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Free Will and Destiny in Chaucer

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of sin developed in Western thought as polymorphic and anthropomorphic ideas about God were being discarded. It is the foundation of man's acceptance of responsibility for his destiny, and the story concerning the individual's fall through sin is as timely now as it was twenty-five centuries ago at the height of Greek literary culture. This can be demonstrated by comparing Sophocles and Karl Menninger, the one a poet of ancient times who defines human weakness through a philosophy of religion and the other a modern medical man who prescribes the cure for this weakness in what is essentially a religious philosophy of psychiatry. Both point out clearly that control over the fate of man lies within the capability of the individual.

The conflict in Sophocles' Antigone is built around an argument between the laws of Creon, which are based on the practical considerations of a worldly ruler, and the convictions of Antigone (a daughter of the fallen Oedipus), who is concerned first of all with God's laws. She and the audience know well what these laws are, since they appear in Oedipus the King, the play by Sophocles which precedes Antigone. Here, in the usual manner of Greek drama, the means for resolution of the conflict is provided by a chorus. Pride, power, and impiety are presented as vanity and folly,[1] and the chorus concludes by comparing eternal laws with those of this world:

[1]Sophocles, The Oedipus Plays, trans. Paul Roche (New York: Mentor, 1958), p. 57.

> I shall not worship at the vent
> Where oracles from earth are breathed,
> Nor at Abae's shrine and not
> Olympia, unless these oracles
> Are justified -- writ large -- to man.[2]

From this choral commentary the audience should be able to see that Oedipus has fallen into what Whitney Oates calls "a tragedy of Fate"[3] through a misconception of what God demands. In Antigone, to the contrary, the ensnarements of pride are avoided; while the heroine falls in the worldly sense, she does not fall out of heaven's favor. Even Oedipus redeems himself to the extent that as the play ends he "accepts full responsibility as a moral agent for all his acts, whether done in ignorance or not."[4] Aristotle's definition of the tragic hero specifies "a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty," a man "highly renowned and prosperous, -- a personage like Oedipus, Thyestes, or other illustrious men of such families."[5] The difference between Oedipus and Antigone is chiefly that, in Aristotle's context, the latter knows from the start how to avoid the former's error. This is something Creon does not know, and neither does Antigone's sister Ismene:

[2]Sophocles, p. 58.

[3]Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr., eds., Seven Famous Greek Plays (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 120.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Aristotle, "Poetics," in The Great Critics, ed. James Harry Smith and Edd Winfield Parks (New York: W. W. Norton, 1951), p. 41.

> Ismene: I do them no dishonour; but to defy the State, I have no strength for that.
> Antigone: Such be thy plea: — I, then, will go to heap the earth above the brother whom I love.
> Ismene: Alas, unhappy one! How I fear for thee!
> Antigone: Fear not for me: guide thy own fate aright.[6]

Antigone is of course not a tragic protagonist in Aristotle's sense; if she were, she would not know how to avoid the tragic flaw. What she does know is that man is responsible for his actions, as is affirmed by Sophocles' chorus:

> Cunning beyond fancy's dream is the fertile skill which brings him, now to evil, now to good. When he honors the laws of the land, and that justice which he hath sworn by the gods to uphold, proudly stands his city: no city hath he who, for his rashness, dwells with sin. Never may he share my hearth, never think my thoughts, who doth these things![7]

This is the final strophe of a long choral ode in which the various skills and virtues of man are praised. The expressed ability of man to shape his destiny is one part of the two fundamental aspects of Sophocles' view of life; the other part is man's dependence on heaven's laws.[8] At one point, as Creon examines Antigone, he asks her if she did not know of his law and then, if she did know of it, whether she still dared to break it. She replies to both questions affirmatively, saying that the law was public, but that

> it was not Zeus that had published me that

[6]Sophocles, "Antigone," in Seven Famous Greek Plays, ed. Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), p. 190.

[7]Ibid., p. 199.

[8]Ibid., p. xx.

> edict; not such are the laws set among men
> by the Justice who dwells with the gods below;
> nor deemed I that thy decrees were of such force,
> that a mortal could override the unwritten and
> unfailing statutes of heaven. For their life is
> not of today or yesterday, but from all time,
> and no man knows when they were first put forth.
> Not through dread of any human pride could
> I answer to the gods for breaking these.[9]

The great tragedy in Antigone is not the title character's death, but rather the cause of it. Creon has supplanted Sophocles' laws of heaven with those of the state, his own. Antigone's defeat is the result of going against Creon's laws, but her fall does not imply heavenly condemnation as does the greater collapse of the king's house.

The argument must have been of great importance not only to poets and philosophers in Sophocles' time, but to ordinary citizens as well. In our own time, writers such as Lorenz[10] and Skinner[11] have advanced theories that there is no individual responsibility. But Karl Menninger, in his Whatever Became of Sin?,[12] disavows genetic and environmental determinism in human behavior and asks that the individual accept responsibility for his actions. He says that we are "free to choose to commit good or ill."[13] According to Menninger, much of that

[9] Ibid., p. 202.

[10] Konrad Lorenz, Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1974).

[11] B. F. Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity (New York: Knopf, 1971).

[12] Karl Menninger, Whatever Became of Sin? (New York: Hawthorn, 1973).

[13] Karl Menninger, "Whatever Became of Sin?," Intellectual Digest (April 1974), p. 43.

which in times past was termed sin has been taken over by state law and is now called crime.[14] "The policeman," he writes, "replaced the priest."[15] Thus the designation of sin has become "increasingly pointless from a practical standpoint."[16] If this is so, then intensely personal decisions which could lead to the improvement of the individual and his world are being bypassed as man seeks only to avoid being apprehended by instruments of the law. But Menninger says that sin exists "that is expressed in ways that cannot be subsumed under such verbal artifacts as 'crime,' 'disease,' 'delinquency,' 'deviancy'. There is immorality; there is unethical behavior; there is wrongdoing."[17]

This short comparison of a very old and a very new philosophy has been by way of introduction to my own topic, in a study which I hope will demonstrate some important aspects of how we have examined the extent of our own responsibility in shaping our fate. My focus will be on the late Middle Ages and specifically on three of Chaucer's works as they are borrowed in plot and character from Boccaccio, and how they are reworked to show the importance of moral self-determination. These works are Troilus and Criseyde, The Knight's Tale, and The Monk's Tale as they derive from the Filostrato, the Teseide, and De Casibus Virorum Illustrium. As a further introduction, however, I deem it

[14]Menninger, Whatever Became of Sin?, pp. 50-73.

[15]Ibid., p. 50.

[16]Menninger, "Whatever Became of Sin?," p. 44.

[17]Menninger, Whatever Became of Sin?, p. 46.

necessary to review some of the high points of early philosophy as they apply to my study, primarily including thoughts of the Stoics, Plotinus, and St. Augustine.

Separated from Sophocles by some seven centuries, Plotinus is extremely important as a transmitter of ideas through Augustine and Boethius to Chaucer. He was a Neo-Platonist living well into the Christian era. Bertrand Russell states that Greek philosophy held no new developments between the end of the third century B. C. and the age of Neo-Platonism in the third century A. D.[18] If so, Sophocles was much ahead of his time. Much of the essence of Platonic philosophy as it concerns human responsibility was revived by Plotinus and was extended into what is essentially a non-Christian doctrine of behavior. Augustine then drew heavily on Plotinus and devised doctrine for the Christian world on the basis of a long evolution of Greek and Roman thought. One of the most important of the early schools of philosophy was the Stoic.

[18]Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945), p. 218.

THE STOICS, PLOTINUS, AND ST. AUGUSTINE

Founded by Zeno of Citium, the Stoic school reached its highest development at a time when its importation from Greece into Rome had been thoroughly accomplished. It is in the writings of the Stoics Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius that we find the most obvious bridges between older philosophy and the new Christian-oriented doctrine. Here the thought is less Greek than Christian, and "contains religious elements of which the world felt a need, and which the Greeks seemed unable to supply."[1]

Cicero, the earliest Stoic in terms of such Christian ideas as sin and providence, compares various schools of philosophy in his dialogue On the Nature of the Gods. Here the Epicurean, the New Academy, and the Stoic schools are represented, with Balbus the Stoic speaking for Cicero's own point of view.[2] In an early version of the chain-of-being notion, Cicero places man between animals and God, separate from the former by virtue of the ability to reason and akin to the latter in the possession of virtue.[3] If man can be virtuous, then he is also capable of sin. Balbus illustrates the result of mocking the gods as he recalls the defeat of Claudius and the death of Gaius Flaminius[4]

[1] Russell, p. 252.

[2] Cicero, On the Nature of the Gods, trans. Hubert M. Poteat (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1950), p. 333.

[3] Ibid., p. 45.

[4] Ibid., p. 228.

and states that "Roman dominion was won by generals who observed the requirements of religion."[5] If the gods can destroy us, can they and will they also assist mankind in a providential manner? Balbus says this is the center of the most heated philosophical argument of his time, and that "Unless this question can be answered, the human race must remain in the deepest uncertainty and live in ignorance of life's most vital concerns."[6] There are, he says, philosophers "who hold that the cosmos is controlled and guided by divine will and intelligence; and not only so, but that divine providence keeps benevolent watch over mortal life."[7] Balbus reaffirms this toward the end of the work when he says that "the universe and all its parts were established and set in array in the beginning and have been administered through all intervening time by divine providence."[8]

The Roman Stoic tradition concerning sin and providence was carried on by Seneca and Epictetus, contemporaries during the time of Christ but born some two generations after Cicero. Seneca envisioned a single god controlling the entire universe in a providential way.[9] Epictetus, acknowledging the providence of God, warns his readers that they should be "constantly hymning and praising the deity for his

[5]Cicero, p. 229.

[6]Ibid., p. 179.

[7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., p. 255.

[9]M. L. Clarke, The Roman Mind (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1956), p. 116.

benefits."[10] Similarly, Marcus Aurelius writes in his Meditations of those who are "manifestly guilty of sin" and of "a certain original movement of Providence."[11]

Many Christians today have the impression that the concepts of sin and providence are the innovations of their own religion, but long before even the Romans quoted above, Plato and Aristotle took pains to define these terms. The later Neo-Platonists began with these two men, to be sure, but the importance of the Stoic influence can hardly be overestimated. The Neo-Platonists could no more have done without the later Roman philosophy than the Christians could have done without Jewish religious tradition. The point here is not to separate but rather to accent the fusion of Greco-Roman and Christian thought. As Etienne Gilson says, "there is no contradiction between the principles laid down by the Greek thinkers of the classical period and the conclusions which the Christian thinkers drew out of them."[12]

Concepts in Roman philosophy and Christian thought were to aid in the development of each other for centuries after the birth of Christ. The high points of this history are extremely interesting in that the Neo-Platonic writings of Plotinus, which express a Christian-like philosophy by a non-Christian, were of great influence on the

[10]Epictetus, The Discourses of Epictetus, trans. George Long (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890), pp. 50-51.

[11]Marcus Aurelius, The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius, trans. George Long (Roslyn, N. Y.: Walter J. Black, 1945), p. 92.

[12]Etienne Gilson, The Spirit of Mediaeval Philosophy, trans. A. H. C. Downes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), p. 81.

Christian doctrine of Augustine, whose ideas were to be again almost identically expressed in the sixth century by Boethius.

Plotinus was a Greek teacher of philosophy in Rome, where he moved from Alexandria during the middle of his life. He has been called the founder of Neo-Platonism and the final great ancient philosopher.[13] His position with reference to his predecessors can be briefly stated. While we define Neo-Platonism as an important modification of the teachings of Plato, to Plotinus himself it seemed that he was merely amplifying the wisdom of that much earlier philosopher.[14] It does appear that Plato is the sole writer among the various influences on Plotinus who is spared the extensive criticism of his pen.[15] But there is a great difference in the approach taken by Plotinus. He criticizes other schools severely,[16] among them the Stoics (for their materialism) and the Epicureans (for nearly everything they stood for).[17] He also differs from Plato in that his work contains a definite doctrine. He does not subscribe to the Stoic resignation to the reality of disastrous times,[18] but neither does he explore ways to transform an ill-desired reality into something better, as do Plato

[13] Russell, p. 252.

[14] Plotinus, The Philosophy of Plotinus, trans. Joseph Katz (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1950), p. xi.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Russell, p. 288.

[18] Ibid., p. 284.

and Aristotle:[19]

> He turned aside from the spectacle of ruin and misery in the actual world, to contemplate an eternal world of goodness and beauty. In this he was in harmony with all the most serious men of his age. To all of them, Christians and pagans alike, the world of practical affairs seemed to offer no hope, and only the Other World seemed worthy of allegiance. To the Christian, the Other World was the Kingdom of Heaven, to be enjoyed after death; to the Platonist, it was the eternal world of ideas, the real world as opposed to that of illusory appearance.[20]

Here, as Copleston notes, the use of the term "Platonism" must be taken in a general sense, "as denoting the Platonic tradition."[21] For while Plotinus might have seen himself as a developer and a transmitter of Platonic philosophy, we see him primarily as a mystic.[22]

Thus even while Plotinus developed his ideas through the methods of logic employed by Aristotle, the Stoics, and others, his importance in this study is as a transmitter of pagan ideas which he wove into the frame of Christian doctrine and as a philosopher who is, in a sense, a theologian. Neo-Platonism has even been called an "erudite religion."[23] Windelband says that "Neo-Platonism and Christian theology had a community of purpose and common origin. Both were

[19] Plotinus, p. xxiii.

[20] Russell, p. 284.

[21] Frederick Copleston, Medieval Philosophy (1952; rpt. New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 10.

[22] Plotinus, p. xii.

[23] W. Windelband, History of Ancient Philosophy, trans. Herbert E. Cushman (1900; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1956), p. 366.

scientific systems that methodically developed a religious conviction and sought to prove that this conviction was the only true source of salvation for the soul needing redemption."[24]

Although the philosophy of Plotinus was the prevailing one in the last days of the Roman Empire, the Christian religion was developing with strength and vigor beside it. Here was "the religious consciousness of a community organizing itself into a church. Neo-Platonism was a doctrine thought out and defended by individual philosophers, which spread by associations of scholars, and then sought to profit by contact with all sorts of mysteries. Christian theology was the scientific external form of a faith that had already mightily developed."[25] The ideas, the methods of thought, and even the terminology of Neo-Platonism were used by early Christian leaders in the development of doctrine; they commonly regarded Neo-Platonism as "having been an intellectual preparation for Christianity."[26] As Russell quotes from Inge, there is an "utter impossibility of excising Platonism from Christianity without tearing it to pieces."[27] An example of Plotinus' direct influence on Christian doctrine is the invention of the trinity. While his is not the Christian Trinity, his terminology was used in defining it.[28] This is but one item of a large number of

[24]Windelband, p. 365.

[25]Ibid., p. 366.

[26]Copleston, p. 10.

[27]Russell, p. 285.

[28]"Plotinus," New Catholic Encyclopaedia, ed. William J. McDonald (New York: McGraw Hill, 1967), XI, 444.

contributions to early Christian doctrine, a doctrine devised formally by St. Augustine.

The Roman civilization in its waning stages was not quick to adopt the psychological approach to life that was Augustine's.[29] But during the Middle Ages in Europe his writings were second only to the Bible in authority.[30] He was not only pre-eminent as a formulator of doctrine but, by his method of scriptural examination, helped to determine the character of medieval education as well. It is said that for a thousand years he was acknowledged as "a court from which there was no appeal."[31]

Augustine's most influential works were the result of study and philosophical exploration which lasted half his life. While studying rhetoric as part of a classical education, he was led away from his mother's Christian faith through readings in classical philosophy and literature. He then accepted Manichaeism with its mystifying dualism, the struggle between forces of light and darkness, but soon abandoned it because "it was too naive and contradicted the goodness and omnipotence of God."[32] After his arrival in Rome in 383 A. D. as a prospective teacher of rhetoric, he accepted Neo-Platonism, in

[29]David Knowles, The Evolution of Medieval Thought (Baltimore: Helicon, 1962), p. 51.

[30]D. W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University, 1963), p. 52.

