

'Robby' on Chaucer's *Knight's Tale*

Selections from D.W. Robertson, Jr., *A Preface to Chaucer* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1962).

(All page references, in square brackets, and all footnotes, are to this edition)

[105] The operation of "suggestion" is illustrated very vividly in the Knight's Tale. As Palamon and Arcite languish in prison, they observe, in an appropriate garden setting, the beautiful Emelye

that fairer was to sene
Than is the lylie upon his stalke grene,
And fressher than the May with floures newe

She is suitably crowned to provoke exactly the kind of attention she gets:

Hir yelow heer was broyded in a tresse
Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse.

Palamon sees her first --

He cast his eye upon Emelya,
And therwithal he bleynte and cride, "A!"
As though he stongen were unto the herte.

As he explains to Arcite,

"I was hurt right now thurghout myn ye
Into myn herte, that wol my bane be"

The object which is "fair to see" thus passes as an "arrow" or image into the heart, where its force sends Palamon to his knees in a prayer to Venus that she may deliver him from prison. Since Venus is conventionally associated with the entangling chains or snares of concupiscence, or with those who "thrall hemsilf" in the words of the *Roman*, this prayer does not lack certain ironic overtones. Arcite's turn comes next, and the effect of beauty is even less whole- some than it was when Palamon suffered it:

"The fresshe beautee sleeth me sodeynly
Of hire that rometh in the yonder place,
And but I have hir mercy and hir grace,
That I may seen hire atte leeste weye,
I nam but deed; ther nis namoore to seye."

This reaction leads at once to a passionate dispute between the [106] sworn brothers, for Venus makes all men enemies."⁹⁶ Arcite becomes especially irate, condemning all law with a Boethian echo that undercuts what he says even before he has a chance to say it:

Wostow nat wel the olde clerkes sawe,
That "who shal yeve a love any lawe?"
Love is a gretter lawe, by my pan,
Than may be yeve to any erthely man;
And therefore positif lawe and swich decree
Is broken al day for love in ech degree.
A man moot nedes love, maugre his heed.
He may nat fleen it, though he sholde be deed,
Al be she mayde, or wvdwe, or elles wyf.

"But what is he that may even a lawe to lovers?" asks Boethius in exasperation as he finds himself forced to admit that Orpheus "lokede abakward on Erudyce his wif" when the two were "'almost at the termes of the nyght." Orpheus "sette his thoughtes in erthly things" because of his lawless desire and lost "the noble good celestial." Love becomes a "law" unto itself when it abandons all wisdom and reason."⁹⁷ Arcite may well swear by his "pan," albeit a trifle inelegantly, for he is making small use of it. [107] But instead of bringing Dame Raison on the stage to demonstrate Arcite's foolishness, the Knight achieves the same result by having Arcite tell a fable and then violently misinterpret it:

We stryve as dide the houndes for the boon;
They foughte al day, and yet hir part was noon.
Ther cam a kyte, whil that they were so wrothe
And baar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.

[108] Although this exemplum clearly shows the futility of wrathful altercation,⁹⁸ exactly the kind of altercation the two lovers are engaging in over the phantasm of Emelye, Arcite concludes by setting forth as a doctrine an attitude first experienced by Adam and Eve after the Fall:

And therefore, at the kynges court, my brother,
Ech man for hymself, ther is noon other.

The phrase "at the kynges court" may be a bit of glancing satire at English court life in Chaucer's time, but, in any event, Arcite's conclusion shows an inability on his part to follow a logical sequence of thought. As the first part of the poem ends, both lovers cite philosophical principles from Boethius without being able to see their implications.

When we meet Arcite again at the beginning of the second part, his "immoderate thought" has led to the full development of a passion. His condition is

Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
Engendred of humour malencolik,
Biforen, in his celle fantastik.
And shortly, turned was al up-so-doun
Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
Of hym, this woful love, daun Arcite.

The medical language serves only to emphasize the fact that Arcite has undergone the traditional process of suggestion, delightful thought, and passion. The three steps are explicitly defined in the description of the "loveris maladye" given by Arnaldus of Villanova in his treatise *De amore heroico*. After explaining that

"heroic love" is not, strictly speaking, a disease, but rather, an accident, Arnaldus continues by saying that "Love of this kind, that is, of the [109] kind called *heroicus*, consists of vehement and assiduous thought concerning something that is desired, with a prospect of obtaining something apprehended with delight from it. The truth of this description is demonstrated thus. First a thing is fully presented to someone, reaching his apprehension either in itself or through the explanation of someone else, or by means of a simulacrum, or in any other way; and, apprehending something from the form of the said thing, or from its accidents, he conceives it to be delightful. ...And from this it necessarily follows that on account of desires for such a thing, the eager one vigorously retains its impressed form as a phantasm, and making a memory of it thinks of the thing continuously. And from these two [steps] the third arises as a consequence, for it originates when, moved by vehement desire and assiduous thinking, he begins to think of this: in what way and by what devices it may be possible to obtain the thing at will so that he may gain the enjoyment of the noxious delight which he conceives."⁹⁹

