes to which I have already referred here and there. These are Chaucer's own additions to the story, and they are written with amplitude and enthusiasm.

Reference is made to Troilus' triumphal return on horseback, Criseyde's love song in the garden, the nightingale's "lay of love in the moonlight," the consummation of the amour.

Chaucer realized the preeminence of the things of the next world over the things of this. But that does not mean that the things of this world did not occasionally win a good deal of his attention. It may be that until the end of his days he still liked a courtly romance, though by then he was probably quite tired of writing them. However, whether he

29 Lewis, "What Chaucer Did to Il Filostrato," 59.
30 Karl Young, "Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde as Romance," PMLA, New York, LIII, March, 1938, 39.
31 Ibid., 57.
still had an affection for the form or not, it may be judged that when he made his retraction he was sincere about it, at least intellectually and volitionally. As Chesterton says, knowing the Catholic and the medieval mind, there seems no doubt as to Chaucer's capability for making such a retraction.

In summation, there seems to be no good reason for saying that the intellectual part of Chaucer, if not the emotional part, actually did consider the Troilus condemnable, and not merely because he was lax in his condemnation of the courtly code within the poem, much less because he considered the whole thing an allegory on a Boethian framework, with a high moral purpose. If anything, he could have argued this, had it been the case in conscience, for his condemnation at the end of the poem is quite violent. But the truth as he knew it was that, though his expressions at the end of the poem were quite representative of one phase of his personality and outlook, they were not representative of his intention in undertaking the work.

If conscience in Chaucer worked anything like conscience in the rest of men, his conscience was operative during the writing of much of this kind of thing, as well as

32 Chesterton, Chaucer, 254.
at the time of retraction.\textsuperscript{33} He was not, after all, a convert late in life, unless to the better Catholicism. Conscience seems to be one of the reasons logically to be assigned for his ending the poem in the manner that he did. Conscience indeed makes cowards of us all. As the folly of the story became unavoidably apparent, that conscience would become more and more audible. And at the end, with the truth crystal-clear, like a child involved in candy-stealing, hopeful of not having been seen, turning informer. It is remotely possible, of course, that Chaucer was so hardened as to premeditate such an outburst. As has been noted, it is not inconceivable that he add a bit of sententiousness at the end of his poem, simply as sententiousness. To go one step further, it is conceivable that he added a bit of spiritual embellishment merely to make his work more widely acceptable. One does not get the impression from his other works, however, that he is a scheming man. His sort of 'slyness' Chesterton would distinguish from "the darker kind."\textsuperscript{34} This 'darker kind' would certainly be in question in machinations such as those suggested with respect to the changing of face in the final lines of \textit{Troilus}. It

\textsuperscript{33} Marchette Chute, \textit{Geoffrey Chaucer of England}.  

\textsuperscript{34} Chesterton, \textit{Chaucer}, 220.
would be truer to Chaucer as a man and a craftsman such as he is generally conceded to be in the majority of his works, to make this Boethian ending a spontaneous thing, spontaneous in the sense that it grows naturally out of his whole view of life, a view derived from the Faith and an ordinarily decent living of it.

Another reason that could be assigned besides the Christian conscience is Chaucer's natural artistic genius. The following chapters present arguments to show that in his portrayal of Criseyde, Chaucer errs artistically, due primarily to his writing her story in the romantic tradition. Then it is argued that Chaucer instinctively, as it were, felt this error as the poem drew near its close, and that he made sub-conscious efforts to provide some kind of remedy. The last part of the poem is held to represent a statement of his deeper artistic realization, of his implicit acknowledgment of the point which is made (in Chapter V) with reference to Criseyde. The conclusion--given in the final chapter--may be seen when these matters have been considered.

35 W. P. Kerr notes, "Chaucer learned from Boccaccio the art of construction... the lesson of sure and definite exposition." (W. P. Ker, Medieval Literature, New York, 1905, 87; cited in Shelly, The Living Chaucer, Philadelphia, 1940, 46). Chesterton's mention of "his beautiful sense of design" has been given. (Chesterton, Chaucer, 255; cf., p. 25 of this paper).
With the subject matter delimited thus far; namely, that Chaucer is writing a 'medieval tragedy' and no subtle allegory or philosophic poem, it becomes necessary to decide the exact point in that subject matter upon which criticism may be focussed. The point is to be Criseyde.

Even a medieval tragedy has to have a hamartia, some kind of weakness that leads to a fall. There are two possibilities in this medieval tragedy. From the general handling of the story, it is apparent that Troilus should be the tragic hero, and consequently it would seem that the hamartia should be in him. Shelly says, "It is the tragedy of Troilus." But from the standpoint of the courtly code, Troilus is a rather good hero, though he does stoop to deception, which is certainly not in the rules of the game. Chaucer might have written a poem where the tragic climax resulted directly from this breaking of the courtly canon. But he did not. The only hamartia in Troilus, aside from several rather obvious ones in the strictly realistic order, is that which he himself sees after his love affair and his life have been so unhappily terminated—unhappily from the point of view "Of hem that wepten for his deeth so faste." Hovering amid the spere, he took a backward glance


37 V, 1822, 415.
while waiting for Mercury:

... his looking down he caste;
And in him-self he lough right at the wo
Of hem that wepten for his deeth so faste;
And dampted all our werk that folweth so
The blinde lust, the which that may not laste.\textsuperscript{38}

Like those several others, this \textit{hamartia} is certainly not one
from the point of view of the code.

But there was such a one in Criseyde, and though she
does not suffer the real tragedy, she certainly receives such
special treatment as to warrant the name 'heroine'. And what
was her \textit{hamartia}? It is only necessary to quote the famous
words of Professor Kittredge: "As Cresside is at the beginning,
such is she to the end, amorous, gentle, affectionate, and
charming altogether, but fatally impressionable and yielding."\textsuperscript{39}
From the point of view of the courtly lover, it seems, Criseyde
was just plain inconstant, and that is a real \textit{hamartia}. How-
ever, a question arises here. It is of the essence of the
courtly convention that the lady be yielding, ultimately. There
must be a certain amount of reluctance—-and Criseyde shows that
with Troilus—-but if there be no yielding, the whole romance
totters. Inconstancy then may not be equavalated with the idea
of yielding if the tradition of the courtly convention is to be

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{V.}, 1820-1824, 415.

\textsuperscript{39} G. L. Kittredge, \textit{Chaucer and His Poetry}, Cam-
bridge, Mass., 1933, 135.
Crisseyde's weakness was not in being yielding by nature, but in yielding twice instead of just once. Her hamartia then, from the point of view of the medieval tragedian, was inconstancy, real inconstancy.

After a consideration of the second chapter of this paper and the remarks there made concerning activity, form, and the fact that artistic beauty lies in them alone, a general question might arise as to how, in any tragedy, a hero can arouse the aesthetic emotion, since he is consistently portrayed as dominated more and more by a hamartia, which is an unbeautiful thing. The solution lies in the word, 'thing'. Every thing in the true sense of the word must have beauty. But the hamartia is not really a thing at all; instead it is what was termed in the second chapter a privation. The beauty in tragedy comes from the natural, unusually passionate activity of the tragic hero, an activity always underlying the defect, which is always a misdirected use of the activity. This passionate activity as an act and form is beautiful. It may be hard to name, for the exact nature of the passionate actions are but vaguely known. Men have named them as they are manifested in moral defects or excellences: love, hate, envy, greed; or in their morbid or effusive manifestations: fear, hilarity.

40 Pp. 16-17.
All of these, according to scholastic psychology, are based on activities of will and lower appetites, and indirectly or intellect—where are in their natures or forms indifferent morally, but supremely beautiful as beings which are what they should be, and which are highly imitative of the Divine Pure Act. Macbeth, Othello, The Medea, or Lear, or any of the works commonly accepted as tragedies, would provide examples in which to study such passionate activity and character defect.

In the present poem, however, with reference to Criseyde, there is a difficulty. Criseyde was only inconstant once. Her fault, from the romantic standpoint, is not one of character, since the very same traits of character which made her yield the second time made her yield the first time, and were then considered graces, virtues. The romanticists are forced to put the blame ultimately on Criseyde's free will, and make her hamartia a simple single sin against Venus.

Criticism of the poem as a real tragedy, then, means turning to the realistic order to find Criseyde's hamartia. In that case, however, the work may logically be considered no tragedy at all—Chaucer was not interested in writing a realistic tragedy—but as a romance with realistic elements. In other words, no form need be looked for behind any defect, necessarily, unless by accident some true, tragically developed de-
fect should appear. It is only necessary to look for the form itself, for it may well be that the form in the real order, aside from the romantic criteria, is quite free of defect and so quite obviously beautiful.

It is necessary now to determine whether Criseyde is the right person to bear the form, since previous judgments with respect to her being the central interest in the poem have been made considering the work as a tragedy, considering her as having a hamartia. The fact is that Criseyde is the person whose form strikes us consistently as we read the story, even after she leaves the city of Troy. From the beginning "til near the end," as Tatlock says, "she is Chaucer's own creation, learned about by us as we learn about our friends, through her words and acts, not from analytic statements. With delicate finesse we are shown her clearly as seen by Troilus, Diomed, herself, and indeed others."