[31]Knowles, p. 33.

[32]Norman F. Cantor and Peter L. Klein, eds., Medieval Thought: Augustine and Thomas Aquinas (Waltham, Ma.: Blaisdell, 1969), p. 13.

part because it offered a solution to the problem of evil. This was the answer to Augustine's greatest difficulty with Christianity and probably had more to do with his eventual conversion than any other single thing. As he writes in the Confessions, "having then read those books of the Platonists and thence been taught to search for incorporeal truth, I saw Thy invisible things, understood by those things. . . ."[33] In his study of the Stoic Cicero, Augustine found a catalyst for his early passion for truth and wisdom.[34] But it was in Plotinian thought that he found a refuge from the despair and skepticism of Manichaeism.[35] He writes of the system of Plato as "the most pure and bright in all philosophy," and days that Plotinus was the man in whom "Plato lived again." Plotinus, he says, could easily have become a Christian.[36] The great difference in Augustine's work, however, is that while Plato and Plotinus both were concerned philosophically with the molding of citizens and philosophers, Augustine's own eyes were set on the actual journey to God.[37] Plotinus, then, provided a background for the interpretation of Scripture set down in the Confessions.[38]

[33] St. Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine, trans. Edward Bouverie Pusey, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), XVIII, 51.

[34] St. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, trans. Anna S. Benjamin and L. H. Hackstaff (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), p. xxi.

[35] New Catholic Encyclopaedia, XI, 444.

[36] Russell, p. 285.

[37] Knowles, p. 47.

[38] Robert J. O'Connell, St. Augustine's Confessions: The Odyssey of Soul (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1969), p. 12.

Augustine, then, did not invent a system of philosophy.[39] Instead, he tried to develop the kind of wisdom which sees straight through to God's truths.[40] He believed in the "divine illumination of the intellect,"[41] and that the tool for preparation of the mind to receive this illumination is the Christian faith.[42]

In this study, the importance of Augustine is in the means by which man achieves union with God through the exercise of will. This opposes pagan notions of destiny as controlled by forces at once capricious and beyond man's control. The Stoics had long taught that man should put up with things as they are, and "to achieve that equanimity which would make them invulnerable to the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune."[43] But toward the time of Augustine, "such a program did not take for philosophers the form of a plan towards remodeling things as they are into what they could be. The release of the soul from its prison is not to be accomplished in the sense world, but by an ascent from this into more ideal worlds."[44] As Plotinus believed, the soul could accomplish this ascent only by looking within itself and

[39]Jacques Maritain, "St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas," trans. C. M. Leonard, in St. Augustine: His Age, Life, and Thought (Cleveland: Meridian, 1957), p. 204.

[40]St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, trans. D. W. Robertson, Jr. (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), p. xi.

[41]Knowles, p. 41.

[42]Maritain, p. 206.

[43]Plotinus, p. vii.

[44]Ibid.

away from worldly things. Here it could find the true realities.[45] It must turn away from lust, which "dominates the mind, despoils it of the wealth of its virtue, and rags it, poor and needy, now this way and now that. . . ."[46] Augustine illustrated this in his City of God by saying that the Roman Empire succeeded only in worldly ways and therefore fell, and by admonishing Christians to be as far from worshiping the material as from taking pleasure in the senses.[47]

It may be obvious that the idea of ascent of the soul could not be based on a concept of fate as a blind force. In any case, ancient pre-Christian literature did not dwell exclusively on destiny as being outside the individual's control. This has been demonstrated in a summary of some of Sophocles' work, and he was by no means alone. But different times and different men interpret in various ways; Emerson, for example, quotes from Chaucer's Knight's Tale to show a sense of the "weight of the universe" holding men down, and goes on to state that "Greek Tragedy expressed the same sense."[48] As I will attempt to show, Chaucer's tale does not invite this conclusion at all but rather an opposite one. Neither do many of the great works of the Greeks. But even today belief in blind forces is popular as it is reinforced by syndicated astrology charts.

[45] Plotinus, p. xxvii.

[46] St. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, p. 22.

[47] St. Augustine, The City of God, trans. Marcus Dods, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), XVII, 207-230.

[48] Ralph Waldo Emerson, Five Essays on Man and Nature, ed. Robert E. Spiller (New York: Meredith, 1954), p. 97.

Plotinus pointed out that astrologers contradict themselves by first citing stars as causes and then giving elevated circumstances of birth as a cause. In the Enneads a long series of such contradictions is listed.[49] Augustine similarly refutes astrology, using the birth of twins as an argument,[50] and says that the teachings of astrologers "sell unlearned men into miserable servitude."[51] Plotinus tells us that the truth of the matter is that the soul is free and that "an act is fated when it is contrary to wisdom."[52] His "Reason-Principle"[53] seems to be the element in Augustine's study of free will which opposes the material world and its disappointments and which allows the soul to choose its destiny. The idea is echoed again in Boethius and of course in Chaucer. Free will, in other words, is the exercise of wisdom, which naturally draws man away from worldly interests to a state of mind where fortune's wheel has no power. In Augustine's blend of Platonism and Christianity, the specific means of the journey to God is stated.

Without the possibility of free will, this progression toward God would be impossible. Augustine tells of his recognition of will as the cause of evil during the period of his exposure to the

[49] Plotinus, The Six Enneads, trans. Stephen MacKenna and B. S. Page, Great Books of the Western World (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), XVII, 80.

[50] St. Augustine, On Christian Doctrine, p. 58.

[51] Ibid., p. 56.

[52] Plotinus, The Six Enneads, p. 82.

[53] Ibid.

Platonists: "And I strained to perceive what I now heard, that free-will was the cause of our doing ill, and Thy just judgment, of our suffering ill."[54] Similarly, he affirms that "true freedom . . . is reserved for those who . . . abide by eternal law. . . ."[55] Gilson stresses this idea and its importance in the development of Christian doctrine. "What claims our attention," he says, "is the emphatic way in which the Fathers of the Church insisted on the importance of the concept of freedom, and the very special nature of the terms in which they did it. God, in creating man, prescribed him laws, but left him nevertheless free to prescribe his own, in the sense: that the divine law does not constrain the human will."[56] In the first chapter of Augustine's own great affirmation of our ability to choose, he states that "we commit evil through free choice of the will."[57] Why do we do so, if we have the power of our intellect? Plotinus' answer is that the intellect is "overwhelmed by the unruly monster of . . . passions."[58] But true exercise of the intellect demands understanding that the needs of the body "are not relevant to human . . . self-sufficiency, and not to happiness."[59] The difference is that of wisdom, through which happiness can

[54] St. Augustine, The Confessions, p. 44.

[55] Ibid., p. 31.

[56] Gilson, p. 304.

[57] St. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, p. 34.

[58] J. M. Rist, Plotinus: The Road to Reality (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1967), p. 135.

[59] Ibid., p. 145.

be achieved, compared with pleasure, a state in which one lives only for the moment. For all this, there is a specter in the Enneads which, as the soul is "overwhelmed," relieves the mind of its ability to choose as evil leads to more evil. Augustine is more direct: "If you ask what the cause [of evil] may be, I cannot say, since there is only one cause; rather, each man is the cause of his own evildoing. If you doubt this, then listen to what we said above: evil deeds are punished by the justice of God. It would not be just to punish deeds if they were not done wilfully."[60] If this seems a circular sort of proof, we ought to recall that we are dealing with a theology built upon a philosophical foundation, and that in addition to any sort of wisdom, the individual must first of all have faith in order to accommodate the Christian mysteries.

A further problem in the theory of the operation of free will is that of explaining evil existing within the creation of a god who is entirely good. In Augustine, evil "stems from the will's free choice to depart from its true vocation"; it is not caused by some diabolic element in the universe, but "as a result of the abuse of one of God's gifts. . . ."[61] God's punishment "corrects the disgrace of sin" and the universe remains in order.[62]

But perhaps the greatest problem concerning free choice is the matter of God's foreknowledge. Common sense demands that the question

[60] St. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, p. 3.

[61] Ibid., p. xxv.

[62] Ibid., p. 108.

be posed: If God knows the future, and if it is foreordained to be as it will be, then how may the choice to commit sin be ascribed to the soul? Augustine says that the Stoics, in particular Cicero, denied God's foreknowledge because they wished to present mankind as free.[63] They could not reconcile the two concepts. Augustine maintains that free will and foreknowledge are indeed compatible:

> He does not do the thing which He knows will happen. Besides, if He ought not to exact punishment from sinners because he foresees that they will sin, He ought not to reward those who act rightly, since in the same way He foresees that they will act rightly. On the contrary, let us acknowledge both that it is proper to His foreknowledge that nothing should escape His notice and that it is proper to His justice that sin, since it is committed voluntarily, should not go unpunished by His judgment, just as it was not forced to be committed by His foreknowledge.[64]

Later, in The Consolation of Philosophy with which Chaucer was so familiar, Boethius gives the additional explanation that God sees all time as we see the present. The evidence for foreknowledge is thus constantly before him, but the knowledge does not act as a cause.[65] This is an important clarification since Augustine's entire argument concerning the operation of free will in the face of foreknowledge depends upon his assertion that God can foresee man's good choices as well as his evil ones.[66]

[63] St. Augustine, The City of God, p. 214.

[64] St. Augustine, On Free Choice of the Will, p. 95.

[65] Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. Richard Green (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), p. 116.

[66] A. H. Armstrong, ed., The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1967), p. 384.

Finally in this summary chapter the matter of providence must be mentioned. We have seen in Sophocles the idea that the gods have an active interest in human affairs; Plato echoes this by saying that the very existence of gods contradicts any supposed lack of interest on their part.[67] Students of Plotinus have pointed out that his god is not a personal one; that is, that "it is not an agency to which one can pray, or which bestows any grace on us, or has a will that is motivated by mercy or acts arbitrarily."[68] But what Plotinus calls the "Reason-Principle" is a starting-point for Augustine's theory of providence. The implication is that providence is the process whereby the noble soul is rewarded and the poor soul punished; in other words, the very order of the universe, in rewarding the correct exercise of the will as it seeks the good, is providential. Prayers which go against divine law are obviously unlawful: "They are designed in effect to upset the providential ordering of the universe, where man is master of his own destiny."[69] Plotinus' intention seems clear in the Enneads:

> Man has come into existence, a living being but not a member of the noblest order; he occupies by choice an intermediate rank; still, in that place in which he exists, Providence does not allow him to be reduced to nothing; on the contrary he is ever being led upwards by all those varied devices which the Divine employs in its labour to increase the dominance of moral value. The human race, therefore, is not deprived by Providence of its rational being; it retains its share, though necessarily limited,

[67] Gilson, p. 148.

[68] Plotinus, The Philosophy of Plotinus, p. xxv.

[69] Rist, p. 209.

> in wisdom, intelligence, executive power and right doing. . . .[70]

To this Plotinian sketch of the workings of providence, Augustine adds ideas of divine love and mercy. The soul, he says, naturally should occupy the moral heights but turned instead to worldly pursuits. It can be saved, however, because "the divine Spirit of love, the 'fire' of charity, has been poured into our hearts."[71] Plotinus tries to show that God could not reward the wicked, but in Augustine there is the mercy of a God who makes the sun and rain rise and fall on the evil and the unjust as well as on the good and the just. Here is the greatest difference of all between pagan philosophy and Christian doctrine. "Mercy" and "spirit of love" are not the terms of the philosopher; they cannot be subjected to proof. They demand a different kind of reason, an illumination of the soul which causes faith.

Now at last I turn to Chaucer, hoping to show the influence of the foregoing background. In the following interpretation of Troilus and Criseyde, I will attempt to refute at some length what I believe to be narrow critical views in the past. Having done so, I will then largely ignore this immense collection of writings to show how such matters as destiny, free will, and other Christian issues are reflected in The Knight's Tale and The Monk's Tale.

[70] Plotinus, The Six Enneads, p. 87.

[71] O'Connell, p. 26.

THE TROILUS: BOCCACCIO AND COURTLY LOVE

When Troilus and Criseyde is read as a work of moral philosophy illustrating human responsibility in the shaping of destiny, one-sided interpretations in the past can be explained. The complexity of Chaucer's greatest complete work can be seen in a four-part framework he employed, not to lead his audience forever astray of the Christian message, but the more uniquely and memorably to announce its presence. Since this framework is somewhat imposing, the reader may become so fascinated by single aspects that he neglects others in what seems actually to be a carefully unified work. It is as if one should lose himself while examining some corner of a great medieval cathedral and somehow fail to arrive at the altar itself.

Perhaps the most immediately visible aspect of Chaucer's intentionally complex construction is his pose as a mere translator of his "auctour Lollius." He reinforces this attitude at various points, and notes that the tale is only fact, having been passed down to him through the ages. This part of Chaucer's pose is seen through readily, given the access of the modern reader to the works of Boccaccio and others. Thus critical studies have not gone so far afield here as in other cases, beyond an almost endless discussion of the similarities and differences of the characters as portrayed by Chaucer and by the Italian writer.

A second overall irony or pose in Chaucer's poem is the superficial harmony with the ideals of courtly love. It is enough to say at present that hefty and scholarly books have been published on this

subject to the exclusion of all other themes. Love itself, especially as it sheds light on the Christian exemplum, certainly plays a major part in the work. But human love in the Troilus is as often an expression of lust and the pleasure of the moment as it is of courtly tradition.

The third and fourth artificial barriers to an immediate appreciation of the unified genius of Troilus and Criseyde are related. The first of these is the placing of the pagan deities and the ancient setting against a delicate insistence on Boethian and therefore Christian values; the second is the atmosphere of fatalism which hangs over the characters and over the city of Troy itself.

My purpose here and in the following chapter is to examine each of these four parts of Chaucer's framing device to show that each is intentional and in no way detracts from the moral and philosophical unity of the poem, but rather reinforces it. Now it may be said that the Troilus, at the widest limits of the definition, is a translation; that it is a tale of courtly love; that it is a story of pagan persons and pagan gods; and that it concerns determinism. But the obvious point here is that while Chaucer's work is all of these, it is not yet any one of them alone.

I would like to begin by looking at the extent to which the poem is, or perhaps, rather, the extent to which it is not, a translation. Early in this century R. K. Root summed up the whole of Chaucer in an admirable and startling volume. His chapter on Troilus and Criseyde is an example of the kind of work in which comparison with Il Filostrato excludes all other approaches. Nowhere does Professor

Root so much as mention free will or predestination. Instead, he writes that the poem is a comedy (apparently a low one at that) and that Chaucer, sick of sentimentality in his middle age, has a rather good laugh at his own characters.[1] Root dispenses with Chaucer's complex characters in a summary fashion: Pandarus he calls a "middle-aged busybody"; Criseyde to him is "a beautiful but worthless woman"; and Troilus, the desperately introspective main character, he says, is a mere "lovesick boy."[2] Both Boccaccio and Chaucer are reduced to the level of hacks as Root describes each in turn as "sentimentalist" and "humorist."[3] This narrow approach has been refuted in a volley of critical replies which has become almost redundant over the years, but I cannot resist including an example of Root's chatty and artless prose: "Troilus is your typical enthusiast and idealist. Living a life of fantasy and dream, he is rudely awakened by the gradual conviction of Criseyde's faithlessness, and he is unable to recover from the shock."[4] Root's statements are much more apt if applied to Boccaccio's characters instead of Chaucer's, but it might be said in his defense that he was turning over new ground and that his efforts may at least have served to make other critics take a closer look at the two works.

The term "translation" has undergone a change of meaning since

[1]Robert Kilburn Root, The Poetry of Chaucer (Cambridge, Ma.: Riverside Press, 1906), p. 102.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 103.

[4]Ibid., p. 115.

