COURTLY LOVE - BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER

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COURTLY LOVE

Courtly Love appeared in the Midi of France around the end of the eleventh century. The impact which it made on the Western way of life is still being felt today. It changed men's complete attitude toward women; it showed a greater respect and affection for feminine qualities; and it ennobled men's love for the opposite sex, which, until then, was considered of no importance. Not only, though, was the impact great on everyday life, but also on the arts:

> "Many of the features of this sentiment, as it was known to the Troubadours, have indeed disappeared; but this must not blind us to the fact that the most momentous and the most revolutionary elements in it have made the background of European literature for eight hundred years. French poets, in the eleventh century, discovered or invented, or were the first to express, that romantic species of passion which English poets were still writing about in the nineteenth century. They effected a change which has left no corner of our ethics, or imagination or our daily life untouched, and they erected impassable barriers between us and the classical past or the Oriental present. Compared with this revolution the Renaissance is a mere ripple on the surface of literature." [1]

Thus began the poetry and the adoration of women by men.

It is difficult to point to the exact origins of Courtly Love, for many factors contributed to it. Until the event of Courtly Love and chivalry, love of man for woman was rare and seldom known. The love of the Ancients was of a more crude type, mainly physical, this being due to the fact that men loved men at the time and looked upon women as the keepers of their homes and the guardians of their children.

Later on, with the advent of Christianity, once again the male was proclaimed superior. After all, was he not made in the image of God, whereas woman simply came from one of man's ribs - and a crooked one at that, according to Milton.

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[1] C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (Oxford University Press, 1959), p.4.

COURTLY LOVE - BOCCACCIO - CHAUCER

During the Middle Ages, the blossoming time of Courtly Love, the women were still generally looked upon as being "nuisances and half-wits" and were not thought to be good for very much. The little love poetry that did exist in Europe in the beginning of the Middle Ages was written by women (women were known as being quite forward in their feelings toward men). Men took them as they pleased.

> "In a system of chivalry based on prowess, obviously, woman was of no great value. She might render occasional services of a more or less menial nature, but in general she was a nuisance, a distraction, and a source of trouble. Accordingly, in the _chansons de geste_, the knight does not serve the lady. She serves him." [2]

When writing love poetry, a man addressed his work to another man, not to his wife nor to his mistress.

But not all the women were badly treated. A woman's life depended largely on her general background -- family, education, social status, and, last but not least, her husband:

> "What we know is that from the tenth to the fourteenth centuries there were women who held land, made war, signed treaties, dubbed knights, ruled principalities, and, in short, exercised all the rights of lordship quite as if they had been men while, at the same time and in the same countries, other women of the same class were oppressed, maltreated, beaten, robbed, cast off, cloistered against their will, and denied even the most elementary human rights. We have a host of instances of women who were men for the time being, _hommes d' occasion_." [3]

I think there are three main strong influences which led to the evolution of Courtly Love -- Arab Spain, the Church, and the wars which never ended, whether feudal or crusades.

This was the time of the Saracen wars in Spain, of the Muslim blooming in the arts and sciences and of the Muslim conquests. The creativeness of the Arabs has not left us yet today, so they could not help but influence the European warriors who fought them.

The Provincaux were the first to succumb to the cult of love, most probably because of their more Latin character, the warm climate, and the closeness of Spain and the Arabs. And, once it had taken root in the Midi, the rest of France and Europe were quick to adapt their ways to it:

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[2] Maurice Valency, _In Praise of Love_ (New York, 1958), p. 53.

[3] _Ibid_. p. 4.

> "Within fifty years of the emergence of love in Poitou, we find the northern trouveres practicing the love-song like masters, and by 1170, the poetry of love was already established in Alsace, in Switzerland, in Germany, in Austria, in Italy, and in Spain - in fact, everywhere in the Western world where the courtly art could conceivably take root."[4]

The Arabs were, and still are, the most conscious of a woman's beauty, of her femininity. Their poetry was of an utmostly sensual nature and always of love, more often of a woman they had merely heard of, perhaps never seen.

While poetry and beauty were much admired and discussed in the Arab world, the Medieval Church still had a very strong hold on the people, on the customs, and on the way of life down to the most intimate detail in Europe, and, if anything, it preached against sensual, physical beauty. Only spiritual beauty existed. It looked down upon marriage: virginity for both men and women was the highest virtues, and in this state only could humans obtain a place closer to God. Marriage was accepted, but only as a means by which to increase the human race. If the couple kept this in mind and indulged in sexual union for this reason, then they were forgiven their sin. But as soon as carnal desire imposed itself and lust and passion arrested one's senses, sin had been committed.

I think that many people privately rebelled against this Christian attitude. In marriage there was no room for love, for a woman was given as part of an alliance or business deal between her family and that of her husband's family, not as a human being. Thus, few Christian homes, if any, could be founded on love -- so they searched for an outlet for this untouched sentiment. Their outlet came through the troubadours and Courtly Love. At long last, people could love physically and spiritually, both of which had been previously unheard of.

Then, too, adoration of the Virgin Mary had declined, leaving room for the worship of the Son and the Creator. But, now, the Holy Mother began to appear once again and this time in Medieval society, which formerl was a patriarchal society. Men and women looked up to her for love and guidance and, thus, finally came the realization that she was a woman and that the mortal women must have been given some gifts by this saint. The time was ripe for woman-worship. People, women in particular, were tiring of the chansons de geste and their constant dealing with war and masculine interests. A change was needed.

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[4] Valency, op. cit., p. 5.

All through the Middle Age, the men were off to war at some time or another, leaving the women-folk to care for the land, the castle, and all general family interests. Thus, came about the dual role the women were forced to play in society. This certain degree of equality may have been partly due to the Germanic culture in which the woman was looked upon as being a companion, one on whom the husband could depend while away and to whom he went to for advice, especially since the Germans thought of their women as having strong prophetic powers. However, once the husband returned (among the Germans as well as the Europeans), the wife had to foresake her independence and return to her servile existence. Having once tasted independence, though, the woman needed an outlet for it (as well as for her need to give and accept love) and what better way than through an adoring and servile lover who jumped to her every beck and call:

> "While in the one system she was presumably an imbecile, of intellect insufficient to motivate a rational decision, in the other, she was a goddess before whom strong men trembled, all wise, all beautiful, the object of adoration, the mirror of perfection, the guiding star of the knight."[6]

The only news the women received concerning the outside world and their male relations usually reached them through the traveling minstrels of the time who sang of the great battles and of the knights they had seen or heard about. Their songs took on the French title of chansons de geste. The knight became known to the ladies through his bravery, strength, good deeds and, above all, loyalty, especially to his king or sovereign. The knight became the rugged hero and eventually the romantic hero:

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[6] Valency, op. cit., p. 64.

> "The troubadours did not develop the culture in which they lived. It developed them. As a class of more or less professional entertainers, they were hardly in a position to impose alien tastes upon the great lords and ladies at whose courts they practiced the precarious art of the minstrel. But they were in an excellent position to interpret and to express the needs of the society which supported them." [7]

But it wasn't only the troubadour or minstrel who excelled in writing this poetry. Guillaume IX, of Poitiers, was the first troubadour whose work is known to us (but not the first to sing of love):

> "Similarly it was the enthusiasm of the wealthy nobility which chiefly stimulated the development of chivalric poetry. The nobles not only kept the poets alive by employing them to write their songs, but they also manifested their delight in the poetic art by dabbling in it themselves." [8]

With the participation of nobility in love-poetry, a gentle twist was taken poetry was no longer purely knightly in character.

Thus, Courtly Love did not appear on the European scene suddenly, nor was it an invention of the troubadours: it was a slow process of "one thing leading to another", of the evolution and refinement of poetry, an outcome of wars, of protest against the strict church, and of the common desire for affection and love.

The theme of this new literary genre was love -- love of man for woman. Actually, it was more than love; it became a cult, for one couldn't love in his own fashion but according to set rules and ways. Thus, arose with Courtly Love, its court at which one discussed the "dos and don'ts" of lovers. This pastime was especially popular at the Court of Eleanor d' Aquitaine; later on, Andreas Capellanus wrote his De Arti Honesti Amandi which "takes the form of methodical instruction in the art of love making". [9] Cretien de Troyes became Courtly Love's lyrical exponent and was among the first troubadours of Northern France to choose love as a serious central theme. The epics of knights and heroic battles became fewer and fewer and, after having visited Eleanor d'Aquitaine's court, he became "perhaps the greatest exponent of it to his fellow countrymen; and, combining this element with the Arthurian legend, he stamped upon men's minds indelibly the conception of Arthur's court as the home par excellence of true and noble love." [10]

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[7] Valency, op.cit., p. 35
[8] Ibid., p. 86
[9] Lewis, op. cit., (note 1), p. 32

Love of this type was a complete reversal from what men had been previously used to.

Not every one could love in this high manner; one had to be of gentle heart which, generally speaking, meant of the nobility, for only they were considered refine enough to know how to speak and act:

> "Upon the ability to love truly, the troubadours based an ideal of aristocracy which had never before explicitly existed, the aristocracy of the gentle heart. This was their invention, and upon it, strangely enough, was founded a new concept of manhood, the idea of the gentleman, the *Courtois.*" [11]

But, one didn't inherit gentlemanliness through titles only, it had to come from within the person himself.

A lady should never love a man beneath her in social station, nor should she love her husband. As already mentioned, marriage had nothing to do with love; it was the husband who ruled the household and the wife who obeyed. The medieval wife was a servant. If a husband should love his wife "His sin is heavier than that of the unmarried lover, for he has abused the sacrament of marriage." [12] But, where love was concerned, it was the lady who commanded and the man who served:

> "The love which is to be the source of all that is beautiful in life and manners must be the reward freely given by the lady, and only our superiors can reward. But a wife is not a superior." [13]

Marriage was considered an earthly attachment which would be broken when one of the persons died. But, not so with lovers:

> "In the world of love, it was the lover who was the legitimate spouse. The husband was no more than a vulgar intruder. In the nature of things he had to be tolerated, but he had no portion in the realm of love. Love was eternal. But death loosed the bonds of marriage." [14]

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[10] Lewis, *Ibid.*, p. 23

[11] Valency, *op.cit.*, pp. 34-35

[12] Lewis, *op. cit.*, p. 41

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 36

[14] Valency, *op. cit.*, p. 78

It was considered commendable for the lover to be jealous for then, he, according to Andreas, would always think his intentions were insufficient and he would always try to better himself in order to keep his lady. The lovers needed the jealous husband to add a bit of adventure to the affair, so that they could feel close and suffer all the more deliciously. Their love was constantly being put to the test and the lover had to be courageous, the woman wise.