As we might expect, the critical activity is the "vehement and assiduous thought," and it is this which must be removed if the "patient" is to be cured;¹⁰⁰ the phantasm must somehow be extracted from the "celle fantastik," for while it is there it corrupts the activity of the *vis aestimativae* and hence disrupts the work of the other two cells which function to discern and to remember.¹⁰¹ In this way the reasoning powers may become seriously disturbed. Bernard of Gordon, author of the popular fourteenth-century *Lili-[110] um medicinae*, emphasizes the fact that "heroic" love is a *solicitude melancholica*, and warns that if it is not taken care of quickly, it may lead to mania, or, indeed, to the death of the lover.¹⁰² Arcite is thus well prepared to suffer a "miracle" of Cupid or Venus, and it is not at all surprising, if we take some hints from Boccaccio's notes on the Teseida and from the mythographers, that as a devotee of Mars (Wrath), he meets his death through the action of an infernal fury (a wrathful passion) sent up by Pluto (Satan) at the instigation of Saturn (Time, who consumes his "children"), who was, in turn, prompted by Venus (Concupiscence). That is, concupiscence frustrated leads to wrath which in time causes self-destruction (cf. Fig. 68). However that may be, it is significant that the lover's malady as it is envisaged in the late Middle Ages is an extreme form of the pattern of action typical of the abuse of beauty, so that Arcite belongs to the same line of descent as Pygmalion, the dreamer in the *Roman de la rose*, and the cupidinous fool in Scotus' example of the precious vase. To call him a "courtly lover" is simply to obscure him in a very cloudy phantasm. Nor is this phantasm brushed aside if we consider his actions as a satire on "courtly love." Chaucer could not satirize conventions established by a "revolution in love," which later writers ascribe to the eleventh century, for the simple reason that he had never heard of them. He was concerned, moreover, with something far more profound than a set of artificial literary fashions.

An excellent example of the danger of *delectatio cogitationis* is afforded by the story of the old knight Januarie in the Merchant's Tale. Here the mirror visible in representations of Luxuria and described symbolically as the "Well of Narcissus" is pictured in a more literal fashion, and the garden of Deduit becomes an actual garden which shadows forth the ornaments and safeguards which Januarie's imagination conjures up around the phantasm of his little "paradis." Having made it perfectly apparent that, although he talks about the welfare of his "soule," he is actually interested in the "esy and clene" physical delights of marriage,...

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The more or less stereotyped behavior of Chaucer's lovers has long been recognized, but it is not so often remarked that other characters also behave in ways that suggest abstract principles. Let us consider very briefly the actions of Duke Theseus in the Knight's Tale. Theseus belongs, like most of the other materials in the tale, to the traditions of classical iconography. His reputation as the conquering hero of the Thebaid and as a wise leader of a city whose "patron saint" was Minerva,¹⁹⁸ the goddess of wisdom, was firmly established in the Middle Ages. Bernard Silvestris, referring to the story of the rescue of Perotheus from Hell, says that by

Theseus we are to understand "a reasonable and virtuous man who descends to the underworld in accordance with the virtuous manner of de- [261] scent."¹⁹⁹ That is, as Bernard has already explained, he is a man who wisely evaluates the relationship between *temporalia* and *invisibilia*.²⁰⁰ The wisdom of Theseus was, in fact, impressive enough so that in one instance he was used as a figure for Christ.²⁰¹ It would not have been easy for Chaucer to make any abrupt departure from the traditional associations of wisdom and virtue which surrounded this "character"; and, indeed, he shows no inclination to do so. He is introduced as a great conqueror and an exemplar of wisdom and chivalry. At critical points in the narrative Theseus is shown exhibiting mercy, and in all but the first of these instances, which has connotations in the medieval traditions of the *Thebaid*, the mercy of Theseus clearly "tempers justice," so that it is a reflection of the wisdom of the New Law. Theseus states the principle at some length:

"Fy
Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
But been a leon, bothe in word and dede,
To hem that been in repentaunce and drede,
As wel as to a Proud despitous man
That wol mayntene that he first bigan.
That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
That in swich cas kan no divisioun,
But weyeth pride and humblesse after oon."