Chaucer's time. The latitude available to the translator at the present time is narrow. He ought to reproduce the author's intent as faithfully as possible in the second language. But it is well-known that boundaries proscribing innovation were not fixed as Chaucer set to work, and he thus has a defense for the pose as one who simply retells an old story, or translates from the mysterious and probably nonexistent Lollius. But as the works are read side-by-side (that is, the Filostrato and the Troilus), there is seen on the one hand a simple story of a busybody, a worthless woman, and a lovesick boy, and on the other a finely detailed study of character which led De Selincourt to call Troilus and Criseyde "our first great psychological novel."[5] Cummings says that the relationship of Chaucer to Boccaccio in the use of the Filostrato is that of a borrower. "The English poet," he says, "served no apprenticeship to the Italian. He never became a literary disciple to him. He did not weakly imitate him as a master. What of Boccaccio he drew upon he drew as from a storehouse; and, like the materials he drew from numerous other literary storehouses, he fitted it deftly into the great mosaic of his own work."[6] Boccaccio's own version represents considerable borrowing from other sources as well, although he expands the tale, adds to it, and develops its "dramatic possibilities."[7] But, as Shanley says, the treatment of the story by

[5]Ernest De Selincourt, Oxford Lectures on Poetry (1934; rpt. Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1967), p. 52.

[6]Hubertis M. Cummings, The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio (Menasha, Wi.: Collegiate Press, 1916), p. 199.

[7]Robert Dudley French, A Chaucer Handbook, 2nd ed. (1927; rpt. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1947), p. 141.

the Italian is unsatisfactory: "He showed how Troilus, who led his life according to the dictates of the tradition of courtly love, ultimately found only sorrow because Criseyde, like most young women, was vain and fickle. . . . But as this description will not do for Chaucer's Criseyde, so Boccaccio's solution will not do."[8] Nevertheless, Chaucer does make extensive use of the Filostrato.

Chaucer follows Boccaccio not only in outline but in the almost verbatim translation of lines and, at time, whole stanzas.[9] Cummings has listed these borrowings as well as those from other sources.[10] But it is important to note that Chaucer is translating lines and stanzas rather than a philosophy as he borrows from the Filostrato; it is among the other lines that we find Boethian philosophy intertwined with the larger fabric of plot and character. Here Chaucer is "most fully himself" when he is embroidering on the background supplied by Boccaccio.[11] This can best be seen in an examination of the characters Diomede, Pandarus, Criseyde, and Troilus.

Perhaps to underscore the psychological conflict going on in Criseyde's mind in the Greek camp, Chaucer presents Diomede as "far bolder than in Boccaccio and far more deeply cunning, and he has an

[8]James L. Shanley, "The Troilus and Christian Love," in Chaucer Criticism, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, II (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame, 1961), 143.

[9]Nathaniel Edward Griffin and Arthur Beckwith Myrick, trans., The Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio (1929; rpt. New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1967), p. 98.

[10]Cummings, pp. 51-82.

[11]Griffin and Myrick, p. 101.

outer attractiveness which would conceal, except to a careful observer, the fact that he delights in being a 'conqueror' of women. Criseyde is to him only a superb object of the chase. . . ."[12] The idea of Criseyde as a mere object only adds to the premeditated confusion concerning courtly love in the poem. Troilus is somewhat courtly, but Diomede is even less so than in the Italian story.[13] Kirby says that in Il Filostrato "he had at least some claim to consideration as a lover but in the Troilus he has none whatsoever. The conclusion is inevitable that just as in the case of Troilus, whom Chaucer sought to make the typical lover through the enhancement of his courtly love qualities, in the case of Diomede he strove for the opposite effect and presented him as an example of what a courtly lover should not be."[14] The changes Chaucer makes as he portrays Diomede are important since they provide a balance for the characterization of Troilus.

Concerning Chaucer's Pandarus, Cummings lists critics who "concur rather closely in their estimates of the unscrupulous middle-aged worldling, cynical, humorous, lachrymose, tricky, worldly wise according to the wisdom of the base, parasitical, garrulous, indecent, coarse, abhorrent to our moral sense."[15] Certainly there must be a reason for Chaucer's transformation of the cousin into an uncle, but

[12]Robert P. apRoberts, "Criseyde's Infidelity and the Moral of the Troilus," Speculum, 44 (July 1959), 386.

[13]Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: A Study of Courtly Love (Gloucester, Ma.: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 245.

[14]Ibid.

[15]Cummings, p. 113.

Cummings' adjectives are largely surprising. Middle age, for example, cannot be taken as a present-day standard, for then Pandarus could be as old as we might like to think of him; neither can the condition of being an uncle be definitely made to signify an older generation. That Pandarus is meant to be older than the model in Boccaccio I do not doubt. I propose that the reason, however, is not to make him seem old and jaded, but to give credence to his peculiar and consistent philosophy of Fortune, which I will discuss later. When things are going well, and when they are not, Pandarus ascribes fate to the workings of the wheel, and counsels submission. In Chaucer's careful development of this philosophy, Pandarus' reasoning, if in error, is too fully mature to seem in character for a young cousin and companion to Troilus. Worldly, tricky, humorous, and garrulous, yes; but in my estimation Pandarus seems to display a singularly unselfish devotion. Cummings says that Pandarus, like his Italian counterpart, "is a firm believer that nothing is nobler in life than romantic passion."[16] He is nevertheless steadfast and loyal. If he is truly abhorrent in his manipulations, then the product of that manipulation must also be abhorrent. This would detract from the importance of earthly love as a link to the divine. In any case, Pandarus seems to be a new character, shrewdly developed.

The difference between Criseyde and Criseida is more apparent. We are told that the latter gets exactly what she deserves, and

[16]Cummings, p. 115.

deserves to be condemned since she is faithless and base.[17] But Chaucer sympathizes with Criseyde's predicament and stresses the terrible psychological price she pays in giving in to Diomede. If she is "sensual and wanton" in Boccaccio's work,[18] the heroine in the English poem displays the same characteristics, but in a more refined manner: "Cressida is as lifelike as Boccaccio's heroine, but far more complex. Griseida is elemental: her emotions are simple and straightforward, and involve no problems. But Cressida is marvellously subtilized, baffling alike to us and to herself. Quite as amorous as her prototype, she is of a finer nature, and has depths of tender affection that no Griseida could fathom."[19] Criseida sins with relish; Criseyde appears "more sinned against than sinning."[20] Cummings says that Criseyde's name "spells the weakness and loveliness of women."[21] Perhaps so, when we consider the biblical first woman and the traditional attitude in medieval literature toward women. But the crux of the difference seems to me to be a question of philosophy, as I noted in the case of Pandarus. Criseyde, whatever her private moralities or weaknesses may be, is obsessed in the Troilus with honor, this honor being of a superficial nature in that she desire primarily to simply keep her private life

[17] apRoberts, p. 385.

[18] Ibid.

[19] George Lyman Kittredge, Chaucer and his Poetry (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1915), p. 126.

[20] Griffin and Myrick, p. 106.

[21] Cummings, p. 103.

out of public hands.

Of the main characters, Troilus seems the one least in possession of a stable philosophy, at least until he ascends to the spheres. Kittredge's estimation that Troilo and Pandaro in Boccaccio's work are of the same mold seems reasonable. He calls them "simply young men about town, with the easy principles of their class. If they changed places, we should not know the difference."[22] In Chaucer's poem, Troilus is by no means the same as Pandarus, although a debt to Boccaccio must be acknowledged for "we find in him too a son of the south, temperamental, emotional, without a single phlegmatic trait in his nature, hardly less Italian than Boccaccio himself, and more Italian--if that is possible -- than Shakespeare's Romeo, demonstrative in every ounce of his being, able only to keep one great secret, but able to dissimulate that with every inch of his supple young manhood."[23] But much of Boccaccio's treatment is omitted, including a fainting scene at parliament and a suicide attempt. Chaucer also "tones down the hysteria of Boccaccio's hero so that Troilus appears more controlled and dignified than his Italian counterpart."[24] Kirby, apparently referring to Root's odd statement, tells us that Troilus is "something far more than the love-sick boy of the Filostrato," and points to his increased nobility as a lover. These two traits, Kirby says, are the

[22]Kittredge, p. 122.

[23]Cummings, p. 96.

[24]Alfred David, "The Hero of the Troilus," Speculum, 37 (October 1962), 570.

main points of difference over Troilo.[25] This seems fine as far as it goes, but I believe the widest gap between the two characters is caused by the intense suffering of Troilus at his inability to resolve philosophical difficulties and direct his life in an orderly manner. His insight, depth of feeling, and apparent intelligence are not found in Boccaccio's characters.

I can find no better way to conclude these remarks on the difference between the Filostrato and the Troilus than by including Shanley's excellent summary:

> We should not consider the Troilus as simply a romance of courtly love, a psychological novel, or a drama, even though it has characteristics in common with all those types. Most simply stated, what Chaucer did was to recast a narrative poem; and he caused a fundamental difference between the Troilus and Il Filostrato when he retold the story in the light of an entirely new set of values, determined not only by this world and man's life in it but by the eternal as well. He did not merely retell the story of an engaging young man who, because he trusted in a woman, was made unhappy when she proved faithless. The ultimate reason for Troilus's woe was not that he trusted in a woman but that of his own free will he placed his hope for perfect happiness in that which by its nature was temporary, imperfect, and inevitably insufficient.[26]

In the high seriousness of Chaucer's intent, then, no kind of earthly love, courtly or otherwise, would provide Troilus with immunity to fortune. That is why a view of Chaucer's poem which restricts the

[25]Kirby, p. 279.

[26]Shanley, p. 137.

meaning to the courtly love tradition is as lacking as the kind which deals only with the relationship to Boccaccio's version.

C. S. Lewis, writing about the eleventh-century emergence of courtly love, says there are four characteristics of the tradition, the ideals of "Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love."[27] The first two, he goes on, are natural outgrowths of the feudal system.[28] As for adultery, in medieval society "marriages had nothing to do with love, and no 'nonsense' about marriage was tolerated. All matches were matches of interest, and worse still, of an interest that was continually changing. When the alliance which had answered would answer no longer, the husband's object was to get rid of the lady as quickly as possible. Marriages were frequently dissolved."[29] Lewis shows that this is one of two reasons for the growth of the concept of adultery in courtly love arrangements, the other being the medieval idea that passion in any form was evil: "About 'passion' in this sense Thomas Aquinas has naturally nothing to say--as he had nothing to say about the steam-engine. He had not heard of it. It was only coming into existence in his time, and finding its first expression in the poetry of courtly love."[30] The fourth distinguishing characteristic of courtly love, the Religion of

[27]C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 12.

[28]Ibid., pp. 12-13.

[29]Ibid., p. 13.

[30]Ibid., p. 17.

Love, comes from the influence of Ovid and is an "erotic religion" which "arises as a rival or a parody of the real religion and emphasizes the antagonism of the two ideals."[31] The idea of parody is important in the present study, since the intent seems to be, through Chaucer's poses, to throw the reader momentarily off the track of the real meaning and thus increase the effect of philosophical and religious implications as they are finally understood.

So it seems that whatever lengths are taken to show Chaucer as a portrayer of the system Lewis outlines, one can only be led further and further away from any Christian message. Malone, in his Chapters on Chaucer, has a definition set down in the spirit of a Webster: "Troilus and Criseyde is a story of courtly love, a story which the poet tells in 8239 lines, grouped into five books."[32] This statement is not so much out of context in Malone's work as it is indicative of the lack of scope in his criticism. Lewis' statement is also flat: "Troilus is what Chaucer meant it to be--a great poem in praise of love."[33] Here there is some qualification, and as I hope to show later, elements of love in the poem which have a bearing on divine love do assist in making Chaucer's intent clear. But where Lewis leaves the term "courtly" out in one instance, he supplies it in another: "Chaucer's greatest poem is the consummation, not the

[31] Lewis, p. 18.

[32] Kemp Malone, Chapters on Chaucer (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1951), p. 100.

[33] Lewis, p. 197.

abandonment, of his labours as a poet of courtly love."[34] Kirby's volume, as the title implies, narrows down to a discussion of courtly love with much the same result. His solution to questions posed by Troilus' final lines and by Christian elements in the epilogue is that Troilus' love "has been so noble, so spiritual, that he passes at once to his eternal reward." He "ascends directly to heaven" and the final lines are "a complete acquittal of Troilus and constitute Chaucer's final stamp of approval on the conduct of his hero."[35] This kind of criticism completely overlooks Boethian influence and the fact that the heaven Troilus ascends to is after all still within the pagan setting; it is a pagan afterlife in the spheres. The same difficulty led Ian Robinson to write that the poem "does not cohere into a great whole" and that it "looks like his monumentally serious attempt to settle love once and for all."[36]

It is true that Chaucer sets up his audience early in the work to believe in the value of earthly love. This kind of love is natural, he says, at the point where Cupid's arrow finds its way to Troilus:[37]

[34]Lewis, p. 176.

[35]Kirby, p. 282.

[36]Ian Robinson, Chaucer and the English Tradition (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1972), p. 73.

[37]Geoffrey Chaucer, "Troilus and Criseyde," in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), pp. 389-479. All following references to the Troilus are from this edition and are made in the text.

> For evere it was, and evere it shal byfalle,
> That Love is he that alle thing may bynde,
> For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," I. 236-38)

Whatever substance the tip of the arrow delivers, it must, considering the source, contain not so much of the balm of charitable love as it does the earthly poison of passionate cupidity. However that may be, Chaucer elaborates on the positive aspects of love:

> With love han ben comforted moost and esed;
> And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed,
> And worthi folk maad worthier of name,
> And causeth moost to dreden vice and shame.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," I. 249-52)

The reader ought to remember these lines when confronted throughout the poem with evidence that both Troilus and Criseyde are concerned only superficially with "vice and shame," not with the fact of it, but rather with what it can do to one's reputation. Since Troilus is being led in most of the poem by either Pandarus or Criseyde, I note that the greater fault may lie with those two. For by the end of the first book, love has entirely transformed Troilus:

> Dede were his japes and his cruelte,
> His heighe port and his manere estraunge,
> And ecch of tho gan for a vertu chaunge.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," I. 1083-85)

He stops sorrowing at this point and returns to his calling as a great warrior for Troy's cause.

Everything may seem pretty idyllic so far. But the full stanza preceding all this, the one which sets the tone for the Christian audience, has a different and more chilling import concerning fickle Fortune's blind spinning of her wheel:

O blynde world, O blynde entencioun!
How often falleth al the effect contraire
Of surquidrie and foul presumpcioun;
For kaught is proud, and kaught is debonaire.
This Troilus is clomben on the staire,
And litel weneth that he moot descenden;
But alday faileth thing that fooles wenden.
("Troilus and Criseyde," I. 211-17)

It is made clear that Troilus gives himself up completely to passionate love, his new purpose in life:

Alle other dredes weren from him fledde,
Both of th'assege and his savacioun;
N'yn him desir noon other fownes bredde,
But argumentes to this conclusioun,
That she of him wolde han compassioun,
And he to ben hire man, while he may dure.
Lo, here his lif, and from the deth his cure!
("Troilus and Criseyde," I. 463-69)

This shows how absolutely Troilus has put himself in the hands of worldly affairs, at the mercy of Fortune, and implies how small an effect love will have on his character and his eventual fate. For even though

Pride, Envye, and Ire, and Avarice
He gan to fle, and everich other vice,
("Troilus and Criseyde," III. 1805-06)

the determining factor of his new virtue is nothing more than his acceptance by Criseyde. And Criseyde is earthly.

The attitude toward Chaucer and courtly love which I have expressed here finds some support among critics. To an extent, Troilus is a courtly lover, but that is not good; that is the point. Kittredge says that when Troilus is hit by love's arrow, "Chaucer is in full conformity with the doctrines of the chivalric system, and we must accept the convention before we try to interpret the character of

his hero. Nothing is more axiomatic, in this system, than the irresistable nature of love. The god is perfectly arbitrary. The will of a man has nothing to do in the matter . . . . The sufferings of Troilus are in complete accord with the medieval system."[38] So Troilus must be made to seem a courtly lover if Chaucer's point is to be made, but his whole career is a negative exemplum of what can happen to the individual who succumbs to the passions of physical love. As Denomy notes, Chaucer "was concerned not with giving Courtly Love a logical or philosophical basis but with using it as a background for a story he had to tell. In the case of Andreas [Capellanus], heresy is actually and expressly taught and defended. With Chaucer an immoral and heretical teaching is used as a vehicle."[39] In the same vein, Tatlock implies that Chaucer could not have taken courtly love seriously since no one could have done so. "We are not to suppose," he says, "that any except the very young and foolish" subscribed to the traditions of courtly love.[40] Tatlock goes on to point out that "illicit love has always existed, and is not always 'courtly,'" and calls courtly love "a mere literary pose." He writes, "The clashing of the love in the Troilus with Christian morals about which Chaucer at the end felt so uneasy, is no more 'courtly' than illicit love was

[38]Kittredge, p. 123.

