Love Psychology: The *Troilus*
and the *Roman de la Rose*

In the course of unfolding the story of the lovers and their narrator, the *Troilus* appropriates to its own design the greatest of earlier medieval poetry. Its allusive range extends from the minutiae of Ovidian love lore to the great confrontation at the summit of Dante's Purgatory, and for a brief moment Chaucer uses the language of Paradise to express the joy of love. But the *Troilus* is also firmly rooted in the courtly tradition. First and most obviously it is a reworking of an early work of Boccaccio, a reworking that, as C. S. Lewis long ago pointed out, involved adapting the narrative of the *Filostrato* to the paradigmatic love experience set forth in that *summa* of *courtoisie*, the *Roman de la Rose*.

For Lewis this adaptation amounts to a "medievalizing" of Boccaccio's modern love story, and if the result is to make the story more realistic and richer in psychological insight and human appeal, it is because Chaucer has succeeded in restoring to the poem the values of the code of courtly love, a code that is truer, because more universal, than Boccaccio's "cynical Latin gallantries." I agree with Lewis that the *Troilus* draws far more extensively than the *Filostrato* on the courtly tradition, but I do

---

not find in it so straightforward an affirmation as he does of the courtly values he associates with Guillaume de Lorris. Lewis sees in the poem a love separated “only by the thinnest partition” from lawful wedded love.\textsuperscript{2} It seems to me that Chaucer retains a good deal of Boccaccio’s irony in treating the social status of the affair, and a good deal of Boccaccio’s skepticism about human relations in general. While Lewis sees Chaucer drawing chiefly on Guillaume de Lorris in his use of the \textit{Roman}, I would suggest that his debt to Jean de Meun is at least as great, and that the net effect of his synthesis of the \textit{Filostrato} and the \textit{Roman} is a psychological analysis of the experience of courtly love far more rigorous, and closer in spirit to both Jean de Meun and Boccaccio, than Lewis’s interpretation will allow.

The \textit{Filostrato}, if simpler than the \textit{Troilus}, has proved hardly less difficult to characterize. It is clearly “modern” in its pragmatic view of the relations between the lovers and in the utter finitude of the value it claims for their love, and to an extent it flaunts this modernity: as Lewis observes, it is meant to be taken largely as “a new poem by Boccaccio.” But this modernity has limits. The recent article arguing that the poem presents what Boccaccio regards as “the perfect affair,” distinguished by “that very sensuousness which love paramours affords and marriage cannot,”\textsuperscript{3} ignores the element of literary persona in the narrator’s attitude and misses the strong hints of a very medieval skepticism about the crowning joy, the \textit{ultimo valore}, attained by the lovers.

Charles Muscatine provides the best definition of the \textit{Filostrato}’s relation to the courtly tradition. It omits the element of \textit{dangier} and the “semi-religious awe” with which love is treated in French courtly poetry and introduces “a sensuality, and a sauce of cynicism, a realistic knowingness” foreign to French and English \textit{courtoisie} alike. Its emotional and moral range is narrow. Its relaxed narrative manner and its tendency toward realism never give way to a clearly comic perspective; the narrator maintains something like the traditional seriousness about the values of courtliness and the crowning importance of the lady’s love. But

\textsuperscript{2} \textit{The Allegory of Love}, pp. 196–97.
this seriousness never approaches the tragic, as it will in Chau-
cer's version. We may hesitate to conclude with Muscatine that
"the poem's ostensible moral is its actual one: 'Giovane donna è
mobile,'" but it is hard to find solid evidence with which to
refute him. However Chaucer read Boccaccio's work, it may well
have seemed to him, as it is apt to seem to us when set side by
side with the Troilus, a "youthful, urban, pagan, immoral
poem."4

Certainly Chaucer goes to elaborate lengths in his own poem
to insulate his characters and their story against any such dis-
missal. While Boccaccio's Troiolo is constantly aware of the fire
of love within him and can declare that the pains of hell would
be worth enduring for a single night with Criselda (Fil. 2. 88),
Troilus is far more concerned with showing proper reverence to
Criseyde and to love than with satisfying his own sexual de-
sires—which he seems at times to be wholly unaware of. And
while it is possible to see the net effect of Chaucer's treatment of
Pandarus and Criseyde as a condemnation a good deal stronger
than Boccaccio's, Chaucer complicates our view of their emo-
tions and circumstances so that we cannot be simply cynical. The
chief means to this end, and by far his most elaborate creation, is
a narrator whose involvement with the story is far more complex
than that of his counterpart in the Filostrato, who is virtually
immune to any suspicion of his characters' motives, and whose
retreats into euphemism and apology at crucial moments do a
good deal to disarm possible condemnation of their behavior.

But while Chaucer is at pains to render his characters' behavior
as fully as possible and while this "rounding" tends to offset
categorical judgments, their dominant traits and the relations
among them were already perceptible in Boccaccio's poem. This
is particularly true of the relationship between Troilus and Pan-
darus. Though only Chaucer could have done justice to Troilus's
unique combination of idealism and sexual innocence, Troiolo is
in many respects only a slightly less naive version of Chaucer's
hero, franker and more self-aware in his sexual desire, but also
subject to a strong sense of love's dominion, which makes him

125–29.
doubt his worth in Criseida’s eyes (1. 47–57). The Pandaro who can declare that “all women are at heart inclined to love” (2. 27. 1–2) is a younger, superficially more cynical and less sententious version of the Pandarus who cites “wise lered” in discoursing on the aptness of all mankind to feel the heat of love (Tr. 1. 976–79). Like Pandarus, moreover, he is markedly more aggressive and down to earth than his friend and meets Troiolo’s needs with an energy peculiarly his own. Troiolo and Pandaro are both young; they speak more nearly the same language than their Chaucerian counterparts; and Troiolo is less in the dark about Pandaro’s design on him. But we cannot suppose Troiolo any more capable than Troilus of the directness and skill with which Pandaro simply confronts Criseida after an exchange of letters has left her still unyielding and Troiolo burning with desire. Operating on the cruelly pragmatic assumption that a widow is by definition amorous (2. 27. 7), Pandaro requires a bare seven stanzas to break his cousin’s resistance; she confesses that her honor is “shattered and destroyed,” and Pandaro moves quickly to questions of “when, how, and where” (2. 133–39). Again, Pandaro’s first embassy to Criseida, his successful appeal to her pietà, and Troiolo’s joy at the outcome of his mission (2. 63–80) are linked by a series of echoes of Dante which seem to parody the office of Vergil as defined in Inferno 2 and suggest that Boccaccio is at least partly aware of the potential thematic value of the Dante-Beatrice-Vergil relationship that Chaucer will develop in a much more elaborate way.5

Even Chaucer’s complication of the role of the narrator does not effect so radical an adjustment of Boccaccio’s point of view as may at first appear. Though he has no Maria d’Aquino to inspire him, his involvement with his story is no less intense than that of Boccaccio’s passionate young man, and he never succeeds in wholly distancing himself from its appeal to his human feelings.6 While incapable of cynicism, he manages by his evasions

5. With Filostrato 2. 63. 2 cf. Purgatorio 27. 130; with Fil. 2. 80. 1–4 cf. Inferno 2. 127–30; with Fil. 2. 135. 8 cf. Purg. 3. 78. See also the excellent notes to Nicholas Havely’s translation of the Filostrato in Chaucer’s Boccaccio (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1980), pp. 197–205; and below, ch. 5.

and contradictions, his frequent confusion, and his ill-starred attempts at hearty good humor, to point in spite of himself to just those features of the story that invite the sort of skepticism for which Boccaccio appeals more openly. And only in the final stages of the painful process by which he comes to terms with the unhappy outcome of his story and accepts its harsh lesson about the fate of lovers' "gladnesse" does he decisively leave behind the disappointment and futile anger of Boccaccio's narrator over the betrayal of Troiolo.