The "repentaunce" of Palamon and Arcite may be a little dubious, but there is nothing dubious about the principle that justice should be tempered with mercy to those who are repentant, which is the New Law of mercy as opposed to the Old Law of strict jus- [262] tice. The decision not to punish the two youths strictly in accordance with the law is followed by another of the same kind to eliminate "mortal bataille" from the tournament.²⁰² And again at the close of the tale, Theseus, having been advised by his council, urges Emelye to marry Palamon on the grounds that "gentil mercy oghte to passen right." It is quite probable that Chaucer's audience would have seen this same principle operating at the beginning of the tale when Duke Theseus decides to take pity on the ladies in the temple of Clementia, with which the idea of Christian mercy was easily associated.²⁰³ All of these instances reinforce the idea that Theseus is a wise and merciful ruler. The actions are symbolic actions which reinforce the traditional connotations of his character.

But the wisdom of Theseus is emphasized in yet other ways. In his speech on the God of Love which follows his remarks about mercy for those who are repentant, he demonstrates the fact that he recognizes the folly of the kind of love to which Palamon and Arcite have subjected themselves, but he is also aware that a Puritanical attitude toward it should be avoided. This is not "tolerance," that great solvent of modern opinion, but a Boethian recognition of the fact that wretches are to be pitied rather than hated. Again, it is significant that the decision concerning the marriage of Emelye is made in "parlement," as such decisions should be made by a wise ruler, and that the marriage itself was proposed for what were regarded as excellent reasons:

To have with certein contrees alliaunce
And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce.

The establishment of peaceful alliances was said to be one of the just causes for marriage.²⁰⁴ Both the manner of the decision and the decision itself bespeak the wisdom of the Duke. Again, it is Theseus who delivers the speech on the "faire cheyne of love" which is a [262] résumé of the wisdom of Lady Philosophy with special significance for the subject of marriage.²⁰⁵

It may be objected that Theseus was a hunter, and that hunters, like the monk, are not "hooly men." But the fact that Theseus rides out hunting is described explicitly as an act of God's "purveiance," and the hunt itself is

conducted under the influence of "Dyane." There had been, since antiquity, two hunts, one the hunt of Venus used as a controlling figure at the beginning of Ovid's *Ars amatoria* and recommended by that lady to Adonis in the tenth book of the *Metamorphoses*, and another more virtuous hunt. Late antique funerary monuments frequently combine representations of the celestial banquet with hunting scenes in which ferocious animals are the object of the quest. In these instances the hunt represents the exercise of virtue necessary to the attainment of the banquet. The motif of the hunt continued to be used in early Christian funerary monuments with the same moral significance given a Christian coloring.²⁰⁶ Subsequently the hunt for the boar or the hart became a fairly common motif in Christian art, although it is necessary to distinguish among several types of hart-hunts.²⁰⁷ One of the illustrators of the *Roman de la rose*, wishing to show the virtuous hunt of Adonis for the boar, added by way of contrast a hart-hunt to suggest the less commendable pursuit recommended by Venus (Fig. 109). But the hart, enriched in meaning by associations derived from Psalm 41, the bestiaries, and the legends of St. Eustachius and St. Hubert, could also be concerned in virtuous pursuits. The two contrasting hunts are probably represented in Fig. 110, where, in a *Dixit insipiens* initial, a dog seizes a rabbit. Outside the *insipiens* and his apes indulge in an appropriate song [264] and dance while below, in contrast, two dogs pursue a hart. Ovid had made Diana hunt *fortes feras*, and although he included the hart in the hunt of Venus, it was natural that the more virtuous associations of the hart should cause it to be transferred to the hunt of Diana, especially after the hunt of Venus had centered itself on rabbits, conies, and other small creatures.²⁰⁸ The virtuous hart-hunt is made explicit in a woodcut of 1525 described by Raimond van Marle which was called "The Hunt of Virtue." Here a man, accompanied by two dogs, which represent desire and thought, pursues a hart.²⁰⁹ We may thus regard it as almost certain that Theseus' hart-hunt, shaped by Providence, and carried out under the auspices of Diana, is an iconographic action designed to reinforce the attributes of wisdom and virtue which he displays elsewhere in other ways.