Not only did the lovers suffer because of the husband but also out of fear that their secret might be discovered by outsiders. Above all, the lady's name and honor were to be guarded with the knight's life -- never wa the secret of their affair to be confided to anyone. Actually, this must have been difficult to succeed in doing, especially since people were in constant and close contact with each other within the castle and little, if any, privacy existed.

> "It is difficult to exaggerate the want of privacy in the Middle Ages, or the influence of this overcrowding upon social intercourse, and, therefore, upon literature. Even in the great and roomy castle, there was no more privacy than on a modern Atlantic liner; and, in those crag-castles that are so picturesque on French and German rivers, there can have been scarcely more solitude than on a tramp-steamer. Therefore it was almost a conventional necessity that the love-story of medieval romance should rest upon a basis of difficulty and pain, even where there was no noble tragedy to account for this ..." 15

Suffering, for the male especially, began from the very beginning when he wooed the lady for the first time. Never was the lady to give her love easily nor too freely -- she was to keep the man waiting and in suspense. He had to first prove his love to her:

> "Falling in love - enamorement - began with the eyes and was described as an almost mystical phenomenon that produced a state of ecstasy and an ethereal fluid transmitted from the eyes to the heart, where it engendered love. To become a lady's vassal after this, the troubadour was expected to pass through four stages, i.e., aspirant, suppliant, postulant, and lover. When he had made vows of fidelity and this was sealed by a kiss, he attained the last stage of amorous initiation. Sometimes the lady and her lover pledged their troth in church, exchanging hearts, as they said, in a ceremony that smacks of pagan magic and archaic rites." 16

While in his lady's presence, the lover was to turn pale, to tremble, as in the case of Troilus, to faint.

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[15] G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama (The Fontana Library, 1961). Vol. I, p.

[16] Nina Epton, [illegible] French (London, 1964), p. 27

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Since privacy was difficult to find, and the lovers seldom, if ever, found themselves together alone, it would appear that they were more in love with love than with each other. It was possible for a man to fall in love with a lady whom he had never seen, only heard of. He fell in love with the description of her, her deeds, her goodness. Love at first sight was also a common phenomenon. It was believed that only good could come from love, especially when it was reciprocal, that it could lift a couple to unheard of heights of ecstasy. Their love was to glow wherever they went and to affect others for their betterment. Naturally, everyone wanted to be pierced by Cupid's arrow.

Because love was considered so wonderful, no one really thought of it as being adultery. Physical intimacies were not necessarily involved in love -- a couple could love from afar -- even though it was usually a physic attraction that brought them together in the first place. In the early versions of Tristan and Isolde they slept with a sword between them, so as to prevent Isolde's chaste virtue from being marred. But this early outlook on sex was probably due to the Church's view on sex. Later, with the spreading of the cult of Courtly Love, although sex was involved in many instances, it was not looked upon as a sin by the lovers, mainly because of the already-mentioned fact that only good could come from love, and thei intimacies were an outcome as well as an expression of their love.

Out of their constant longing and "pining away" for each other came the inevitable wish for death, for only in Paradise would they be free to love to their hearts' content, while on earth they are not free to share what they call love. This wish is very intense in both Chaucer and Boccaccio so far as Troilus is concerned, but not in Criseyde's case, for it was the man who was to suffer more.

> "The love of love had concealed a far more awful passion, a desire altogether unavowable, something that could only be 'betrayed' by means of symbols, such as that of the drawn sword and that of perilous chastity. Unawares and in spite of themselves, the lovers have never had but one desire -- the desire for death." 17

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[17] M. C. D'Arcy, The Mind and Heart of Love (Meridan Books, N. Y., 1956) p.

COURTLY LOVE - BOCCACCIO - CHAUCER

Because goodness and beauty were the foundation of love, because the lovers worshiped and prayed to a god of love for guidance and help, love became itself a religious cult. Its parallel was found in the Christian cult of the Virgin, Mariolatry, but instead of the Virgin Mary, a mortal woman was worshiped. Through this adoration and the lady's blessings, the knight was capable of unheard-of feats in battle, he became gallant above all other men -- in other words, he became an altogether better man:

> "It was the high function of the lady, therefore, to guide the lover upward in worth and dignity to the utmost reach of his potentiality. This was the true justification of earthly love ..." [18]

The knight thought the lady's approval to be reward enough for the greatest of his accomplishments:

> "The True Love, the *fin amor*, desired not to conquer and to dominate, but to serve and to adore. This adoration was in itself a joy, but not the ultimate joy of love. In return for true service the lover expected ultimately to receive his guerdon, his reward. But, what, in general, the True Love expected of his beloved was not a temporary physical appeasement; it was a perpetual benediction; he looked to his lady not for satisfaction but for blessedness." [19]

Both Troilus and Troilo, as will soon be shown, sought their ladies' love, but their passion did not turn out to be the heavenly bliss which the troubadours sang about -- Troilo dies with a bitter souvenir of women, and Troilus dies and realizes how foolish mortal love can be.

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[18] Maloney, *op. cit.*, p. 49

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 26

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

Courtly Love, as we know it from the troubadours, did not really exist in Italy until the end of the thirteenth century and when it finally did come, nothing very much was left to the imagination; Italian love literature was more of an imitation of Provencal literature than an art with its own particular characteristics.

> "Courtly love as an outgrowth and reflection of the feudal system is unknown in Italy for the simple reason that chivalry and the feudal system never took root on Italian soil." [1]

Poetry did become popular at the Sicilian court under the reign of Frederick II, but it is said to be rather dead and lacking in individual inspiration, especially if compared to the poetry of the troubadours. All poems and songs were alike in style and characters, the latter showing littl life, according to Kirby.

From Sicily, the poetical movement ascended to Tuscany, and finally settled, for a while at least, in Bologna - at that time the center of scientific development and interest. Science brought in a new movement in poetry -- an interest in philosophy -- and the "poet who most fully reflects the new movement is Guido Guinicelli (circa 1240-1274)." [2] Guinicelli's theory is "love and true nobility always occur simultaneously; the one is inseparable from the other." [3] This idea differs from that of the troubadours in that the latter contended true nobility to be an outgrowth of love; yet, on the other hand, only a noble person (noble in the sense of virtue) could love. Thus, while the two depended upon each other (and one cannot exist without the other), they do not occur simultaneously.

Another difference between Guinicelli's theory and the troubadours is that for the latter "women had become a queen but still very much the queen of a feudal castle; for Guinicelli, she had passed beyond all earthly bounds and was fit to be compared with nothing less than the Queen of Heaven." [4]

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[1] Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus (Gloucester, Mass., 1958), p. 70

[2] Ibid., p. 75

[3] ———

[4] Kirby, op. cit., p. 78

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

I cannot wholly agree with Kirby on the above point, for the troubadours also worshiped the lady in a divine fashion, looking upon her as the source of all good and as one who is only created to be adored -- she is virtue itself. Although she was the "queen of a feudal castle", she stepped a bit higher to become the queen of queens in the heart of her admirer; it was more of a pagan idolatry. Guinicelli's "Queen of Heaven", on the other hand, has more Christian connotations in the interpretation of the phrase.

In any case, it seems that Boccaccio used both ideas, for Troilo did adore his lady above all others, but a queen of heaven should be above all human temptations and sensations, Criseida was not. She was a sensual woman who made pretexts to shun temptation, but who knew inwardly, almost from the start, that she would succumb to Troilo's wish. Thus, Boccaccio differs from Guinicelli in that for Guinicelli, love was more spiritual; for Boccaccio, more sensual.

As for Guinicelli's first idea, it would seem that Boccaccio, judging from the Filostrato, believed love to stem from a noble heart, noble in the sense of social class for both Troilo and Criseida were of high birth -- Troilo being a prince and Criseida being the daughter of a learned and once respected man of Troy. Once love was joined to nobility, the two did grow together in the character of Troilo, but they were halted rather early in Criseida, who, once away from her lover's influence and that of her cousin, was easily attracted to another lover.

Thus it appears that Boccaccio did adapt some of the general ideas of Guinicelli's dolce stil nuovo, but also added his own ideas as well as those of the troubadours':

> "He was directly acquainted with the Arthurian cycle ... possibly he knew the work of Andreas. The sensible view, then, seems to be that, though all these elements were important, yet the most important factor was his own imagination, his own creative ability." [5]

Boccaccio's inspiration for Il Filostrato was a personal experience which he went through during his affair with the noblewoman, Maria d'Aquino

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[5] Kirby, op. cit., p. 118

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

Five other poems were written depicting this affair, but in the Filostrato, Boccaccio talks directly of his love for his lady, probably at a time when his passion was at its peak for he had not yet possessed her and, too, she was absent from his sight having left Naples for Sannio for a while where she lived. (Boccaccio, unlike Troilo, did not consummate his love until his lady's return.)

It appears strange that Boccaccio should have been granted amorous favors by a noblewoman, he being of common birth. However, they did have their illegitimate births in common, both being born of French mothers and Italian fathers. But they both had a love for literary art, and Maria was no doubt attracted to him and mused by him because of his literary talents and endeavors:

> "...neither Boccaccio nor his lady were wholly unmoved by literary and historical precedent and the Italian poet was encouraged to hope that a lady so far above him in social station might be led to comply with his wishes from a perception of the piquant parallelism between the relations in which he stood to her and those which the troubadours of old sustained to the lady of his affections. For, like the troubadours of old, Boccaccio was single, while his lady was married, stood beneath her in social rank, came as a stranger from afar to court her, and depended for success upon his skill in song."[6]

This is slightly romanticised by Griffin, for Boccaccio did not go from Florence to Naples with the intention of wooing Maria. As a matter of fact, he did not lay eyes on her until one Holy Saturday in church when, in honor of the occasion she, like Criseida wore black; and, Boccaccio, like Troilo, was pierced by Cupid's arrow and couldn't take his eyes from her. On the other hand, though, Maria did become his poetical muse and his inspiration.