Coghill notes, comparing Criseyde with Troilus, that "although she fits the formula for a courtly lover she has

---

41 The following chapters will show that the defect in the real order is present, but is not tragically developed, nor is it a real tragic defect in the sense that it is what the scholastic would call "accidental." It is a defect which Chaucer makes essential to Criseyde, so that she cannot fight against it. Cf. the discussion of Chaucer's artistic error in Chapter V.

42 Tatlock, The Mind and Art of Chaucer, 45.
which Troilus has not.\textsuperscript{43}

Pandarus is, though some hold him to be better portrayed, a less dominant character, especially in view of the fact that he is what might be termed an 'occasional' one. Considering the rank of the characters, and considering the poem as "a tragedy of Troilus,"\textsuperscript{44} Shelly says, "Troilus is the leading character. But Crisseyde is only slightly less prominent than he, and to most readers, it seems, the more interesting of the two."\textsuperscript{45}

It may be concluded that if Chaucer did not mean that Crisseyde should be at least one of the centers of attraction in the poem, he has already made an artistic error—though the work might still be discussed just for what it is, or would be. For the purposes of this paper it is sufficient that Crisseyde be so important to the story, and that the lines of approach to criticism of her be as clear as possible.

Therefore, the delimitation of subject matter for criticism may be considered complete. The point of departure for criticism is the character of Crisseyde. The following chapter will give as full an analysis of that character as seems

\textsuperscript{43} Coghill, \textit{The Poet Chaucer}, 74.

\textsuperscript{44} Shelly, \textit{The Living Chaucer}, 112.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
required to furnish grounds for application of the principles given in Chapter II. From the discussion given in this present chapter, one may expect to find in the character of Crisseyde a form composed of mixed elements, deriving from the strictly realistic and the romantic. The romantic element may furnish the critic with some aspects of true, personalized beauty, for much of it is grounded in human nature. Most of the beauty will derive, however, from Chaucer's own conception of his lady's character, a conception of her which leaves room for her to take up the romantic game and play it in a very human way.
CHAPTER IV

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE MATTER

THE CHARACTER OF CRISEYDE

The 

hamartia from the viewpoint of the courtly code

has been determined to be inconstancy; to be reducible to an

act of the will on the part of Criseyde, whether that act be
taken as her final decision for Diomede, or her decision to
leave the city as she did. Where does this fit with the idea
of her being "fatally impressionable and yielding;" with
Shelly's statement, "With the best will in the world to be
true, she is untrue," or with Root's, that she has "from the
beginning of the story a fatal weakness--the inability to make
a deliberate choice?" It is best to refer directly to the
text to solve this problem; first it may be helpful to attend
to one fact. No man is from his primary form or nature unable

1 Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, 135.
2 Shelly, The Living Chaucer, 124.
3 Robert Kilburne Root, The Book of Troilus and
Crisseyde, Princeton, 1945, xxxii.
to make a deliberate choice. Presumably these critics are aware of that fact, although today such a presumption—considering not practical but philosophical awareness—is not altogether a safe one to make. At any rate, whenever a person does appear to be consistently yielding, he is so by some accidental form, and that in turn has been induced by some other accidental form, usually one method or rationalization of another, in which the intellect proposes for selection—ultimately at the instigation of the free will—only those motives, or especially those, which will make it preferable to yield when the time comes finally to choose. It is then not the mere fact of yielding, if Crisseyde is yielding, that should be adverted to, but the processes that lead up to it, or rather, each time it occurs.

Chaucer in the fifth book gives us Crisseyde's formal portrait.4

She sobre was, eek simple, and wys with-al; The beste y-norished eek that mighte be, And goodly of hir speche in general, Charitable, estatliche, lusty, and free; Ne never-mo ne lakkede hir pitee; Tendre-herted, slydinge of corage; But trewely, I can not telle hir age.5

This picture can well stand, together with a remark from Mr. Shelly concerning the oft-quoted "slydinge of corage," that is

4 Shelly, The Living Chaucer, 126.
5 v, 820-826, 383.
She was tender-hearted, with a heart (corage) quick to move (slydinge) in sympathy. Slydinge of corage means nothing more than "sympathetic," compassionate, and is thus an additional item of praise, instead of being, as so often interpreted, the one note of blame in a description that is otherwise wholly complimentary.

He shows how the other items mentioned are indeed complimentary. The very punctuation—and there seems to be no doubt of it in the manuscripts—implies that this item is just like the others. As has been said, this is a formal portrait, and not a place for subtleties.

The first personal view of Crisseyde comes much earlier, when she is seen on her knees before Hector, weeping "with pitous vois," "Wel neigh out of hir with for sorwe and fere... hirselven excuseynge." Troilus sees her "undre shames drede" standing in the temple.

In beaute first so stood she, makeles.
Hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees.
Has nevere yet seyn thyng to ben preyseyd derre.
Nor under cloude balk so bright a sterre... Good to look at, and "somdel deignous" in her looking was

6 Shelly, The Living Chaucer, 126.
7 I, III; 108, 112, p. 156.
8 I, 180, 158.
9 I, 172-175, 158.
10 I, 289, 162.
Criseyde. There is promise of a real romance in this beginning; the heroine is one worth getting, and one who promises to be hard to get. Further, this first view of Criseyde is definitely in the romantic tradition (as is the other that has been cited, four books later). Chaucer does not touch the picture that has been handed down to him, though he certainly frames it well.

After the scene in the temple, no more is seen of Criseyde until the second book. There she enters at line eighty-five, and for twenty-five stanzas that are close to pure Chaucerian realism\(^1\) she is before the reader, living, typically feminine, varying between a playful artfulness and a somewhat impatient bluntness—lively, intelligent, friendly, and showing no little knowledge of the ways of the world. She finally breaks down under the treatment of Pandarus and her own inexorable womanly curiosity: "Now, my good eem, for goddes love, I preye, ' Quod she, 'come of, and tel me what it is.\(^{12}\)

When the story is told, Criseyde first feels out Pandarus,\(^1\) then throws herself wholeheartedly into a fit of reluctance that is quite filled with courtly emotion:

With this he stente, and caste adoun the heed,

---

11 II, 85-250.
12 II, 309-310, 198.
13 II, 387-389, 201.
And she bigan to breste a-wepe anoon.
And seyde, 'allas, for wo! why nere I deed?
For of this world the feith is al agoon!
Allas! what sholden straunge to me doon,
When he, that for my beste freend I wende,
Ret me to love, and sholde it me defende?

Allas! I wolde han trusted, doutelees,
That if that I, thurgh my disaventure,
Had loved other him or Achilles,
Ector, or any mannes creature,
Ye nolde han had no mercy ne mesure
On me, but alway had me in repreve;
This false world, allas! who may it leve?

What? is this all the Ioye and all the feste?
Is this your reed, is this my blisful cas?
Is this the verray mede of your beheste?
Is al this peynted proces seyd, allas!
Right for this fyn? O lady wyn, Pallas!
Thou in this dredful cas for me purveye;
For so astonied am I that I deye!14

Pandarus answers in as courtly a mood, and one as
threatening of death, or more:

O cruel god, O dispitouse Marte,
O Furies three of helle, on yow I crye;
Lo lat me never out of this hous departe,
If that I mente harm or vilanye;
But sith I see my lord mot nedes dye,
And I with him, here I me shryve, and seye
That wikkedly ye doon us bothe deye.15

Chaucer adds his own narrative romantic touch to the picture
with a line or two describing the typical courtly heroine, here
Criseyde: "Criseyde, which that wel neigh starf for fere, so

15 II, 434-441, 202.
 Throughout these lines there has been a vague note of realism depending on the fact that Criseyde's position as widow, and daughter of Calchas, is not too stable in Troy. But far overshadowing this are the romantic notions that Criseyde as widow should not even be thought of as the object of anyone's passion, and Troilus is liable at any moment melodramatically to press the steely blade to his frustrate bosom. That people do occasionally kill themselves for love may be granted, but the chances of it are and ever have been so slim that such a representation as is found here would seem to the modern, unimaginative, street-clothes American or Briton most humorous. To quote Speirs, who is speaking of the three characters, Criseyde, Pandarus and Troilus; "Troilus is the least Chaucerian of the trio. He retains, and to a considerable extent remains, the conventional outline of the disconsolate trouvère or Petrarchan courtly lover, the complaining, swooning knight (brave though he is in battle.") What Criseyde should be worried about is not that the devoted servant her uncle or his loving lord the prince might kill their respective selves or just waste away, but that the secretly smitten Troilus might do

---

16 II, 449-451, 203.

17 Speirs, Chaucer The Maker, 52.
something to jeopardize her insecure position in the city.
Troilus is Priam's son "worthiest, Save only Hector," in all of Troy. His accusing her of falsity, or other misrepresentation at this time, might be tragic for her, alone in Troy and daughter of Calchas. However, in the text, the romantic angle is stressed far more than the realistic. It is by reason of his own and Troilus' prospective deaths that Pandarus appeals to his niece, and partly by reason of the royal death's taking place at her feet—she romantically visualizes this—that she herself fears for the security of her position.

Chaucer cannot leave his realism out of the picture very long. In fact, it is present all the way through in the sense that Criseyde speaks like an actress who is getting no small pleasure out of her role. That she is beginning to enter into the courtly game herself becomes apparent in her words, "It nedeth me ful sleyly for to playe."