In short, though the *Troilus* is unquestionably a very different poem from the *Filostrato*, there are good grounds for supposing that Boccaccio, or at the very least a somewhat older Boccaccio, would have readily understood Chaucer's enterprise and found himself largely in sympathy with it. This is not to deny the importance of the changes Chaucer made in Boccaccio's poem, changes that deepen, ennoble, and finally transform its presentation of human love. It is important to recognize, though, that the irony with which Boccaccio often treats courtly idealism is present in Chaucer's poem as well and that this irony is all the more apparent because of Chaucer's alterations. Chaucer shows love not only ennobled but also exploited and betrayed; and in representing this betrayal he neither rejects nor wholly transcends Boccaccio's "cynical" view of the relations of his characters, but rather analyzes these relations and discovers in them implications at once richer and darker than Boccaccio's more simply worldly emphasis can reveal.

Just as Chaucer's adaptation preserves in a more complex form tensions and contradictions already present in the *Filostrato*, so his use of the *Roman de la Rose* shows him fully aware of the complex interplay between the two authors of the poem. Muscatine has shown that the one-sidedness of Lewis's version of the medievalization of Boccaccio is closely related to his view of the *Roman* itself. Lewis tends to play down the purposiveness and coherence of the work of Jean de Meun and its critique of the allegory of Guillaume de Lorris. What Chaucer really did, Muscatine suggests, was to medievalize the *Filostrato* in two directions, by balancing courtly and practical values in what amounts to an enlightened fourteenth-century synthesis of Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. The *courtoisie* of Guillaume, as embodied in Troilus, is not just perfect, but *too* perfect, and in a
number of the narrator’s innocent remarks on Troilus’s behavior, as well as in Pandarus’s frequent exasperation with him, we see Chaucer himself treating the excesses of the courtly code with gentle irony. But Jean’s more practical view of life is subjected to similar ironic scrutiny, as in those moments when Pandarus’s pragmatic and acquisitive temperament shows through his attempts to preserve courtly decorum. Pandarus is finally limited, as the vision of Jean de Meun is limited, by his inability to do full justice to the nobility and spirituality of the courtly ideal. In the end, the poem presents both views as being at once admirable and incomplete, in the light of a third, higher view, which sees “the imperfections inherent in any mode of life . . . wherein the end is earthly joy.”

Muscatine’s reading of the relationships among the Troilus, the Filostrato, and the Roman de la Rose makes a valuable contribution by calling attention to the significant opposition between the viewpoints of Troilus and Pandarus. Like Muscatine I see this opposition as defining the poem’s central concerns, but it seems to me to imply things both positive and negative about the two characters which his sense of a healthy and essentially worldly interplay between their two points of view will not admit. This problematic aspect of their relationship unquestionably owes a great deal to the Roman de la Rose, but Chaucer has gone beyond the Roman in his emphasis on the separateness of the imaginative worlds from which the attitudes of Troilus and Pandarus derive. Their opposition, moreover, serves not only to focus Chaucer’s more probing critique of love in its earthly context, but also to make us aware of a potential spiritual meaning that Muscatine’s view tends to obscure and that even Lewis recognizes only in a somewhat sentimentalized form.

At the beginning of the Troilus, in a speech that alludes directly to the Roman de la Rose, Pandarus attempts to find a positive meaning in the contrast between his own misfortunes as a lover and the happiness he hopes to attain for Troilus. Troilus has expressed skepticism about Pandarus’s fitness as a guide: “Thou koudest neve re in love thi selven wisse: / How, deel, maistow brynge me to blisse?” (1. 522–23). Probed too deeply at

The *Troilus* and the *Roman de la Rose* [59]

this stage such a question might expose the whole enterprise of “love” as Pandarus conceives it, but he counters by proposing a doctrine of contraries to illustrate the functional relation of his role to Troilus’s:

A wheaston is no kervyng instrument,
But yit it maketh sharpe kervyng tolis;
And there thou woost that I have aught myswent,
Eschew thow that, for swich thyng to the scole is:
Thus often wise men ben war by foolys.
If thow do so, thi wit is welbewared;
By his contrarie is every thyng declared.

For how myghte evere swetnesse han ben knowe
To him that nevere tasted bitternesse?
Ne no man may ben inly glad, I trowe,
That nevere was in sorwe or som destresse;
Ek whit by blak, by shame ek worthinesse,
Ech set by other, more for other semeth,
As men may se, and so the wyse it demeth.

[1. 631-44]

Ostensibly these lines express no more than the practical notion that experience teaches. In context, however, as part of Pandarus’s strategy, the maxim becomes a way of diverting attention from the potentially disturbing implications of the opposition between Troilus’s almost religious sense of love and Pandarus’s more practical concerns and anxieties, by emphasizing a dialectical relation between their points of view. The lines evoke a passage from the concluding scene of the *Roman*, in which the lover, about to achieve the bizarre fulfillment of his quest for the Rose, reviews his experience and offers the wisdom of it to other would-be seducers: He who has tasted many dishes can tell the bitter from the sweet; having experienced hardship we appreciate good fortune; by knowing honor we recognize shame;8 discomfort teaches the enjoyment of comfort. And the lover concludes:

8. Note Pandarus’s deft reversal of this pairing in line 642 of the passage just quoted. In the *Roman* it is clearly stated: “ne qui ne set d’aneur que monte / ja ne savra connoistre honte...” (He who does not know what honor means will not know how to recognize shame...”) (21535–36).
Thus it is with contrary things: one is the gloss of the other. And whoever wants to define one of them must keep the other in mind, or he will never give it a definition by any amount of mental effort. For he who does not have knowledge of both things will never know the difference between them.

This view of experience, which Pandarus will reduce to the proposition “by his contrarie is every thyng declared,” informs the Roman itself at several levels. It suggests most obviously the contrast between the pain and privation the lover has endured and the reward he is about to enjoy, but it bears as well on the larger contrast between the ideal and the practical dimensions of love as the Roman develops them. The lover as he speaks these lines is about to conclude in an emphatically physical manner a sexual quest that is “glossed” at several points by the imagery of religious pilgrimage, most strikingly by the lover himself in a passage that follows closely on the lines just quoted. The tension between practical and ideal extends finally to the vast plane of allegory, or mock allegory, on which the lover’s facile Ovidian cynicism and his involvement with the self-delusion of Narcissus and the idolatry of Pygmalion are set in vivid contrast to, and at the same time brought into secret collaboration with, Genius’s vision of sexual activity as a means to the recovery of Paradise.

In the Troilus, too, the common enterprise of Troilus and Pandarus will be perceived by them in radically different ways, Pandarus’s words and actions providing a sustained and consistently reductive gloss on the idealism and intuitive spirituality of Troilus. In seeking to substitute the facile optimism of his
The Troilus and the Roman de la Rose

The doctrine of contraries for the profound sense of inner contradiction expressed by Troilus in his Petrarchan Canticus a few stanzas earlier, Pandarus is substituting one view of reality for another. It is emblematic of the extent to which they exist at cross purposes that at a point when Troilus is still very much the neophyte of Guillaume's poem, his love as yet untested by even the most tentative address to Criseyde's good will, her Bel Acueil, Pandarus should already be speaking in the worldly wise accents of the sexual pilgrim of Jean de Meun, whose earlier doubts and fears have been cast out by a suddenly emboldened physical desire.

A comparison that may help us appreciate more fully the scope of Pandarus's design on Troilus and its programmatic character is provided by the moment at the center of the Roman when the god of love, having summoned his barons to besiege the Castle of Jealousy where the Rose is immured, prophesies for them the glorious consequences of the campaign they are about to undertake. By helping young Guillaume de Lorris, they will help bring into being the poem that will recount Guillaume's success and thus pay tribute to love. But Guillaume will die before finishing his masterwork; only after forty years, when Jean de Meun completes the poem, will the implications of Guillaume's conception be realized (Roman 10465–574).

The way Jean's task is defined seems straightforward enough: he will “continue” Guillaume's narrative, completing it “if time and place permit,” speaking on in Guillaume's voice “until he shall have plucked . . . the beautiful Rose.” (10554–72). But the effect of this definition of Jean's role is to identify poet with lover to such an extent that the fulfillment of the one role is described wholly in terms of the other. In citing “time and place” as necessary conditions for the completion of the poem, he is appropriating an Ovidian formula that had become traditional for defining the conditions appropriate to sexual activity. His fitness for his task consists in his physical vigor and his hostility to Reason (10536–42), qualities the lover of the Roman

10. By 1. 946–52, where he artfully misapplies the imagery of Ovid, Remedia amoris 45–46, Pandarus is speaking of his contraries even more confidently—almost in terms of simple cause (bad) and effect (good).
will triumphantly reaffirm at the moment of his final sexual conquest (21560, 21730–31).