The Filostrato "is the elaborate version of the story of Troy found in the Roman de Troie of the French trouvere Benoit de St. Maure and in the Historia Trojana of his Latin translator, the Sicilian judge, Guido delle Colonne. To both of these works Boccaccio had recourse, though he mentions neither by name ."[7]

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[6] Nathaniel Griffin, from the Introduction of the Filostrato of Giovanni Boccaccio (Philadelphia, 1929), p.24

[7] Ibid., p.24-25

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

But the above works dealt more with the actual war story, whereas Boccaccio (as well as Chaucer) was more interested in developing the romance between Troilo and Criseida.

It is generally agreed that Il Filostrato is a poem of Courtly Love. But I feel that it differs mainly from Chaucer's Troilus in that Boccaccio lacked Chaucer's delicacy and finesse. While Courtly Love was above all spiritual and, then, perhaps, physical, Boccaccio far outweighs the spiritual with his sensual interpretation of Troilo and Criseida's love. But this will be gone into later on. The fact still remains that Il Filostrato is basically and above all, a poem which follows the code of Courtly Love:

> "The poem also possesses an important cultural signigicance as exemplifying the well-recognized habit of late medieval writers of bringing, in so far as possible, older love stories of whatsoever provenience into conformity with the requirements of the contemporaneous code of Courtly Love." [8]

Actually, the characters of the Filostrato are altered from real life that is to say, they do not exactly resemble either Boccaccio or his mistres The reason for this may have been Boccaccio's wish to shield the true identity of his lady. Maria is of high and noble birth, her father being King Robert of Sicily and, her mother, the Countess of Aquino. Apart from her father, Calchas, we know nothing about Criseida's background, but are given to understand that her family was well-to-do, which cannot be mistaken since her cousin, Pandaro, is Troilo's most trusted friend. Too, we know that she was a lady highly esteemed in Trojan society:

> "... e da ciascuno amata
> che la conobbe fu ed onorata." (I, 15)

Also, Maria was not forced to leave Naples as was Criseida forced to leave Troy. She went to her mother's husband's estate in Sannio, possibly to test "the constancy of her lover's affections". [9] She, unlike Criseida, did return and gave herself to Boccaccio, although she left him a little while after for another lover. In this sense, both Maria and Criseida appear as sensual women and both were said to have possessed extreme beauty among other highly feminine qualities:

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[8] Griffin, op. cit., p. 1

[9] Ibid., p. 17

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

> "... e quante volte le belleze, i costumi, a qualunque altra cosa laude vole in donna di Criseida scritto troverete, di voi essere parlato potrete intendere ..."
> (Proemio Dell' Autore)

It is difficult to know if there was any Pandaro involved in Boccaccio's love affair, although as Kirby points out:

> "From the evidence at hand there is no way of knowing whether or not Boccaccio used a go-between to further his interests with Maria d' Aquino. However, we do know that the Filostrato is autobiographical, that Troilo and Criseida speak for Boccaccio and Maria. Does it seem unlikely then, especially since he had an intimate friend (Niccolò Acciauoli) that, having brought a third character into the story, he might have taken the suggestion from his own experience?" 10

From this reference, one is left with the impression that there was most probably a best friend who carried messages back and forth between the lovers.

But Il Filostrato is not about Criseida or Pandaro; nor is it about Troilo's and Criseida's love -- it is about Troilo and how he enjoyed Criseida's love and suffered from the absence of this affection:

> "ma per questo le scrissi, perchè la felicità veduta da alcuno, molto meglio si comprende quanta e qual sia la miseria sopravvenuta."
> (Proemio Dell' Autore)

Although the poem itself is about Troilo, it is a very personal document written directly to Maria -- here, we see Boccaccio, the troubadour at the feet of his lady, his "nobilissima donna". He declares himself a servant of Love since his youth and thus goes into a very typical question among lovers of the time and, perhaps, even today:

> "Uno giovane ferventemente ama una donna, della quale niuna altra cosa gli è conceduto della fortuna, se non il potere alcuna volta vederla o tal volta di lei ragionare, o seco stesso di lei dolcemente pensare. Qual' è adunque di queste tre cose di più diletto?"
> (Proemio Dell' Autore)

Since he had been spoiled by the sight of his lady, he thought that only thinking about her would be more than enough, the imagination being freer than reality, but soon the complete absence of his lady was to change his mind.

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[10] Kirby, op. cit., p. 116

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

> "Affermo adunque, bellissima donna, esser vero,
> che poscia che voi nella più granziosa stagione
> dell' anno dalla dilettevde citta di Napoli
> dipartendovi. e in Sannio andandone, agle
> occhi miei, più vostr angelico viso vaghi
> che d'altra cosa, mi toglieste subitamente
> quello che io per la vostra presenza doveva
> conoscere, non conoscendolo, per lo suo contrario
> prestamente mi fece conoscere, cisé per la
> privazione di quella; la quale tanto fuori
> d'ogni dovuto termine m'ha l'anima contristta, che assar apestamente posso comprendere,
> quanta fosse la letizia, allora poca de ma
> conosciuta, che mi veniva dalla vostra granziosa e
> bella vista."
>
> (Proemio Dell' Autore)

But, still, although he longs to see her, to speak to her, to describe her, and to draw her would give him relief and a bit of delight, still he withholds himself in order to save his lady's honor:

> "ma questo piacere viene mischiato con un disio
> ferventissimo, il quale tutti gli 1 altri sidii
> accende in tanta filamma di vederyi, che appena
> in me regger gli posso, che non mi tirino,
> postagià ogni debita onestà e ragionevole
> consiglio, colà dove voi dimorate; ma pur
> vinto dal volero il vostro onore più che la
> mia salute guardare, gli raffreno;"
>
> (Proemio Dell' Autore)

He ends with a plea to her not to forget that Troilo's sufferings are his sufferings; and all of Criseida's good qualities are her good qualities:

> "Nelle quali se avviene che leggiate, quante
> volto Troilo piangere e dolersi della partita
> di Criseida troverete, tante apertaments portrete
> comprendere e conoscere la mie medesime voci,
> le lagrime, i sospiri e l'angosce; e qualunque
> altra cosa laudevole in donna, di Criseida
> scritto troverete, di voi essere parlato potrete
> intendere ..."
>
> (Proemio Dell' Autore)

Thus, from the very beginning, Il Filostrato is a poem of Courtly Love — the poet suffers from the most beautiful lady's absence, but still doesn't attempt to see her or do anything indiscreet which could possibly dishonor her. He is devoted -- a servant of love -- and thus ends the Proemio in a prayer:

> "Il mio lungo sermone da sè medesimo chiede
> fine, e perciò dandoglielo, prego colui che
> nelle vostre mani ha posta la mia vita e la mia
> morte, che egli nel vostro cuore quello disio
> accenda, che solo esser può cagione della mia
> salute."
>
> (Proemio Dell' Autore)

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

Troilo

Troilo appears to us from the very beginning as a young dandy, very experienced and very proud that he knows what love is like -- more of a prison than a heavenly paradise. Knowing this, he can look quite objectively upon any lady and see both her good and bad points, while his friends are too love-struct to notice anything or anybody:

> "Troilo giva come soglion fare
> I giovinetti, or qua or là veggendo
> Per lo gran tempio, e co' compagni a stare;
> Or qui or quivi si giva ponendo,
> Ed ora questa ed or quella a lodare
> Incominciava, e tali riprendendo,
> Siccome quegli a cui non ne piacea
> Una pià ch' altra, e sciolto si godea.
>
> "Anzi talora in tal maniera andando,
> Veggendo alcun che fiso rimirava
> Alcuna donna seco sospirando,
> A' suoi compagni ridendo il mostrava,
> Dicendo: quel dolente ha dato bando
> Alla sua libertà, si gli gravava,
> Ed a colei l' ha messa tra le mani:
> Vedete ben s' e' suo pensier son vani."
> (I, 20-21)

Troilo has had one bad experience in love but blames it on his great folly -- mia gran follia -- that he came to know what love was -- questo maddetto fuoco (this accursed fire). Now, he prides himself in being able to be aloof from his friends and immune to love:

> "Or ne son fuor, mercè n' abbia colui
> Che fu di me pià ch' io stesso pietoso,
> Io dico Giove, iddio vero, da cui
> Viene ogni grazio, e vivommi in riposo:
> E benchè di veder mi giovi altrui,
> Io pur mi guardo dal corso ritroso,
> E rido volentier degl' impacciati,
> Non so s' io dico amanti o smemorati."
> (I, 24)

At the same time, Troilo cannot deny that love didn't give him great satisfaction:

> "E s' io dicessi che amor cortesia
> Non mi facesse, ed allegrezza e giuoco
> Non mi donasse, certo i' mentiria"
> (I, 23)

But Troilo is a selfish man, spoiled by his princely position, and thus was not willing to suffer as the other young men for something that could ultimately bring only the greatest good:

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

"Ma Tutto il bene insieme accolto, poco
Fu o niente, rispetto a' martirj,
Volendo amare, ed a' tristi sospiri."
(I, 23)

This pride and egoism in Troilo is unforgivable in love, according to both the Christian and pagan norms. In any Court of Love, Troilo would be a doomed man for his blasphemy against love. And, it is love itself which punishes Troilo -- Troilo, a mortal, who thinks he is above and untouchable by the heavenly spirits:

"O cecità delle mondane menti,
Come ne seguon sovente gli effetti
Tutti contrarii a' nostri intendimenti!
Troil va ora mordendo i difetti,
E' solleciti amor dell' altre genti,
Senza pensare in che il ciel s' affretti
Di recar lui il quale amor trafisse
Più ch' alcun altro, pria del tempio uscisse.
(I, 25)