And with a sorwful syk she seyde thrye,
'Al lord! what me is tid a sory chaunce!
For myn estat now lyth in Iupartye,
And eek myn emes lyf lyth in galaunce;
But natheles, with goddes governaunce,
I shall so doon, myn honour shal I kepe,
And eek his lyf';

18 II, 739-740, 212.
19 II, 456-460, 203.
20 II, 462-469, 203.
Pandarus has been playing for some time. "For-thy hir wit to serven wol I fonde." Crisyde had enjoyed herself greatly in a pure realistic vein; taken aback for a few moments she is all the courtly lady; now she is playing again, this time the game Pandarus and Chaucer have chosen to play. She knows, knows something, and the pursuit is on.

"[M]yn honour shal I kepe." This matter of honor is one that may well be noted. It is not the modern kind of honor, having a foundation in the actual moral character of the woman who has the honor. Not that Crisyde's honor is entirely founded on the opinion of men. In one sense it is. Troilus, speaking to Pandarus early in the fourth book, makes this sense clear:

Yet drede I most hir herte to pertourbe
With violence, if I do swich a game;
For if I wolde it openly distourbe,
It moste been disclaundre to hir name.
And me were lever deed than hir defame,
As nolde god but-if I sholde have
Hir honour lever than my lyf to save! 23

His intentions are clear by this time, yet he still wants her honor to be safe. Such a sense of the word "honor" is eminently

21 II, 273, 197.
22 II, 468, 203.
23 IV, 561-567, 320.
proper to the courtly code.

Another sense is well illustrated by Crisseyde at the end of the same book, in one of her private encounters with Troilus. It too is proper to the code.

And whyl that god my wit wol me conserve,
I shall so doon, so trewe I have yow founde,
That ay honour to me-ward shall rebounde. 24

This is the sense that she means in her romantic lament in the last book:

Allas, of me un-to the worldes ende,
Shal neither been y-writen nor y-songe
No good word, for thiese bokes wol me shende.
O, rolled shal I been on many a tonge;
Through-out the world my belle shal be ronge;
And wommen most wol hate me of alle. 25

This is her honor in the eyes of all the keepers of the courtly tradition in future ages. It is honor with a foundation in her, indeed; a foundation based on the morality of the courtly code, a morality whose ultimate end is the perfect service of Venus. The other honor—that in the eyes of the whole world—though a characteristic of the romantic literature, has no direct connection, subjectively, with any morality, and is reducible to a kind of pragmatism. 26

24 IV, 1664-1666, 355.
25 V, 1058-1063, 390-391.
26 Cf. the discussion of morality in the following chapter. Brosnanhan in his work on ethics notes that the utilitarians attribute to "morality" a meaning entirely foreign to
The matter of fear is also placed on the courtly level. After Pandarus had gone, Criseyde sat alone and considered the situation.

And wax somdel astonied in hir thought,
Right for the newe cas; but what that she
Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought
Of peril, why she oughte afered be.
For man may love, of possibilitie,
A woman so, his herte may to-breste,
And she nought love ayen, but-if hir leste.27

This game is going to be played according to the rules, and the only fear Criseyde need show is that which is called for by the rules. There is no need for realistic disturbances here.

It is while Criseyde sits considering her affairs that Troilus rides by—-one of the enthusiastic additions of Chaucer which Karl Young notes.28 Troilus is a son of the king, he is a noble warrior, he is handsome and appealingly bashful. He is, in short, the second best man in Troy, and with Hector present in Troy that is no small measure of mobility. Criseyde, on the other hand, is a woman who knows that she is young and beautiful.

for scholastic sense of the word, and so make it impossible for any action to be bad, morally. "Admitting this[Bentham's] theory, we cannot with propriety predicate moral badness of any man." (Timothy J. Brosnahan, S.J., Prolegomena To Ethics, New York, 1941, 80-81. Quotation from p. 81.)

27 Young, Troilus and Criseyde as Romance, Cf. note 30, p. 33 of this paper.

28 II, 603-609, 207-208.
I am on my best, out of drede,
And goodlieste, who-so taketh hede,
And so men seyn, in al the towne of Troye.
What wonder is it though he of me have joye?29

There is nothing so strong as the natural urge to be well considered, and Crisseyde is no exception to the general rule for humanity in this matter. She has made a good point, of course, and she knows it. But beautiful woman or no, to hear that one is the object of such a man's devotion is at least a pleasing dream, and much more so because of his reputed imperviousness to female charm.30 It is not just a matter here, either, of being well considered; it is one of being the object of an impassioned love. If the one motive is strong, what of the second? There are few more appealing to human nature.

As a widow, of course, and no unschooled lover, Crisseyde has another point of superiority over other women who might find themselves in a similar case. For this reason she is so much more the perfect courtly lady, since because of it she may more easily show that reluctance which is essential31 to besieged damsels defending themselves against knightly protestations of love.32

29 II, 746-749, 212.
30 Cf. I, 185-196, 159.
31 Chute, Chaucer of England, 75-76.
32 Ibid.
This quite naturally romantic working of the leaven of love in Criseyde is visible from the time of her talk with Pandarus. Then, as has been seen, her author, her curiosity, her femininity all combine to shape her decision that she will play the game her uncle proposes. After breaking off the first discussion with him for a while and speaking of sundry things, she suddenly reveals the whole working of her mind in one sentence; "Can he wel speke of love?" quod she, 'I preye, Tel me, for I the bet me shal purveye.' Just what her knowing that will do for her better estimation of the situation is a mystery known only to woman. No wonder Pandarus "a litel gan to smyle," knowing that the woman's nature was at work to hatch his plot for him.

Neither he nor the reader seems to be justified in calling Criseyde a schemer in the sense that she coldly premeditated all that would follow. But she is human, and capable like any human of self-deception. And it is self-deception; for Criseyde plays her romantic game with herself more than with anyone else, enjoying herself famously, never directly.

33 Pp. 33-34.
34 II, 503-504, 204.
35 II, 505, 204.
36 Shelly: "She takes such delight in playing the game of love as to be willing to prolong it in order to savor
adverting to the fact that she herself is just as much involved in her delightful little plays as those against whom she calls them. She makes a large point of considering herself as mistress of Troilus' destiny, not admitting until the last minute that she has for some time been as much a servant as a mistress. Troilus bids her yield to him at that last moment. Criseyde, perhaps partly from pride, but mostly from a clear realization of the facts, says, "Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte dere, Ben yolde, Y-wis, I were now not here!" Aside from these words, granting that she did not know the circumstances under which the end would come to pass, it would seem very unlikely that Criseyde did not have at least some suspicion of what she was getting into. She knew her own beauty, knew something of the circumstances, and could not have been too much surprised when "she him felte hire in his armes folde." She quakes like an aspen leaf, to be sure, but not its fascination to the full." (Shelly, The Living Chaucer, 118).

37 The position here adopted is medial between that of Shelly and that of Speirs, who says, "These are the gambollings of a creature unconsciously caught in the contrivances of Pandarus and Fortune." (Speirs, Chaucer the Maker, 64). According to Speirs, Criseyde has nothing at all to do with her fate; according to Shelly, she has everything, human nature nothing.

38 III, 1210-1211, 281.

39 III, 1201, 281.
from dread or surprise. The phenomenon is not uncommon in modern women's magazine short stories.

The game Criseyde plays with herself is shown line by line as the story moves on from her first meeting with Pandarus. She runs through all the objections to her giving her love to Troilus, then in effect throws them all out the window with a song of love and a going-off-to-sleep by the song of the nightingale.

On the morrow, Pandarus brings Troilus' letter. His niece is obdurate, making two hardy references to her insecure position, telling him to take the letter back where it came from. A few lines on, having had the letter thrust upon her, she smiles, is happy, says she will not write any answer, reads the letter and writes her answer. It is a revelation of feminine nature. After such transpirings it is a wonder that Criseyde does not admit openly that she is less in control of the situation than she pretends to be. But to the praise of Chaucer as a humanist, and all the courtly romanticists, she is perfectly natural in her reaction--it could be so with any woman placed in analogous circumstances. Natural also in the courtly tradition is the fact that in the letter she promises very little; just enough to keep hope alive; namely, "as his
Criseyde becomes more openly amenable to the program as time goes on. Troilus rides by again and she pities him. In the best courtly sentiment Pandarus speaks,

\[
\ldots '\text{'nece, I pray yow hertely,}
\text{Tell me that I shal axen yow a lyte.}
\text{A womman, that were of his deeth to wyte,}
\text{With-outen his gilt, but for hir lakked routhe,}
\text{Were it wel doon?'}
\]

Not even waiting for the end of the line she says, "'Nay, by my trouthe!'"

Chaucer in relating Pandarus' second visit, adds one small section of realistic flavor which indeed is worthy of the Canterbury Tales. But it is worth noting for the purposes of these considerations that the rest of the passages that are added by him in this section, and indeed the rest of this very passage, are much less reminiscent of the Chaucer who is commonly lauded as 'realistic' and 'modern' than of the medieval romanticist.