[39]Alexander J. Denomy, "The Two Moralities of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde," in Chaucer Criticism, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, II (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame, 1961), 155.

[40]J. S. P. Tatlock, "The People in Chaucer's Troilus," PMLA, 56 (1941), 87.

in the tenth century or the nineteenth."[41] Troilus laughs at earthly love from the security of the eighth sphere much as he sneers at it as an innocent in the beginning of the poem. Meech says that Chaucer shows the illusion of courtly love throughout the poem:[42]

> He sought to make this love of compelling interest, and friendship also, by portraying the persons involved with fidelity to life and only secondarily to codes of behavior formalized in literature. What he invites thereby is contemplation of the intricacies of human nature, sympathetic contemplation, indeed, but always questioning. He elects to leave relations between his men and women a debatable and hence an immortal issue instead of constricting them within some dated formulas. Had he proposed, less wisely, to give his public a model of courtly love, he would never have chosen a story in which the heroine violates the basic tenet of fidelity.[43]

Alfred David suggests as well that courtly love "may represent only one limited approach to an ideal of love that becomes progressively clearer to Troilus and to the audience."[44]

If all this is true, that Chaucer's use of the courtly love tradition is only as a backdrop to a greater human tragedy, then one must look for other sources to see how the theme is played out against Chaucer's Christian philosophy. The most important among these is Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy. Now I hope that in my zeal to show that Chaucer did not favor the system of courtly love I have not

[41] Tatlock, p. 88.

[42] Sanford B. Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus (New York: Syracuse University, 1959), p. 421.

[43] Ibid., p. 19.

[44] David, p. 567.

given the impression that he denied the virtue of earthly love. This denial comes only from Troilus in the afterworld, the pagan afterlife of the eighth sphere in which he seems to have gained some wisdom but perhaps not all. The bond of love in Christian tradition at its highest level consists of divine love ordering the universe, but the love on this earth is nevertheless a copy of that. Chaucer makes this clear in words which express his conviction unmistakably, at the point where Troilus is most involved in earthly love. Use is made of material taken directly from Chaucer's own translation of Boethius' work.[45] The passage in Boece shows the seriousness with which Chaucer uses his source to draw his audience back to the central meaning of the poem, and reads in part:

> al this accordaunce of thynges is bounde with love, that governeth erthe and see, and hath also comandement to the hevene. And yif this love slakede the bridelis, alle thynges that now loven hem togidres wolden make batayle contynuely, and stryven to fordo the fassoun of this world, the which they now leden in accordable feith by fayre moevynges. This love halt togidres peples joyned with an holy boond, and knytteth sacrement of mariages of chaste loves; and love enditeth lawes to trewe felawes.
>
> ("Boece," II. m8)

These words are from the consolation of Boethius by Lady Philosophy, whose primary message is that men place themselves willingly in the hands of Fortune through desire for worldly pleasures. The correct kind of love is actually far from the courtly variety. The same

[45]Geoffrey Chaucer, "Boece," in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, 2nd ed., ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), pp. 320-84. All following references to Boece are from this edition and are made in the text.

idea is expressed in the Troilus (III. 1744-57). A look at these lines shows that the speaker is Pandarus. Why would he be used by Chaucer to express a Boethian idea, since he is so far from being a Christian? I believe the answer lies partly in the peculiar character Pandarus is made to have, so far removed from that of Pandaro, and partly in the placing of the speech, at the end of the third book, with the hymn to Fortune immediately following at the commencement of Book Four.

Pandarus constantly expresses Boethian ideas, but only one aspect of the total philosophy. He is a pagan Lady Philosophy, and for the pagan setting in which Troilus and Criseyde live, he is as effective and to the point as Lady Philosophy is to Boethius. As we consider this, I remind the reader that the Consolation expresses Augustinian doctrine at the total expense of mentioning Christianity as the motivation. This may be a key to the popularization of Boethius in the Middle Ages and to the effect of the Consolation as a bridge between the pagan and the Christian. So within the Christian mode, in both Boece and the Troilus, the presence of pagan gods is only part of a pose. Boethius and Chaucer do this intentionally, of course, but the character Pandarus must be a true pagan. The distinctions which separate a worthier kind of love from the merely courtly are seen in the line in Green's translation of Boethius that says "love binds sacred marriages by chaste affections; love makes the

laws which join true friends,"[46] and in Krapp's Troilus as Pandar sings "thou with whose laws societies comply, / Thou in whose virtue loving couples dwell."[47] It doesn't damage Chaucer's characterization of Pandarus that from this character's own words come the most resounding condemnation of courtly love, since Pandarus' speech is only part of a sales pitch. His words are Boethian, but Pandarus is blind; that the love of Troilus and Criseyde is "up-so-doun" does not occur to him. This love is neither chaste nor in accord with communal law. The contrary, in fact, is shown as Pandarus literally throws Troilus into Criseyde's bed and as Criseyde continually frets over the maintenance of a kind of honor which depends on secrecy.

Troilus escapes damnation; he is innocent of the evil aspects of courtly love. This is unremarkable within the pagan setting. His ascent to the spheres seems in accord with the traditional literary afterlife for a great pagan warrior. It may be more difficult to see how he could fit into the Christian heaven through the workings of providence and love, but there is reason to believe that even this is possible. Boethius says of the chain of love: "In like manner You create souls and lesser living forms and, adapting them to their high flight in swift chariots, You scatter them through the earth and sky. And when they have turned again toward You, by your gracious law, You

[46]Boethius, The Consolation of Philosophy, trans. Richard Green (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1962), p. 41. All following references to the Consolation are from this edition and are made in the text.

[47]Geoffrey Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, trans. George Philip Krapp (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 173.

call them back like leaping flames." ("Consolation," III. m9) The love in Troilus and Criseyde may be, as Denomy asserts, "unchristian and heretical."[48] But where Criseyde fails both as a courtly mistress and as a Christian in her lack of fidelity, Troilus does not.

It is not unreasonable to see Troilus as the one figure who is not entirely vain. He provides a contrast to cupidity. He may be guilty of that too, but later as he is faced with Criseyde's departure he consistently chooses charitably to honor her wishes. Alfred David says that he tries to love Criseyde "with an ideal spiritual love," the kind we see repeated by Palamon in The Knight's Tale. "His own love," David goes on, "makes him see a divinity in Criseyde. Her physical beauty is for him the tangible presence of a spiritual beauty that raises her far above mankind; yet, her grace may nevertheless be won for man and constitutes the highest good."[49]

Troilus' intentions in the face of failing destiny seem commendable. His reason is brought into use as he "prevails over an impulse to indulge his will in its pleasure or to preserve to one's enjoyment a supreme treasure."[50] From his position in the eighth sphere Troilus finds that the kind of love he has experienced on earth is very lacking, laughable in relation to divine love. But balanced against the deviousness of Pandarus and Criseyde's worldliness and infidelity, Troilus has had good intentions throughout and seems to deserve his

[48]Denomy, p. 148.

[49]David, p. 578.

[50]Cummings, p. 99.

place a little closer to the angels. Chaucer's message to all "yonge, fresshe folkes" at the end of the poem (V. 1835-48) provides a Christian moral. Troilus' new vision from the spheres points to him as the only available good example among those who fall into the trap of worldly, courtly love.

THE TROILUS: PAGAN SETTING AND FATALISM

In the last chapter I was concerned with the relationship of the Troilus and the Filostrato and with courtly love in Chaucer's poem. The third of the four parts of what I called Chaucer's intentionally misleading framework for his Christian story concerns the pagan setting. In the beginning of the second book of Troilus and Criseyde Chaucer reminds his audience that he is retelling an ancient tale when he says that "In sondry londes, sondry ben usages," (II. 28) and "Forthi men seyn, ecch contree hath his lawes." (II.42) These and other lines reinforce his pose of being unable (at least until the end of the work) to condemn his characters for their actions. And it is possible to become interested in the pagan aspects of the poem to the exclusion of all else. The mixture of pagan divinities and reckonings through astrology show a consistent pattern. And yet the reader ought to have made up his mind as to the substance of the work long before he arrives at Chaucer's concluding lines.

The Trojans honor Palladion (or Pallas) in April, and it is at this celebration that Troilus first sees Criseyde. Chaucer says of the assemblage in general that "lusty knyght" and "lady fressh" were dressed "bothe for the seson and the feste." (I. 165-168) The widow Criseyde is alone dressed in black. This picture of a springtime ritual combines pagan and Christian elements at the very beginning of the poem. Here Troilus makes light of love, but the widow is waiting for the "up-so-doun" wedding in Book Three. The old pagan dance they will do has some of the trappings of Christian love, and the irony

of all this should have been immediately noted by Chaucer's audience.

Jefferson says that the gods "must be the gods of classical mythology as the tale concerns ancient Troy, but the attributes which they possess are the attributes of the Boethian deity, and what is said about them to a great extent will be found in the Consolation."[1] But it is the relationships of the individuals to the gods that most reveals the characters as pagan. Troilus alternately praises and damns his gods, his position is always that of a beggar, and none of the pagan deities ever do a thing to help him. They do their work in the fashion of Fortune, and Troilus is powerless to do anything but rant and swear; there are at least nine oaths in the second book alone. What all this swearing does accomplish is to constantly remind the audience of the pagan setting, for the good Christian does not swear at all.

Tatlock tells us that "the medieval caught at every chance to see Christian verities shadowed darkly in pagan tradition."[2] Chaucer, certainly no pagan, "plays down his own Christianity for good reason." But he "does not avoid the Christian point of view when he feels it necessary to be expressed."[3] Chaucer's readers were also Christians,

[1]Bernard L. Jefferson, Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius (New York: Gordian Press, 1968), p. 121.

[2]J. S. P. Tatlock, "The Epilog of Chaucer's Troilus," Modern Philology, 18 (April 1921), 645.

[3]Morton Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde," PMLA, 72 (1957), 201.

and were not unfamiliar with Boethius,[4] so they should have been able to easily see the irony and the Christian verities.

Pagan aspects are further reinforced in a way which may have been more difficult for the medieval audience to see. I am referring to the use of astrology by Calchas to divine the future. Some say that Chaucer himself believed in this "science." Smyser tells us that "in our own day hundreds of thousands of people have taken up astrology," and that because of this it is impossible to doubt Chaucer's belief in it.[5] It is difficult to agree with this conclusion. For one thing, what modern man takes up probably does not tell us much about the medieval mind; for another, we cannot be said to believe in something simply because we "take it up." Greenfield says that Chaucer professes a lack of faith in the system of astrology in his Treatise on the Astrolabe and that "the general medieval attitude toward astrology" was one of scoffing.[6] There is even some doubt that the character Calchas believes in it himself, since he so often is not as much ruled by the stars as he is led to cite them as causes in predictions which are political maneuverings for his own benefit.

What the applications to the stars do for the poem as a whole is as a reinforcement of the characters' attitude of submission to

[4]S. S. Hussey, "The Difficult Fifth Book of 'Troilus and Criseyde,'" Modern Language Review, 67 (October 1972), 722.

[5]Hamilton M. Smyser, "A View of Chaucer's Astronomy," Speculum, 45 (July 1970), 371.

[6]Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Role of Calkas in Troilus and Criseyde," Medium AEvum, 36 (1967), 145.

Fortune's wheel. But the pagan point of view is soundly condemned at the end of the work:

> Lo here, of payens corsed olde rites,
> Lo here, what alle hire goddes may availle;
> Lo here, thise wrecched worldes appetites;
> Lo here, the fyn and guerdoun for travaille
> Of Jove, Appollo, of Mars, of swich rascaille!
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," V. 1849-1853)

Various critics have seen this passage as a turnabout by Chaucer and therefore as an artistic failure. I would hardly call it a reversal, but rather a reaffirmation. Shannon says that Chaucer was "anxious lest he be criticized for paganism, and so hastened to announce his adherence to the true religion before the poem was finished."[7] Chaucer, he goes on, was "old and poor, so that the Church more easily secured a hold upon his imagination, and influenced it unduly."[8] This appears to be speculation. Such a conclusion would be more reasonable if the consistent Christian overtones in the Troilus were absent. W. C. Curry goes even further than Shannon as he says that Chaucer's passage about pagans is a "nest of contradictions," that it is "dramatically inappropriate," and that it is an "illogical solution of the philosophical problem." He says Troilus "sails serenely to a Christian bliss," but the ridiculing of all earthly love by Troilus in the spheres does not seem appropriate to a party in the Christian heaven. What Curry apparently likes least of all is Chaucer in the position of

[7] Edgar Finley Shannon, Chaucer and the Roman Poets, Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, VII (1929; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 155.

[8] Ibid., p. 157.

"extraordinary moralist,"[9] implying that art must somehow be kept separate from morality. Concluding that the ending is "a sorry performance," Curry provides a solution for the reader, who may simply remove the last part of Troilus and Criseyde. "The Epilog," he says, "is not a part of the whole and is detachable at will, and one need not of necessity consider it at all in an interpretation of the drama."[10] This startling suggestion was published in 1930, but as late as 1951 Malone says that Troilus' ascent "seems to have been an afterthought on Chaucer's part." The explanation is that "the poet may have put [it] in simply because he liked the corresponding passage in Boccaccio's Teseide and thought he could work it in here to better effect" than in The Knight's Tale.[11] The pagan element in the Troilus seems to me to be part of a balanced celebration of man's capabilities, his responsibilities, and the Christian hopes. While it may be amusing to think of Chaucer with a pile of clippings, vainly attempting to make sense of them, many modern critics agree that the condemnation of pagans in Chaucer's final lines is consistent with the whole of the poem. It does not seem that anything could be gained either artistically or morally if the ending were to be omitted. What it says, in effect, is that pagans can expect nothing but trouble and that the reader ought to put his faith in the Christian promise. I will

[9] Walter Clyde Curry, "Destiny in Chaucer's Troilus," PMLA, 45 (1930), 165.

[10] Ibid., p. 168.

[11] Malone, p. 107.

not repeat here all of what has been said on the subject, of course, but the idea that the ending is consistent has been substantiated by the work of Patch, Greenfield, Stroud, Shanley, Jordan, and Meech.[12]

The last part of Chaucer's framework has to do with man's responsibility to choose correctly, the better to avoid the kind of fate implied in submission to Fortune's wheel. An atmosphere of doom certainly does pervade the Troilus and must be resolved to make the Christian meaning of the poem clear. This can be done as Boethian influence is understood.

Earlier, I discussed Augustine's blend of Platonic philosophy and Christian thought. Since Boethius is both Augustine's philosophical heir and an influence on Chaucer, some background may be helpful at this point. Boethius wrote The Consolation of Philosophy while in prison, where he was charged with treason and was condemned and executed.[13] He had studied Plato and Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists as well as St. Augustine, and had translated works by Aristotle, Cicero, and others. Some of his essays became part of the medieval trivium; works on arithmetic, geometry, and music became standard educational

[12]Howard Rollin Patch, On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1939), p. 121; Greenfield, p. 141; Theodore A. Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus," Modern Philology, 49 (1951), 3; Shanley, p. 136; Robert M. Jordan, Chaucer and the Shape of Creation (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1967), p. 65; Meech, p. 138.