What is rather ironic, though, is that it is not only Criseida's beauty and dignity which attract him, but also her disdainful aloofness -- Troilo's great fault:

"Piacque quell' atto a Troilo, al tornare
Ch' ella fe' in sè, alquanto sdegnosetto,
Quasi dicesse: non ci si può stare;"
(I, 28)

But still love does not prevent him from thinking of himself and his pride and, thus, he says nothing as he leaves the temple. His silence is not to keep Criseida's name unmarred, but to prevent his friends from mocking him. He, who, just shortly before, had mocked Love so disdainfully

"Tenendo bene il suo disio nascoso,
Per quel che poco avanti avea parlato
Non fosse in lui rivolto l' oltraggioso
Parlar d' altrui, se forse conosciuto
Fosse l' ardor nel quale era caduto."
(I, 31)

Not only did he hide his feelings but he continued to laugh at Love so that none of his companions would suspect any change in him:

"Per me' celar l' amorosa ferita
Di quei ch' amavan gran pezza gabbossi"
(I, 32)

Once alone, Troilo's meditations on Criseida begin and will continu throughout the whole poem. It is at these moments especially that we observe how Troilo forgets his pride little by little -- his suit of iron is gone and now he is clad in simple pilgrim's clothes –– his pilgrimage being to worship Criseida. Not only does he praise Criseida's beauty, which Boccaccio describes as being angelic:

"Sì bella e sì angelica vedere
Era, che non parea cosa mortale"
(I, 11)

but, also, he praises her noble nature which is very important, for he could not love beneath himself (both according to his own code and the code of Love) as a lady must always be looked up to in order to be served and adored by her knight:

"Lodava molto gli atti e la statura,
E lei di cuor grandissimo stimava,
Ne' modi e nell' andare, e gran ventura
Di cotal donna amar si riputave"
(I, 34)

Troilo looks upon her as a goddess and prays, ironically, to Love (his unknown tormentor) to help him woo Criseida and to win her:

"Tu stai negli occhi suoi, signor verace,
Siccome in luogo degno a tua virtute:
Perché, se 'l mio servir punto ti piace,
Da que' ti prego impetri la salute
Dell' anima, la qual prostrata giace
Sotto i tuoi piè, sì la ferir l' acute
Saette che allora le gittasti,
Che di costei 'l bel viso mi mostrasti."
(I, 39)

Like all lovers at that time, he became pale and sickly; his only cure could be Criseida's attentions bestowed on him:

"Nè del di trapassava nessun' ora
Che mille volte seco non dicesse:
O chiara luce che 'l cuor m' innamora,
O Criseida bella, iddio volesse,
Che 'l tuo valor che 'l viso mi scolora
Per me alquanto a pietà ti movesse:
Null' altra fuor che tu lieto può farmi,
Tu sola se' colei che puoi atarmi."
(I, 43)

He lacked sleep and appetite:

"Aveagli già amore il sonno tolto,
E minuito il cibo ..."
(I, 47)

On the other hand, though, Love made him a great hero:

"E per amor, se 'l ver dice la storia,
Divenne in arme sì feroce e forte,
Che gli Greci il temean come la morte."
(I, 46)

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

Since only good comes from Love, Troilo became a better man:

"Ed avvegna ch' el fosse di reale
Sangue, e volendo ancor molto potesse;
Benigno si faceva a tutti eguale,
Come che alcun talvolta nol valesse;
Cosî voleva amor, che tutto vale,
Che el per compiacere altrui facesse;
Superbia, invidia, ed avarizia in ira
Aveva, ed ognun dietro si tira."
(III, 93)

Through all this, Troilo realises his mistake in having once mocked love, but never does he dream of the terrible repercussions which are destined for him once he has tasted true bliss. For the time being, he knows that his suffering is unbearable and that he fears not Love but Criseida -- that her heart may be of stone, or that she may love another:

"Onde quand' egli aveva spazio punto
Seco d' amor sen giva a lamentare,
Fra sè dicendo: Troilo, or se' giunto,
Che ti solevi degli altri gabbare,
Nessun ne fu mai quanto tu consunto
Per mal saperti dall' amor guardare;
Or se' nel laccio preso, il qual biasmavi
Tanto negli altri, e da te non guardavi."
(I, 50)

Not only does Troilo fear suffering but he also fears the mockery of his friends, as well as the contempt of the king and the lords (for whom the war is of great importance) who would most probably look down upon him if he were to display his emotions. Thus, Triolo, although greatly humbled, still looks upon Love as being trivial because he still fears rejection and insults:

"Che se il mio mal, del qual nessun s' è accorto
Ancora, se si scuopre, fia ripiena
La vita mia di mille ingiurie al giorno,
E più ch' altro sarò detto musorno."
(I, 54)

His plea throught the poem is to Criseida, to accept him so as to free him from his suffering, lest he kill himself:

"Io tornerò, se tu fai donna questo,
Qual fiore in nuovo prato in primavera,
Nè mi fia poscia l' aspettar molesto,
Nè il vederti disdegnosa o altera;
E se t' è grave, almeno a me, che presto
Ad ogni tuo piacer son, grida fera
Ucciditi, che io 'l farò di fatto,
Credendoti piacere in cotal atto."
(I, 56)

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

Troilo is always careful to keep his love a secret, not only to protect himself but also to protect Criseida's honor. That he confides in Pandaro is not necessarily an offense against the code of Love, for he needed some one to turn to in his distress -- a confident, which in the Middle Ages was quite a common habit. But, at the same time, it appears that Troilo is afraid to think for himself, and he wants some one else to take the reins in this affair. As soon as Pandaro has promised to help him, Troilo does not hesitate putting everything into his hands to be arranged:

"Pandaro mio, io mi ti raccomando,
Tu savio, tu amico, tu sai tutto
Ciò che bisogni a dar fine al mio lutto."
(II, 33)

The same thing occurs later on with Criseida -- it is she who arranges their first meeting at the urging of Pandaro:

"Quando vuoi tu che ti venga a parlare?
Tiriamo ormai a capo questa tela."
(II, 142)

At this, Criseida names a day and only hopes that the delay will not distress Troilo nor cause him too much anxiety:

"Questa tardanza non gli sia molesta."
(II, 143)

While it is normal in the code of Love for the lady to have the upper hand, Troilo appears to be completely incapable of anything but moaning around when not with Criseida or in the battlefield. The only time he shows any animation is when he hears from his lady. He hangs on to her every word, but never directly taking the initiative where she is concerned; however, later on, he lets her know that he is willing and ready whenever she wants his presence. Even his first letter to Criseida was not written on his own initiative but on Pandaro's inspiration:

"A ciò Pandaro disse: se ti piace
Fa' quel ch' io dico, e poi mi lascia fare."
(II, 94)

Troilo's first intent is to serve Criseida and nothing more, unless she should later accept to love him also:

"E vie maggior se per sua lunga cura
Potesse far, se quanto egli essa amava
Cotanto appresso da lei fosse amato,
O per servente almen non rifiutato."
(I, 34)

But, as time passes, he wishes to see her more and more, and his ardor is more impatient than he thought it possible to be -- no longer do glimpses of her in public places suffice:

> "Ella mi guarda, e soffera ch' io guati
> Onestamente lei; questo dovrebbe
> Essere assai a' miei disii infiammati;
> Ma l' appetito cupido vorrebbe
> Non so che più ..."
> (II, 87)

Now, Troilo wants to spend some time alone with her -- to enjoy not only the spiritual pleasures of Love but also the physical pleasures:

> "Or foss' io teco una notte di verno,
> Cento cinquanta poi stessi in inferno."
> (II, 88)

While physical intimacies were not taboo among lovers of the time, still they usually took place after a very long courtship and, then, might only include a kiss from the lady. Never is a lady to succumb to the will of the man too quickly.

Troilo, all through the affair and even after Criseida's departure, is loyal to her, although he has, at times, his doubts as to whether she will return, and because of the famous dream of the boar, he also doubts her loyalty. Love causes his death in the end, but it is not the same beautiful Love that first inflamed his whole being -- it was a love mixed with jealousy, resentment, and hatred gnawing away at his heart until they all outweigh pure sentiment. But, once Troilo is sure of Criseida's disloyalty, he realizes how useless his suffering was and that not all women are worthy of such attention:

> "Chi crederà omai a nessun giuro,
> Chi ad amor, chi a femmina omai,
> Ben riguardando il tuo falso spergiuro?"
> (VIII, 13)

By having Troilo find the brooch he gave to Criseida on Diomede's garment, Love is throwing its last stone at Troilo:

> "Grandi furo i lamenti e 'l rammarchio,
> Ma pur fortuna suo corso facea;
> Colei amava con tutto il disio
> Diomede, e Troilo piangea;
> Diomede si lodave d' Iddio,
> E Troilo per contario si dolea."
> (VIII, 25)

All Troilo could think of was death -- his own and that of Diomede's. But he did not succeed in killing his foe although they met often in battle, for it was Achilles who mercilessly killed him, thus ending Troilo's punishment:

> "Cotal fine ebbe il mal concetto amore
> Di Troilo in Criseida, e cotale
> Fin' ebbe il miserabile dolore
> Di lui, al qual non fu mai altro eguale;
> Cotan fin' ebbe il lucido splendore
> Che lui servava al solio reale;
> Cotla fin' ebbe la speranza vana
> Di Troilo in Criseida villana."
> (VIII, 28)

Troilo, although a true knight and a faithful lover, was never doomed to be happy once he laid eyes on Criseida. The reason for his suffering was all due to his extreme pride, which, not even love actually managed to break down, for he realized that he had not chosen a woman worthy of his love.