To appreciate the full significance of this passage as it bears on the role of Pandarus, we must recognize its broader implications in its original context in the *Roman*, implications that bear on the literary program of the *Troilus*. On one level it is a statement about poetic tradition: the god of love places Guillaume de Lorris in the tradition of Catullus, Ovid, and other Latin love poets (10477–500) and so accords him something like the status of the *poetae* themselves. On this basis it has been suggested that Jean de Meun should be regarded as the first vernacular writer to sense the possibility of an authentic modern extension of the classical tradition.  

But it is clear that Jean’s reductive conclusion to the *Roman* has a largely satirical purpose: he will set the progress of Guillaume’s lover against a backdrop of Ovidian and Vergilian history on the grand scale, but his purpose is to point up the incongruity between a poetic universe founded on Guillaume’s courtly values and the world view of the true *poetae*, and to show that any synthesis of the two is implausible. No doubt we should take even this parodic and deliberately incoherent coupling of ancient and modern as evidence that Jean de Meun was seriously concerned with the possibility of an authentic engagement with the classical tradition, and to that extent his poem constitutes a significant first step toward the emergence of a vernacular *poeta*. But it is only a first step, and Jean offers no clear indication of the way toward a more complete assimilation of classical poetry.

The subversive irony that underlies Jean’s juxtaposition of courtly and classical models has, as I have suggested, an important programmatic significance for the *Troilus*. It is one of the challenges Chaucer’s narrator must meet in the course of his evolution from the perspective of a poet of romance to that of a poet writing in conscious subjection to the tradition of the classical authors. But this challenge manifests itself largely on the level of the narrative itself, and Jean’s exploitation of Guillaume

---

finds its truest equivalent in the complex role of Pandarus as author-from-within of the story of the *Troilus*. Like Jean, Pandarus takes over the story in a way that leaves the narrator virtually as powerless as the dead Guillaume to alter the course of events. Like Jean's poet-lover, he can bring his creation to full realization only by finding "a tyme therto, and a place" (1. 1064), and his own "entente" impinges on and threatens to dominate that of Troilus to the point at which it becomes unclear whose desires are being served. Not only does he bring the lovers to the necessary heights of desire by employing the full rhetorical and psychological arsenal of the Ovidian *Ars amatoria* and the tradition of *fin amor*, but he manages to make time, place, the elements, and the crises of war and politics collaborate toward the realization of the "great effect" that he and the narrator await with equal enthusiasm. He is, as it were, the genius of the story itself, the shaping power that defines the role of each of the other characters and the motivating force that draws them into collaboration with the conventions of love.\(^{12}\) In the face of Pandarus's inventiveness, the narrator becomes a mere spectator, as awed and reverent as Troilus at the realization of his hopes and freed of the necessity to act out in his own person the interest he shares with Pandarus in furthering the cause of Troilus's love.

But just as Pandarus embodies in an extreme form the manipulative power of Jean de Meun's poetic *persona*, Troilus's private involvement with love is significantly more intense than that of Guillaume's lover. While Pandarus pursues his elaborate design, Troilus will continue to experience love on the visionary plane, and his Dantesque imaginative integrity will endow this love with a significance beyond Pandarus's power to comprehend or wholly subvert. So also Genius in the *Roman* adheres to his vision of the beauties of Paradise even as his powers are being appropriated by Venus and the god of love, who are identified with the artifice and materialism of the fallen world. But to establish this opposition is to raise the question of how it is resolved. In the

---

Roman, no doubt, we are to see the relationship between Genius's visionary enthusiasm and the exploitation of that enthusiasm by Amors as ultimately a cooperative one. If Genius is mocked and in a sense seduced, his seduction nonetheless leads to the conception of a child and hence the fulfillment of his own declared view of the divine mission of mankind. To that extent we may see the conclusion of the Roman as achieving in a very tentative way the sort of balance between the literal and the idealistic perspective which Muscatine finds in the Troilus, an opposition that enhances the meaning of both perspectives and at the same time qualifies it rigorously in the light of an implied higher truth of which both Amors and Genius fall short. 13

In the Troilus, the separation between the practical and the idealistic points of view is maintained even more rigorously than in the Roman, and the subversion of the latter does not lead to even so tentatively positive an issue as the impregnation of the Rose. Troilus remains, from beginning to end of his experience of love, unaffected by any taint of the opportunism and half-conscious blasphemy with which the lover of the Roman comes to view his triumph, and the promise of his momentary vision of love as a functional cosmic bond, uniting lovers under the patronage of Hymen (3. 1254–60), is left wholly unfulfilled.

It is equally clear that Troilus as well as Pandarus is implicated by this failure. If he is like the Genius of the Roman in his radically innocent sense of sexual love as a participation in the divine order, he seems incapable of giving physical expression to this intuition, and it is Pandarus whose relentless pursuit of the “fyn” of consummation represents the “genial” response to Troilus's vision. There is, in fact, no single integrative principle that informs the view of love presented in the Troilus, nothing to correspond to the traditional function of the genius figure, and this absence should warn us of the rigorously qualified value Chaucer assigns to sexual procreation as a bond between man and any higher order. Whatever the case for an Alain de Lille or Jean de Meun, Chaucer is consistent in developing only the psychologi-

13. One cannot, of course, affirm anything about the ending of the Roman without being uneasily aware of Jean's powerful and somewhat unwieldy irony. On the problems of interpreting his portion of the Roman see Stephen A. Barney, Allegories of History, Allegories of Love (Hamden, Conn., 1979), pp. 191–212.
The Troylus and the Roman de la Rose

...cal and potentially spiritual implications of his sources, and there is no point in his poetry at which we can see him indulging in “naturalism.”

Psychologically, at least, Chaucer is very close to both Gil-laume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Troylus’s passive and largely solitary role carries to an extreme the isolation of the lover which develops in Guillaume’s portion of the Roman and is maintained through nearly the whole of Jean’s. Like Jean’s lover, Troylus disappears from view for long intervals while Pandarus pursues his various stratagems. Like the lover in the Roman, he is lectured, maneuvered, and goaded into pursuing love on a level which he does not understand. He is distanced psychologically from this kind of love by innocence, by a deep-seated reluctance to compromise his ideal view of his lady’s perfection with the least show of aggression or possessiveness toward her person, and perhaps most fundamentally by a profound sense of something obscurely forbidding associated with love itself.

The most striking feature of Troylus’s role as lover is his extraordinary passivity. From the moment Criseyde’s image enters his heart, he is virtually powerless to act. Like the Dante of the Vita nuova he is subjected to love largely by the power of his own imagination, suspended in contemplation of an image too pure to elicit a response from his lower nature. His vital spirit seems to him to die (1. 306–7), and from this point to almost the very moment of physical consummation all of the “art” and ardor with which he pursues love, all of his imaginative and emotional energy, will tend to seek expression within the closed world of...