[13]Knowles, p. 52.

works, as Green notes in his introduction, p. xi. The influence of the Consolation itself is effectively summarized as well:

> The Consolation of Philosophy was one of the most popular and influential books in Western Europe from the time it was written, in 524, until the end of the Renaissance. Its doctrine was a cornerstone of medieval humanism, its style a model of much important philosophical poetry in the late Middle Ages. The subject of this work is human happiness and the possibility of achieving it in the midst of the suffering and disappointment which play so large a part in every man's experience. The Consolation can still be read with interest in the twentieth century, not only because it is a landmark in the history of Western thought, but because its subject is of no less concern now than it was then. And, since the problem and its solution are presented poetically as well as doctrinally, succeeding ages have found in Boethius' work a remedy against desolation of the spirit which has never lost its curative power. (p. ix)

This remedy puts the responsibility for his destiny squarely in man's hands, for if he puts his faith in earthly and therefore transitory happiness such as that afforded by wealth and power, he gives in at the same time to the whims of a capricious Fortune. The way out of this snare is the real consolation in the philosophy, that God is the only source of permanent happiness for man. Material satisfactions should not be sought after and in this way disappointment is avoided. But how can man avoid Fortune's wheel if he is predestined to be and do as he is and does?

The solution in Boethius is that there is both a simple and a conditional necessity. The first includes matters which are out of man's hands, such as the motion of celestial bodies. The second encompasses those areas in which man has choice, and here he

controls his destiny by making correct choices. How is it, then, that we are free to make up our own minds in a certain way, if God can see beforehand the choices we will make? It is enough for Boethius to tell us that God does not think in terms of past or present or future because he has all before him in a kind of Eternal Present. Fortune has no real existence as a force, then, but is only a personification of man's incorrect choices.

To illustrate how these ideas are reflected in Troilus and Criseyde, my approach is to look at the actions and words of the characters. I will omit reference to critics who contend that the poem is a fatalistic work, since most of what I find is more amusing than it is instructive. In any case, since much has been made of the idea that Troy's doom is fated, I will begin by trying to show that such is not the case.

Chaucer seems to leave the matter of the fate of Troy up to the reader; that is, the reader must choose a reason for Troy's doom. To say that the doom is predestined is to neglect all the other possibilities presented in the Troilus. One of these makes the fall of Troy a matter of the Greek wish for vengeance, and is shown as Diomede declares:

> Swiche wreche on hem, for fecchynge of Eleyne,
> Ther shal ben take, er that we hennes wende,
> That Manes, which that goddes ben of peyne,
> Shal ben agast that Grekes wol hem shende.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," V. 890-93)

Calchas gives a different version, that the wrath of the pagan gods is responsible:

> For certein, Phebus and Neptunus bothe,
> That makeden the walles of the town,
> Ben with the folk of Troie alwey so wrothe,
> That they wol brynge it to confusioun.
> Right in despit of kyng Lameadoun,
> Because he nolde payen hem here hire,
> The town of Troie shal ben set on-fire.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," IV. 120-26)

Chaucer lends credence to the theory that Calchas can actually predict events as he says the seer is

> a lord of gret auctoritee,
> A gret devyn, that clepid was Calkas,
> That in science so expert was that he
> Knew wel that Troie sholde destroied be,
> By answere of his god, that highte thus,
> Daun Phebus or Appollo Delphicus.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," I. 65-70)

But here we need to remember what Chaucer really thinks of the "science" and that these gods are pagan ones. Calchas' predictions seem to be part of his political posture, since they give him an excuse to leave a state of siege which can only end in disaster of one sort or another. He is clever enough to wish to be on the side which has the most options in the war. Once in the Greek camp, he slyly contrives to gain the freedom of his daughter Criseyde as well.

In Troy, the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor is opposed by Hector, but the Trojan people demand that it be carried out. Kittredge says that Hector was right, because "Cressida was not a prisoner, he contended; and Trojans did not use to sell women. And the people were fatally wrong. The 'cloud of error' hid their best interests from their discernment; for it was the treason of Antenor that brought about

the final catastrophe."[14] Kittredge is referring to Chaucer's stanza about the foolish Trojan mob:

> O Juvenal, lord! trewe is thy sentence,
> That litel wyten folk what is to yerne
> That they ne fynde in hire desir offence;
> For cloude of errour lat hem nat discerne
> What best is. And lo, here ensample as yerne:
> This folk desiren now deliveraunce
> Of Antenor, that brought hem to meschaunce.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," IV. 197-203)

It seems that the doom of Troy is the fault of the people who inhabit that city. In the fifth book, it is Fortune who "Gan pulle awey the fetheres brighte of Troie / Fro day to day, til they ben bare of joie." (V. 1546-47) But Fortune here is only the personification of a blind desire among the Trojans to complete the prisoner exchange.

As they accommodate themselves to Fortune, so does Chaucer's Pandarus. I have compared his role in the Troilus to that of Lady Philosophy in the Consolation, but this I mean in the sense that he is her opposite, advising submission to an uncertain destiny. He is, as Cummings says, a "genuine fatalist."[15] The typical Pandarus argument is consistent both for times of opportunity and of adversity as he counsels Troilus and Criseyde. In trying to convince Troilus to be more active in the pursuit of love, he says: "'Was nevere man or woman yet bigete / That was unapt to suffren loves hete.'" (I. 977-78) In a similar vein, he tells Criseyde to take her chances:

[14]Kittredge, p. 120.

[15]Cummings, p. 116.

> For to every wight som goodly aventure
> Som tyme is shape, if he it kan receyven;
> But if that he wol take of it no cure,
> Whan that it commeth, but wilfully it weyven,
> Lo, neyther cas ne fortune hym deceyven,
> But ryght his verray slouthe and wrecchednesse;
> And swich a wight is for to blame, I gesse.
>
> Good aventure, o beele nece, have ye
> Ful lightly founden, and ye konne it take;
> And, for the love of God, and ek of me,
> Cache it anon, lest aventure slake!
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," II. 281-91)

Part of the trouble for Troilus and Criseyde is that they both take Pandarus' advice so often. He tells Troilus to put himself in Fortune's hands in Book One (843-54). Later he visits Troilus in the aftermath of the prisoner exchange and again his advice is to take things as they come. Pandarus is sympathetic, but is as unfailing in his acceptance of the turning wheel as he is in the first book:

> Swich is this world! forthi I thus diffyne,
> Ne trust no wight to fynden in Fortune
> Ay propretee; hire yiftes ben comune.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," IV. 390-92)

Anyway, he adds, there are lots of other girls in Troy, and he and Troilus can find one to replace Criseyde. Pandarus is loyal and wishes to be helpful, but he has no idea of the divine kind of love which is part of Troilus' feeling for Criseyde. Pandarus' belief in Fortune is pagan and worldly.

Criseyde's approach to life is similar. She is certainly her father's daughter and her uncle's niece. She accepts Fortune in the same way as Pandarus and makes the best of bad situations in the manner of Calchas. Moreover, her love for Troilus seems to have nothing of

the divine in it;[16] she is most of all concerned with her public image and displays this flaw throughout the poem. Some say she is to be pitied, and that she is "crushed beneath the blind and insensate weight of circumstances."[17] But her refusal to leave in secret with Troilus before the prisoner exchange is a matter of personal choice and shows how highly she values him. The cloak of mourning she so constantly wears is only another facet of her threadbare public reputation, for she uses the same argument with Diomede as with Troilus, that she is a mourning widow. She does seem to tell any story she thinks will get her by. She tells Troilus at first that she will love him only as a sister, but confesses later (in bed) that she had made up her mind when she first saw him. Then in the Greek camp she tells Diomede that she is still in mourning for a husband. Now she is truly mourning, for once, but for the loss of Troilus rather than for her dead husband. Even as she makes up her stories, it must be occurring to her how she will adapt to these new circumstances among the Greeks. She rationalizes, practical and worldly, that it will be better for her to remain where she is:

> Retornyng in hire soule ay up and down
> The wordes of this sodeyn Diomede,
> His grete estat, and perel of the town,
> And that she was allone and hadde nede
> Of frendes help; and thus bygan to brede
> The cause whi, the sothe for to telle,
> That she took fully purpos for to dwelle.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," V. 1023-29)

[16]David, p. 578.

[17]apRoberts, p. 394.

Criseyde does love Troilus, in a way, but she always decides on the safe course first of all. She chooses to obey the terms of the exchange and chooses to remain in the Greek camp. As Meech says, "Though directed more than a little by her heart, she would assure herself always that reason certifies its dictates to be safe and to her advantage."[18]

I believe that it is in her constant worry over her reputation that Criseyde most clearly puts herself in Fortune's hands. It is on the condition that her public honor be maintained that she first decides to meet with Troilus as she says "And kepe alwey myn honour and my name, / By alle right, it may do me no shame." (II. 762-63) That she is "naught religious" further reinforces the idea that her honor is only a cloak, since it is in a temple that we first see her in the widow's clothing. Her meeting with Hector, after Calchas' departure, shows that she is concerned not about her missing father, but about her public image. Pandarus tutors her in the philosophy that shame only exists when something becomes publicly known:

> And also think wel that this is no gaude;
> For me were levere thow and I and he
> Were hanged, than I sholde ben his baude,
> As heigh as men myghte on us alle ysee!
> I am thyn em; the shame were to me,
> As wel as the, if that I sholde assente,
> Thorugh myn abet, that he thyn honour shente.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," II. 351-57)

Criseyde finally assents, wholly on this basis, as she declares:

[18]Meech, p. 121.

> Myn honour sauf, I wel wel trewely,
> And in swich forme as he gan now devyse,
> Receyven hym fully to my servyse.
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," III. 159-61)

It is fine to pity Criseyde, as the narrator says he does, whether as an additional part of his pose or not, but there seems to be little in her words and deeds to redeem her from a Boethian point of view. She has constantly made choices which determine her fate and has little cause to blame Fortune.

Calchas, Pandarus, and Criseyde are members of a family whose fortunes go up and down as they scheme to make the best of things in this world. Troilus, the last character I am concerned with in trying to show how Christian ideas prevail over the doom aspect in Chaucer's poem, is somewhat different. I see him as a tragic figure in the classical sense. He is of high estate, possesses reason, is neither entirely good nor wholly bad, and he falls prey to Fortune through the choices he makes. These choices are flawed by a narrow vision through which he sees temporal bliss as an end. He redeems himself, however, through his vision of ideal love, and his destiny is eventually carried beyond the realm of Fortune for this reason.

To present Troilus in this light, Chaucer uses his Boethian philosophy but obscures it in a tale in the tragic tradition. Di Pasquale says that "Whether or not Chaucer knew Boccaccio's Genealogy of the Gods, then, he certainly would have been aware of the tradition that the poets 'should be reckoned of the very number of the philosophers.' In Troilus and Criseyde, accordingly, he goes about the task of 'veiling' the philosophical truths of Boethius' Consolation of

Philosophy in the manner of a poet."[19] The reference to veiling is from the Genealogy, where Boccaccio adds that the poets "never veil with their inventions anything which is not wholly consonant with philosophy as judged by the opinions of the Ancients."[20] In the same work he declares that "This poetry . . . proceeds from the bosom of God" and that it "veils truth in a fair and fitting garment of fiction."[21] Chaucer seems to be this kind of poet, and his conception of tragedy is like that of Boethius: "What else does the cry of tragedy bewail but the overthrow of happy realms by the unexpected blow of Fortune?" ("Consolation," II. pr2) Chaucer, then, takes the Italian tale of romance and makes it over into a moral tragedy,[22] the morality being by nature Christian but presented in the De Casibus tradition "that no man has the power by will, by action, or even by merit, to secure himself in any worldly possession, and that therefore such a possession is worthless from the beginning."[23] Criseyde is taken from Troilus as all worldly things must be, and "the Boethian lesson is a fortiori confirmed."[24] Farnham tells us, in a summary of

[19]Pasquale Di Pasquale, Jr., "'Sikernesse' and Fortune in Troilus and Criseyde," Philological Quarterly, 49 (April 1970), 154.

[20]Boccaccio, "The Genealogy of the Gentile Gods," in Boccaccio on Poetry, trans. Charles Osgood, 2nd ed. (1930; rpt. Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), p. 79.

[21]Ibid., p. 39.

[22]Helen Storm Corsa, Chaucer: Poet of Mirth and Morality (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame, 1964), p. 40.

[23]Willard Farnham, The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy (1936; rpt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), p. 145.

[24]Stroud, p. 5.

these ideas, that "kingliness and pride may think themselves less held to the way of all flesh, but in their presumption they fall, and then they realize that all men, high or low, are driven in the world's traces and put under the lash of mortality."[25] Troilus finally realizes this, but only after his death.

Criseyde, Pandarus, and Calchas all possess a philosophy of sorts, based on submission to Fortune and a make-do approach to life. But Troilus "sees nothing steadily or whole."[26] His approach is to try to fight Fortune, but he is not equipped to do so. Cummings seems to be correct when he says that Troilus is "determined only upon the enjoyment of his own pleasure, and occasionally apprehensive as to its continuance."[27] When his fortune fails, he does little but accept the advice of Pandarus and Criseyde which invariably leads to the scenes in which he curses the gods and thrashes about in tears and anguish on his bed.

Troilus shows an abandonment of reason, and reason must be put into play to discern what is really worthwhile in the world. In the Consolation, Lady Philosophy counsels Boethius: "'If you find that among all the gifts of Fortune your most precious possessions are still safely yours [reason, wisdom, and the like], thanks to God's providence, can you justly complain of any misfortune?'" (II. pr4) Troilus complains to his false gods precisely because, in his lack of

[25]Farnham, p. 143.

[26]Greenfield, p. 150.

[27]Cummings, p. 98.

reason, he cannot tell what is of value and what is not.

In the beginning of the poem, Troilus seems to possess some ability to reason, but this is only the result of innocence. He makes merry at the expense of his companions in the temple of Palladion, where he unwittingly predicts what is to be his own fate: "'And whan youre prey is lost, woo and penaunces. / O veray fooles, nyce and blynde be ye!'" (I. 201-02) Here Troilus resembles Boethius before Lady Philosophy's lesson. But the knight has only Pandarus, the representative of Fortune, as his guide. Troilus' tragedy, McCall states, is "the tragedy of every moral sinner. . . . With the change of fortune and the imminent departure of Criseyde in Book IV, Troilus evolves into a painful, pathetic counterpart of his success. His philosophizing is short-sighted and ignorant, his prayers pathetic and blasphemous by turns, his attempt at suicide rash and defiant. Fortune's favorite has become Fortune's fool, and his sufferings become an exemplar for all who would depend on the fickleness of the world."[28] But since the poem is a philosophical quest,[29] Troilus is far removed from the De Casibus characters of Boccaccio and the Monk's tragedies, as well as from his companions in the Troilus "in that he actually gropes for the De contemptu mundi lesson. . . ."[30] The idea of Troilus' philosophic search is reinforced by his speech on

[28] John P. McCall, "Troilus and Criseyde," in Companion to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto: Oxford University, 1968), p. 376.

[29] Stroud, p. 9.

[30] Ibid., p. 4.

predestination in the fourth book, where he tries to decide between two theories of man's state: Is his life predestined by forces beyond his control, or does he have a share in the shaping of his destiny?

This passage parallels V. pr3 in the Consolation. Baum says that "artistically it is a blemish" in the Troilus.[31] Price calls is the "chief artistic blemish of the poem" and takes the words away from Troilus and assigns them to Chaucer, stating that they show "the settled determinism of Chaucer's philosophical conception of human life."[32] These statements may be the result of failing to examine the Consolation. Curry writes about such early misconceptions and lists a dozen critics who say the speech is out of place and goes on to comment that it is actually "a very complex account of the intricate relations between the happy or miserable human being and the destinal forces which rule the universe."[33] He returns to earlier critics' ideas as he says that "it has no place whatsoever in the story."[34] The gradual shift of criticism from a negative to a positive view of the passage can perhaps best be seen in the work of Patch. In 1918 he concludes that "The speech is . . . dramatically appropriate to Troilus but does not voice the moral of the poem as a

[31]Paull F. Baum, Chaucer: A Critical Appreciation (Durham, N. C.: Duke University, 1958), p. 148.

[32]Thomas R. Price, "Troilus and Criseyde: A Study in Chaucer's Method of Narrative Construction," PMLA, 11 (1896), 311.

[33]Curry, p. 152.