There remain to be discussed the first actions in which we see Theseus engaged, his conquest of the Amazons and his marriage to their queen, Ypolita. It must not be forgotten that the conquest of the Amazons was one of the labors of Hercules, for which, as Boethius informs us, he gained immortality. The special significance of this story was suggested by Lactantius, who did not moralize the story but condemned it. He asks (*Div. inst.*, I. g. 5) whether he who subdues an Amazon is better than "he who subdues lust, the vanquisher of modesty and fame." Almost as if in answer to this criticism, Amazons were made figures for lust, for, as Salutati puts it when he makes this point, "Nothing, indeed, enervates or makes effeminate and diminishes our virtues [vires] more strongly than libido."²¹⁰ At first glance, this interpretation may seem to be inconsistent with the picture of the Amazons we find in the *Teseida* (I. 6-7):

Al tempo che Egeo re d'Attene era,
fur donne in Scizia crude e dispietate,
alle qua' forse pareva cosa fiera

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esser da' maschi lor signoreggiate;
per che, adunate, con sentenza altiera
deliberar non esser soggiogate,
ma di voler per lor la signoria;
e trovar mode a fornir loro follia.

E come fer le nepoti di Belo
nel tempo cheto alli novelli sposi,
così costor, ciascuna col suo telo
de' maschi suoi li spirti sanguinosi
caccio, lasciando lor di mortal gielo

tututti freddi, in modi dispettosi;
e'n cotal guisa libere si fero,
ben che poi mantenersi non potero.

But if we recall once more the Pauline traditions underlying Fig. 6, it is not difficult to see that the inversion achieved by these ferocious ladies may be thought of as a triumph of the flesh and that the Amazons are worthy precursors of the wife of Bath. They are, in effect, figures for rampant sensuality or effeminacy. In the *Teseida*, the marriage of Teseo to Ipolita effectively puts an end to the inversion and to the evil custom of the Amazons, who, as the last stanza in Boccaccio's first book indicates, learn to subject themselves to men again without too much hesitation. Chaucer's lines put the matter more decorously and abstractly:

What with his wysdom and his chivalrie,
He conquered al the regne of Femenye

Wisdom is traditionally the virtue by means of which the "regne of Femenye" is controlled, and the reason, which is the source of wisdom, is traditionally "married" to the sensuality when a proper relationship between the two is maintained. The "marriage" suggested here is suggested once more at the end of the tale, for the marriage of Palamon and Emelye establishes Thebes, the city of Venus and Bacchus, in a position of "obeisance" to Athens, the city of Minerva. The actions of Duke Theseus in the Knight's Tale are thus, like the actions of the figures we see in the visual arts of the fourteenth century, symbolic actions. They are directed toward the establishment and maintenance of those traditional hierarchies which were dear to the medieval mind. They have nothing to do [266] with "psychology" or with "character" in the modern sense, but are instead functions of attributes which are, in this instance, inherited from the traditions of medieval humanistic culture.

In the same way it is not difficult to see without elaborate analysis that Custance's actions in the Man of Law's Tale are symbolic actions which reinforce the idea of constancy, that Griselda's actions in the Clerk's Tale are intended to stress the idea of patience and its attendant virtues, and that Prudence's actions, or speeches, in the Tale of Melibee are intended to develop the idea of prudence as it functions in warding off the attacks of the flesh, the devil, and the world, and in leading the mind toward penance. We should also expect symbolic actions in the Second Nun's Tale, which is a Saint's legend, or in the Prioress' Tale, which is almost a Saint's legend. But when the characters are neither personified abstractions, near-abstractions, nor characters whose attributes are established by traditional associations, the symbolic nature of the action may be more difficult to discern. Nevertheless, it can, I think, be demonstrated even in these instances.

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An interesting example of Chaucer's use of classical iconography is furnished by the Temple of Venus in the Knight's Tale. Conventional meanings for Venus are discussed above in Chapter II, but to these we may now add the observation of Boccaccio in his notes to *Teseida*, 7. 50ff., where the goddess is said to represent the concupiscible appetite, or, more specifically in this instance, illicit appetite, "per la quale ogni lascivia e desiderata. "" Whether Chaucer [371] read these notes or not makes little difference, since here as elsewhere they are essentially conventional. Boccaccio's Venus differs not at all in implication from that described as "concupiscence of the flesh," or "the mother of all fornication." Chaucer confronts his reader at once with the natural results of such desire painted on the walls of the temple: broken sleeps, sighs, tears, lamenting, the fiery strokes of desire, and lover's oaths. There follow a series of personified abstractions: Plesaunce, Hope, Desir, Foolhardyness, Beautee, Youthe, Bauderie, Richesse, Charmes, Force, Lesynges, Flaterye, Despense,

Bisynesse, Jalousye. Among these, beauty and youth sound attractive to the modern ear, but in this context beauty is the leporine beauty of mere physical attractiveness, and youth is a time of levity and irresponsibility. There follow

Festes, instrument, caroles, daunces,
Lust and Array, and alle the circumstaunces
Of love.