14. The evident unimportance of the genius figure for Chaucer is even more striking in the Parlement of Fowles and the final episodes of the Merchant’s Tale, in which he is obviously very conscious of both the De planctu naturae and the Roman. See David Aers, “The Parliament of Fowles: Authority, the Knower and the Known,” Chaucer Review 16 (1981–82): 9–10. On the ambiguities in the treatment of sexuality in the Parlement, see Emerson Brown, Jr., “Priapus and the Parlement of Fowles,” Studies in Philology 72 (1975): 258–74. That the Troylus draws on the tradition of “cosmic allegory” is argued by James Wimsatt, “Realism in Troylus and Criseyde,” in Essays on Troylus and Criseyde, ed. Mary Salu (Woodbridge, Suffolk, 1979), pp. 48–55, though Wimsatt is somewhat equivocal about the contribution of this tradition to the poem. Donald Rowe, O Love O Charite! Contraries Harmonized in Chaucer’s Troylus (Carbondale, Ill., 1976), pp. 88–91, shows that Pandarus as well as Troylus assumes attributes of the genius figure, but seems to me to overstate the positive implications of this association. The limits of the Pandarus-Genius comparison are well defined by Ian Bishop, Chaucer’s Troylus and Criseyde: A Critical Study (Bristol, England, 1981), pp. 37–38.
courtly idealism. Set against this idealistic tendency, the challenge of pursuing love on the earthly plane assumes an increasingly menacing aspect. Like the lover in the Roman, Troilus is utterly demoralized by the thought of dangier, the moral and psychological barrier presented to his own timid inexperience by the lady’s imagined disdain. Confronted by this barrier, yet urged forward by strong but scarcely acknowledged desires, he feels love only as the convergence upon him of conflicting forces. The impulse to give expression to his feelings is reduced to the articulation of this conflict in passages like the Canticus Troili, in which rhetorical antitheses precisely define the contradictory emotions that hold him suspended in a state of powerlessness.

That the Canticus so closely imitates its Petrarchan model suggests that Troilus’s experience is determined by his innocent responsiveness to a preconceived pattern of conventional behavior—an idea we may sense again in such gestures as Troilus’s submission to the lordship of love, which immediately follows the Canticus (1. 422–24). Chaucer’s divergences from Petrarch reinforce this view and at the same time suggest a “dark,” potentially malign element in the love he describes, the first of many instances in the story in which Troilus’s love is associated with disease. He stresses the apparently chronic nature of Troilus’s infirmity (406, 418); eliminates even the tentative moral perspective of Petrarch’s lover, who sees himself “so light of wisdom, so laden with error”; inserts into the very center of the song a reference to the curious diminishment of Troilus’s vital powers (410); and ends with an added reference to death.

The Canticus thus marks the apogee of an emotional process that then descends toward the soliloquy that concludes this section of Book 1, leaving Troilus, with no hope of gaining Criseyde’s favor, longing for death. The ebbing of his morale in this section recalls the long, slow descent toward despair and thoughts of death in Guillaume’s portion of the Roman. The interruption of his lament by Pandarus is equivalent to the abrupt shift in the mood of the Roman effected by the intervention of Jean de Meun.15

15. The structure of Book 1 sets off with mathematical precision the programmatic character of Troilus’s experience and the significance of Pandarus’s intervention. The first quarter of the book ends at the precise moment (marked
The tendency of Troilus's emotions to turn in upon themselves rather than to cause him to actively pursue love is perhaps the most consistent feature of his behavior in the early books of the poem. From the moment he first begins "his hornes in to shrinke" in response to his initial discovery of the beauty of Criseyde (1. 300), his diffidence and sense of unworthiness are such that every outward gesture of praise or appeal generates its own reaction, the fear and threat of suffering. Thus when he is first brought into close confrontation with Criseyde at the house of Deiphobus, his immediate reaction is a helpless abrogation of "lordship" and anything remotely resembling an aggressive sexual role. The pattern of his behavior is set by his first words, after Pandarus has ushered Criseyde into the "triste cloos" where he lies waiting:

"Ye, swete herte? alas, I may nat rise
To knele, and do yow honour in some wyse."

[3. 69–70]

The will to act expressed in "rise," followed at once by an instinctive self-abasement ("knele") and the profession of respectful but vague and unfulfilled intentions, will be illustrated again and again in Book 3. Here it leads into a literal acting out of the same pattern. Troilus attempts to sit up, but is pushed back by Criseyde's "hondes softe," and then thrown into instant and utter confusion by her request for his protection. As he languishes, "neither quyk ne deede," his helplessness is such that he cannot respond to Criseyde, as Chaucer remarks with a hint of sexual unmanning, "Although men sholde smyten of his hede."16 When Troilus has sufficiently mastered his feelings so that he is able to plead for "mercy," Criseyde is bewildered by his lugubrious appeal, in which protestations of fidelity alternate with assertions of his willingness to die. Challenged by Pandarus by the almost onomatopoetic "stente") in which Troilus's eye first strikes Criseyde and he is simultaneously stricken by the arrow of love (273). The emotional process Troilus undergoes in the second quarter of the book reaches its peak of intensity in the Canticus Troili, which is its numerical center (400–20). The second half of the book begins with the entry of Pandarus (547ff.), and the final quarter, rather less precisely, with Troilus's first positive gesture, an acknowledgment that something must be done (820ff.).

16. The sexual implication of the image is reinforced by the somewhat cruder use of it by Pandarus in 3. 1572–73.
to "help" Troilus, she can only answer that she does not know what he wants:

"Now thanne thus," quod she, "I wolde hym preye
To telle me the fyn of his entente;
Yit wiste I nevere wel what that he mente."

[3. 124–26]

Troilus's appeal is unintelligible because his intentions toward Criseyde have no clear "fyn": desire and the hope of reward are expressed tentatively only to be thrust aside by thoughts of punishment:

"And I to han, right as yow list, comfort,
Under youre yerde, egal to myn offence,
As deth, if that I breke youre defence...."

[3. 136–38]

"And with good herte, al holly youre talent
Receyven wel, how sore that me smerte...."

[3. 145–46]

Troilus's feelings in such passages resemble those of the lover of the Roman at the moment when his initial overtures to that personification of the lady's good will called Bel Acueil have caused him to be rebuffed as uncourtly or vilains; there the accusation is followed immediately by the appearance of Danger, the virtual incarnation of vilanie, whose coarse strength and grotesque appearance cause the lover to flee in terror and leave him

esbaiz,
honteus et maz; si me repens
dont onques dis ce que je pens.
De ma folie me recors,
si voi que livrez est mes cors
a duel, a poine et a martire.

[2936–41]

dazed, shamed and downcast; I repented having said what I thought to do. I reflected on my folly, and I saw that my body had been subjected to injury, to pain and martyrdom.
In one aspect, no doubt, Dangier is a more forceful expression of the Rose-maiden's rejection of the lover, perhaps a manifestation of the pride or anger that provokes her. But the vividness and menace of his description and his deeply demoralizing effect on the lover suggest that he represents something more than the lady's dismissive gesture in itself—the aspect, perhaps, in which her rejection seems to the lover to mirror his own inadequacy. It is tempting, indeed, to see his rough physicality and his repeatedly emphasized rudeness, or vilanie, as representing the challenge of aggressive sexuality itself, a demand for self-assertion in the face of which the lover withdraws in confusion, just as Troilus becomes confused and demoralized at the prospect of any too active address to Crisye de.

However we locate the phenomenon of Dangier, it clearly contributes to the strongly reflexive tendency in the feelings of both Troilus and the hero of the Roman. It is also closely related to another common trait of the two lovers, their inability to conceive their quest in concrete sexual terms. Troilus's articulations of desire, when not wholly thwarted by his deep sense of unworthiness, are abstract; he frequently expresses willingness to "serve" his lady in "some wise" he cannot define. Essentially the same sensibility is mocked by Jean de Meun, in the well-known episode in which the lover and Raison fall out over the latter's uncourtly reference to coilles ("balls") in recalling Jupiter's castration of Saturn (6898–7174). In both cases a combination of genuine innocence, sexual timidity, and the deceptive euphemisms of courtly rhetoric creates a barrier, verbal and psychological, that prevents any open acknowledgment of the physical realities of the quest.

In Troilus's case both the blindness to sexual implication and the innocence that underlies it are developed to an extreme degree. Even after Pandarus has withdrawn from the center of the action, abandoning him to Crisye de's arms, Troilus's con-


18. For the possibly reflexive aspect of Dangier, note (in addition to the vilanie stressed in 2899, 2904) the echo of Dangier's turbulent feelings in the lover's at their second meeting (3724, 3749). The verb esbair, used of the lover's timidity in the face of Dangier at 2936, also describes Narcissus's reaction to his reflection at 1483; cf. 2752, 3356.
scious, reverent experience of love as a "grace," freely given and involving no action on his part, remains wholly insulated from any contamination by the workings of physical desire in him. But the most striking illustration of his imperviousness is the earlier scene in which Pandarus, after announcing that Troilus is now "in wey / To faren wel" in love (3.247–48), acknowledges, less baldly than in the corresponding section of the *Filostroto* but still in plain terms, that he has compromised himself in pandering to Troilus's desires and has compromised his niece's honor in the process. Troilus's unflagging response to Pandarus's confession is a refusal to acknowledge anything ignoble in his conduct, to extol it as an act of disinterested friendship, and to offer his own services in a similar role should Pandarus desire one of his sisters. To some commentators this moment seems the moral nadir of Troilus's career. He recognizes plainly enough that such a service as Pandarus has provided, done for money, would constitute a "bauderye" and deserve another name than "gentilesse" (395–99); hence, it would seem, he can hardly fail to recognize that there is something dishonoring to the lady in the arrangement itself, whatever motive may have inspired the go-between.