Criseida

As already mentioned, Boccaccio identified only Criseida's good characteristics with the person of Maria. He is very careful to mention this both in the beginning and in the end of the poem, comparing them in beauty and virtue, but, at last, when Criseida's true deceiving character has been revealed, he loses no time in assuring young men that all ladies are not so ruthless in character. Hope still lies in the character of ladies of true nobility, meaning Maria:

> "Perfetta donna ha più fermo disire
> D' essere amata, e d'amar si diletta;
> Discerne e vede ciò ch' è da fuggire,
> Lascia ed elegge, provvede ed aspetta
> Le promission: queste son da seguire:
> Ma non si vuol però scegliere in fretta,
> Che non son tutte saggie, perché sieno
> Più attempate, e quelle vaglion meno."
> (VIII, 32)

Criseida, I think, is a bit of a disappointment so far as character goes. She follows very carefully the code of her society as well as the code of Love, but as soon as she feels she has observed them enough she casts them to the wind and gives way to her more sensual and natural side.

This is the true Criseida and I cannot help but feel that the virtuous side of her character is bursting to be set free.

Boccaccio describes her as being modest and wise, as well as an angelic beauty even clad in her black widow's robes:

> "Tra' quali fu di Calcas la figliula
> Criseida, la qual' era in bruna vesta,
> La qual, quanto la rosa la viola
> Di bletà vince, cotanto era questa
> Più ch' altra donna bella, ed essa sola
> Più ch'altra facea lieta la gran festa,
> Stando nel tempio assai presso alla porta,
> Negli atti altiera, piacente ed accorta."
> (I, 19)

Her first words when she hears of Troilo's love are modest, timid and sincerely meant:

> "Criseida alquanto arrossi vergognosa
> Udendo ciò che Pandaro diceva,
> E rassembrava a mattutina rosa;
> Poi tai parole a Pandaro moveva:
> Non ti far beffe di me, che gioiosa
> D' ogni tuo ben sarei; poco doveva
> Avere a far colui a cui io piacqui,
> Che mai più non m' avvenne poi ch' io nacqui."
> (II, 38)

Although later on, Criseida permits herself complete amorous and physical freedom, she is, above all, a prudent woman -- she does not go into this affair blindly nor on a whim; she knows quite well what she is doing and is aware, too, that she will most probably surrender to Troilo in the end. But, first, she seeks to test his sincerity -- she is coy and not easily obtainable for, above all, and, most important, is her honor, which she will not risk marring even for the love of a prince. This, she makes quite clear to Pandaro:

> "Ma come tu conoscer chiaro dei,
> Che le vaghezze si trovano spesse
> Chente egli ha ora, e quattro dì o sei
> Durano, e passan poscia di leggiero;
> Cambiando amor cosi cambia il pensiero.
>
> "Però mi lascia tal vita menare,
> Chente fortuna apparecchiato m' have;
> Egli troverà ben donna da amare
> Al piacer suo, e umile e soave;
> A me onesta si convien di stare:"
> (II, 50-51)

But, at the same time, Criseida is a very feminine woman and realizes that the years are slipping away; she doesn't enjoy the prospect of growing old without having really lived. In her musings, she falls into the same trap laid before most beautiful and virtuous women -- temptation. Everybody else is having an affair so why shouldn't she as long as she is discreet.

> "La giovinezza mia si fugge ognora,
> Debbol' io perder si miseramente?
> Io non conosco in questa terra ancora
> Veruna senza amante, e la pià gente,
> Com' io conosco e veggo, s'innamora,
> Ed io mi perdo il tempo per niente?
> E come gli altri far non è peccato,
> E non può esser da alcun biasimato."
> (II, 70)

Too, she is tempted by Troilo's good looks, his youth, and social standing:

> "Di real sangue e di sommo valore
> E Pandar tuo cugin tel loda tanto."
> (II, 72)

If she accepts Troilo as her lover, she will have the advantages of a married woman and, at the same time, be able to keep her freedom. She rejoices in this for she is a sensual creature:

> "Ed ora non è tempo da marito,
> E se pur fosse, la sua libertade
> Servare è troppo pià savio partito;
> L'amor che vien da si fatta amistade
> È Sempre dagli amanti pià gradito;
> E sia quanto vuol grande la beltade,
> Che a'mariti tosto non rincresca,
> Vaghi d'avere ogni di cosa fresca.
>
> "L'acqua furtiva, assai pià dolce cosa
> È che il vin con abbondanza avuto:
> Cosi d'amor la gioia, che ns
> Trapassa assai, del sempre mai tenuto
> Marito in braccio ... "
> II, 73-74

Although Criseida naturally doubts Troilo's sincerity at first, Pandaro is always able to encourage her just enough. She never rejects Troilo until after her departure from Troy; this is due to her own weakness, not that of Troilo.

Like most lovers of the time, Criseida falls in love with Troilo without ever having met him or having exchanged words with him. Pandaro's words are enough to instill the seed of love within her breast, although she attempts to ignore it, to banish it from her mind:

"Dunque cotali amor lasciali stare
A cui e' piaccion: ed appresso il detto
Incominciava forte a sospirare,
Nè si poteva già dal casto petto
Il bel visi di Troilo cacciare"
(II, 78)

But, once she has looked upon him as a man who loves her (when he passed under her window), she loved him also and desired him:

"E quella tiepidezza che intra due
Criseida tenea, sen fuggi via,
Seco lodando le maniere sue,
Gli atti piacevoli e la cortesia;
E si subitamente presa fue,
Che sopra ogni altro bene lui disia,
E duolle forte del tempo perduto,
Che 'I suo amor non avea conosciuto."
(II, 83)

Since lovers at the time never, or hardly ever, thought of marriage and spending the rest of their lives together, they did not have to look at each other from a subjective point of view, but more objective, judging each other from what they had heard and seen. Both Troilo and Criseida fall in love in this manner.

After being smitten by Cupid's arrow, Criseida, for the sake of the game, continues her coy act -- but it is purely an act. When Pandaro brings her Troilo's letter she is all virtue and begs her cousin to take temptation away, but it doesn't take more than seven lines from Pandaro to convince her to read it, which she does most eagerly at that:

"Criseida sorrise lui udendo,
E quelle prese, e messesele in seno:
Quando avrò agio, poi a lui dicendo,
Le vederò come saprò appieno;
Se io fo men che ben questo facendo,
Il non poter del tuo piacer far meno
Me n' è cagion; Iddio dal cielo il vegga,
Ed alla mia semplicità provvegga.

"Partissi Pandar poi glie l' ebbe date,
Ed essa vaga molto di vedere
Quel che dicesser, sue cagion trovate,
L' altre compagne sue lasciò a sedere,
Ne gi nella sua camera ... "
(II, 113-114)

The letter instills an intense longing in Criseida's heart to see Troilo:

"... or foss' io nelle braccia
Dolce di lui, stretta a faccia a faccia!"
(II, 117)

BOĞAZİÇİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ KÜTÜPHANESİ

BOCCACCIO - HIS FILOSTRATO

And thus it is that the right words can bind one person to another and thus the code of Courtly Love plays on a woman's greatest weakness -- her vanity -- for a lover never ceases to praise his lady and she knows that as her servant, the knight's destiny is in her hands. While Troilo's letters are always constant, Criseida's letters change from sweetness to a bit of cruelty, but they are always coquettish.

Criseida is caught within the snares of two dogmas: that of Christianity, which demands her to be virtuous and chaste; and, that of Love, which tells her there is nothing wrong in having a lover as long as her love is pure and sincere. In her reply to Troilo's letter she is still a devout Christian for truly she fears Hell's fire:

"Ed io nel ver, come ch' io vaglia poco,
Vie più che mille volte mi potesti
E puoi aver per tua, se 'l crudel fuoco
Non m' arda, il che son certa non vorresti;
Nè dico più, se non ch' io prego Iddio
Che ne contenti il tuo e 'l mio disio."
(II, 127)

Eventually pagan Love does win over Criseida's heart, but not until after many moans and utterings against Love have been heard. In a sense, she feels herself free from all guilt for she is following her male cousin's advice:

"Io vorrei esser morta il giorno ch' io
Qui nella loggia tanto t' ascoltai;
Tu mi mettesti nel cuore un disio,
Ch' appena credo ch' el n' esca giammai;
E che mi fia cagion dell' onor mio
Perdere, o lassa, e d' infiniti guai;
Or più non posso, poichè t' è in piacere,
Disposta sono a fare il tuo volere."
(II, 139)

When Boccaccio's couple finally does meet, unlike Chaucer's, they hardly speak but immediately fall into each other's embrace:

"Non si partiron prima di quel loco,
Che mille volte insieme s' abbracciaro
Con dolce festa e con ardente gioco,
Ed altrettante vie più si baciaro,
Siccome que' ch' ardevan d' ugual foco,
E che l'altro molto aveva caro;
Ma come l'accoglienze si finiro,
Salir le scale e'n camera ne giro."
(III, 30)

Naturally, the couple's grief is great when they learn that Criseida is to be sent to the Greek camp. Troilo, because of his vow to always guard her honor and to keep their love a secret, is helpless in any attempt to keep her in Troy. It is at this time that the code of Love becomes binding and unbearable for both parties. The irony of it is that if they had not observed the rules, although they risked living in shame and as outcasts, they still would have had each other. But, Fortune made of Troilo a man faithful to his word -- he is a man of noble heart and spirit. Criseida, while still in Troy, suffers greatly from the King's decision. Not only does she dislike the Greeks, but likewise she has no feelings for her father. Because she is forced among a strange people, one probably pities her more and feels heavier the weight of her grief, for truly she is not selfish but suffers more for Troilo than for herself:

> "Grave m' è la partita, Iddio il vede,
> Ma più m' è veder Troilo afflitto,
> E incomportabil molto, per mia fede,
> Tanto ch' io ne morrò senza rispitto
> E morir vo' senza sperar mercede,
> Poiché 'l mio Troilo veggio sì trafitto."
> (IV, 105)

When Troilo comes to her for their last night together the thought of her forthcoming departure is too much for Criseida to endure and she faints; Troilo, the true lover, is about to kill himself, thinking her to be dead. (Life would have no meaning for him without her.) However, she regains consciousness in the 'knick' of time. However, when the actual time of separation comes the next day, it is Criseida who is the stronger of the two. It is she who comforts him the night before and promises to come back within ten days, no matter what the risk. That she did not keep her promise is something else; at the time it was made, it was vowed in all sincerity. Once alone in the Greek camp, Criseida has nothing to do all day but weep and long for Troilo. Too, she is afraid, being in a completely new atmosphere and among people whom she considers her enemies. Thus, she is in a weak state of mind and Diomede arrives at the opportune moment, the fourth day, to woo her. He begins by instilling more fear within her, telling her that Troy is doomed; finally he pledges her his loyalty. Once again

Criseida's vanity is flattered. She had managed to have two princes at her feet, promising to love and protect her. What need for her to go back to doomed Troilo when she can live in peace and protection among the Greeks?