[34]Ibid.

whole."[35] By 1939 Patch says ironically that "If we leave out passages like these because they are in conflict with our theories, we may read the Consolation of Philosophy as a fine study of settled determinism, and the Divine Comedy as a superb pagan tragedy."[36] This is a fine reply to Price's comment, but Patch adds that "there is no reason to suppose that this monologue is spoken for other than dramatic effect."[37] Kittredge, on the other hand, wrote as early as 1915 that the passage is no digression but rather is "as pertinent as any of Hamlet's soliloquies."[38]

In the foregoing, I have tried to show that progress has been made over the years in the resolution of a critical issue. Most of the later critics agree that the predestination speech is a key element in philosophical conclusions reached in the poem. It may seem that Troilus decides there is no choice for the individual, but it is important to note that he is the only character in the poem who so much as considers the subject. As he argues back and forth with himself, one can imagine that with some help he might arrive at the truth. It does not seem that he has settled the matter in his mind at all:

[35] Howard Rollin Patch, "Troilus on Predestination," JEGP, 17 (1918), 411.

[36] Howard Rollin Patch, On Rereading Chaucer (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University, 1939), p. 114.

[37] Ibid., p. 113.

[38] Kittredge, p. 115.

> And whil he was in al this hevynesse,
> Disputyng with himself in this matere,
> Com Pandare in. . . .
> ("Troilus and Criseyde," IV. 1083-85)

At this point Pandarus provides his own dubious kind of guidance, that Troilus got along without Criseyde before he met her, that there are other women in the town, and so on. No matter how close Troilus has come to solving the problem, he is now taken back to his inactive role as the listener to a philosophy which is based completely on submission to blind Fortune. Again, the important consideration is that he has at least asked the question, and remains undecided: "'O, weylaway! so sleighe arn clerkes olde, / That I not whos opynyoun I may holde.'" (IV. 972-73) Boethius did not know either, so Lady Philosophy tells him: "'You have not been driven out of your homeland; you have wilfully wandered away. Or, if you prefer to think that you have been driven into exile, you yourself have done the driving, since no one else could do it.'" ("Consolation," I. pr5) Troilus continues to accept bad advice, while Boethius at last learns the truth from a better teacher. But Troilus acts, in any case, of his own will. "His trouble," Shanley finds, "was not that he lacked free-will but that he had used it unwisely. Once again we see that his unhappiness depended on his own choice."[39]

One might ask what the effect would have been had Troilus persuaded Criseyde to leave in secret rather than accept her role in the prisoner exchange. His desire to escape with her shows the exercise

[39]Shanley, p. 142.

of will in an attempt to change his destiny. But since he does not learn the Boethian lesson, the answer has to be that in the end the effect would have been the same. He would still be acting on the basis of a desire for temporal pleasure. However free his choice, it was exercised incorrectly and would have presented only another worldly alternative. His tragedy is thus the tragedy of all mankind.

The conclusion of Troilus and Criseyde gives the problem of free will a proper Christian look. It is in the tradition of Augustine and Boethius, Patch tells us, "the same tradition in their analysis of predestination or grace and their recurrent insistence on human freedom and moral responsibility."[40] It is a redeeming feature of Troilus that he poses the question concerning destiny and free will; another can be found in his faithful love which, while worldly in its more passionate aspects, is a step in the direction of the divine bond of love which orders the universe in the Consolation.

Dante writes in The Paradisio that he hears a chorus sung by divine lights: "And within one I heard begin: 'Since the ray of grace,-- whereat true love is kindled, and then doth grow, by loving. . . .'"[41] The light tells Dante that it and the others are the souls of certain men. Here a series of ideas occurs which are reflected in the Troilus and which assist in showing the meaning of

[40]Patch, On Rereading Chaucer, p. 108.

[41]Dante, The Divine Comedy, trans. John A. Carlyle, Thomas Okey, and Philip H. Wicksteed (New York: Random House, 1932), p. 464.

Troilus' place in the afterlife. In his poem, Dante places Boethius in the eighth circle of Paradise, as Jefferson has noted.[42] Not only that, but Boethius is the eighth of the lights described. Dante says of him that here "rejoiceth the sainted soul, which unmasketh the deceitful world to whoso giveth it good hearing."[43] Notes to the Carlyle-Wicksteed translation point out that "The medieval consciousness, uncritical as usual, but with a correct enough instinct, laid hold of this welcome supplement [the Consolation] without perceiving its essentially Pagan presentation, and so found room for Boethius among the Christian teachers," and that Boethius "appears never to have separated himself from the Christian communion, though his spiritual life was fed entirely from Pagan sources."[44] Now Troilus is presented as a pagan in the eighth sphere, but whether this heaven is indeed a pagan one or the Christian heaven of Dante seems less and less important. What is remarkable is Chaucer's invention. Troilus, who does not learn his lessons so quickly as does Boethius, is transplanted to an eternal world where he can finally see the truth of the Boethian Christian philosophy. It is further an intention on Chaucer's part, I believe, that as he changes the Filostrato from romance to philosophy he takes the eighth sphere device from the Teseide and puts it not in his Knight's Tale but in the Troilus which, unlike the first tale of the Canterbury collection, does not have other tales to reinforce

[42]Jefferson, p. 129.

[43]Dante, p. 465.

[44]Ibid., p. 467.

the philosophic message and must stand unified on its own. This may help explain the strange "tacked-on" theory.

Troilus looks out from his celestial home, "and down from thennes faste he gan avyse / This litel spot of erthe" (V. 1814-15) and sees the truth at last, that those old philosophers he questions in his predestination speech, at least the ones who argue in favor of a blind destinal force, are in error. Chaucer shortly points this out: "Lo here, the forme of olde clerkis speche / In poetry, if ye hire bokes seche." (V. 1854-55) This is from the stanza in which the pagan rites are displayed as fallacious, and in this Christian conclusion Chaucer disavows clearly all the features of the blind lust in the earthly estate.

The last book of the Troilus concludes as the narrator voices a prayer to Jesus, who after all is the focus of the New Jerusalem goal for the Christian world. Problems concerning free will and destiny seem resolved, and for the Christian this means that he is no longer carrying Adam's burden but rather can choose to avoid worldly evils and ascend beyond the spheres.

In this chapter and in the last I have tried to show that a better understanding of the Troilus may be achieved by avoiding concentration on single aspects of the poem. I hoped to show that what I believe to be errors in past studies center around this narrowness of view in four areas which compose what I have called the framework of Chaucer's poem. I have endeavored to sort these areas out to see how they apply to points of Christian doctrine which I believe, for

Chaucer, were truth. These medieval beliefs are difficult to support if critical perspective takes in only the Troilus as it reflects the Filostrato, or only courtly love aspects, or only pagan setting. Finally, those beliefs seem to be entirely lost without a resolution of the free will theme. All of the four parts of the framework seem to be only poses, and add to the ironic complexity of the poem as it is studied in relation to Boethius' Consolation. In the next chapter I hope to show how some of the same Christian ideas are illustrated by Chaucer in two of the Canterbury Tales.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE AND THE MONK'S TALE

In the Canterbury Tales the pilgrims represent various estates of man in the Middle Ages and show different individual approaches to the greater pilgrimage of life. Of course the destination of the travelers is the shrine at Canterbury, but the end of the journey in the largest sense is surely the New Jerusalem. Some of Chaucer's pilgrims have their hearts surely fixed on both the immediate and the greater goals, while some seem to have other things in mind. The Pardoner may find a market for his phony relics, and the Wife of Bath may look about for another husband. In fact, by far the largest number of the travelers seem not to be wholly admired by Chaucer. But even if they are mainly negative exempla of the way man ought to live, the theme of moral instruction runs throughout the collection. Far from being a simple set of tragedies, comedies, romances, or fabliaux, the tales present a panorama of man for all ages, of life at its highest and its lowest moral levels.

Unlike the Troilus, where man's responsibility in the shaping of his destiny seems to be made clear in one poem, the Canterbury Tales as a whole does not invite clear moral conclusions if the stories are studied only individually. It will not be clear, for example, whether it is Chaucer or the Monk who has not done his homework in the Monk's Tale. Similarly, the Knight's Tale cannot be fully understood without comparing it with the Franklin's Tale parody, and comparing the Knight's character with that of the Monk in the

light of Christian concepts set down in the Parson's Tale. I believe that when critics in the past have settled on a suspect interpretation of any of the tales, such as when the Knight's Tale is said to be a courtly romance or when the Monk's Tale is called monotonous, their failure to examine the larger philosophical and religious issues is largely caused by looking at only one tale at a time.

I do not intend to fully illustrate the relationships among the various tales and characters here, but my point can be made quite well, now that I have discussed Troilus and Criseyde, through a short study of the Monk's Tale and the Knight's Tale. I will do this by considering two of Chaucer's sources, Boccaccio's Teseide and his De Casibus Virorum Illustrium, by contrasting the characters of the Monk and the Knight, and by examining the tales of these two pilgrims.

I began this study by referring to Sophocles' Antigone and other ancient and modern works, among them noting something of Aristotle's definition of tragedy. At this point I will refer again to Mr. Patch's later volume, once more to take the reader closer to an idea which is at the center of meaning in the Canterbury Tales. Chaucer's collection ceases to be tragic only if the pilgrims mend their ways and live in harmony with Christian teachings, and there is a difference between moral tragedy and fatalism. As Mr. Patch

says:

> The aesthetic importance of the distinction was clearly perceived by Aristotle, who, in discussing tragedy, at first points out that for the hero an entirely virtuous man will not do, for his adversity will merely shock us. On the other hand, in what is really an inductive fashion, inferring his principles from the drama of his day, and trying to formulate them in relation to his philosophy, Aristotle traces the development of a tragedy to an essential weakness in the hero. Elsewhere in his works the necessity of moral responsibility and of moral value is never ignored, and he shows definitely his belief in an element of human free will.[1]

Boccaccio's stated intent in his De Casibus collection was to cause the tyrants ruling the city-states in Italy to take heed and reform themselves.[2] As Boccaccio writes at the beginning of the work:

> I was wondering how the labor of my studies could benefit the state when I recalled the conduct of illustrious princes. These rulers are so attracted to vice and debauchery, are so unrestrained, that it is as if they had put Fortune perpetually to sleep either with drugs or with spells; then with iron bands they clamp their little bands to an adamantine foundation. I realize how they not only oppress others with their power but also, which is worse, with foolish temerity rise up against the Worker of all good Himself.[3]

Boccaccio says that he selects the most famous persons of all time as examples so that his own Italian rulers, when they grew old, "will

[1]Patch, On Rereading Chaucer, p. 106.

[2]Boccaccio, The Fates of Illustrious Men, trans. Louis Brewer Hall (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1965), p. vii.

[3]Ibid., p. 1.

recognize God's power, the shiftiness of Fortune, and their own insecurity."[4] It sometimes seems that God and Fortune are not given as causes for fall in a consistent manner in Boccaccio, but he says that "I shall relate other examples of what God or (speaking in their own language) Fortune can teach them about those she raises up."[5] As Augustine described the sins of the Romans to point to their downfall, for the instruction of early Christians, so Boccaccio refers to them again for the benefit of the fourteenth-century Italian princes.

Unlike Chaucer's Monk, who only recounts a series of exempla from the hundred he has in his cell, Boccaccio enlivens his long prose collection through the device of having "a regiment of unhappy ghosts" beg for space in his work so that their miseries may be told.[6] This device enables him to achieve a variety and movement which are largely absent from the collections which are his own sources.[7] He begins by explaining, through the story of Adam and Eve, how the Fall of Man and subsequent miseries were made possible by the entrance of Fortune into the world. This, Farnham says, is the "origin of tragedy,"[8] but it is not always easy in Boccaccio to see the extent to which the protagonist is at fault. Part of the reason for this is the De Contemptu Mundi or

[4]Boccaccio, The Fates of Illustrious Men, p. 2.

[5]Ibid., p. 1.

[6]Farnham, p. 73.

[7]Boccaccio, The Fates of Illustrious Men, p. xiii.

[8]Farnham, p. 85.

contempt of the world tradition. Here tragedy does not necessarily arise out of the fault of the individual. We can find example after example in Boccaccio's tragedies where fault is made plain, but almost immediately we read another story of a great fall wherein the protagonist seems innocent of sin. The Contemptu Mundi tale, Farnham says, is "the normal sort of tale" in Boccaccio's work. When he equates Fortune with God, one might expect a Boethian consistency in which the workings of the former are bound to be good in that they may cause man to contemplate the vanity of temporal goods, fame, or power. But beyond individual responsibility in the De Casibus, we find "lines of destiny, which we may refer to as Fortune, the stars, divine purpose, or some other fateful force, but which are to us inexplicable."[9]

However, aside from the tragedies themselves, Boccaccio draws his moral at frequent intervals in the form of short sermons in which he warns against pride, riches, deceit, the tricks of women, gluttony, credulousness, lack of patriotism, and other supposed causes of misfortune. Especially he applauds the state of poverty as a way of passing through life without great sin:

> O Poverty, little regarded, yet desired by many an humble person. You alone observe the laws of nature, subdue harmful cunning, eschew worldly honors, ridicule man's long sea voyage and sweaty battles. You despise superfluities. Naked, you easily withstand the summer sun, and with the greatest patience overcome the winter chill. ... Flitting love, secret passion, and foul seduction have all fled. You can march by the den of lions, through forests infested with robbers, safe from their treachery, and by

[9] Farnham, p. 128.

> cross-roads and towns, in the presence of the envious. Calmness, freedom, and a repose in the midst of the world is granted you. You are skillful; you are inventive; you are the distinguished mother of all laudable study. Fortune despises you, and you are equally contemptuous of her.[10]

Poverty, in fact, seems to be the only sure way in Boccaccio's world to avoid Fortune. Thus the trouble in this world becomes less a great and tragic personal flaw, but the tragedy of the active life. The snares and sins the active person falls into are subsidiary causes of misfortune; the way to avoid them is Boccaccio's moral, "that we should keep God's commandments and endure the sacred yoke of obedience so that, though this world is transitory and evil, we may inherit after death a world which is eternal and good, the world which Adam and Eve lost for us. The mortal world, it seems, is by nature given over to tragedy which it is useless to struggle against or strive to understand."[11]

What I propose is that if one compares the Monk and his manner of telling his tragedies to the occasional confusion of purpose in Boccaccio's work, then Chaucer's intent can be seen more clearly. I believe that the Monk's Tale is a proper statement for that particular monk, going even beyond Boccaccio in the obscurity of the moral lesson, lacking an understanding of the Boethian spirit which runs through the Canterbury Tales, and therefore is understandably unbearable for the

[10]Boccaccio, The Fates of Illustrious Men, p. 37.

[11]Farnham, p. 86.

Knight. Farnham tells us, as we have seen, that Boccaccio's tales of the fall of the mighty are partly within a De Contemptu Mundi tradition, and partly express the power of Fortune as a facet of God's organization of the universe. "Boccaccio is glorifying the omnipotence and rational justice of God," Farnham says, "yet clinging to Fortune as the expression of a fickle chance which operates in the world."[12] The Monk's efforts at story-telling, by contrast, overlook a consistent moral and are "open-and-shut tragedies showing how Fortune at her pleasure overthrows the innocent and the wicked alike."[13] The Monk is thus true to the contempt of the world tradition and to his own definition of tragedy.

While Chaucer's Monk tells the stories of fall in the form of Boccaccio's collection, that is, in a relatively monotonous series, it can only be shown that Chaucer definitely borrowed as few as five of the Monk's seventeen exempla from the De Casibus.[14] It would seem that again Chaucer has adapted a vehicle only to enhance his own concept of the Boethian world. In Boethius, the bridge is made between Fortune and God, and therefore the former must be a facet of divine providence and therefore be good. The Monk has apparently not studied Boethius carefully. It is true that "the Monk's Tale is Boethian in

[12] Farnham, p. 85.

[13] Ibid., p. 133.