But Chaucer leaves ample room for the supposition that Troilus does indeed miss the point of Pandarus's speech. For one thing, Pandarus's confession, while plain enough as to his own role, becomes vague and euphemistic when it touches on the consequences of his actions. Where Boccaccio's Pandaro looks forward repeatedly to the moment "when you hold sweet Criseida in your arms" (*Fil.* 3.6.8; 3.10.1–3), Pandarus speaks only of a time when things will come to pass "right as thow wolt devyse" (336). Pandaro acknowledges having "corrupted the pure breast" of Criseida and "removed all shame from her heart" (3.6.3–4, 3.9.3–4). In Chaucer's version this becomes

"For the have I my nece, of vices cleene,  
So fully maad thi gentilesse triste,  
That al shal ben right as thi selven liste.”

[3. 257–59]

Moreover, Chaucer's Pandarus offests the force of his confes-
sion by capping it with a digression of nearly forty lines on the importance of keeping secrets; by the time he returns “to purpos” he has recovered his spirits, and the final emphasis of his speech is positive:

“And kepe the clos, and be now of good cheere;
For at thi day thow shalt me trewe fynde.
I shal thi proces sette in swych a kynde,
And God toforn, that it shall the suffise...”

[3. 332–35]

At every turn Pandarus avoids making explicit the manner in which his pandering is to compromise Criseyde; everything is left subject to Troilus’s own will. And it seems to me that Troilus, vague as he is about the “fyn” of his own love, is equally unclear about the objective envisioned by Pandarus. Given his idealization of Criseyde and his conviction of his own unworthiness, her acceptance of even the most innocent “servyce” from him is bound to appear to him as potentially compromising. Such a compromise would seem to him a sufficient explanation of Pandarus’s use of words like “treachery,” and together with the need to keep such a relationship secret, it might well seem to explain Pandarus’s concern about his own role and his insistence on “keeping tongue.” It is true that Pandarus insists with what seems extraordinary candor that his persuasion of Criseyde “to doon thi lust, and holly to ben thyn” would appear in the world’s eyes as “the worste trecherie / ... that evere was bigonne” (3. 278–79). But Troilus’s “lust” is an uncertain quantity; and he is only too likely to discern in Pandarus’s words the threat of those dark and malign shapes—rumor, envy, malicious gossip—with which “the world” menaces the courtly lover. Such preoccupations, as well as his own special sense of Dangier,19 would keep him from reflecting on the moral implications of Pandarus’s characterization of their joint role.

Certainly there is no hint of misgiving, no sense that unpleasant realities are being glossed over, in Troilus’s reaction to Pan-

19. At Fil. 3. 14. 6–7, Troiolo trembles lest he be overheard telling Pandaro of his love; at Troilus 3. 370–71, Troilus, knowing that only Pandarus can hear him, “quakes” at having to speak of his love at all.
darus's speech. Though Chaucer follows Boccaccio closely, a number of minor alterations in his version cause Troilus's feelings to appear more profound, more ingenuous, and less affected by the promise of fulfillment than in the _Filostrato_. The elaborate “spring” simile, which describes his response to Pandarus's promise (351–57), is adjusted to convey his feelings rather than his appearance. His expression of gratitude goes beyond Troiolo's hyperboles to show him awed and moved by Pandarus's act of friendship, an act he sees as different in its essential nature from common pandering. The purity of motive here imputed to Pandarus is, of course, Troilus's own, a projection of his assurance that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the love Pandarus has negotiated. The same assurance, I think, must be seen as underlying his offer to arrange for Pandarus a similar relationship with one of his sisters. It seems clear that he does not see even the married state of Helen as an obstacle to her entering into such an arrangement; hence he must see this arrangement in terms of a real “love of frendes” of the sort that Pandarus himself describes as common in Troy.

20. In _Fil._ 3. 12 the face of Troiolo is compared to the glad aspect of the spring, while in _Troilus_ 3. 351–57 the heart of Troilus is compared to the earth which the spring renews.

21. Cf. _Fil._ 3. 16. 4–5 (with the arbitrary hyperbole “hell and worse,” “d’inferno e di peggio”) with _Troilus_ 3. 388–92, for which there is no precise counterpart in Boccaccio. At _Fil._ 3. 17. 7 Troiolo says that Pandaro has acted “as one should act for a friend”; cf. Troilus’s wonder at Pandarus’s “gentilesse, / Compassioun, and felawship, and trist” (3. 402–3).

Troilus’s vindication of Pandarus by way of the logical distinction between similarity and identity (on the philosophical basis of which see Root’s note on 3. 404–6) is highly dubious. His grasping at such an argument may reflect the anxiety Ida L. Gordon detects in this long speech ( _The Double Sorrow of Troilus_ [Oxford, 1970], pp. 116–17). But it may also show his chronic inability to think of his own quest in sexual terms.

22. Thus I cannot agree with D. W. Robertson, Jr., “Chaucerian Tragedy,” _ELH_ 19 (1952): 26, that Troilus’s offer in 409–13 is a sign that he has descended to Pandarus’s moral level. On the other side it is hard to accept the view of Donald Howard, _The Three Temptations_ (Princeton, N.J., 1966), p. 137, n. 86, that Pandarus and Troilus are avowing only “good intentions and loyalty.” For both, says Howard, the offer to procure is “an exaggerated protestation of friendship which in each case carries the implication that the friend would forbear to ask so much.” But Pandarus has in fact procured for Troilus if not his sister, at any rate his niece, to whom he is “he that I moost lo ve and triste” (2.247; cf. 3. 587). This can hardly be unclear to Troilus, and the only room for ambiguity seems to me to lie in Troilus’s lack of understanding of what such a “servise” implies in concrete sexual terms.
and that Helen appears to enjoy with his brother Deiphobus. All in all, the scene shows Troilus and Pandarus talking at cross purposes, Troilus unaware of Pandarus's true objective, Pandarus perhaps failing to recognize the extent of Troilus's innocence, and in any case, by his characteristic euphemism and indirection, helping to perpetuate it.

Pandarus's attempt to deal even this candidly with Troilus in this scene is unique in the first half of the poem. As a rule his purposes are better served by keeping Troilus in the dark and manipulating his innocence to ends of his own. A good example of his modus operandi is the speech that issues in the hatching of his first major ploy, the meeting at the house of Deiphobus. Pandarus begins by introducing more directly than ever before the idea of a face-to-face meeting between Troilus and Criseyde, but immediately offsets the possibly unnerving effect of this proposal on Troilus by presenting it not as a challenge to self-assertion, but as an opportunity for Troilus, in good courtly fashion, to display his suffering before Criseyde: “For in good herte it mot sorne routhe impresse, / To here and see the giltlees in distresse” (2. 1371–72). Pandarus then proceeds to anticipate Criseyde's resistance and interpret it in terms of courtly love psychology, imputing his line of thought to Troilus:

“Paraunter thynkestow; though it be so,
That kynde wolde hire don for to bygynnne
To han a manere routhe upon my woo,
Seyth daunger: ‘nay, thow shalt me nevere wynne’;
So reulith hire hertes gost withinne,
That, though she bende, yit she stant on roote;
What in effect is this unto my boote?”