"Egli era grande e bel della persona,
Giovane fesco e piacevole assai,
E forte e fier siccome si ragiona,
E parlante quant' altro Greco mai,
E ad amor la natura aveva prona;
Le quai cose Criseida ne' suoi guai,
Partito lui, seco venne pensando,
D' accostarsi o fuggirsi dubitando."
(VI, 33)

Criseida's great and unforgivable sin is her infidelity to Troilo; not only is she unfaithful but adds to her crime by giving a gift offered to her by Troilo, to Diomede, her new love. It is ironic that all through the poem it is she who feared Troilo to be insincere and yet she, not Troilo, betrays their love. It is Troilo who suffers and who waits daily on the ramparts for her return; it is Troilo who falls ill in her absence and who eventually seeks death as his only escape from reality. Boccaccio blames Fortune for Troilo's unhappy affair, for it was Fortune that led him to love such a fickle woman.

"Ma gli atti tuoi altieri e signorili,
Il valore e 'l parlar cavalleresco
I tuoi costumi più ch' altra gentili,
Ed il vezzoso tuo sdegno donnesco,
Per lo quale apparien d' esserti vili
Ogni appetito ed oprar popolesco,
Qual tu mi se', o donna mia possente,
Con amor mi ti miser nella mente."
(IV, 165)

Irony again steps in, for Boccaccio robs Criseida in the end of all her noble qualities in speaking generally of the unworthy women who inhabit this world:

"Giovane donna é mobile, e vogliosa
E negli amanti molti, e sua bellezza
Estima più ch' allo specchio, e pomposa
Ha vanagloria di sua giovinezza;
La qual quanto piacevole e vezzosa
È più, contanto più seco l' apprezza;
Virtù non sente né conoscimento,
Volubil sempre come foglia al vento.

"E Molte ancor perché d' alto lignaggio
Discese sono, e sanno annoverare
Gli avoli lor, si credon che vantaggio
Deggiano aver dall' altre nell' amare;
E pensan che costume sia oltraggio,

Torcere il naso e dispettose andare;
Questo schifate, ed abbiatele a vili,
Che bestie son, non son donne gentili."
(VIII, 30-31)

Pandaro

The character of Pandaro appears in neither of Boccaccio's main sources (St-Maure and Colonne), although, according to Kirby, he may have got his inspiration from numberless other tales, as the go-between was quite a common figure in the literature of the time.

Pandaro appears to be young and of a good family:

"... un troian giovinetto,
D'alto lignaggio e molto coraggioso."
(II, 1)

Pandaro is the most loyal of friends and, from the very beginning, he tries to help Troilo in his love affair and it is truly thanks to him that the couple ever meets:

"Io vo' con teco partir queste pene,
Se dar non posso a tua noia conforto,
Perciocchè coll' amico si convene
Ogni cosa partir, noia e diporto:
Ed io mi credo che tu sappia bene
Se io t' ho amato a diritto ed a torto,
E s' io farei per te ogni gran fatto,
E fosse che volesse ed in qual atto."
(II, 5)

Pandaro always feels that he is doing the right thing, and that Troilo's love will be good for Criseida who leads such a solitary life; after all, only good can come from Love. He probably pursues this affair more ardently than another friend would because he has been such a failure in Love himself and does not want his friend to make the same mistakes:

"Io ho amato svenuratamente,
Ed amo ancora per lo mio peccato."
(II, 11)

He never takes the matter lightly. He is a true cavalier and insists upon strict observance of the code of Love. He believes that the two are worthy of one another:

"Tu se' di lei ed ella è di te degno,
Ed io ci adoprerò tutto 'l mio ingegno."
(II, 24)

He insists upon complete secrecy for the sake of Criseida's honor:

"Ma perciocchè 'l disio s' è impedito

All' operare, e tutto simigliante
Non conosciuto, parmi per partito
Poter pigliar, che ciascheduno amante
Possa seguire il suo alto appetito,
Sol che sia savio in fatto ed in sembiante,
Senza Vergogna alcuna di coloro
A cui tien la vergogna e l' onor loro."
(II, 26)

Pandaro is a schemer; he knows women and their desires:

"Io credo certo, ch' ogni donna in voglia
Viva amorosa, e null' altro l' affrena
Che tema di vergogna; e se a tal doglia,
Onestamente medicina piena
Si può donar, folle è chi non la spoglia,
E poco parmi gli cuoca la pena.
La mia cugina è vedova, e disia;
E se 'l negasse nol gliel crederia."
(II, 27)

Not only does he know their desires, but also how to get them to relent:

"Troverò modo con mie parolette"
(II, 23)

Pandaro is the only one of the three who is immediately quite open about how he conceives the affair -- that it will not be a simple friendship but a complete and intimate love and he does not hesitate in leading Criseida down this path:

"... deh dimmi, quando
tu vuoi ch' ei venga a te? cui e' più prezza
Che non fa il ciel, e dimmi come, e dove;
Non voler vincer tutte le tue prove."
(II, 137)

Pandaro's whole character in the poem evolves around his loyalty to Troilo. He does not forgive Criseida for her deception, and during Troilo's most trying moments does not leave his side but prepares to die with him if necessary. While this has nothing to do directly with Courtly Love still, without Pandaro's loyalty, the course of the poem would have probably been quite different. He is the main tie between the two lovers, and it is he who keeps the poem going and active.

CHAUCER - HIS TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

Chaucer lived in England during a period of social turmoil. Feudal institutions and the Church were losing their grip, and the people were losing their faith in the "old truths":

> "During the age of Chaucer England passed through the first stages of her long journey out of mediavalism and came to the foothills of the modern world." [1]

Troilus and Criseyde, "the only one of Chaucer's longer works which he brought to full completion", [2] is essentially medieval:

> "It is borrowed from an Italian, and not a French, source; and the Italian source is, in many respects, a Renaissance poem; but then Chaucer has taken from his model only what is still medieval, or what can be medievalized." [3]

The basic medieval element in the poem is that of Courtly Love whose rules Chaucer follows quite closely. But at the same time, while keeping in line with the Middle Ages, Chaucer adapts bits and pieces of Renaissance thought and ideas. According to Root, "the medieval mind has its gaze fixed primarily on the spiritual and the abstract, that of the Renaissance on the sensuous and the concrete." [4] One finds both the spiritual and the sensual in the lovers' outlook on their love, especially after once it had reached its climax.

It is a known fact that Boccaccio is Chaucer's main source, although this is never mentioned in the poem:

> "Many of the details which Chaucer has included in his Troilus, particularly in the last two books, were derived directly from the sources of the Filostrato. Since most of them are to be found in Benoit's Roman de Troie and Guido's Historia Trojana, it is very difficult to determine the extent of the debt which Chaucer owes to each of these authorities; but it is clear that he was acquainted with both works, and it is probable that he consulted both of them while writing the Troilus." [5]

Unlike Boccaccio, Chaucer did not write subjectively; his poetry was not the result of the inspiration of a certain experience: His inspirations are mainly his creative and poetic powers; Chaucer is basically a story-teller, but one who perfects his style, his language and his characters; Chaucer goes deeply into the story and analyzes and develops his characters. In a sense one feels that Chaucer is writing about people, perhaps friends, whom he knew very well; he feels a certain closeness and sympathie toward his characters; he is the Peeping-Tom looking through the windows, listening at the key-holes. One has this impression because he goes so deeply into what the characters are thinking.

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[1] Robert Dudley French, A Chaucer Handbook (New York, 1941), p. 1.
[2] Ibid. p. 191.
[3] Lewis, op. cit., p. 177.
[4] Robert Kilburn Root, The Poetry of Chaucer (Cambridge, 1922), p. 3.
[5] French, ob. cit., p. 185.

While the characters are basically medieval, Chaucer's analysis of them is modern. His characters are not stereotypes of his age but definite individuals:

That Chaucer was torn between the old and the modern is shown in the Troilus. Although basically a medieval romance founded on the code of Courtly Love, Chaucer is influenced slightly by the Renaissance, by its ideas of individualism. Although the lovers live in a strict society where public knowledge of their affair would have led to disaster, still they seem to live, while together at least, in an ideal world of their own, where love and beauty and truth and innocence walk hand-in-hand. All bad and ugly elements of the story are rooted in outside sources, in the society in which they lived. Both Troilus and Criseyde are victims of their own destiny and nothing save separation and death can rescue them and bring them back to their Christian, medieval society.

Generally speaking, Chaucer follows the strict rules of Courtly Love: his lovers are starry-eyed, the lady is difficult to obtain. Hopelessly in love, both suffer while apart, long for death or their next meeting which seems to be an eternity away; both praise the god of Love and both guard the secrecy of their love with their lives. Chaucer, like Boccaccio, deviates from Courtly Love in that Criseyde is happy living alone, being her own mistress, whereas a lady of distinction of the Middle Ages would normally be married after a certain period of mourning; while she wears widow's garb, it is clear that inwardly she no longer mourns her husband's death, but has become quite accustomed to her position. We miss the horror and fear the lovers would have had, had there existed a jealous spouse. Their main concern with the outside world is to keep Criseyde's name and virtue above reproach and scandal.