---

42 II, 1277-1281, 229.
43 II, 1104-1109, 223.
44 I.e., passages not to be found in germ in his sources. Cf. "Notes to Troilus" in Skeat, Boethius Troilus, 461-506.
Characteristic of the state of mind of the lady in the later part of the second book is her remark concerning the ailing Troilus, made while the others are speaking of his sickness. It shows the dominion she knows herself to have over him in accordance with the rules of the game of love. "But there satoon, al list hir nought to tache, That thoughte, best coude I yet been his leche."\(^{45}\) It is merely the advanced stage of that state of mind she was in earlier in the same book, a state already mentioned, when she accepter with satisfaction the fact—a solemn convention to courtly lovers—that Troilus was liable to cast himself into a moat for her sake at any moment, since "swich is love, and eek myn aventure."\(^{46}\)

It is in another passage, a passage near the beginning of the third book for which there is no hint in Chaucer's sources, that Crisseyde gives certain indication of what the end will be. After the usual demands for assurance of her honor, she takes Troilus as her official knight:

With that she gan hir eyen on him caste
Ful esily, and ful debonairly,
Avysing hir, and hyed not to faste
With never a word, but seyde him softely,
'Myn honour sauf, I wol wel trewely,
And in swich forme as he can now devyse,
Receyven him fully to my servyse,

\(^{45}\) II, 1581-1582, 236.

\(^{46}\) II, 741, 212.
Biseeching him, for goddes love, that he Wolde, in honour of trouth and gentiless, As I wel mene, eek meme wel to me, And myn honour, with wit and besinesse, Ay kepe; and if I may don him gladnesse, From hennes-forth, ywis, I nil not feyne: Now beeth al hool; no lenger ye ne pleyne.\textsuperscript{47}

Knowing already the significance of the use of "honor" in the courtly code, it is not difficult to realize what this means. Criseyde realizes what it means, though it would not be proper to expect that she admit anything openly, or even to herself in formulated terms. She says,

'And shortly, dere herte and al my knight, Beth glad, and draweth yow to lustiness, And I shal trewely, with al my might, Your bitte tornen al in-to swetnesse; If I be she that may yow do gladnesse, For every wo ye shal recovere a blisse' And him in armes took, and gan him kisse.\textsuperscript{48}

This is to be no long distance love affair, that is certain.

The end is sure, and Pandarus knows it:

'Immortal god, quod he, 'that mayst nought dyen, Cupide I meme, of this mayst glorifye; And Venus, thou mayst make melodye; With-outen hond, me semeth that in towne, For this merveyle, I here ech belle sowne.'\textsuperscript{49}

Criseyde demands only one thing, that her due rights according to the rules of the game be allowed.

\textsuperscript{47} III, 155-168, 249.
\textsuperscript{48} III, 176-182, 249.
\textsuperscript{49} III, 185-189, 250.
'But nathelees, this warne I yow,' quod she,
A kinges sone al-though ye be, y-wis,
Ye shul na-more have soverainetee
Of me in love, than right in that cas is;
Ne I nil forberc, if that ye doon a-mis,
To wrathen yow; and whyl that ye me serve,
Cherycen yow right after ye deserve.50

Criseyde has for all practical purposes done her
final yielding already, as she admits in the external act of yielding, "Ne hadde I er now. . . ."51 According to the rules she should have been allowed to choose the time of her external yielding; that was denied her. But it shows her deeper moti-vation, the purely natural one of sexual attraction, in that she was so willing to give up these demands for fair play. It may be argued that she could do little else under the conditions as they finally evolved, but the point is simply that from all anterior and posterior evidences, she would not have wanted to do anything else; nor did she then. She is brought down to reality just a little before the desired time; in the end she implicitly agrees that the preparations have taken long enough.

Criseyde's discussion with Pandarus previous to their going to his house is a masterful touch for building up expectation and suspense. Chaucer has made this romance so appealing, as opposed to other romances of the type, simply by bringing

50 III, 169-175, 249.
51 III, 1210, 281.
out most effectively the realistic elements of the courtly code. This is not a reference to the "typical" Chaucerian touches which occur here and there, of course. They transcend the romantic entirely. It is in the union of romantic and realistic, noted already, that he consistently excels. In this scene it is evident that Criseyde's mind is on Troilus. Without any provocation, she whispers to her uncle, questioning whether Troilus is at his home. He of course deceives her. Had he not done so, she would have been kept from going there by her ladylike reserve. But he does deceive her, and she goes. From then onward, to every added phase in Pandarus' story she reacts in the acceptable manner, anguished at the thought that she be considered false, then building up suspense by her reserve, finally agreeing to see Troilus, her honor being assured, for his pleasure.

This is the story of the first half of the Troilus as far as Criseyde is concerned. She is shown acting primarily from the natural motive, but always according to the rules of courtly love. That is typical of the courtly romance, except that in this one Chaucer makes the formalities seem more probable by revealing the humanness of his heroine and her uncle;

52 III, 568-569, 261.
53 III, 944-945, 273.
especially by making the reader believe, as is indeed true, that people could actually enjoy such a game. Although the motives that drive Troilus are in the large the same as those impelling Criseyde, Troilus shows none of the more ordinary means of manifesting them, and so seems to the modern reader more or less impossible. His actions have more of the tinge of traditional ritual; Criseyde's and Pandarus' those of an imaginative but modern world. Troilus speaks Gothic, the others speak Middle English, which is at least understandable.

Especially to be noted here is the negative motivation that Criseyde uses for keeping out of the entanglement with Troilus. She is afraid. She fears for her honor and for her security in Troy. She wishes to retain her liberty. These two motives, consistent with her are reducible ultimately to utilitarianism. She would stay away from Troilus because it is easier and more useful to do so. Added to these is the motive of reluctance, of reserve. This is traditional with the courtly code.

It is to the characteristics of Criseyde examined in this chapter, and especially to the manner in which Chaucer has portrayed them, the the points of theory developed in Chapter I will now be applied. The chapter here completed exemplifies in the case of Criseyde the more general conclusion of Chapter II concerning the essentially romantic nature of
Chaucer's approach to the poem. This section on Crisseyde, therefore, not only depends upon the delimitation of subject matter in the previous section, but also complements the contents of that section.

The results of both chapters, therefore, should be kept in mind during the following application of theory. That application can be considered as a drawing of conclusions from given data.
CHAPTER V

AN ARTISTIC ERROR

The introduction of the term "morality" in a work on literary criticism tends to cause a vague unrest in the reader. It is well first to dispel any such unrest. As an introduction some words of Macaulay and Coleridge can be considered. First, Macaulay:

In the name of art, as well as in the name of virtue, we protest against the principle that the world of pure comedy is one into which no moral enters. If comedy be an imitation, under whatever conventions, of real life, how is it possible that it can have no reference to the great rule which directs life, and to feelings which are called forth by every incident of life.

Then Coleridge, in his essay on Shakespeare:

Keeping at all times in the high road of life. Shakespeare has no innocent adulteries, no interesting incests, no virtuous vice; he never renders that amiable which religion and reason alike teach us to detest, or clothes impurity in the garb of virtue. In Shakespeare vice never walks in the twilight; nothing is purposely out of place; he inverts not the order of nature and propriety.

---

2 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Shakespeare," Ibid., 146.
The words "reason" and "nature" are noteworthy. The scholastic definition of ethics or moral philosophy\(^3\) brings out two facts: it is a science concerned with the free acts of human beings, and it is a philosophic science in the strict sense of the word "philosophy"; that is, it is pursued without aid from revelation. The discussion of natural religion is indeed a branch of ethics, but of no relevance here. It is regrettable that many of the authors who speak of the question of morality in art--it almost seems especially with reference to this poem--tend to confuse the idea of morality with that of revealed religion.\(^4\) The point will arise again shortly. Even a number


\(^{4}\) ... revealed religion and other phenomena. A curious blending of four meanings of morality are to be found in the following passage. It includes the idea of religion as morality, hints of true morality (implied by conscience), social and individual utilitarianism. The selection begins with a presentation of opinions other than those of the author quoted, then goes on to give his own. "Yet it may be asked whether her own indifference to moral issues [Criseyde's] does not entirely exonerate her from guilt. She sees no wrong in loving Troilus. 'Such is the way of an adulterous woman,' says the Book of Proverbs, 'she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, 'I have done no wickedness.' Criseyde is not adulterous, and she is aware that there is something wrong about giving herself to her lover. She once rebuked Pandarus, as we have seen, for counselling her to love, when he should be the first to refuse her the privilege. Her indifference means simply that she intends to be a law to herself, and that certainly does not excuse her. She knew the social standard of her time." (Howard Rollin Patch, *On Rereading Chaucer*, Cambridge, Mass., 1939, 81-82; brackets by author of this paper.)
of scholastic authors fail to make a very important and perhaps too obvious distinction which calls to attention the two legitimate but definitely separate phases of morality in the art question. De Wulf does make the distinction. Speaking at the beginning of a new chapter of the matter just treated in the last, he says,

There, it was a question of the aesthetic value in art of morality, proposed as object of contemplation. Here, we are considering the moral value of the aesthetic activity when one subordinates it to ends freely chosen. It is easily seen that this second problem, the moral one, must be solved according to the principles proper to the moral science.5

Here it is a question of solving a given moral problem by the principles of aesthetics, and not by those of ethics. However, in order to handle facility such a problem or situation or state if it is presented, it is necessary to have clearly in mind the exact nature of morality, and of its relation to art.

First it may be noted that poetry is an imitation of human action. Morality is concerned with human actions. One should indeed be surprised if there were no connection between the two.