[2. 1373–79]

In creating this brief psychomachia, in which “kynde” is imagined as thwarted by “daunger” at the bidding of the “hertes

23. In proposing to Criseyde rather than to Troilus the strategy of using “love of frendes” as a “mantel,” Pandarus diverges from the probable source of this notion in the Roman de la Rose. There the Friend advises the Lover to disguise his design on the Rose by pretending to a love that is lawful, pure, and sincere (7561–66), and the Lover is outraged by his cynicism (7765–75).
Chaucer and the Poets

gost," Pandarus is dramatizing the basic, self-defeating tendency of Troilus's own imagination, which has established Criseyde and her feelings on a lofty and inaccessible plane from which he himself is excluded, leaving him as helpless as the lover outside the castle of Jealousy in the Roman. And having thus defined the situation in such a way as to impress upon Troilus a sense of his powerlessness to act, Pandarus goes on, as if shifting from the vantage point of Guillaume de Lorris to that of Jean de Meun, to define what is in effect his own role:

Thenk here ayeins: whan that the sturdy ook,
On which men hakketh ofte for the nones,
Receyved hath the happy fallyng strook,
The grete sweigh doth it come al at ones,
As done thise rokkes or thise milnestones. . . .24

[2. 1380–84]

Despite the blatant innuendo in line 1382, the proverbial image developed here and in the stanza following conveys its meaning in a manner sufficiently general to keep Pandarus's objective from becoming too obvious, and his conclusion ("Men shal rejoyssen of a grete empryse / Acheved wel") is more general still. The implications Boccaccio's Criseida sums up in the terse characterization of her "broken honor" (Fil. 2. 138) could not be conveyed more smoothly. The point, I think, is to show Pandarus's effort not to create any uneasiness in Troilus regarding his ultimate intentions toward Criseyde. The effect becomes virtually that of an aside to the audience and is underscored by the quickness with which Pandarus reverts to idealistic terms in order to engage Troilus in his next stratagem:

"Which is thi brother that thow lovest best,
As in thi verray hertes privetee?"
"Iwis, my brother Deiphobus," quod he. . . .

[2. 1396–98]

Troilus's reply here is his sole contribution to the scene: without

24. The tree-felling image may recall Ovid, Met. 10. 372–74, which describes the effect on Myrrha of her own thoughts; cf. Roman 3396–97, and below, ch. 3, n. 13.
in any way distracting him from his preoccupation with the inner experience of love, Pandarus has managed to involve him. Now Pandarus has the information he needs to prepare the dinner party which is the climax of Book 2, and the game is afoot.

In many ways the paradigmatic illustration of the relationship of Pandarus and Troilus, and of the contribution of the Roman to Chaucer's presentation of them, is a scene that we experience only through Pandarus's report of it to Criseyde and that may indeed be Pandarus's invention. In response to Criseyde's curiosity about Troilus's courtoisie ("Kan he wel speke of love?" [2. 503]), Pandarus describes how he "stalked" Troilus as he lay beside a well in the palace garden and heard him complain of his torments in love. One purpose of Pandarus's account is, of course, strategic: it provides Criseyde with a window on Troilus's emotional world, where love struggles to withstand "disesperaunce"; it shows her the completeness of his devotion and the keenness of his suffering on her account. But its obvious reference to the garden scene of the Roman also establishes Pandarus iconographically as god of love in relation to Troilus and shows Troilus as a virtual prisoner within the world of love allegory, his feelings and gestures utterly programmed by its conventions. Though we respond with Criseyde to the genuineness and depth of his feelings, we are aware at the same time that what gives these feelings rhetorical potency is the mediating presence of Pandarus, the artist and in a sense the god who oversees Troilus's innocently idolatrous pursuit of Criseyde.

Thus the association of Troilus and Pandarus involves much more than a superficial complementarity of innocence and worldly wisdom. There is a profound and finally irresolvable tension in the relationship between Troilus's essentially passive, contemplative attitude toward love and Pandarus's single-minded focus on the "fyn" of consummation. Pandarus becomes, in effect, that appetitive element lacking in Troilus's feelings toward Criseyde. As his desire begins to menace Troilus's radical innocence, his guidance becomes increasingly a matter of deception and seduction. In his role as artist he manipulates Troilus's idealism through the promise of a vaguely defined "blisse," and in general their collaboration depends on their placing very dif-
different interpretations on the nature and object of their common quest.

To illustrate further the radical difference between the responses of the two friends to their experience, I would like to expand this discussion beyond the frame provided by the *Roman de la Rose* and look briefly at a few passages in which Chaucer focuses on the very different ways in which imagination operates in them. For while Chaucer is, as I have suggested, rigorous in excluding from his poem any such comic resolution as that made possible in the *Roman* by the presence of the procreative Genius, he does develop the imaginative world of Troilus and contrast it with that of Pandarus in ways that open his own poem to a depth of meaning that is only dimly and confusedly adumbrated in the *Roman*.

In effect, Pandarus and Troilus embody two different aspects of the imaginative faculty itself as medieval psychology understood it. Pandarus represents the simplest level of imaginative behavior, that which isolates the desirable aspect of an object and draws our other conscious faculties into the service of our appetite to possess that object. Thus governed by appetite, the imagination is reduced to a stimulus to ingenuity, machination in the interest of possession. Our experience of love thus becomes that pragmatic exercise whose rules are formulated half parodically in the *Ars amatoria* and its medieval equivalents, though the dominance and control that such rules imply serve only to disguise what is finally an enslaving compulsion.

As dramatized in the behavior of Troilus, the imagination is also responsive to aesthetic impulses, and tends, in its storing up of the images of sensory experience, to enhance that aspect of their attractiveness which approximates the ideal. To the extent that it remains free of the contaminating influence of physical desire, imagination dwells on this aspect of what it thus "loves" in an increasingly reflective way. Thus the imagination tends to cultivate the ideal that it senses is present in or symbolized by the

---

25. Pandarus is in many ways a textbook illustration of the appetitive function of the faculty known to medieval faculty psychology as *ingenium*. On the background of this and other aspects of imagination discussed in the following pages, see Wetherbee, "The Theme of Imagination in Medieval Poetry and the Allegorical Figure Genius," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, n.s. 7 (1976): 45–64.
loved object and moves toward a level of apprehension so intense as to suspend the activity of the will. At this level we intuit in what we love something that makes us yearn beyond possession, perhaps toward an ideal of which the beloved appears as a foreshadowing, or perhaps, nostalgically, toward a purity or a state of emotional integration we have lost and for which the ideal of union with the beloved serves us, consciously or not, as a substitute.

From the moment in Book 1 when we first see Pandarus and Troilus together we observe symptoms of the tension between their responses to love. Pandarus is as wholly given to action as Troilus to reflection; the mocking suggestion in his first speech that Troilus, miserable in the throes of his passion, has been seized by a fit of “hoolynesse” typifies his subversive attitude toward all things spiritual. Typical too is the indirection with which he operates, seeking to draw Troilus out of his languor by initiating a sort of chain reaction:

Thise wordes seyde he for the nones alle,
That with swich thing he myght him angry maken,
And with an angre don his sorwe falle,
As for the tyme, and his corage awaken....

[1. 561–64]

The awakening of Troilus’s “corage” is the first step in the direction of the ultimately sexual goal that constitutes the causa finalis of Pandarus’s activity in the poem, the “fyn of his entente.” From the outset his imagination is devoted to devising a series of concrete, practical alternatives to the spiritual terms in which Troilus, left to his own devices, typically views his experience. While quickening Troilus’s hope of “grace,” Pandarus will gradually narrow and localize the definition of this grace until Troilus, for whom Criseyde is now a “goddess,” is drawn to seek it in the physical consummation of his love for her.

The same relationship between the idealistic and the pragmatic is emphasized again when the friends separate at the end of Book 1. Having aroused Troilus’s hope of realizing the “blisse” his impossibly idealized love seems to promise, Pandarus departs,
The linking to a particular time and place of the “grace” Pandarus and Troilus pursue (and this is only the first of several significant rhymings of “grace” and “place” in the poem) gives us a sharp reminder of the finite nature of Pandarus’s vision and how it will finally circumscribe the genuinely spiritual longings of Troilus. The irony is sustained by the well-known simile that follows, in which Pandarus’s thoughts are compared to those of an architect whose construct is a concrete embodiment of his deliberate plan:

For everi wight that hath an hous to founde  
Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne  
With rakel hond; but he wol bide a stounde,  
And sende his hertes line out fro withinne  
Aldirfirst his purpos for to wynne.  
Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,  
And caste his werk ful wisly or he wroughte.  