Although derived from historical sources, Chaucer, like Boccaccio, deals little with the actual story of Troy -- the lovers have his absolute attention. He mentions all the famous names of the war, but advises us if we care to know any more about the actual history, to turn to Homer and others:

"But the Troyane gestes, as they felle,
In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dyte,
Who-so that can, may rede hem as they wryte"
(I, 21)

Chaucer announces his intention in writing the poem immediately:

"The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,
That was the king Priamus sone of Troye,
In lovinge, how his aventures fellen
Fro wo to wele, and after out of Ioye,
My purpos is, er that I parte fro ye."
(I, 1-5)

But his purpose does not end with the tale -- there is a lesson to be learned from Troilus' experience and all lovers should heed it:

"But natheless, if this may doon gladnesse
To any lover, and his cause avayle,
Have he my thank, and myn be this travayle!"
(I, 19-21)

The reason for his writing the poem to lovers? Because they all, at one time or another, must naturally have suffered:

"But ye loveres, that bathen in gladnesse,
If any drope of pitee in yow be,
Remembreth yow on passed hevinesse
That ye han felt ..."
(I, 22-25)

This is Chaucer's first reflection on Love as seen through the medieval eye.

Fortune and the divinity of Love are the causes of all that happens; Love takes revenge on the proud, arrogant and mocking Troilus in the person of the good and lovely Criseyde. Love struck the heart of Troilus and took care of the rest. Here there is a mixture of Christian ideals and paganism quite common in Courtly Love. To be proud and arrogant were considered sins by the medieval church; to mock the gift of a god (in this case, Love), was an equally bad sin among the pagan religions. Thus, Troilus was twice guilty, but it is the pagan god who sees to immediate punishment:

> "At which the god of love gan loken rowe
> Right for despyt, and shoop for to ben wroken;
> He kidde anoon his bowe nas not broken;
> For sodeynly he hit him at the fulle;
> And yet as proud a pekok can he pulle.
>
> "O blinde world, O blinde entencioun!
> How oft falleth al the effect contraire
> Of surquidrye and foul presumpcioun;
> For caught is proud, and caught is debonaire."
> (I, 206-214)

Although Troilus speaks out of ignorance (for later it is clear that he has never had anything serious to do with women), still he must suffer for saying to his friends, among other things:

> "O verrey foles! nyce and blinde be ye;"
> (I, 202)

If Troilus had ever before loved, he would have known Love's powers and respected and feared them too much. Once struck by Eros' arrow, Troilus realizes he will serve the god of Love through Criseyde:

> "And to the god of love thus seyde he
> With pitous voys, 'O lord, now youres is
> My spirit, which that oughte youres be.
> Yow thank I, lord, that han me brought to this;
> But whether goddesse or womman, y-wis,
> She be, I noot, which that ye do me serve;
> But as hir man I wole ay live and sterve."
> (I, 421-427)

In the very beginning Troilus believes Fortune to be his foe, and it is Pandarus who persuades him that Fortune is changeable. Troilus' first impression was the right one, for it was Love that brought them together and gave them so much happiness; and cruel Fortune which separates the unhappy pair, but without their understanding what they have done wrong:

> "Than seyde he thus, 'Fortune! allas the whyle!
> What have I doon, what I thus a-gilt?
> How mightestow for reuthe me bigyle?
> Is ther no grace, and shal I thus be spilt?
> Shal thus Criseyde awey, for that thou wilt?
> Allas! how maystow in thyn herte finde
> To been to me thus cruel and unkinde?
>
> "Have I thee nought honoured al my lyve,
> As thou wel wost, above the goddes alle?"
> (IV, 260-268)

But, according to Christianity, if one suffers and pays for one's sins on earth, he is recompensed in death. And, so it is with Troilus, for as he travels through the spheres on his way to heaven, he cannot help but look down and laugh at the human sufferings in search of happiness:

"And doun from thennes faste he gan avyse
This litel spot of erthe, that with the see
Enbraced is, and fully gan despyse
This wreeched world, and held al vanitee
To respect of the pleyn felicitee
That is in hevene above;"
(V, 1814-1819

Thus, the poem ends on a Christian tune, believing in the beauties of life after death and mocking the most highly-held of all cults -- Love. Troilus has become an individual, he no longer thinks according to the human codes of society presented to him from the time of his birth by his fellow-men, but according to the immortal code of the Christian God.

I feel that religion and Fortune are the basis of the poem. It is Christianity which keeps the couple apart, but paganism along with a strong belief in the god of Love and in Fortune (destiny) bring the two together.

Looking at the poem as a whole and from the point of view of Fortune, I see it thus: Troilus is Fortune's offender; Criseyde is Fortune's trap; and, Pandarus, Fortune's enticer who leads the accursed to his final ruin.

Troilus

The subject of the poem, as already mentioned, is Troilus; it was he who started the whole ensuing affair from the time he saw Criseyde in the temple:

"And up-on cas bifel, that thorugh a route
His eye perced, and so depe it wente,
Til on Criseyde it smoot, and ther it stente.

"And sodeynly he wex ther-with astoned,
And gan hire bet biholde in thrifty wyse:
'O mercy, god!' thoughte he, 'wher hastow woned,
That art so fair and goodly to devyse?'
Ther-with his herte gan to sprede and ryse,"
(I, 271-278)

Troilus did not lose this feeling of Love for Criseyde until his death and then all was literally lost. Even when he knew himself to have been betrayed Troilus' love did not falter, although it was mixed with jealousy and resentment. At all times Troilus was a true lover in the Courtly fashion.

From the very beginning he regards her as 'hoolly' and above him. His only thought is to be able to serve her holy image in order that he may feel himself nearer to her and thus perhaps occasionally see her:

> "Thus gan he make a mirour of his minde,
> In which he saugh al hoolly hir figure;
> And that he wel coude in his herte finde,
> It was to him a right good aventure
> To love swich oon, and if he dide his cure
> To serven hir, yet mighte he falle in grace,
> Or elles, for oon of hir servaunts pace."
> (I, 365-371)

Future unhappiness is the last of his thoughts, knowing that only good could possibly come from Love since Love is such a godly phenomenon itself. He accepts that he will suffer, but all along thinks that he will be a good enough servant to the god of Love who will in this way help him to obtain at least Criseyde's slightest attention. By doing this he is becoming an initiate of a sort into the cult of Love. Once within the clutches of Love, only death can free a true servant.

As said, much good comes from Love, but also much suffering. All through the poem we find Troilus throwing himself on his bed and lamenting his bad fortune in not yet being loved by Criseyde, or not being able to see her:

> "... and called ever in his compleynte
> Hir name for to tellen hir his wo,
> Til neigh that he in salte teres dreynte.
> Al was for nought, she herde nought his pleynte;
> And whan that he bithoughte on that folye,
> A thousand fold his wo gan multiplye.
> (I, 541-546)

Next, we find him crying over a letter which he is writing to Criseyde:

> "And with his salte teres gan he bathe
> The ruby in his signet, and it sette
> Upon the wex deliverliche and rathe;
> (II, 1086-1088)

He practically goes into tears again when he first actually meets with Criseyde in Deiphebus' home. Although he was feigning illness in order to have two minutes alone with her, at the sight of Criseyde, Troilus becomes so excited, so weak and so pale that he really does not have to pretend to be ill:

> "Ther-with it seemed as he wepte almost;
> 'A ha,' quod Troilus so rewfully,
> 'Wher me be wo, O mighty god, thou wost!"
> (III, 64-66)

When he meets with Criseyde at Pandarus' house he faints completely for this time he can no longer simply cry, and his emotions get the best of him. But the sight of Criseyde crying is too much for him. Every tear she shed was for him:

> "The crampe of deeth, to streyne him by the herte."
> (III, 1071)

He was overcome with grief:

> "Ther-with the sorwe so his herte shette,
> That from his eyen fil ther not a tere,
> And every spirit his vigour in-knette,
> So they astoned and oppressed were.
> The feling of his sorwe, or of his fere,
> Or of ought elles, fled was out of towne;
> And doun he fel al sodeynly a-swowne."
> (III, 1086-1092)

But when he learns that Criseyde is to leave Troy, Troilus truly becomes a madman and once alone in his room frees all the sorrow and rage which had built up within him while at the Parliament where he was forced to remain calm and cool so that no one would have reason to suspect him and Criseyde:

> "Right so gan he aboute the chaumbre sterte,
> Smyting his brest ay with his festes smerte;
> His heed to the wal, his body to the grounde
> Ful ofte he swapte, him-selven to confounde."
> (IV, 242-245)

Although Troilus will cry many more times during Criseyde's absence, this seems to be the climax of his passions. Although losing her is a great tragedy for him, what causes Troilus greater agony is the fact that he can do nothing to save her and himself from their fate without revealing to the public and to the world in general, their love. For their secret to ever be unvelied is a great sin in Courtly Love, for then nothing could save Crisyde's honor. Secrecy is emphasized from the very beginning when Troilus first saw Criseyde, although then it was more to save his own face than Criseyde's:

> "Thus took his purpos loves craft to suwe,
> And thoughte he wolde werken prively,
> First, to hyden his desir in muwe
> From every wight y-born, al-outrely,
> But he mighte ought recovered be thereby;
> Remembring him, that love to wyde y-blowe
> Yelt bittre fruyt, though swete seed be sowe.
> (I, 379-385)

From the very beginning Troilus' heart and soul are for Criseyde alone:

> "By night or day, for wysdom or folye,
> His herte, which that is his brestes ye,
> Was ay on hir ... "
> (I, 452-454)

But through all the spiritual and mental torture Love causes Troilus, still only good comes from it, for he becomes a stronger, nobler and more courageous warrior, as well as a better and more generous man:

> "But for non hate he to the Grekes hadde,
> Ne also for the rescous of the toun,
> Ne made him thus in armes for to madde,
> But only, lo, for this conclusioun
> To lyken hir the bet for his renoun;
> Fro day to day in armes so he spedde,
> That alle the Grekes as the deeth him dredde."
> (I, 477-483)

Because he loves his lady so much, because his love is so very strong within his heart, because he thinks of her so highly, he cannot help but think that he himself is unworthy of her. It is this sense of unworthiness that leads him to perform his valiant deeds and to be the perfect lover. One very important element which neither Chaucer nor Boccaccio ignored was the fact that the lady must be considered by the knight to be his superior in every way. She must be very feminine for the knight to be able to prove himself manly and courageous.