As Boccaccio points out, feasts are places "ove donne sieno adunate," and music and dance form a fitting prelude to the act of Venus. As a *locus amoenus* Chaucer shows us next "al the mount of Citheroun," which, Boccaccio tells us, is a place near Thebes where the citizens offered "multi sacrifici ad onore di Venere." It has a temperate climate, he says, neither too hot nor too cold to inhibit lecherous activity. But Chaucer was not content to use only the details furnished by Boccaccio. To enrich the meaning of the "mount," he added "al the garden" with its porter "Idelnesse" and "Narcisus." In other words, the Garden of Deduit as it is described by Guillaume de Lorris becomes an iconographic attribute of the Temple of Venus. This garden is not, of course, "classical," in spite of the presence of a descendant of Ovid's *otia* and Narcissus. As we have seen, it acquires its general significance from the Bible. In view of the nature of medieval interpretations of the classics, there is nothing startling about this fact. Indeed, the garden is followed immediately by "the folye of kyng Salomon." As St. Augustine put it in *On Christian Doctrine* (3. 21. 31), "His beginnings were redolent with the desire for wisdom; when he had obtained it through spiritual love, he lost it through carnal love." Medea and Circe, Turnus, and Cresus are added as further examples to show that

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wysdom ne richesse,
Beautee ne sleighte, strengthe ne hardynesse,
Ne may with Venus holde champartie

In other words, he who seeks assistance from Venus almost inevitably suffers misfortune. The details so far do not speak well for the success of Palamon or for that of any other suppliant in this temple.

But to make this idea even more emphatic, Chaucer adds a picture of Venus derived ultimately from Fulgentius (*Mit.*, z. I). She is seen "naked, fletynge in the large see." The meaning of this configuration is that the "sailor" of Venus loses all of his possessions and suffers shipwreck. Mythographus Vaticanus Tertius comments further that the nakedness is appropriate because the crime of libido is difficult to conceal, because it is appropriate to the nude, or because it denudes its victim of counsel.¹⁸⁰ The roses Venus has are commonplace, and the explanation offered by Fulgentius is standard: they blush and prick with their thorns just as libido blushes with shame and pricks with the sting of sin. It is said also that like libido they quickly fade in time. Chaucer's Venus is also accompanied by doves, since those birds were thought to be "maxime in coitu fervidae." But Chaucer departs from his predecessors in one detail. Venus usually holds a conch shell in her hand; Chaucer shows her holding a "citole." An explanation for this fact has recently been advanced by John M. Steadman.¹⁸¹ In his commentary on Ovid, Berchorius retains the conch, but he considers it to be a musical instrument which he associates with that of Is. 23. 10, 16: "Pass thy land as a river, O daughter of the sea, thou hast a girdle no more.... Take a harp, go about the city, thou harlot that hast been forgotten: sing well, sing many a song. . . ."

Venus was, of course, also a "daughter of the sea." Acting on the suggestion he found here and wishing to emphasize the musical idea, Chaucer, presumably, substituted a "citole" for the traditional shell. As we have seen, libido has its own "melody," so that an alteration of this kind is not difficult to understand. Finally, Chaucer [373] completes his picture by mentioning blind Cupid, whose significance needs no further comment here.

So far as the Knight's Tale is concerned, this temple is an appropriate enough place in which to vow Perpetual warfare on chastity, as Palamon does, but its details neither comment favorably on the suppliant nor suggest that he will be successful. From the point of view of technique, we should notice that classical and scriptural materials are mingled freely so that their meanings reinforce each other. Moreover, all of the details are consistent with the traditional meanings attributed to Venus by medieval mythographers. It would be mere critical waywardness to consider the temple as a whole to be just so much decoration on the surface of a "story," or to regard it as a blind accumulation of detail without significance. Chaucer should obviously be considered as a representative of the medieval humanistic tradition.

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In The Canterbury Tales the effects of cupiderous love are first set forth in the Knight's Tale. Palamon becomes a worshiper of Venus, bent on a perpetual war against chastity, and Arcite a worshiper of Mars, in whom wrath becomes so strong that it leads to self-destruction (cf. Fig. 68). Since Palamon is more "reasonable," Duke Theseus is able to direct him toward a cure for his trouble, marriage, with a long speech on Divine Providence. Neither Palamon nor Arcite engages in any form of courteous love. The treatment of the lovers is mocking and humorous. When Palamon first sees Emelye, he cries out "A," as though he "stongen were unto the herte." Arcite, who does not understand what has happened, delivers an unctuous little sermon on patience:

"Cosyn myn, what eyleth thee,
That art so pale and deedly on to see
Why cridestow? Who hath thee doon offense?
For Goddes love, taak al in pacience
Oure prisoun, for it may noon oother be"

This friendly and charitable concern vanishes like the shadow it is as soon as Arcite sees the girl for himself. If the friendship of the two sworn brothers cannot survive the mere sight of a girl from a prison window, when neither of the friends has any prospect of approaching her, that friendship does not amount to much, and there is no hope that either "friend" has any potentiality for true love. The pair fall into a heated and futile argument, the seriousness of which is not deepened by Arcite's very transparent sophistry. The whole scene is, in fact, comic. One has only to read it aloud with some expression and a little of the intonation of English colloquial (not "school") speech to see that rhetorically it is comic. As for the content, neither Chaucer nor his contemporaries had sufficient training in nineteenth-century attitudes to regard it with sympathetic seriousness. Arcite's malady adds nothing to his dignity. If there is a point in the narrative where sentiment might have intervened, it is at the death of Arcite. But the Knight's remarks about his fate are not very propitious:

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His spirit chaunged hous and wente ther
As I cam nevere; I kan nat tellen wher.
Therefore I stynte. I nam no divinistre.
Of soules fynde I nat in this registre;
Ne me ne list thilke opinions to telle
Of hem, though that they writen wher they dwelle.

Arcite is coold, ther Mars his soule gye!

This elaborate restraint from Dantean speculation can only lead the reader to wonder what kind of guide Mars might make; his temple does not look very promising. Nor is the sudden noise of the mourners entirely convincing:

Shrighte Emelye, and howleth Palamon,
And Theseus his suster took anon
Swownynge

To think of the shriek, the howl, and the swoon as quaint medieval ways of expressing strong passion roughly equivalent to

Oh, lift me from the grass! I die! I faint! I fail!

is to transfer Chaucer to the nineteenth century. Shelley flourished in an entirely different environment where expressions of this kind could be taken with respectful seriousness. And the seriousness of Chaucer's scene is not heightened by the hyperbolic comparison with the lament of the Trojans for Hector. But any sentiment we might still feel is punctured finally, or should be, by the ridiculous practicality of the women:

"Why woldestow be ded," thise wommen crye,
"And haddest gold ynough, and Emelye?"

This behavior illustrates well the remark made concerning Emelye's attitude toward the tournament:

For wommen, as to speken in commune,
Thei folwen aile the favour of Fortune,

Arcite has very little dignity even in death, in spite of the very courteous efforts of Theseus on his behalf. Theseus himself who is treated with much more seriousness, shows a certain susceptibility to the courteous form of chivalric love, first when he takes pity [468] on the women before Thebes and again when he heeds the pleas of the Queen and Emelye for the lovers when they are caught fighting in the grove. Distressed ladies are not treated lightly by Chaucer's wise and noble Athenian, but the young lovers never exhibit what the eighteenth century would call "disinterested benevolence" or what the fourteenth knew as charity.

[Notes on pp. 106-110]

96 Boccaccio identifies Venus in the Teseida with the concupiscible passions and Mars with the irascible passions. See the Chiose in Roncaglia's edition (Bari 1941), p. 417. The manner in which the concupiscible passions move the irascible passions in the course of the lover's malady is described by Bernard of Gordon, *Lilium medicinae* (Lyons, 1574), p. 210.

97 The story of Orpheus was pregnant with philosophical meaning in antiquity, and undoubtedly had some occult significance for Ovid, who had pronounced Pythagorean and