[1. 1065–71]

The lines are imitated from the opening of the Poetria nova of Geoffrey of Vinsauf, but Chaucer has significantly altered the emphasis of his original. Geoffrey’s equivalent to the “hertes line” of 1068, “intrinseca linea cordis,” is a wholly inner resource, a faculty of the “interior man,” which traces in its archetypal form what is then, by a secondary process—the “hand of the heart” giving place to that of the body—translated into its outward imitation. 26 In Pandarus’s case, by contrast, the “hertes

26. Geoffrey’s emphasis on the interiority of the process he describes is very clear in the lines in question, Poetria nova 43–48; ed. Edmond Faral, Les Arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle (Paris, 1924), p. 198:

Si quis habet fundare domum, non currit ad actu  
Impetuousa manus: intrinseca linea cordis  
Praemetitur opus, seriemque sub ordine certo  
Interior praescritit homo, totamque figurat  
Ante manus cordis quam corporis; et status eius  
Est prius archetypus quam sensilis.
line” is sent “out fro withinne” as the first stage of the creative process, which thus becomes a process not of preconception, but of reconnaissance. The point, I think, is that Pandarus has little or no inner life in the sense that Geoffrey’s example implies and no archetypal preconception of what he seeks to realize. His imagination is wholly oriented toward the material world and operates pragmatically to give material expression not to his own preconception, but to a materialist version of that of Troilus. Throughout the poem we will see Troilus’s idealism providing the occasion, and at times the material, for the art of Pandarus, which translates it into a form that, while paying lip service to the ideal, is finally literal in the extreme. Geoffrey’s architect is an artist in a lofty traditional sense, a version of the *poeta platonicus*; but Pandarus is a mere craftsman, whose wholly practical design will be realized within the four walls of an actual (and already existing) house. The effect of Chaucer’s allusion to Geoffrey is thus to foreordain at the level of artistic principle the subversion of Troilus’s love and the foreshortening of the poem’s moral and spiritual vision, which will be the effects of Pandarus’s artistry.

But while Pandarus debases the artist’s role, Geoffrey’s original conception can help us appreciate the experience of Troilus. His comparison of the poet to the architect, and by implication to Plato’s divine artist, reflects the influence of Bernardus Silvestris, Alain de Lille, and other poets and philosophers who, working in the tradition of the *Timaeus* and late classical neo-Platonism, had linked the activities of the imagination with the most profound operations of the human mind. In this tradition, and in company with the Genius of Jean de Meun, whose sexual yearning for Paradise is in many respects a product of the

If a man has a house to build, his impetuous hand does not rush into action. The measuring line of his mind first lays out the work, and he mentally outlines the successive steps in a definite order. The mind’s hand shapes the entire house before the body’s hand builds it. Its mode of being is archetypal before it is actual.

same tradition, Troilus experiences his love of Criseyde on a level of ideal perception which brings him to an intuition of the pure source of imaginative vision, the divine goodness.

In the concluding stanzas of the *Troilus*, Chaucer hints at the analogy, even the continuity, between the human and spiritual dimensions of the love that "up-groweth" within us as we grow toward maturity (5. 1835–40). Throughout the poem Troilus’s experience of this upgrowing, though finally abortive, is charged with promise. When, contemplating Criseyde’s beauty in the mirror of his mind, he first resolves to devote his life to her service in the hope of attaining grace (1. 365–71), we may see no more than courtly hyperbole. But as the poem progresses, he lives out the implications of this language, responding in a way for which courtly poetry offers no precedent but Dante, to that paradisal aspect of Criseyde’s beauty which all men may see, but which he alone perceives in his “brestes eye” (1. 435). Even in the letter that is his final, futile appeal to her, he can still declare her his agent of salvation, his Mary or his Beatrice (5. 1419–20). Throughout the poem he associates her with light and “blisse.”

In the process he rises to that awareness which Chaucer must surely have felt to be the highest spiritual attainment of pagan thought, the discernment in the harmony of the universe of the operation of a love that manifests the beneficence of the Holy Spirit:

> Than seyde he thus: “O Love, O Charite,  
> Thi moder ek, Citherea the swete,  
> After thi self next heried be she,  
> Venus mene I, the wel-willy planete;  
> And next yow, Imeneus, I the grete. . . .”

[3. 1254–58]

The lines hark back to a rich medieval tradition of commentary and philosophical poetry which had derived from Boethius and the late classical neo-Platonist authors a philosophy of natural love. This “benigne love,” the “holy bond of thynges,” which

Troilus then proceeds to invoke directly in the language of Dante, manifests itself on all levels of human life, seeking always to orient our physical, rational, and spiritual natures toward fulfilling participation in the larger order. Troilus's intuition of the working of this power is prompted by a "genial" impulse that is inseparable from sexual desire, but the participatory gesture is transformed by his "clene entente" into one of reverence:

Whoso wol grace, and list the nought honouren,
Lo, his desir wol fle withouten wynges.
And noldestow of bounte hem socouren
That serven best, and most alwey labouren,
Yit were al lost, that dar I wel seyn, certes,
But if thi grace passed oure desertes.
[3. 1262–67]

These lines, imitated from Saint Bernard's prayer to the Virgin in the final canto of the Paradiso, constitute Chaucer's most striking embellishment of the tour de force of Troilus's experience at the center of the poem. That they expose in a uniquely vivid way the confusion of earthly and divine in Troilus's view of love is plain enough, but their more significant function is to set this confusion in a larger perspective. The previous stanza had invoked a love whose natural expression would be participation in the harmony of the universe. In the lines just quoted, Troilus seems to have moved forward into the spiritual realm. He cannot consciously recognize the physical aspect of his state of feel-

30. There is no need to assume a single source for Troilus's prayer, but its most striking details are also found in a gloss on the god Hymenaeus in a commentary on Martianus Capella discussed and excerpted by Peter Dronke, Fabula: Explorations into the Uses of Myth in Medieval Platonism (Leiden, 1974), pp. 100–118. Hymenaeus is first identified with the natural process of propagation, which is glossed in turn by the quotation of Boethius, De consolatione 2, metr. 8, 13–18, on the love that rules the universe and binds together the order of things. The commentator explains: "He is the holy spirit [spiritus sanctus] which infuses into all things a certain ardent love [quendam caritatis ardorem]. He is called the god of marriage, that is, the ordering power in the divinely ordained conjoining of the elements [sacre coniunctionis elementorum compositor]" (p. 115).

31. Gordon, Double Sorrow, p. 37, emphasizes Troilus's confusion in 1254–74, his inability "to distinguish between cupidinous love and charitable love," and sees the invocation of Hymen as evidence that he is "blind enough to regard his 'acord' with Criseyde as equivalent to marriage." But this confusion seems less important than the pure intuition that causes it, Troilus's vision of his own love as participating in the cosmic marriage effected by divine love. See Rowe, O Love O Charite!, pp. 106–8.
ing, and hence what is largely the stimulating effect of appetite on imagination seems to him a manifestation of the divine bounty. Innocence, self-abasement, and awe collaborate with a genuine Boethian intuition of the integrative power of love, and for a moment, in the stanza that marks the exact center of the poem, his desire seems to have attained a spiritual fulfillment, a "place" commensurate with his vision of grace:

And for thow me, that koude leest deserve
Of hem that noumbred ben unto thi grace,
Hast holpen, ther I likly was to sterve,
And me bistowed in so heigh a place,
That thilke boundes may no blisse pace,
I kan no more; but laude and reverence
Be to thy bounte and thyn excellence!