[14] R. W. Babcock, "The Medieval Setting of Chaucer's Monk's Tale," PMLA, 46 (1931), 207 ff.

spirit and that Chaucer had the Consolation definitely in mind while writing it."[15] But the spirit is incomplete, aimed at Chaucer's perceptive medieval audience. Most of the Monk's references to Boethius fall within the early books of the Consolation,[16] and in that work the specifics of man's responsibility and his will come later. Kaske points out that "the important antithesis [in Boethius] is not that between pleasant and unpleasant fortune at all, but between the moral qualities of the man who receives it. . . ."[17] This is not the Monk's stress, and for Chaucer that has to be wrong, but it is still in keeping with the Monk's habits and character.[18]

In the General Prologue we are told as the Monk is introduced that he is an "outridere." (166) This is evidence that he is not primarily a scholar, and one would think that he ought to be. His

[15] Jefferson, p. 87.

[16] Ibid., pp. 144-45.

[17] R. E. Kaske, "The Knight's Interruption of the Monk's Tale," ELH, 24 (1957), 263.

[18] There is a wealth of criticism concerning the Monk's Tale, and I will not include that which follows patterns outlined in the discussion of the Troilus. But an example is Root's statement that "Apart from the unspeakable monotony of the series, the dry epitomizing character of the individual narrations and the inevitably recurring moral makes them intolerable." (p. 207) Root does not make clear why they are intolerable, especially to the Knight and therefore to Chaucer as well. Trevor Whittock (A Reading of the Canterbury Tales (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University, 1958) agrees with Root, but in what I hope is the more modern spirit of my own study, adds the important qualification that "if we see behind the Monk the mocking figure of Chaucer, we may recognize the skill with which the series has been organized to point the mindless repetition of (almost) meaningless incident." (p. 220)

rank is next after the Knight's in the tales,[19] and he should serve as an example for those beneath him. But as an outrider he is more a traveling businessman than a monk of the cell, this job having been given to him by his superiors.[20] But he cannot be held blameless because he has adopted the ways of the outside world. He is not merely an outrider, but one "that lovede venerie." ("General Prologue," 166) So he has access to fine horses, which he no doubt needs for long trips in the conduct of business but which he additionally uses for sport in hunting. Moreover, he favors fine foods such as roast swan (206) and dresses, as far as his monastic garb permits, in a rich and worldly way, even wearing an expensive piece of jewelry:

> And, for to festne his hood under his chyn,
> He hadde of gold ywroght a ful curious pyn;
> A love-knotte in the gretter end ther was.
> ("General Prologue," 195-97)

He may be wise in the conduct of the monastery's business matters and, indeed, in getting along smoothly with associates in the outside world, but his interest in philosophical and theological matters is lacking. He leaves the studies to others:

> This ilke Monk leet olde thynges pace,
> And heeld after the newe world the space.
> He yaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
> That seith that hunters ben nat hooly men,
> Ne that a monk, whan he is recchelees,
> Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,--
> That is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.

[19] R. M. Lumiansky, Of Sondry Folk (Austin, Tx.: University of Texas, 1955), p. 99.

[20] Paul E. Beichner, "Daun Piers, Monk and Business Administrator," Speculum, 34 (1959), 612.

> But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
> And I seyde his opinion was good.
> What sholde he studie and make hymselven wood,
> Upon a book in cloystre alwey to poure. . . .
> ("General Prologue," 175-85)

No doubt, considering his worldly way of life, there is much in the old religious works in the cloister to disturb him. His lack of willingness to take up the more spartan monastic burdens reflects the perennial theological problem of the rich and worldly man. To become serious about his religion, he would have to give up the things he likes best. The Monk infuses this attitude into his tragedies, and this accounts for the monotony of the series and the absence of moral order. Sometimes it is God who strikes down the mighty sinners, and sometimes it is Fortune. Even if one should grant that the Monk uses the terms synonomously, there is still no method implied in the punishments; sometimes the mighty are made to seem deserving of their fall, sometimes not. Thus God is made to seem as capricious and unreliable as is Fortune. If there is a moral, it seems somewhat like that of Pandarus, that one may as well take his chances, that his destiny is out of his hands, and that he is therefore not responsible for sin. The Monk makes no use of moral commentary in the manner of Boccaccio.

Instead, he begins by defining tragedy twice, once in the prologue to his tale and once at the beginning of the tale proper. In the second instance he adds that

> ther nas no remedie
> To brynge hem out of hir adversitee.
> For certain, whan that Fortune list to flee,
> Ther may no man the cours of hire withholde.
> ("The Monk's Tale," 1993-96)

In both the definitions the Monk says that tragedy consists of portraying those who fall from "heigh degree." (1992, 1976) In repeating a virtually identical definition, the Monk introduces his superficial, simplistic, and one-sided view of Boethian Fortune. He can provide the exempla, but not the explanation. Lucifer, the Monk's first figure, falls because of sin (2002), but by the time the Monk gets to Adam, the next example, sin has changed to "mysgovernaunce" (2012) or misconduct. The third, Sampson, is betrayed by a woman. (2027-30) In these first few lines, we can see that the Monk's understanding is incomplete. He does not want to inherit the sin of Adam, for his own destiny will be a better one if he is only guilty of misconduct. Also, he could as well have excused Adam through betrayal by Eve, since she is traditionally the original temptress. The Monk repeats Sampson's excuse three more times in the short tragedy (2053, 2062, 2065) and then gives a moral for the example which repeats it again. (2092-94) If all this is not clear to the pilgrims, it is so to the Monk; he follows with the story of Hercules, in which the same moral is brought forth. Dianira sends Hercules a poisoned shirt (2122-26) but suddenly the mischief is attributed to Fortune. (2136) At this point Daun Piers makes the ironic comment that "Ful wys is he that kan hymselven knowe!" (2139) It may be that the Knight is already considering an interruption, for he can only be thinking, "Physician, heal thyself!" Finally, in this first instance of the Monk's reference to Fortune, that force is presented as active and vindictive, rather than as in the Boethian presentation where she is only a figure and is

the result of improper use of one's will.

God enters the Monk's scheme in the next story concerning Nebuchadnezzar. This king is guilty of pride, among other things, and defies God to "bireve of his estaat." (2169) He is punished, but is later paroled, and finally realizes "that God was ful of myght and grace." (2182) The disorder of cause in the fall of the mighty in these and the other twelve tragedies can be seen in Table One, below, included in the interest of brevity. A glance tells that there is no divine plan at all as the Monk understands the universe. The Monk even bewails what seem to be just falls, as in the case of Croesus in the last tragedy.

If Chaucer used Boccaccio's De Casibus as a model, then he did so in a negative sense, since the Monk's version is even less consistent than the Italian. Much has been written about the worldliness of Daun Piers; however, worldliness is not related to "defects" in the Monk's Tale by most critics. Lumiansky even tries to excuse the Monk (p. 98), and puts the blame on the church which sends him out into the world. But this neglects the possibility that since someone must attend to business the Monk may be the most ready and willing to do so. In any case, doctrine would apply equally to those who are sorely tempted in the world and those who are not.

No one among the pilgrims is more suited than is the Knight to interrupt the Monk's pointless collection of tragedies:

TABLE ONE*

Character in *The Monk's Tale*	Fault or Virtue	Cause of Fall
Lucifer	Sin	Sin
Adam	Misconduct	Misconduct
Sampson	Noble	Woman
Hercules	Worthy	Woman; Vindictive Fortune
Nebuchadnezzar	Pride; Idolatry	Vindictive and Benevolent God
Balthasar	Pride; Idolatry	Vindictive Fortune; Benevolent God
Cenobia	Many Virtues	Vindictive Fortune
Peter of Spain	Noble; Worthy	Betrayal by Brother; Benevolent Fortune
Peter of Cyprus	Chivalrous	Capricious Fortune
Barnabo	A Scourge	Betrayal by Nephew
Ugolino	None Included	Betrayal by Bishop; Vindictive Fortune
Nero	Many Vices	Righteous Fortune
Holofernes	Pompous	Woman; Random Fortune
Antiochus	Pride; Venomous Works	Righteous God
Alexander	Knighthood and Freedom's Flower	Betrayal by citizens; Random Fortune
Julius Caesar	Wisdom; Manhood	Random Fortune
Croesus	Pride	Vindictive Fortune

*Table One is included to show at a glance the futility of searching for a consistent moral or philosophic tone in *The Monk's Tale*.

> fro the tyme that he first bigan
> To riden out, he loved chivalrie,
> Trouthe and honour, fredom and curteisie.
> ("General Prologue," 44-46)

He is a different kind of outrider than the Monk, one who crusades in the manner of Tennyson's Arther, to eradicate spiritual darkness and let in the light of Christianity. The "newe worlde" of the Monk must have an aversion for the Knight; he does not belong to it since he is an idealized figure.[21] His clothes are humble and worn and smeared, and he has in fact just returned from his latest crusade.

Chaucer's audience would remember, at the point of the Knight's interruption, that the Monk attempted to tell his tale immediately after the Knight's and would have done so but for the drunken Miller, who intrudes with his immoral parody of the Knight's Tale. No doubt the Knight is irritated by the offhand Miller, and by the time Chaucer returns to the Monk the relationship between the two pilgrims is clear. The audience, by the time the Monk's Tale is stopped, should be able to see that the Monk's tragedies are not another parody of the Knight's Tale, but rather an antithesis of the Knight's point of view. It is the Monk himself, rather than his tale itself, who is a parody of the Knight.[22] Kaske outlines four parallels and shows major differences between the Monk and the Knight. "The two," he says, "are depicted in the General Prologue with obvious reference to the two great Christian ideals of chivalry and monasticism, the Knight

[21]Spearing, p. 48.

[22]Kaske, p. 254.

the unlikely fulfillment of his ideal as the Monk is the too-likely negation of his; of all the pilgrims, in fact, it would be difficult to find two whose portrayal depends more directly on this relationship between the ideal and its fulfillment or lack of fulfillment in the individual."[23] If the Knight is an unlikely ideal, it is largely because, as Moorman says, the real age of chivalry, if indeed it ever actually existed as we think of it, had by Chaucer's time so deteriorated that it consisted largely of "pomp and display." Real knights in Chaucer's day were being attacked by the Church and were noted for "their arrogance, and their plundering activities."[24] Chaucer's Knight is a rare one indeed, a lover of philosophy which "led him straight to the bourgeois ideals of marriage and natural gentilesse, concepts alien to the traditional practices of chivalry."[25] I noted earlier that the Monk's philosophy is incomplete, but it is true that "of all the Canterbury Tales the Knight's Tale and the Monk's Tale are by a good margin the most obviously saturated with Boethian references."[26] Chaucer's Knight tries to see his own philosophy through to the end: "Such a tale is clearly suited to the Knight of Chaucer's prologue who tells it, a man of high rank, wide travel, and ingenuous loyalty to the ideas of his class and age. The lessons of the tale . . . imply a pious and logical mind in the instructor, a deep

[23]Kaske, p. 253.

[24]Charles Moorman, "The Philosophical Knights of The Canterbury Tales," South Atlantic Quarterly, 64 (1965), 92.

[25]Ibid., p. 99.

[26]Kaske, p. 261.

acceptance of Christian faith and chivalric standards, and an heroic disposition to face the vicissitudes and disasters of a dangerous calling."[27] As a vehicle for the Knight's philosophic tale, Chaucer makes use of the plot and characters in Boccaccio's Teseide.[28] This epic story of contending lovers was written as an inducement to Boccaccio's patroness, a plea that she should choose him as a lover over his rival.[29] Nearly ten thousand lines in length, the Teseide is reduced by Chaucer by more than three quarters.[30] But the term "reduced" is incorrect, for Chaucer is not translating or re-telling the Italian story, but rather using its plot and some of its lines for a new purpose. French tells us that Chaucer translates only 270 lines and that only 374 more bear a "general likeness to Boccaccio's."[31] Cummings' figures in the same categories are 272 and 379, and he adds that 131 lines show a "slight likeness."[32] Whatever the case, the small fraction of actually borrowed material is evident.

[27]William Frost, "An Interpretation of Chaucer's Knight's Tale," in Chaucer Criticism, ed. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor, I (Notre Dame, In.: University of Notre Dame, 1961), 113.

[28]If an English translation of the Teseide actually exists, I have not been able to find it. But a summary is given by Robert A. Pratt, "The Knight's Tale," in Sources and Analogues of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, ed. W. F. Bryan and Germaine Dempster (New York: The Humanities Press, 1941), pp. 93-105.

[29]French, p. 321.

[30]Spearing, p. 2.

[31]French, pp. 210-11.

[32]Cummings, p. 128.

The shortened "romantic epic"[33] supplies Chaucer with "a substructure upon which to build."[34] Contrary to his method in the Troilus, Chaucer here has less room to indulge in individual character analysis, no doubt because a tale of the length of Troilus and Criseyde would not balance as well among the relatively short tales in the Canterbury group. The Troilus provides a fairly complete account of Boethian philosophy, while the Knight's Tale must be taken with the entire Tales. The Teseide may be regarded as a pseudo-classic epic,[35] while Chaucer's work is adapted for his own times.[36] Boccaccio's style is "decorous, melodious--and a little thin," but Chaucer's is "more urgent, visionary, and also more down to earth. . . ."[37]

It is however not the style but the philosophy which most distinguishes the Knight's Tale in relation to the Teseide. With a combination of ideal chivalric traits and an understanding of Christian doctrine, the Knight, as Chaucer's spokesman with Theseus as his own, can resolve questions surrounding the fates of Palamon and Arcite in terms of providence and love, and point out where human responsibility and individual will fail to come to grips with Boethius' solutions.

[33] Cummings, p. 125.

[34] Paul G. Ruggiers, "Some Philosophical Aspects of The Knight's Tale," College English, 19 (1957-1958), 296.

[35] Cummings, p. 126.

[36] Lumiansky, p. 32.

[37] Ian Robinson, p. 111.

This "verray, parfit gentil knyght," ("General Prologue," 72) wise and chivalrous, ("The Knight's Tale, 865) has been said to be somewhat out of date for Chaucer's time, considering the reputation of knights as a whole, and Theseus is an ancient pagan who in Boccaccio murders his queen[38] and falls at the hand of "hard-hearted Fortune."[39] But Theseus in Chaucer is a pagan made into a Christian knight. Chivalry both for the Knight and for Theseus consists of abiding by the entire knightly system of religious and social morality,[40] embodying gentillesse, the quality of "magnanimous, generous, and unselfish" behavior expected of the nobility.[41] As a part of overall gentillesse there is the sense of pitee, which is compassion in its largest sense, sorrow for human suffering as well as for the suffering of Christ.[42] These qualities are ascribed to the Knight in the General Prologue and are shown in the character of Theseus by his intervention at moments of human suffering. Examples are the way he treats the mourning widows and his reaction to the informal and bloody duel between Palamon and Arcite. In the first instance, "This gentil duc doun from his courser sterte / With herte pitous, when he herde hem speke." (952-53) In the second, Theseus at first intends to have the two

[38] Boccaccio, The Fates of Illustrious Men, p. 21.

[39] Ibid., p. 23.

[40] Muriel Bowden, A Commentary on the General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales (New York: MacMillan, 1948), p. 47.

[41] Spearing, p. 19.

[42] Ibid., p. 20.

warring companions killed, the one for escaping prison and the other for not keeping the terms of his exile. Theseus swears by Mars that it shall be so, but his ladies beg for mercy for the two and Theseus changes his mind: "Til at the laste aslaked was his mood, / For pitee renneth soone in gentil herte." (1761-62)

Immediately before Theseus appears in the wood to settle the duel with his promise of a tournament, the Knight has told us that

> The destinee, ministre general,
> That executeth in the world over al
> The purveiaunce that God hath seyn biforn,
> So strong it is that, though the world had sworn
> The contrarie of a thyng by ye or nay,
> Yet somtyme it shal fallen on a day
> That falleth nat eft withinne a thousand yeer.
> ("The Knight's Tale," 1663-69)

Here "purveiaunce" is of course providence, and in Theseus' final oration we see that he knows the difference between being Fortune's fool and being a recipient of God's providence.[43] But Palamon and Arcite do not know this, and it is only through the intervention of Theseus that their fortunes come to any good at all. While their knowledge is incomplete, however, the one may have an advantage over the other in relation to the message of the Consolation. They are by no means the same, as some critics have suggested.[44] But the

[43]Richard Neuse, "The Knight: The First Mover in Chaucer's Human Comedy," University of Toronto Quarterly, 31 (October-July 1961-62), 300.