5 De Wulf, Art Et Beauté, 126. "La il s'agissait de la valeur esthétique de la moralité dans l'art, proposée comme objet à la perception contemplative. Ici on considère la valeur morale de l'activité esthétique quand on la subordonne à des fins librement choisies. Or, qui ne voit que ce second problème, relevant de la morale, doit se résoudre d'après les principes propres à cette science?"
Beauty in art derives from perfectly ordered activity; activity, that is, which is perfectly suited to bring the nature from which it flows to the end for which that nature is by its Creator ordained. Man, in common with all creatures, has as his last end, God. It might be useful to quote again a section from the *Summa* already quoted, for it is applicable here in a different sense.

The entire universe, with all its parts, is ordained towards God as its end, inasmuch as it imitates, as it were, and shows forth the Divine Goodness, to the Glory of God. Reasonable creatures, however, have in some special and higher manner God as their end, since they can attain to Him by their own operations, by knowing and loving Him.

Furthermore, man is fitted to judge of the appropriateness of these actions for the attaining of the end proposed.

Divine providence has endowed men with a natural tribunal of reason, to be the ruling principle of their proper activities. But natural principles are ordained to natural purposes. There are certain activities naturally suited to man, and these activities are in themselves right, and not merely by positive law.

There are certain acts proper to a human being, by which he

---

7 P. 11.
attains to his natural end, which are in themselves right; and he is equipped to judge which these are. And quite the contrary, there are some which are in themselves wrong, and that not merely by any positive law. ¹⁰

Wherein does an artist err artistically with reference to such actions? Certainly not simply by presenting them in his work. It is quite possible that he may fall into a moral error in some cases by doing so, for as Maritain notes, referring to the artist, "For the man working, the work to be done itself comes into the line of morality, and so is merely a means." ¹¹ In question here is the "moral value of the aesthetic activity," as De Wulf puts it. ¹² The consideration of such a morally wrong act may be illicit for the artist or the art-enthusiast because it is a means which leads him away from his ultimate end, rather than towards it. In other words, it may be a sin.

As the distinction cited from De Wulf would indi-

¹⁰ "... the morally right is the conformity of volitional actions as such to the norm which is by nature appropriate to the will. The term "wrong" gives the same evidence. Allied by etymology with the participle "wrung" it primarily signifies that which is wrung aside or twisted from its direction, scope or type." (Brosnahan, Ethics, 30).


¹² Cf. p. 67.
cate,\textsuperscript{13} bad moral implications of such artistic treatment are not necessarily bad artistic implications. Artistically the work is irreproachable if the artist does not show what purports to be a human act—that is, the free-will act of a creature endowed with and using reason—so as to leave out an absolute necessary concomitant of that act.\textsuperscript{14}

An analogy from substantial forms or natures (the same principles hold for their artistic representation), would be to represent man as if he were an angel or a dog. It is simply to say that a thing is different from what it really is, to say it in painting or poetry or sculpture. Every moral act has three aspects that must be considered when it is imitated. First, with reference to the actual internal volitional act—what might be termed the moral act proper—there are two relational aspects to be properly portrayed, that of the act to the subjective principle by which it is elicited, and that of the act to the norm of goodness, the objective principle, the end or scope.\textsuperscript{15} Second, the external act must be represented properly in its relation to its end in the scheme of creation.

In portraying the internal act as related to its

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{14} Cf. Chapter II, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{15} Cf. Broadnahan, \textit{Ethics}, 217.
subjective principle the author must faithfully portray the workings of the human intellect and will in the placing of the act. If an artist were to portray a person as acting consistently in an amoral manner; that is, acting in such a way as to show absolutely no real distinction between good and evil, he would probably be guilty of poor imitation, since it is questionable whether such individuals exist. This consideration of the relation of the act to the subjective principle would provide matter for much interesting speculation with respect to Criseyde; however, it must be passed over here for lack of space.

The matter of concern in this paper is more particularly the imitation by Chaucer of the relation of the act—in this case of the internal act corresponding to the sexual act—to the absolute norm or end. The actual ultimate norm or end of this act, as a moral act that is either good or bad, aside from all considerations on the part of Criseyde or anyone else, is God Himself. Bad artistic presentation of it would occur if it were portrayed as not related to that end, or—in a negative way—if what would ordinarily be an objective sin were portrayed as a good thing.

Also of concern is the imitation of the external or

16 Cf. Brosnahan, Ethics, 180.
"imperative" act. The primary end of the sexual act is the propagating of children. It would be poor imitation to portray it as excluding this end. 18

The question here then is, "Does Chaucer make either of these latter wrong portrayals in the Troilus?"

Part of Chapter II has been devoted to showing that the Troilus was undertaken and written by Chaucer as a romance. Chapter III shows how Crisseyde is consistent with that undertaking of her creator in the first half of the work. Her reluctance is partly due to the courtly code, partly to utilitarian fear for her honor and for her security in Troy. 19 So little have these latter to do with real morality 20 that the overcoming of them is celebrated as an act of religion to Venus and Cúpido. The citation has already been given,

"Immortal god! . . . that mayst nought dyen,
Cúpide I mane, of this mayst glorifye;
And Venus, thou mayst make melodye;
With-outen hond, me semeth that in towne,
For this merveyle, I here ech belle sowne. 21"

Pandarus is the witness of Crisseyde's declaration of faith in

17 Ibid., 195, for a further discussion of this term.
18 Cf. Brosnahan, Ethics, 304.
19 Cf. Chapter IV and summary, p. 64.
20 Cf. note 26, pp. 52-53.
21 III, 185, to 189, 250; cf. p. 60.
the religion of Venus,\textsuperscript{22} and the consummation of the \textit{amour} is the high act of this religion.\textsuperscript{23}

What is happening in this courtly romance is exactly that double wrong portrayal in question above. First, the artistic misrepresentation of the end of the internal act. The end of the act is not here the true ultimate end of man; it is Cupido. Second, the end of the external act is not the propagation of the race, it is pleasure, and nothing more. It is its end and heaven in itself---or its immediate consequences---as Chute remarks.\textsuperscript{24} Chesterton expresses the idea when referring to a Victorian revival of romantic love:

This religion of romantic love had till lately all the advantages, and has now all the disadvantages, of having been revived by the Victorians. 'Love is Enough', which was the title of one of William Morris's plays, might have been the motto of all William Morris's period.\textsuperscript{25}

The presentation of these two aspects of the whole act in such a manner necessarily affects the portrayal of the act, for they are relational aspects inseparable from the

\textsuperscript{22} For that declaration \textit{cf.} III, 155-168, 249; cited on p. 60.

\textsuperscript{23} Chute, \textit{Chaucer of England}, 73, 75-76.

\textsuperscript{24} Chute, \textit{Chaucer of England}, 75.

\textsuperscript{25} Chesterton, \textit{Chaucer}, 143.
Further, as the specific act is the act of Criseyde, it is ultimately she who is mis-portrayed. And since she is such an important part of the poem, the whole work suffers. Actually the act is portrayed through the words and actions of everyone concerned; the discussion has been limited to Criseyde for purposes of simplicity in treatment and application.

It may be noted parenthetically that such a portrayal of the objective aspects of an act have a necessary influence on the subjective attitudes of the character in whom the act inheres. Criseyde cannot be nearly as fine a woman under the restrictions of the courtly code—even with all her smaller sorts of pleasantness—as she could be acting free of its influence. The next chapter will have reference to this question.

The last section of the Troilus, as has been noted in Chapter III, gives the proper relationships. That last section, however, is not what Chaucer's intention was directed toward, nor is it what his heart and attention were fixed upon as he wrote. Unless one has the same spirit as the Christian one which is there expressed, the most those lines will call forth is a remark on how natural or sincere or even passionate they are as they come from Chaucer's pen. But unless one is strongly inclined to the ultra-intellectual, he will not con-

This is all just a way of saying once more that the Troilus is not a unified work. It should not seem strange to find it so, coming as it does out of an age when the ideals of Christian chastity and those of the cult of Venus could exist side by side, not, most assuredly, in practice, but most assuredly on the literary page.

Professor Kittredge has a paragraph dealing with the matter of unity that will be interesting to consider, in the light of what was said in Chapter III.

The tone does not change. The faithful devotion of Troilus is represented as the highest of virtues, and the treason of Cressida as the most heinous of crimes, still from the point of view of the chivalric code. Yet we come more and more to suspect that Troilus was right in his first opinion; that the principles of the code are somehow unsound; that the god of love is not a master whom his servants can trust. And then, suddenly, at the end of the poem, when the death of Troilus has been chronicled, and his soul has taken its flight to the seventh sphere, the great sympathetic ironist drops his mask, and we find that he has once more been studying human life from the point of view of a ruling passion, and that he has no solution except to repudiate the unmoral and unsocial system which he has pretended to uphold. 28

"Has no alternative" might be said in place of "has no solution." This point will be handled more at length in the next chapter. A change in tone is noticeable, as will be shown

27 Cf. p. 34.

28 Kittredge, Chaucer and His Poetry, 143.
there if one watches Criseyde and her creator carefully. But it is a change to which Chaucer was forced despite his adoption of the courtly code for the body of the story. It is the realistic asserting itself and demanding acknowledgement; it is Chaucer fighting conscience and art. The realistic Kittredge can see that a change is demanded, but, like Stroud, he makes it an intended change. He makes it a study. He makes Chaucer, in effect, a modern. Chaucer was a modern medieval, but the "modern" is only a modifier. Saying the same thing in a converse manner, "While nine-tenths of his mind made him a citizen of the old empire of Christendom, there was another tenth of his mind; and it was beginning to tell.29 In the Troilus, as has been demonstrated, the first half of the story is an artistic presentation of courtly love. Chaucer meant to unify it with the second half as a medieval tragedy.30 (That would have been quite in conformity with the literary temper of the times, for the thought of what might have been was quite as haunting to the medieval mind as it is to that of the modern). Finally, he meant what he said in the closing lines, but he had no artistic unity in mind when he wrote them, nor had he intended them as the artistic climax of the work. Their

29 Chesterton, Chaucer, 180.
30 Troilus and Criseyde, ed. Coffin, xi.
tone is entirely different from the tone of the passage which professor Kittredge would make the point of unity in the piece, that of the scoffing Troilus in the first book. Troilus there is a sinner against the code, and obviously one to be reprobated. "O blinde world, O blinde entencioune! How ofte falleth al theeffect contraire of surquidrye and foul presumcioun." Chaucer at the end of the work is reprobating the code. The burden of proof rests with Professor Kittredge, to show just how the tone at the beginning is like that at the end. All the textual indications seem to be toward the exact opposite.