hence "Orphic" tendencies, The early Christians did not allow the story to be forgotten, so that in the early Church the Crucified Christ was regarded as the "true Orpheus," a contention that survives in a twelfth-century hymn. See Hugo Rahner, *Griechische Mythen in Christlicher Deutung* (Zürich, 1945), pp. 88-89. By transference, Orpheus could signify the good priest. Hence Berchorius, *Metamorphosis Ovidiana* (Paris, 1515), Lib. x says, "Orpheus significat predicatorem & divini verbi carminum distatorem: qui de infernis, id est de mundo veniens debet in monte scripture vel religionis sedere carminum s: melodiam sacre scripture canere." Orpheus was said to have been killed by angry women. Berchorius continues, "Mulierum copulam debet fugere & carnis amplexus penitus exhorrere, & contra ipsarum malitias predicare." There was thus a tradition of a successful Orpheus in addition to the Orpheus who looks back. See D. W. Robertson, Jr., "The Partitura amorosa of Jean de Savoie," *PQ*, xxxiii (1954), 1-9, and, for an extended example, the Middle English *Sir Orpheo*. Cf. The interpretations recorded by Bukofzer, "'Speculative Thinking in Mediaeval Music," *Speculum*, xvii (1942), pp. 174-175. The interpretation indicated by Chaucer's gloss to Boethius probably stems from Remigius. He is quoted by Albericus, ed. Bode, pp. 212-213: "Ait enim Euridicen ideo Orphi dictam esse conjugem, quia facundiae comes debet esse discretio. Ipsa vero serpente laesa ad infernum descendit, quum terrenis inhians commodis veneno iniquitatis ad sinistram partis inflectitur. Sed Orphei carminibus ad superos revocatur, quum loculenta ratione lucri stimulus ad aequitatem reformatur. Sed si respicit, retrahitur ad terrena, nec oranti Orpheo redditur. Nam quum terrenas animus saecularia nimis concupiscit, vix eum aliqua oratio ad statum rectitudinis erigit, quia a Proserpina, id est maxima vitiorum tenetur illecebra." This version is repeated by Walsingham, fol. 111 verso. This author identifies the women who stoned Orpheus, fols. 112, 119, with those "uiuentes muliebriter," or "luxuriosi," who were envious because Orpheus refused to love them but loved men, that is, those "viriliter agentes" or "virtuosos," instead. The women were thus transformed into various figures by Bacchus, that is, by inebriation in vices. A modification of Remigius' interpretation, with minor variations, appears in the commentary on the *Aeneid* by Bernard Silvestris, ed. G. Riedel (Greifswald, 1924), pp. 53-55; in Guillaume de Conches' commentary on Boethius, part of which is printed by Charles Jourdain, *Notices et extraits de MSS de la Bibl. Impér.*, xx (1862), pp. 80-81; and in Nicholas Trivet's commentary on Boethius, Ms Burney 131, fols. 48-49. Bernard takes Orpheus to represent a man "sapientem et eloquentem," the son of Apollo, or Sapientia, and Calliope, or Eloquentia. His cithara is "orationem rhetoricam, in qua diversi colores quasi diversi numeri resonant," and by means of this instrument, he moved the lazy, the unstable, and the truculent, or stones, streams, and beasts. Euridice is "naturalis concupiscentia," the "genius" which is born with every man. She wanders in the meadows, or "errat per terrena quae modo virent et statim arescunt et sicut flos feni fit omnis gloria mundi." She is loved by Aristeus, or divine virtue, but fleeing him, is bitten by a serpent -- "in pede anguis virus recipit: in sensu boni temporalis delectationem." When she is led off to Hell, or "ad temporalia," her husband pursues her, wishing to extract his concupiscence through wisdom and eloquence from temporal things. This is essentially the interpretation given by William of Conches. Trivet is slightly more specific. He calls Orpheus "pars intellectiva, instrumenta sapientia et eloquentia." Euridice is "pars hominis affectiva." She falls "per sensualitatem" into a Hell of involvement in *temporalia*. If Orpheus looks back, he loses her again. The same general meaning is put in simplified form by Radulphus de Longo Campo in his commentary on the *Anticlaudianus*, Oxford, Ms Balliol College 146 n, fol. 150 verso; by John of Garland, *Integumenta ovidiana*, ed. Ghisalberti (Milan, 1933), p. 67. and by a fourteenth-century commentator quoted by Ghisalberti in a note. Radulphus calls Orpheus "ratio siue rationalis predicator" and Euridice "caro vel sensualitas." John of Garland's verses run:

Pratum deliciae, coniunx caro, vipera virus,
Vir ratio, Stix est terra, loquela lira.

The anonymous commentator makes Orpheus a "vir discretus" and Euridice "sensualitas." Neither Chaucer nor those in his audience who recognized his allusion would have failed

to see in the "lawless" lover a suggestion of the perennial overthrow of the reason or of wisdom in those not sufficiently "virile" to follow the "true Orpheus."

98 It is so used by Deschamps, *Oeuvres*, *SATF*, vii, 133-134.

99 *Opera* (Basel, 1585), col. 1525. It is instructive to contrast the Arabic view of the cause of this malady. For "daun Constantyn's" opinion, see the *Viaticum* (Leyden, 1510), sig. b iiii, where the difficulty is attributed to the necessity for expelling superfluous humors. This authority says that *hereos* means "delight." The edition here cited is very carelessly printed. A more reliable text of part of the discussion appears in Guibcrt of Tournai, *De modo addiscendi*, ed. E. Bonifacio (Turin, 1953), p. '93 Bonifacio refers to a text in Rasi, *Opera parva* (1505), which I have not seen.