[44]Among those who do not distinguish between Palamon and Arcite are Ian Robinson, p. 124; Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Los Angeles: University of California, 1957), p. 180; Spearing, p. 28; Paul F. Baum, "Characterization in 'The Knight's Tale,'" Modern Language Notes, 46 (May 1931), 302.

individuality of the two is not too elaborate, as it appears intended that the reader should not immediately favor one character over the other. An example of their being treated the same occurs when they are fighting in the wood. Palamon is called a "wood leon" (1656) and Arcite a "crueel tigre" (1657) but since both are knights with battle experience they can be as well matched as Chaucer likes without damaging the careful differentiation of character in other respects.

More important are their attitudes toward love. Up to the time Emily appears in the garden, Palamon and Arcite are only prisoners of war. Now, however, Chaucer begins to separate the two, as Palamon answers Arcite's question as to why he suddenly cries out as he looks out the tower window:

> The fairnesse of that lady that I see
> Yond in the gardyn romen to and fro
> Is cause of al my criyng and my wo.
> I noot wher she be womman or goddesse,
> But Venus it is soothly, as I gesse.
> ("The Knight's Tale," 1098-1102)

Arcite's vision does not include the supernatural element, as he says "'The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly / Of hire that rometh in the yonder place. . . .'"(1118-19) Palamon has already prayed to Venus for help in escaping in lines 1103-07, but after Arcite has seen Emily there is an argument about who loved her first. Arcite claims it is he, since he first recognized Emily as a woman:

> Tho woost nat yet now
> Whether she be womman or goddesse!
> Thyn is affecciоun of hoolynesse,
> And myn is love, as to a creature...."
> ("The Knight's Tale," 1156-59)

Venus supports one of the main chivalric interests, and Palamon is

already inclining toward her. Even though it is he who "stongen were unto the herte," (1079) reminding the reader of love's arrow in the Troilus, we know with Arcite's speech that it is he who is stung with the more earthly and active kind of love. His words have more of cupidity in them, of the lustful aspect of the May garden theme; Palamon's regeneration is more spiritual in nature.

This does not mean that Palamon is perfect. Both he and Arcite are "committed exclusively to one deity embodying their appetite and destiny."[45] This is in contrast to Theseus, who "successfully combines the service of Venus, Mars, and Diana."[46] But in the Consolation, it is the chain of love which binds the universe together. When Palamon and Arcite meet to fight to the death, they both allow unreason to prevail. Theseus, coming upon them, cries passionately: "'Ye shal be deed, by myghty Mars the rede!'" (1747) But his mood is soon "aslaked" and he cries again, in one of the most important thematic speeches in the poem, "'The God of love, a benedicite! / How myghty and how greet a lord is he!'" (1785-86) As he arranges for the tournament, he says to Arcite and Palamon that "'ech of yow shal have his destynee / As hym is shape. . . .'" (1842-43) Theseus here "relates the Boethian them of free will and predestination to courtly love by arguing that the God of Love is stronger than any of the other influences governing man's conduct."[47] Even if

[45] Neuse, p. 303.

[46] Ibid.

[47] Moorman, p. 96.

it is loss of reason which brings the two together to fight, the stage has been set, in the different attitudes toward love, for Palamon's winning of Emily.

Palamon and Arcite are further distinguished in the prayers they address to Venus and Mars prior to the tournament. "The Gods," says one critic, "stand for things as they are. . . . The artists who have adorned the temple walls see no chasm between earthly reality and the divinities that rule over it . . . [and they] sum up certain ways of life to which men dedicate themselves. In another sense, they have a psychological function: the god a person serves is his ruling passion."[48] If this is so, the cause of destiny in the Knight's Tale is not a blind fate, but rather "lies in the human will or appetite."[49] For Arcite, the way to Emily is not through love by itself, but by means of the tournament. He is so intent on victory that he fails to even bring up the subject of Emily in his prayer. Here indeed is a tragic flaw. He assumes that he will gain her if he defeats Palamon in the contest, but he fails, since his love for her is "to a creature," to see any of the eternal side of the light of love in Emily. While Venus can be related symbolically to the Christian deity, Mars cannot be, and Arcite prays "with alle the rytes of his payen wyse." (2370) He promises service to Mars and ends his prayer thus: "'Now, lord, have routhe upon my sorwes soore; / Yif me

[48] Neuse, p. 303.

[49] Ibid., p. 307.

victorie, I aske thee namoore.'" (2419-20) Neither does Mars mention Emily in his signal, but only echoes "'Victorie!'" (2433) And for the time, this is enough for Arcite to hear.

Palamon, up to say his prayers a full two hours before dawn, also promises service, but to Venus. He would rather die than live without Emily, he says, and asks for pity and mercy "with hooly herte and with an heigh corage" (2213):

> I recche nat but it may bettre be
> To have victorie of hem, or they of me,
> So that I have my lady in myne armes.
> For though so be that Mars is god of armes,
> Youre vertu is so greet in hevene above
> That if yow list, I shal wel have my love.
> ("The Knight's Tale," 2245-50)

The goddess makes a sign that the prayer has been received. Since in Chaucer "the universal law of love is inescapably the road to virtue, then the implication of Palamon's prayer is that he would rather die than not do the will of God by taking Emily as his wife."[50]

Palamon and Arcite are additionally differentiated by the gates through which they enter the arena for the tournament. Theseus is responsible for the nature and positions of the gates, and for the ruling passion that is Palamon's

> He estward hath, upon the gate above,
> In worship of Venus, goddesse of love,
> Doon make an auter and an oratorie. . . .
> ("The Knight's Tale," 1903-05)

The direction obviously corresponds to that of the rise of the planet Venus, the socalled morning star which would have been visible to Palamon. Venus would be both literally and figuratively behind him as

[50]Ruggiers, p. 298.

he enters to face Arcite. The description of the Venus gate includes worldly items (1918-65) which are subject to Fortune, as is the kind of love suggested by Cupid, Venus' blind companion who stands before her with bow and arrow. But over all this is the figure of Venus herself.

By the time Arcite enters through the west gate the sun is up and Venus the planet has receded into invisibility along with the greater background of the stars. Arcite is facing the sun and is blind to any aspect of Venus in his desire for martial victory. The aspect of the Mars gate is dreadful (1967-2050) and before the figure of the god stands a wolf. Mars is "gastly for to see" (1984) and on the wall is a forest of barren trees "hidouse to biholde." (1977-78) There is not so much as a ray of the "northren lyght" (1987) and this is important since the northern gate includes the oratory at which Emily addresses her prayers to Diana.

Arcite gains a bitter victory in the tournament, as Saturn contrives, through Pluto, to unhorse him causing a mortal wound. Thus the gods are pacified, but it is clearly Palamon who wins the real victory. Arcite, who has formerly complained about fortune and providence (1251-74) sees somewhat less blindly as his death nears: "'What is this world? what asketh men to have?'" (2777) He tells Emily that if she ever marries, she should not forget Palamon. At Arcite's death

> His laste word was, "Mercy, Emelye!"
> His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther,
> As I cam nevere, I kan nat tellen wher.
> ("The Knight's Tale," 2808-10)

The "wher" Chaucer knows well enough, if the Knight does not, for the author, as we remember from the Troilus, had already used the portion of the Teseide dealing with the ascent to the spheres. Here the conclusions are less obviously stated, but at least it is clear that Arcite has changed from his past passion and has a charitable attitude. His funeral is conducted with distinct Christian overtones, cremated as he is in the pagan manner with sword in hand:

> Ne what jeweles men in the fyre caste,
> Whan that the fyr was greet and brente faste;
> Ne how somme caste hir sheeld, and somme hir spere,
> And of hire vestimentz, which that they were,
> And coppes fulle of wyn, and milk, and blood,
> Into the fyr, that brente as it were wood. . . .
> ("The Knight's Tale," 2945-50)

We know already the identity of two of the ones who cast the symbolic liquids into the fire, as the funeral procession is described in earlier lines:

> Upon the right hond wente olde Egeus,
> And on that oother syde duc Theseus,
> With vessels in hir hand of gold ful fyn,
> Al ful of hony, milk, and blood, and wyn. . . .
> ("The Knight's Tale," 2905-08)

What remains is for these two, and finally for the Knight, to tie up the Boethian theme of the tale.

After Arcite's funeral, "certeyn yeres" have passed and Theseus calls Palamon and Emily to sanction their marriage. He tells them:

> The Firste Moevere of the cause above,
> Whan he first made the faire cheyne of love,
> Greet was th'effect, and heigh was his entente.
> Wel wiste he why, and what thereof he mente;
> For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
> The fyr, the eyr, the water, and the lond
> In certeyn boundes, that they may nat flee.
> ("The Knight's Tale," 2987-93)

That which necessarily must happen has to be accepted, but the goodness of the universe is a reason for rejoicing:

> Why grucchen we, why have we hevynesse,
> That good Arcite, of chivalrie the flour,
> Departed is with duetee and honour
> Out of this foule prisoun of this life?
> ("The Knight's Tale 3058-61)

Arcite's death is not meaningless "since it empowered him to reassert his proper relation to Palamon,"[51] and the prison of the world is not much to be condemned considering the pilgrims' ultimate goal, as Egeus consoles his son Theseus after the funeral:

> This world nys but a thurghfare ful of wo,
> And we been pilgrymes, passynge to and fro.
> Deeth is an ende of every worldly soore.
> ("The Knight's Tale," 2847-49)

So Theseus should take heart again, as he does in the poem's final lines at the marriage of Emily and Palamon. The Knight as narrator ends the tale as he reaffirms the fact of God's love. Boccaccio's fate is changed to providence,[52] and the Knight and the moral of his tale are in sharp contrast to the "philosophically inadequate"[53] Monk's Tale and the Monk himself.

[51] Frost, p. 112.

[52] Rowland, p. 230.

[53] Kaske, p. 261.

Chaucer's pilgrims, as they listened to the various tales on their journey to Canterbury, were no doubt fond of the kind of exempla in the Monk's Tale, and of course these tragedies have a definite place in the Canterbury Tales as a whole.[54] I have tried to suggest that the meaning in the Christian sense should be taken by way of contrast to the Knight's Tale. What Lumiansky and others fail to note is that the Monk, in his seeming unawareness of the tragic implications of his own life, is a victim of Chaucer's intent to show a highly-placed religious figure as worldly and gone astray from Christian doctrine. The Monk does not "face personal responsibility for tragedy"[55] even to the extent that Boccaccio does in his De Casibus, and much less so than does the Knight. The Knight makes clear, through the individual choices of Palamon and Arcite, how much each is to blame for his own destiny. The Monk's view is established by his own way of life: "For the Monk, Fortune is never specifically an instrument of God."[56] In the Knight's Tale, Fortune as an arbitrary force is denied.[57] The process toward the perfection of the individual in the overall view of the Canterbury Tales is a "process of becoming,"[58] and the Knight's Tale is in the prime position.

[54]Lumiansky, p. 104.

[55]Farnham, p. 136.

[56]Jack B. Oruch, "Chaucer's Worldly Monk," Criticism, 8 (1966), 284.

[57]Neuse, p. 299.

[58]Ibid., p. 312.

CONCLUSION

In the Troilus, Chaucer resolves a variety of issues which for his audience should not have been issues at all since they were already established as Christian doctrine. Troilus and Criseyde presents a fairly complete account of the high points of that doctrine, but one which is in a sense only a preparation for the wide spectrum of real medieval life and Christian belief explored in the Canterbury Tales. An added dimension here is the presence of the seemingly real Christian pilgrims, among them the Knight and the Monk. In the Troilus, the narrator tells about pagans who reflect Christian ideas; here, he describes Christians good and bad who tell their various tales of pagans, saints, and so on. We have to deal not only with the tales themselves, but also with the characters of the tellers as well as ironies as one tale reflects or supplements another. The same basic Christian points can be made over and over with no boring repetition. They lead to an actual lengthy sermon on doctrine which is the Parson's Tale.

Considering the consistency of purpose in the whole body of Chaucer's work, one might wonder why retractions were necessary. If certain tales or parts of tales seem to be less than Christian, how can they be evil if they provide exempla to warn those who are falling away from doctrine? Perhaps part of the answer is that Chaucer saw a possibility, one that we have indeed seen realized in the work of some critics, that his tales would be taken piecemeal rather than as parts

of a whole. He was certainly concerned that his work not be misunderstood. This can be seen in the short poem "Chaucer's Wordes unto Adam, His Owne Scriveyn." Chaucer warns his scribe about possible future copies of the translation Boece and the Troilus, since the copier's work so often has to be corrected by the author himself. This poem, probably written in the mid-1380's, focuses on the two works which, up to that time, seem to represent the most serious products of Chaucer's art.

That he sincerely wished the reform of a world he believed gone astray can be demonstrated at length in a number of ways. Since we have looked at some of the larger works, I would like to end this study with some brief bits and pieces from his shorter poems. In "The Former Age" Chaucer imagines an original world free of sin, inhabited by "lambish peple, voyd of alle vyce." (50) But now, he says, the temper of the age consists chiefly of

> covetyse,
> Doublenesse, and tresoun, and envye,
> Poyson, manslauhtre, and mordre in sondry wyse.
> (61-63)

The same theme is repeated in "Lak of Stedfastnesse." Once upon a time there was order, and the world was "stedfast and stable" (1); but now

> it is so fals and deceivable
> That word and deed, as in conclusioun,
> Ben nothing lyk, for turned up-so-doun
> Is al this world for mede and wilfulnesse,
> That al is lost for lak of stedfastnesse.
> (3-7)

Chaucer asks if the reason for the sinful nature of the times is not

simply "wilful wrecchednesse." (13) He obviously believes that it is. In "Truth" his audience is told to "Ruele wel thyself" (6) and "Crye him mercy, that of his hy godnesse / Made thee of noght." (24-25) In "Gentilesse" Chaucer says that the "firste stok was ful of rightwisnesse, / Trewe of his word, sobre, pitour, and free" (8-9) and that people in his own times "Must folowe his [the first stock's] trace" (3) or else "He is noght gentil, thogh he riche seem." (13) For those who complain of bad luck in this world, Chaucer's title-figure in the poem "Fortune" declares that "No man is wrecched, but himself it wene" (25) and identifies herself not as the traditionally blind and capricious tyrant who controls man's destiny with a wheel of chance, but rather as a part of God's divine plan for order in the universe:

> Lo, th'execucion of the majestee
> That al purveyeth of his rightwysnesse,
> That same thing "Fortune" clepen ye,
> Ye blinde bestes, ful of lewednesse!
> (65-68)

So for Chaucer it is the modern willful man who is blind and who seeks to excuse himself by blaming Fortune.

There must be a way to see all of Chaucer's work so that a consistent matrix will emerge, a universal truth for all ages. I believe that approach to be a Christian view of man's pilgrimage, a path over which he travels willfully but guided by providence. These two aspects of man's existence seem to be the warp and the web of Chaucer's system; the more easily discerned embroideries depicting Fortune, the stars, courtly love, war, and other themes are done in lesser threads

and colors. In the most apparent aspect of Chaucer's myth, pagan and chivalric doings seem sometimes to be controlled by a false guardian of human affairs who has no real interest in man's welfare or in his future. This despised Fortune, as the basic Chaucer material shows through, is seen to be only a personification, an easy handle to be grasped by those who have used their wills wrongly.

The rain in the first lines of prologue to the Canterbury Tales falls, as Chaucer knows, on the just and the unjust alike. Here it is a liquor of such virtue that it engenders the blooming of flowers. It follows that even weeds, through the quality of this mercy, can bloom as well. They are not subject to winter's killing frost or the "droghte of Marche" since they can bear fruit and seed. We see this occurring outside the metaphor as Troilus assumes his share of bliss and wisdom in the spheres. Palamon is given respite from worldly strife through the workings of human and divine love, and even the warlike and pagan Arcite is brought to bloom at death's hour and is sped on his way out of the "foule prisoun of this lyf" as a Christian. There is even hope for Chaucer's Monk, for he too is finding his way along with the other pilgrims to the holy shrine at Canterbury.

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