The criticism concerning Chaucer's erroneous portrayal of the moral act pertain to any true courtly romance. But in a special way an accusing word may be directed at Chaucer, paradoxically enough, because of his very genius. It is not that his work is worse because better might have been expected of him. Once again, it is because of what he has actually done here in the work in question.

The mis-portrayals commented upon, once noticed at all, do not really need to be indicated further, in view of the

31 I, 185-205, 159.
32 I, 211-213, 159.
fact that Chaucer plays them up by way of contrast. Had Cris-
eyde been a beast, no moral implications would have been ex-
ected of her or her acts. However, Chaucer in a superb way
makes it obvious that she is supposed to be human. He paints
in her phases of human nature that in themselves express much
beauty. But by the very fact that he accentuates these quali-
ties, he accentuates the disproportion between what Crisseyde
is supposed to be and what she is; between the good qualities
of a woman—in all her completeness of substance and accident—and the absence of qualities that go to make a woman.

Beauty, of course, flows from the form. But as a
fine set of naturally beautiful teeth seem more disfigured by
the absence of one tooth in the middle than would a double line
of yellowed snags, so the form of the whole Crisseyde seems more
disfigured by the romantic treatment than would the form of
some lesser woman, and precisely because of her excellence.
Says Eric Gill,

Beauty consists in due proportion and the word
'due' signifies a debt, so that to say that a certain
thing has due proportion signifies that it has the pro-
portion due to it—the proportion which it ought to
have on account of its being what it is. . . .

Crisseyde, judging from the other things that Chaucer says of
her, ought to be an exemplary woman.

33 Eric Gill, "Id Quod Visum Placet," Art Nonsense
and Other Essays, 148.
This special criticism of Chaucer holds when Criseyde is considered from all points of view. Considered from special ones, in some of her separate actions, she is a wonderful creation. Chaucer was at once a romanticist and a realist, and as has been noted, he knew how best to deal with the realistic aspects of romanticism. In his application of these talents for realism to Criseyde, he has produced a figure who far excels the rest of the romantic sorority of her time. She is, as Shelly remarks, "one of the immortal characters of fiction." There is a spot in the second book where Chaucer's realism and humor, the modern kind, break through the restraint of the courtly manner and make Criseyde remark on the absurdity of the idea of her—old widow as she is—falling in love.

'Al god forbede!' quod she, 'be ye mad?
Is that a wideres lyf, so god you save?
By god, ye maken me right sore a-drad,
Ye ben so wilde, it semeth as ye rave!
It sets me wel bet ay in a cave
To bidde, and rede on holy seyntes lyves:
Lat maydens gon to daunce, and yonge wyves.'

This must have been spoken by some young widow Chaucer knew and courted as a young man, so lively is it. It is the sort of passage that inspires the modern critic to look for other

34 Shelly, The Living Chaucer, 112.
35 II, 113-119, 192.
modern traits in the author. One wonders what a man who could write so far beyond his age would have written had he been born beyond his age, born today. Perhaps he would have been as far again beyond this age.

Chapter IV stopped with the analysis of Crisseyde's character as developed to the mid-point of the poem. The chapter to follow the present one will continue that analysis, and draw from the data as Chaucer presents it further conclusions of Chapter II concerning the essentially romantic nature of Chaucer's approach to the poem. In that sense it is a complement to Chapter IV in its corroboration of these conclusions. Aside from this, however, the next chapter is meant to clarify the state of Chaucer's mind as he drew close to the end of the poem. Chesterton says that "when Troilus was actually dead and done with, the poet suddenly turned and spat all these things the thing involved in the code of love out of his mouth."36 Kemp Malone would have it that Chaucer, in writing his ending as he did, "followed a familiar and deeply rooted medieval literary convention, that of the religious ending."37 And of the same ending Coffin writes, "No one who

36 Chesterton, Chaucer, 255.
37 Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer, Baltimore, 1951, 139.
comes on this epilogue after reading the poem through feels it to be in any way impertinent, or tacked on as an afterthought. For throughout the poem, in spite of Pandarus, and of all its ample variety, there is . . . a sort of undercurrent of philosophic argument."

In view of such a divergence of opinion on the point, it seems advisable to study the text to see what this 'philosophic undercurrent' may be, or whether it may be. It is not present to any noticeable degree in the first half of the work, if the analysis of Chapter IV be correct. It may be possible, however, that there are undercurrents in the later books of the poem that usually go unnoticed in the conscious romantic flow, undercurrents that point toward a perhaps sub-conscious artistic realization on Chaucer's part--moving toward consciousness with the progress of the story--of the weaknesses of romantic literature.

38 Troilus and Criseyde, xviii.
CHAPTER VI

CHAUCER'S ARTISTIC GENIUS JUSTIFIED

FURTHER EVIDENCE OF DISUNITY

Perhaps the peak of romantic treatment in *Troilus* and *Criseyde* is the harrowing session in the fourth book in which Criseyde faints at her lover's feet after much lament, lofty promise to starve herself to death, self-torment, rage and woe. Into all this she occasionally injects an element of pity for Troilus. Her condition or situation at this point has become so unfortunate in the light of her adopted course that she is much less troubled at his danger of death than at her own discomfort, though she nobly adheres to the vestiges of the romantic code.

"But yet to me his sorwe is muchel more, That love him bet than he him-self, I gesse. Allas! for me hath he swich hevinesse? ... this sorwe doubleth al my payne. ... And deye I wol in certayne,'... "

Her adopted course has been the romantic one. Chaucer of course had her adopt the romantic course to the usual, quite

---

1 IV, 899-901; 903-908. P. 331.
impossible extent. But now she has a quite realistic tantrum, a natural perturbation—natural for anyone who is frustrated in a chosen course of action. It is a realistic-romantic tantrum, but after all, the course of action was romantic. The tantrum over, and the faint, she embarks upon a purely realistic program that is later to bring from her the rueful remark, "Prudence, alas! con of thyn eyen three Me lacked alwey, or that I cam here;" meaning, of course, to the Greek camp. The change is preshadowed by the abrupt manner in which she drops the fruitless weeping and wailing, and turns to the pleasure of the moment, which she accompanies by a more practical consideration of the situation:

'But with this selve sword, which that here is, My-selve I wolde have slayn!'—quod she tho;
'But ho, for we han right y-now of this, And late us ryse and streight to bedde go, And there lat us spoken of our wo. For, by the morter which that I see brenne, Knowe I ful wel that day is not fer hemen.'

A few moments later she has this to say,

Me thinketh thus, that neither ye nor I Oughte half this wo to make skilfully. For there is art y-now for to redresse That yet is mis, and sleen this hevinesse.

2 v. 744-745, 380.
3 v. 1240-1246, 396.
4 v. 1254-1267, 397.
As furtively as the woman's desire to have a man around began to push Criseyde toward the arms of Troilus, the opposite desire to be free of encumbrances is beginning to pull her by. Troilus as a fancy here begins to pass. The love between them is based on self-gratification; self-gratification, become embarrassing or too difficult of achievement, ceded to the stronger motive. In short, Criseyde leaves the city, protesting her love for Troilus and mourning the cessation of their relationship—probably with sincerity, insofar as selfishness is sincere. She planned by typically feminine wiles to achieve the reunion. She finds it no easier to go back than she found it to keep from leaving. With distance in space and time, the motivation, based on physical intimacy, grows less and less. Again, she does not return.