100 Arnaldus, *Opera*, col. '530: "Cum igitur hec furia, suique causa formalis sit intensa cogitatio super delectabile, hoc cum confidentia obtinendi, erit illis directio, & correctium oppositum, non in hoc delectabile cogitare, nec sperare ullo modo eius obtentum."

101 *Ibid.*, col. 1527: "Cum igitur quasi ad imperium aestimatiuae ceterae inclinet virtutes, patet quod superius dicebatur, scilicet quod rationis imperium sensibilibus virtutum delusionibus subjugatur erroneis, cum decretum estimationis sustineat, vt informet." Accounts of the functions of the three cells of the brain vary somewhat in medieval sources.

102 On p. 216 we read, "Amor qui hereos dicitur est sollicitudo melancholica propter mulieris amorem"; and on p. 217, "Prognosticatto est talis, quod nisi hereosis succurrantur, in maniam cadunt, aut moriuntur." The various cures suggested are designed to remove the "false imagination."

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[Notes on pp. 260-266]

198 See Boccaccio's note to *Teseida*, I. 60. i, in Roncaglia's edition (Bari, 1941), p. 376.

199 *Comm. in sex libros Eneidos*, p. 56.

200 The four ways of descending to Hell, p. 30, are (1) the way of nature, (2) the way of virtue, (3) the way of vice, (4) the way of artifice. The way of nature is birth into a fallen world, which is common to all. The way of virtue is that of the wise man like Hercules or Orpheus who descends by considering the fragility of worldly things while adhering to *invisibilia*. The way of vice is like that of Euridice, who places her whole confidence in temporal things. Finally, the way of artifice involves necromancy. Theseus' descent is thus a figure for a philosophical attitude toward the world. Cf. Salutati, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. Ullman (Zurich, 1951), II, 483ff., and Pietro di Dante, *Commentarium*, pp. 11-17.

201 J. Sauer, *Symbolik des Kirchengebäudes* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1922), p. 259. The story of Ariadne is involved here. Cf. *Ovide moralisé*, viii, lines 1395ff. 261

202 Trial by battle was still an accepted judicial procedure in Chaucer's time, as the career of Oto de Grandson shows, so that we should not quarrel with the tournament

itself.

203 Thus Thomas Ringstede, *In proverbia Salomonis*, fol. xix, observes, "Statius secundum Thebaidem narrat quod in medio civitatis atheniensium erat ara deo clementie consecrata Moraliter per hanc aram siue per hoc templum si bene respicimus cristum secundum naturam humanam intelligere debemus qui tanta habundat clementia vt nullos recuset volentes ad se quodammodo venire."

204 Lombard, *Sententiae*, 4.30.3.

205 See the discussion by Paul A. Olson, "A Midsummer Night's Dream and the Meaning of Court Marriage," *ELH*, xxiv (1957), 99ff.

206 See Cumont, *Recherches*, pp. 438-456.

207 The hart might be attacked by the evil as well as pursued by the virtuous. Thus a centaur representing the Devil might be shown pursuing the virtuous man or the hart. See R. van Marle, *Iconographie de l'art profane* (La Haye, 1932), 11, 108. Again, because of the legends of St. Eustachius and St. Hubert the hart might represent Christ, and this significance is reinforced by the bestiaries. Finally, in the Renaissance, the hart might represent a man pursued and brought down by his passions. See Emile Picot, "Le cerf allégorique dans les tapisseries et les miniatures," *Bulletin de la sec. franc. de reproduction de manuscrits à peinture*, III, 2 (1913), 57ff. Little effort has been made to sort out the various hart hunts which appear in medieval art.

208 The two hunts are contrasted in Lydgate's *Reson and Sensualyte*, ed. Sieper, EETS ES 84 (1901), lines 2850ff. and 3711ff. where Diana's hunt is taken as an antidote to idleness. But the hunt of Venus here includes, as it does in Ovid and the *Roman de la rose*, the hart as well as "the konyn and the hare."

209 *Iconographie*, II, 108.

210 *De laboribus*, 11, 364. Cf. Richard Hamilton Green, "Classical Fable and English Poetry in the Fourteenth Century," *Critica Approaches to Medieval Literature* (New York, 1960), pp. 130-131.

[Notes on pp. 370-373]

180 See the discussion in Bode, *Scriptores rerum mythicarum* (Cellis, 1834), pp. 228-229, or what is practically the same material in A. Neckam, *Super Marcianum*, Oxford, Bodl. Lib., Ms Digby 221, fol. 37.

181 *Speculum*, xxxiv (1959), 620-624.