[3. 1268–74]

It is part of the peculiar poignancy of these lines that they should define, in the very process of giving imaginative expression to Troilus's sense of grace, the "boundes" that render his experience finite and transitory. The prayer that comes to a climax here illustrates Troilus's love suspended in contemplation of an unattainable goal. The deep division between the immediate inspiration of Troilus's desire and its ultimate object, so elaborately dramatized in this portion of the poem, is the condition of postlapsarian man, divorced by the flawed character of his will and reason from the simple fulfillment of his role in the cosmic harmony and prevented by the same hard fact from realizing in its full reality the grace he imagines to be sustaining his love. Cut off both from full spiritual knowledge and from a recognition of his concrete situation, he can only "beat his wings," dwelling repeatedly on the wonder of his undeserved reward and his wish that he might somehow be of service to Criseyde. But if the barrier that confines Troilus's aspiration is impassible, it has seemed for a moment to be virtually translucent, and Troilus's experience takes us to the heart of Chaucer's sense of the intrinsic capacity of the human spirit.

But Troilus is seduced and betrayed by the very beauty that arouses him to ecstatic vision. He is utterly at the mercy of
Criseyde's contradictory appeals to his imagination and most intensely conscious of her paradisal aspect when most strongly subject to her physical attraction. There is nothing in literature that approximates the moment in which Troilus rises to the eloquence of Dante's Saint Bernard, only to "fall away" into the welcoming arms of Criseyde, but one further comparison may help to focus the irony of the situation and the deeply enigmatic character of the desire that creates it. In the strange and intricate lyric "Saturni sidus lividum," from the *Carmina Burana*, a long description of the coming of spring, the dispelling of the clouds and gloom of winter by the warm sun, culminates in an elaborate analogy:

```
Sic beati spes, halitus flagrans oris tenelli,
dum acclinat basium,
scindit nubem omnium
curarum; sed avelli
nescit, ni congressio sit arcani medica duelli.
```

Thus the hope of the blessed, the warm breath of a tender mouth offering a kiss, dispels the cloud of all cares. But it may not be wholly removed (? or "she does not wholly unveil herself") lest intercourse become the cure of the secret conflict.

The promise of the beauty of the beloved, idealized as *beati spes* (Dante's "speranza de' beatii"), cannot be fully realized. Like Troilus's vision of the divine reality he senses in the beauty of Criseyde, the object of love is never fully disclosed. Union with the beloved offers no new vision and provides no resolution of the perennial conflict of imagination and desire, love and lust.

The betrayal of vision here is an inescapable danger, inseparable from the potential value of imaginative experience. Reason is light, says Hugh of St. Victor, but imagination, which can never wholly transcend its material origin as "bodily similitude," is to that extent shadow, an obstacle to illumination. Reason and imagination are united by the soul's "imaginary affection" and exist in a delicate balance. When their union takes place wholly

in accord with nature reason is dominant, “circumscribing” by perfect understanding the nature whose image it perceives. But the bodily appeal of the image may subvert reason’s power, and then, says Hugh in a striking image, imagination adheres to reason like a fleshly garment, contaminating perception with bodily desire.33

We can see these conflicting tendencies of the imagination coming to a head in a passage in which Troilus, for the first time, responds physically to the presence of Criseyde:

This Troilus, with blisse of that surprised,
Putte al in goddes hond, as he that mente
No thyng but wel; and, sodeynly avysed,
He hire in armes faste to hym heme.

[3. 1184–87]

To be “surprised” is literally to be captured or seized.34 To be “avysed” is to receive a prompting from within. In effect Troilus is “seized” and responds religiously, is “inspired” and responds physically. Though the wording of the passage carefully excludes conscious physical desire as a motive for Troilus’s behavior here and he remains suspended in contemplation of his bliss for another hundred lines, his lower nature is evidently coming into play.35 But he is incapable of isolating the components of this experience, which brings lust and exalted feeling into collaboration.

As in the “Saturni sidus lividum,” what focuses Troilus’s com-


34. “Surprise” is used in a similarly complex way in Purg. 21. 63, in which Dante’s Statius, describing the soul’s release from penance, tells how the newly purified will “surprises” (sorprenede) the soul with its new power to ascend to Paradise. On the possible significance of this moment for Chaucer, see below, ch. 8, pp. 228–31.

35. Is it in keeping with the interlocking of active and contemplative attitudes here to conjecture that Criseyde’s comforting words in 1182–83 may have been accompanied by some intimate physical gesture? Such twofold encouragement might help to account for the complexity of Troilus’s response and would lend an interesting ambiguity to his “putting al in goddes hond.” But the temptation to overread is very strong in this part of the poem. Donald Howard, “Literature and Sexuality: Book III of Chaucer’s Troilus,” Massachusetts Review 8 (1967): 442–56, deals very well with Chaucer’s skill in “avoiding intimate sexual detail to obtain an effect of erotic suggestiveness” (p. 446), but then offers a few suggestions of his own that go well beyond any hint in the text.
plex awareness is, of course, the beauty of Criseyde, which is at once “hevenyssh” and seductive in its appeal. Criseyde’s “chere” becomes in effect a symbolic text, which Troilus is all too liable to read idolatrously, accepting its literal attractiveness as an end in itself, but which also seems to grant him an intimation of a higher reality, the divine source of all love and beauty. Troilus himself employs the vocabulary of reading when, in the aftermath of the consummation of their love, he is able for the first time to gaze steadily and without fear into Criseyde’s eyes and finds himself disoriented in a way he does not understand:

“The ther be mercy witen in youre cheere,
God woot the text ful hard is, soth, to fynde;
How koude ye withouten bond me bynde?”

Troilus never learns the answer to his question and never recognizes the fatal ambiguity of the relationship between the all-too-human Criseyde and the divine promise he had perceived intuitively in her countenance. And when, late in the poem, Chaucer offers his own “reading” of Criseyde, a description of her physical appearance which with masterly irony takes us to the heart of Troilus’s dilemma, the ambiguity is shown to be finally beyond human resolution. Chaucer’s portrait dwells on her flowing hair and the paradisal radiance of her eyes and ends with a deceptively simple couplet that states the fundamental enigma:

And with hire riche beaute evere more
Strof love in hire ay, which of hem was more.

What seems to be in question in these lines is the relation between the divine aspect of Criseyde’s beauty, the “angelic” element the narrator had noted at her first appearance in the poem (1. 102), and that which arouses sexual desire. The linguistic device by which Chaucer analyzes this opposition is appropriate to its character, bypassing the conventions of rhetoric as the phenomenon itself eludes the categories of aesthetics and psychology. The narrator’s words in the couplet just quoted are
based on a corrupted text: in the poem of Joseph of Exeter from which Chaucer has borrowed his description of Criseyde's beauty, the word corresponding to "love" (amorum) had originally been "virtues" (morum).36

In Joseph's description the contest between beauty and morality is a cliché, a way of indicating that his heroine is as virtuous as she is fair. Chaucer cannot have failed to recognize this conventional descriptive formula and so must have adopted the obviously false reading deliberately, if he did not invent it himself.37 Its effect is to transform what Joseph had presented as a perfect congruence of beauty and character, a notion fully appropriate to Troilus's idealizing vision, into an opposition between that same beauty and something called "love" which we may read in the terms of medieval psychology as an appeal to "animal" imagination, that earthly attractiveness with which the senses threaten to envelop our perceptions of the ideal.38

Criseyde's beauty, then, is itself finally a corrupted text. Its angelic perfection is contaminated by an erotic appeal that reflects both the corruptibility of her own malleable, "slydynge" character and the deeply flawed nature of the vision accessible to even so pure an imagination as that of Troilus in the absence of sure knowledge of the divine.

36. Chaucer's source is the portrait of Briseis in Joseph, Frigii Daretis Ylias 4. 156–62. Line 160, corresponding to Troilus 5. 818–19, reads "Diviciis forme certant insignia morum" ("The evidences of her moral character vie with the riches of her beauty"). Substituting amorum for morum would not affect the meter, and the change would be imperceptible when the line was read aloud. See Root, ad loc., who cites mss. of the Troilus in which the passage is glossed by the quotation of Joseph's lines with the amorum reading.

37. There can be no doubt that Chaucer's misreading is intentional. The formula being employed by Joseph becomes even clearer when he goes on in lines 161–62 to list examples of the mores of Briseis, beginning with sobria simplicitas, corresponding to the "sobre" and symple" of Troilus 5. 820.