It is easy to see the instability of the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde, considering the nature of things and men. Certainly Chaucer saw it. Chaucer was a man who became very interested in his characters when he felt that the story gave him sufficient latitude to develop them, and he was, as Marchette Chute remarks, in love with Criseyde him-

5 Cf. p. 60.
6 IV, 1380-1400.
It has been shown in the earlier chapters of this paper that Chaucer was artistically unfair, as it were, to Criseyde in the earlier half of the poem. It is possible that the few liberties he took there with the ordinarily sober romantic medium made him aware of the fact, not in his mind as much as in his heart. In the latter part of the work, though still limited to some extent by the presentation demanded of him as a courtly poet, he had an opportunity to make his Criseyde a little more realistic, really human. Such humanization here implies the correct portrayal of the objective aspect of the moral act as discussed in the preceding chapter, and of the external act. By so portraying these acts, implicitly or explicitly, Chaucer would make it possible for Criseyde to act subjectively as men are in fact destined to act, a possibility denied her in the full romantic tradition. Chaucer's sympathy for Criseyde, as well as his intellectual awareness of higher beauties, may actually lead him, then, no doubt subconsciously, to attempt this humanization. Due, however, to the limitation mentioned above, it is improbable that he could ever clearly accomplish it in this work—with specific reference, that is,

8 Cf., p. 74.
to Criseyde.\footnote{9}

One obvious fact in the story of the departed Criseyde is that she did not return to Troilus. From the romantic viewpoint that is her great sin. From a purely everyday viewpoint, it is merely weakness. But it may well be that with the coming of difficulty, Criseyde had also begun to realize the instability of her union with Troilus, and, as time went on, came to see that it was better broken up, even aside from the accidental difficulties. Not that she necessarily came to hate Troilus. In fact, it would probably be much more in keeping with a sympathetic portrayal of both her and Troilus if she were to come to pity him; he is, after all, still in the really difficult plight into which his folly and her own led him, from which she has so recently emerged. Heavily tinged with romanticism, but holding truth, and surely ending with it, is the passage

\begin{quote}
"But Troilus, sin I no better may,
And sin that thus departen ye and I,
Yet preye I god, so yeve yow right good day
As for the gentileste, trewely,
That ever I say, to serven feithfully,
And best can ay his lady honour kepe:"\end{quote}

\footnote{9 Chaucer was limited too by the facts of the story as he got them from Boccaccio, for Boccaccio's heroine is no person to arouse deep sympathy. However, in Criseyde's rejection of Troilus and in her acceptance of Diomede, Chaucer may have recognized germs of possibility for a new, completely human, more convincing or at least more sincere Criseyde.}
And with that word she brast anon to wepe.
'And certes, yow ne haten shal I never,
And freendes love, that shal ye han of me,
And my good word, al mighte I liven ever.
And trewely, I wolde sory be
For to seen yow in adversitee.
And gilteless, I woot wel, I yow leve;
But al shal passe; and thus take I my leve.'

This is not Boccaccio, of course, and shows all in one Chaucer's romanticism, his sympathetic treatment of Criseyde, his final acceptance, on a realistic plane, of the greater plan of the universe, of the eventual and necessary triumph of the true morality. All indeed shall pass.

The herald of the time to come is a very definite person in this poem. His name is Diomede. There is an ironic twist in the fact that just about the appointed ten days after Criseyde leaves Troy, indeed, on the tenth evening, just after Diomede's visit, she considers Diomede as a possible protector. Diomede had made himself very evident the very first day, and ten days is quite ample time for a person to do some thinking. Criseyde would be thinking during these days, for her prospective leaving of the camp to rejoin Troilus was to take place at the end of them. It is not surprising then that she decided upon something at least, namely a postponement of the romantic notion. Nor, in the light of this very rational

10 V, 1069-1085, 391.
11 V, 1023-1029, 389.
decision, is it surprising that upon Diomede's next visit she
is by his pleasant chatting "refte ... of the grete of al
hir peyne."12

Diomede is theoretically every bit as good a man as
Troilus, and practically speaking a good bit better, especially
from the point of view of a woman in an alien atmosphere and
in a good deal of mental turmoil. Diomede must have seemed to
Crisseyde like the Rock of Gibraltar, or some ancient Trojan
parallel to it. There was a pleasant glint of sunshine off
him too. He had none of the excessive fears of the courtly
lover, though he had enough of interest in her to satisfy any
woman. He was a capable talker, with deeds to back up his
words. And he seemed to be serious about courting Crisseyde.
He comes openly to her father's tent, and frequently, to visit
her. He becomes he champion openly, accepts from her various
tokens which were quite obvious to the eyes of all: a "pen-
cel"13 which it was the custom—as far as Chaucer was con-
cerned—to wear in a conspicuous place; and what is harder to
hide, a horse.14 In Chaucer's source this animal was original-
ly Troilus', and was captured from him by Diomede, who then

12 V, 1036, 390.
13 V, 1043, 390.
14 V, 1039, 390.
sent it to Criseyde. She, however, told him to keep it by her favor. Chaucer does not put it this way, but implies that the horse had been in Criseyde's possession for some time before she returned it as a gift. "And after this the story telleth us, That she him yaf the faire baye stede, The which he ones wan of Troilus."16

Not only is this affair aboveboard, but it is quite definitely elevated to that level by the woman herself in the first interview with Diomede.

"But as to speke of love, y-wis, 1 she seyde, I hadde a lord, to whom I wedded was, And whos myn herte al was, til that he dayde; And other love, as helpe me now Pallas, There in myn herte nis, ne never was."17

Skeat, in his note to these lines, says that Criseyde "lies boldly."18 But it has been seen that it is ten days since she left Troilus, whom she never in the full sense loved. In such a case, assuming it as most probable that she had in the full sense loved her husband, is it not likely that there is much more of the truth in her here than a strictly romantic view-

\[15\] Boethius Troilus, ed. Skeat, note to V, 1039; 499.
\[16\] V, 1037-1039, 390.
\[17\] V, 974-978, 388.
\[18\] Boethius Troilus, ed. Skeat, note to V, 977; 499.
point would allow? The paragraphs preceding this in her speech are very serious and not at all likely to introduce an unmitti-
gated falsehood, unless Criseyde is a much more hardened crimes.al than Chaucer has given his readers reason to believe. There is no doubt that Griseida, Boccaccio's heroine, did lie boldly, but she was a wench, and Chaucer has not chosen to portray Criseyde as such up to now, nor does he afterwards. Of course the passage cited is "strangely"¹⁹ spoken, from the romantic viewpoint—and that is the viewpoint the narrator Chaucer adopts in this section. But Criseyde, at least in her relations to Diomede, chooses to be more practical than romantic, and one can hardly blame her after such a romantic debacle as she has just sidestepped.

Towards Troilus Chaucer has her as romantic as she can yet be. She is false but regretful, adamant in her practical course but penitent as a false lover. At any rate, whatever her sincerity in this speech to Diomede, Criseyde certainly gives him an indication that she would expect any future dealings in the matter of love to be on the same plane as those she must have had with her husband.

The same indication is given generally by Chaucer's rather pugnacious statement that it took quite a while even

¹⁹ V, 955, 387.
after these early advances before Diomede won his prize. "For though that he began to wove hir sone, Er he hir wan, yet was ther more to done."20 "Pugnacious," it may be said, because Chaucer admits that there is no author who tells how long it was, yet makes the statement. It certainly puts Criseyde in a good light as far as her moral character is concerned. It may be objected, "She is exercising that courtly reluctance again." This does not square with the already mentioned considerations concerning the openness of the dealings and her manner of dealing with Diomede as contrasted to the relations with Troilus. Diomede is a suitor; hecourts her. Troilus was a courtly lover and made courtly love. The first means of approach may be etymologically associated with the other, but if so the actuality like the word is only a vestige. The modernswain goes courting too, but he does not make courtly love.

Criseyde's pity for Troilus has already come under discussion. It is highly romantic. With Diomede the matter is much more practical.

... tho weep she many a tere,  
When that she saugh his wyde woundes blede;  
And that she took to kepen him good hede,  
And for to hele him of his sorwes smerte.21

20 V, 1091-1092, 391.  
21 V, 1046-1049, 390.
It is on this note that Chaucer chooses to put in his word of condemnation: "Men seyn, I not, that she yaf him hir herte." The situation mitigates the condemnation, surely, at least on a realistic plane. Of course Chaucer must apologize for the crime against the 'falsed' Troilus, but he must have known subconsciously at least that the mental comparison of Troilus in his earlier moonstruck proximity to death—the occasion for awakening Crisseyde's pity in the first books—with Diomede here actually struck down, would have some appeal in favor of Diomede for anyone not slavishly adhesive to the courtly code.

It is as Chesterton says of the medieval man: "He says that the lower thing is in every sense worthy; except that compared with the higher it is worthless." Chaucer does not say that the lower thing here is worthless, but he knows it.

His favor toward Crisseyde, and his tacit permission for her to continue in her ways, since she has gone this far, is given when he says shortly after this—throwing an appeasing bouquet to the courtly ladies simultaneously—"And if I might excuse hir any wyse, For she so sory was for hir untroughe, Y-wis, I wolde excuse hir yet for routhe." 24 His excuse for

22 V, 1050, 390.
23 Chesterton, Chaucer, 256.
24 V, 1098-1099, 392.
forgiving her is her sorrow for breaking the code. His forgiveness itself is for her, the real her.

Griseyde's first letter to Troilus, in which she swears her love for him, is drawn in germ from Boccaccio. The second letter, in which she is eminently practical, breaking the news gently to Troilus, promising to be his friend, is Chaucer's addition. It is realistic, has a rational appeal.

In all this section Griseyde is nothing of the timid, trembling lady, protesting her fear, that she was in the earlier section. She is quite frank with Diomede about her liking it in Troy, she stands up for her father and for the Trojan gentry. She is courteous, like any lady, but not obsequious. She does not play with Diomede as she did with Pandarus about Troilus; there is no coy wondering as to just what he wants of her. "I sey not therefore that I wol yow love, Ne I sey not nay, but in conclusioun, I mene wel, by god that sit above."

In short, there is a different air about this whole second half of the poem, a realistic flavor that makes itself apparent in spite of Chaucer's own traditional treatment. For Griseyde it means a gaining of the perspective of life, of the

25 V, 1427-1431, 402.
26 V, 1590-1631, 408-409.
27 V, 1002-1004, 389.
missing tendency in her character that has been attended to previously in this paper. No one sees Criseyde making the actual decision in favor of Diomede, but it can be believed that her decision pictures a full humanity. That is a degree of the quality of which her decisions in favor of Troilus on the same subject were not capable.

Why was Chaucer surprised at Criseyde's denial of any love besides that for her husband? Why does he introduce even in this final section many passages that are in the pure romantic vein, for example the formal portrait of Criseyde mentioned at the beginning of Chapter IV, Cassandra's explanation of Troilus' dream? Why must the new, moral Criseyde be searched for, not simply found? The probable explanation is that Chaucer was a good enough craftsman to keep his story in the frame that he had intended for it, the romantic one. His craftsmanship has previously been remarked on. As Speirs says, "The leisureliness of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde ought not . . . to blind us from recognizing the complexity and value of the organism which is thus gradually built up." Not until the affair is all over will the author drop the romantic approach.

28 v, 1450-1519; 403-405.
29 Speirs, Chaucer The Maker, 50.
But the mere fact that he does allow indications to appear before that time shows once again that there were forces at work upon him that were not completely under his technical control. Conscience has been mentioned as a possibility,\textsuperscript{30} and Chaucer's real artistic genius. It would be exceedingly difficult to explain the noted indications, or even to notice many of them, if it were not for the advertence made in Chapter V to the flaw in Crisseyde's character. For the critic considering the work with Professor Kittredge there are difficulties. He speaks of Chaucer's "dropping his mask" in the last few stanzas.\textsuperscript{31} Had Chaucer intended the work as Kittredge would have it (such a work, as has already been indicated, would be unbalanced to begin with) he should have allowed no indication of his feelings to creep into the story before the final section. As it is, his sympathy is indulged at the expense of his irony—holding to the Professor's assumptions. It is no dropping of the mask, it is just a snipping of the last string by which the mask dangles. By such treatment, Chaucer is made a much weaker craftsman than is indicated by Mr. Speirs.

The word "mask" is not acceptable because it implies that Chaucer has intentionally hidden something from the begin-

\textsuperscript{30} Pp. 34, 35 and 36.

\textsuperscript{31} Kittredge, \textit{Chaucer and His Poetry}, 143; cf. p. 75 of this paper.
ning. However, change the material half of the figure "dropping the mask"—change the mask to any ordinary article of clothing assumed for convenience or custom and from no sinister purpose—and the formal half of the figure becomes at least partially agreeable. Chaucer, when the final scene is acted out, feels free to stop being romantic, and free—impelled, too—to add a typically medieval, typically unartistic balance to his story. The tale has come to be a poor romance because it is too tragic, and a poor tragedy because it is romantic. He will therefore point out one way in which it is exalted—in its eternal implications, as a moral guide. He will doff his heavy colored coat, romantic as it is, and point out how impractical it is as an all-year-round article of apparel. It is rather pleasant to think that Crisseyde too has put on more wearable garments.

When one looks back at the rambling, delightfully disordered work that—despite his powers of organization—Chaucer was capable of doing and did, at the patchwork aspect of medieval life in general, taking in a little of everything and a good deal of a lot of things, not ever rushing to get them all in, nor ever considering that they might be immiscible—when one looks at these, and then at that "moral mood of his
Chaucer's age and creed\textsuperscript{32} that Chesterton speaks of, which could reconcile Christianity and the courtly code; then one comes to realize that Chaucer indeed does not need to be "discovered" by twentieth century critics as the modern medieval, but as the medieval one. Chesterton would 'elucidate' Chaucer just enough to permit him to appear medieval.\textsuperscript{33} "Appear" because that is how he really is—at least nine-tenths of him, as has been remarked.\textsuperscript{34} For the reader of today, the final lines of this work have a fascinating lesson about Chaucer as a medieval artist, as medieval and as artist. Whatever part the man's conscience had in the writing of these last stanzas, it is quite likely that his genius had as much. To close his work of \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, Chaucer took from Dante lines that as closely as any in any language and literature express the proper end of those human, moral actions of which this paper has spoken.

Chaucer of course, as Arnold said long ago, was not Dante. "The accent of such a verse as "\textit{In la sua volontade e nostra pace}" is altogether beyond Chaucer's reach; we praise him but, we feel that this accent is out of the question for

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{32} Chesterton, \textit{Chaucer}, 259.
  \item \textsuperscript{33} \textit{Ibid}.
  \item \textsuperscript{34} \textit{Ibid.}, 180; cf. p. 78 of this paper.
\end{itemize}
Yet, though Chaucer was not a Dante or a Milton, his medieval birthright, as this paper has in its later sections tried to show, included a sensitivity to the mystical; and though his natural genius tended toward the tendered, less profound expression of the truths of the universe with relation to man, he could appreciate and tend at least in desire toward the more sublime expression.

Chaucer may have taken advantage of the moralizing tendency of the age to cover over his romanticizing. Yet, when he chose those lines from Dante mentioned above, more than conscience was urging him. He was a complete, intelligent medieval man, and recognized— as man and artist— the supreme expression of the supreme truth and beauty of what the philosophers had drily called "the ultimate end of all things, and in a special way of man:"

Quell' uno e due e tre che sempre vive,
E regna sempre in tre e due e uno
Non circonstritto, e tutto circoscrive. . . .

Longfellow, one of the first Americans to capture a


36 Dante Alighieri, La Divina Commedia, Paradiso, Canto xiv, 28-30, from La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri, col commento di Giovanni Maria Cornoldi, Roma, 1887.
little of the spirit of the Middle Ages, or to be captured by it, puts this into modern English:

And One and Two and Three who ever liveth
And reigneth ever in Three and Two and One,
Not circumscribed, and all things circumscribing. ... 37

But somehow it almost seems most perfect in a simpler language, one well suited to showing how close the exalted things of God, by the power of God, can come to the practical, everyday things of man; how close in fact the question of saving the soul can and must come to that of the conduct of life:

Thou oon, and two, and three, eterne on-lyve
That regnest ay in three and two and oon,
Uncircumscript, and al mayst circumscryve,
Us from visible and invisible foon
Defende; and to thy mercy, everichoon,
So make us, Iesus, for thy grace dignes,
For love of mayde and moder thy benign: Amen.

Sic explicit liber Troili et Griseydis. 38


38 v. 1863-1870, 416-417.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

When Chaucer produced the work of art that is *Troilus and Criseyde*, he, like any artist, wished to please. He had to please like any artist, by a mimetic process that has been briefly outlined earlier in this paper¹ and shown to be quite in conformity with the Thomistic outlines of metaphysics and morality. In his imitation of Criseyde, Chaucer chose a subject capable of possessing accidental beauty to a high degree; he chose a human being. He created this being, in a sense, for the actions he placed in the substance of Criseyde were actions that he alone selected and placed there.

If, as the fifth chapter of this paper has attempted to show, there is a doubly poor imitation of the kind of action Chaucer chose to portray,² the whole of this poem must suffer adverse criticism. And, as noted again,³ the fault is

¹ Pp. 14 and 18.
² Pp. 73-74.
³ Pp. 77-79.
more regrettable artistically—with reference to the poem as a whole—because it is pointed up by way of contrasts with the other excellencies of the portrayal of Criseyde.

There is a saying of St. Dionysius quite popular in philosophy, "Bonum ex integra causa, malum ex quolibet defectu." It seems that this may well be applied in criticism, and most happily applied here. The whole poem may not be called perfect because of the error in a part; but many of the parts considered as wholes in themselves are excellent. So, if one aspect of the moral act is faithfully portrayed by Chaucer, there may be some good in the portrayal of that act. His representation of the consummation of the amour may be quite fine as a representation of external act, may even be artistically fine as a representation of the subjective aspect of the internal, voluntary act.

The introduction into this critical summary of the conclusions reached in Chapter VI is a pleasant task. There, in the second half of Chaucer's work, and especially in the ending, is an indication of moral excellence in his imitation, which excellence, though not so treated as to nullify the ef-

---


5 Cf. Pp. 87, 93-94 of this paper.
fect of the earlier misrepresentation, 6 is still an excellence. It is, like the many delightful sections throughout the poem, truly pleasing, truly beautiful. Finally, it is beautiful in a very elevated sense, since the form chosen for representation is of such an elevated nature in itself. 7 It is the moral act of a human being.

---

6 Cf. p. 94 of this paper.
7 Cf. Pp. 11-12.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES


II. SECONDARY SOURCES

A. BOOKS


Brosnahan, Timothy J., S. J., Prolegomena To Ethics, New York, 1941.

Chesterton, Gilbert K., Chaucer, New York, no date.


Dante, Alighieri, La Divina Commedia, La Divina Commedia di Dante Alighieri, col comento di Giovanni Maria Cornoldi, Rome, 1887.


De Wulf, Maurice, Art Et Beaute, 2nd ed., Louvain, 1943.


Malone, Kemp, Chapters on Chaucer, Baltimore, 1951.


Shelly, Percy Van Dyke, The Living Chaucer, Philadelphia, 1940.


B. ESSAYS AND ARTICLES


APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Mr. Fred P. Chenderlin, S.J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of English.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

October 14, 1953

Date

Signature of Adviser