Troilus believes the god of Love to be his patron and thus promises to serve him until his death. Little does he know that Love and fortune had conspired together to seek his ruin and death. (But the question to arise later on is, were all his sufferings a punishment or a trial in which, if he succeeded, would give him eternal reward and a heavenly reward?) On the the other hand, Troilus believes 'Fortune is my fo'. He is a fatalist all through the poem and it is perhaps this quality that makes him appear as a weaker character. From the beginning nothing is in his hands. It is Love's fault that he is enamored with Criseyde; once he has accepted this fact he does not hesitate to leave everything in Pandarus' hands. Not once does Troilus take matters into his own hands, with the exception of when he confides his love to Pandarus and even this is not done until he can no longer refuse his friend's pleas. Troilus in this though is strongrthan Troilo, for he does try harder to keep his lady's name a secret, whereas it takes very little coaxing from Pandaro to persuade Troilo to give in.

Troilus is a valiant and brave warrior. He fears nothing real that approaches him. But his love for Criseyde is not real -- it is abstract, something sent to him from the gods and thus he does not know how to cope with it -- it is not something of his own doing. In this sense he is weak. He is weak when he depends upon Pandaro to help him in whatever concerns Criseyde and he is weak when he puts all the weight of escape from the Greeks on Criseyde's shoulders. But, at the same time, there was nothing else he could really do; he had to stay out of her way completely once she was among the Greeks in order to avoid the revelation of their love. Perhaps he appears weaker than he really is because of Chaucer's sympathy toward Criseyde: Chaucer does not really blame her for not returning to Troy, perhaps because Troilus was so selfish before she left. He thought of his own suffering before Criseyde and told her to come back so that he wouldn't die; he knows Criseyde to be a loyal woman, one who loves him, yet he doesn't once stop to consider whether or not she is suffering; this may be due to his youth and inexperience in matters of the heart. He does not consider Criseyde to be a person but an object of which he is about to be robbed of by Fortune:

> "Shal thus Criseyde awey, for that thou wilt?
> Allas! how maystow in thyn herte finde
> To been to me thus cruel and unkinde?"
> (IV, 264-266)

While one pities Troilus, once cannot help but tire of his constant wailing and dependence on others for happiness.

Troilus' fatalistic attitude toward life comes to a climax when Pandaro finds him meditating alone in the temple just before Criseyde's departure:

CHAUCER - HIS TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

"For certaynly, this wot I wel,' he seyde,
That for-sight of divyne purveyaunce
Hath seyn alwey me to for-gon Criseyde,
Sin god seeth everything, out of doutaunce,
And hem desponeth, thourgh his ordenaunce,
In hir merytes sothly for to be,
As they shul comen by predestinee."
(IV, 960-966)

Troilus' travels through the sphere is probably the most beautiful part of the poem. Troilus was a true lover and never did he deviate from his path; for him, Criseyde was the queen of queens, and the queen of Heaven -- no one could approach her in beauty and virtue. Her unfaithfulness had a double tragic point: first, she made so many vows to come back - vows considered grave by both Christian and pagan standards:

"That thilke day that ich untrewe be
To Troilus, myn owene herte free,
That thou retorne bakwarde to thy welle,
And I with body and soule sinke in helle!
(IV, 1551-1554)

By repeatedly promising Troilus that she will return by the end of the tenth day, she has complete control of the situation because of Troilo's helpless attitude.

(One must give Troilus credit for having thought of ways to escape fate, but all would have ruined either Criseyde's or Troilus' honor; it is the level-headed Criseyde who thinks of this:)

"... and eek of o thing taketh hede,
If this were wist, my lif laye in balaunce,
And your honour; god shilde us from mischance!"
(VI, 1559-1561)

Troilus goes out of his mind but Criseyde is always able to bring him back to reality.

The second reason why her failure to return was tragic was because she showed how fickled and spoiled a very feminine and beautiful woman can be, how important it is for her to be loved, and how easily she can love another for convenience' sake.

That Criseyde causes Troilus' death, I do not consider tragic but more as a boon. While alive and in love Troilus' sufferings never ended -- when away from Criseyde he was unhappy, when with her he became weak and almost lost his senses. While her departure from Troy saddens Troilus to the point that no possible substitute can comfort him, this in reality is Fortune's way of obtaining proof of Troilus' love. Although Fortune is punishing him on earth, God will give him eternal happiness in heaven. On his way to Paradise, Troilus is able to look back on earth and laugh at man's earthly desires and sentiments. Criseyde will probably never be able to do this. Troilus promises her love even after death. Little does he know that he will find true happiness.

> "And in him-selfe he lough right at the wo
> Of hem that wepten for his deeth so faste;
> And dampned al our werk that folweth so
> The blinde lust, the which that may not laste,
> And sholden al our herte on hevene caste.
> (V, 1821-1825)

Criseyde

Chaucer's Criseyde appears perhaps not more sympathique but to be of nobler nature than Boccaccio's Criseida. Although Criseyde gives herself to Troilus she still remains a virtuous woman. That she deserts Troilus, although a sin, does not appear to be as bad a deed, for Chaucer takes the time to explain why she couldn't leave the Greek camp. It is due to Chaucer's analytical powers that we understand her more and pity and admire her at the same time. Criseyde is a victim of both Fortune and her soft and feminine heart.

Typical of all poetical heroines of the time she is extremely beautiful as well as virtuous and courteous:

> "... in al Troyes citee
> Nas noon so fair, for passing every weight
> So aungellyk was hir natyf beautee,
> That lyk a thing inmortal seemed she,
> As doth an hevenish parfit creature,
> That doun were sent in scorning of nature." [illegible]

Kirby claims that Criseyde was an opportunist. This I cannot completely agree with, although there are lines in the poem which would lead one to think this: she finds Troilus' royal estate, as well as his ways and outward appearance, most appealing.

> "And gan to caste and rollen up and doun
> With-inne hir thought his excellent prowesse,
> And his estat, and also his renoun,
> His wit, his shap, and eek his gentillesse;

But most hir favour was, for his distresse
Was al for hir, and thoughte it was a routhe
To sleen swich oon, if that he mente trouthe."
(II, 659-665)

Within this stanza, we see that Criseyde's soft heart does get the better of her, for she does not want to see Troilus die because of her. At the same time, she can freely take a lover if she so wishes for she won't have any jealous husband to "seyn to me chekmet". In this way she may be an opportunist, but I would say that everything put together are merely elements which helped induce her to love Troilus. She is not a woman who went out of her way in search of love or adventure. When we are first introduced to her she appears quite happy in a quiet and modest fashion. It is her respect for Pandarus' opinion which changes her life completely. She first rejects his story of Troilus' love and begins to lose faith in her Uncle:

"For of this world the feith is al agoon!"
(II, 410)

But Pandarus manages to make everything sound so simple and harmless, assuring her that Troilus has only "love and freendship in his minde" that Criseyde's pity is finally stirred and she agrees, as long as their relation will remain a friendship; if either Pandarus or Troilus try to further the relation she promises to have no pity on either of them:

"And here I make a protestacioun,
That in this proces if ye depper go,
That certaynly, for no savacioun
Of yow, though that ye sterve bothe two,
Though al the world on o day be my fo,
Ner shal I never on him han other routhe."
(II, 484-489)

Yet it is pity for him that slowly forces her to give way to her sensual desires. (Pity is one of Criseyde's weaknesses.) There is no doubt that this surrender at the same time was anything but voluntary, for Criseyde is too virtuous a woman to give herself to just any man, but at the same time she doesn't want to be blamed for her actions. **

Criseyde is both very strong and very weak. In Pandarus' presence she is a child listening to her superior; she depends very much on his opinion in her affair and allows herself to be led into it with her eyes open. In Troilus' presence, on the other hand, she has complete control of the situation. Many times she appears as more of a mother-figure than a mistress.

She is not harsh nor cruel neither when with Troilus nor when away from him. She is not coquettish like Criseida but more straight forward and honest. She wants Troilus to have no doubt of her loyalty to him:

> " 'Now god thou wost, in thought ne dede untrewe
> To Troilus was never yet Criseyde.' "
> (III, 1053-1054)

Before she leaves for the Greek camp, it is she who is the stronger and the more level-headed of the two; it is Criseyde who keeps Troilus from doing anything irrational (and when she is not present, Pandarus).

Probably one of the greatest ironies of the poem is Criseyde's view on jealousy which is a sentiment for which which she has a particular dislike. She feels free to accept Troilus as a suitor because she won't have a jealous husband to cope with; then, later on, as soon as she hears Troilus is jealous, she wants him to realise that this feeling is without any foundation, for she is innocent of any infidelity whatsoever:

> "But O, thou wikked serpent Ialousye,
> Thou misbeleved and envious flye,
> Why hastow Troilus me mad untriste,
> That never yet agilte him, that I wiste?' "
> (III, 837-840)

Yet no matter how much she may dislike jealousy, it is her fault that Troilus is eventually driven to it; no matter how faithful she may have claimed to have once been, she is the most unfaithful of all women in the end.

As already mentioned, Criseyde is a very feminine woman. Her female curiosity is very strong and it is this that easily involves her in this affair, for once Pandarus arouses it, she wants to know everything -- she cannot stand to be left in the dark:

> "But for the love of god, I yow beseche,
> As ye ben he that I most love and triste,
> Lat be to me your fremde maner speche,
> And sey to me, your nece, what yow liste:' "
> (II, 246-249

Not only is Criseyde curious, but she also needs to have the feeling of always being protected. Although she is watched over by Hector and Pandarus, when Troilus offers her both love and protection, this is too much for her to let pass by. It is this need for protection which makes her love Troilus more and more:

CHAUCER - HIS TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

"That wel she felte he was to hir a wal
Of steel, and sheld from every displesaunce;
That, to ben in his gode governaunce,
So wys he was, she was no more afered,
I mene, as fer as oughte ben requered."
(III, 479-483)

It is also this need for protection which persuades her to accept Diomede for a lover. Criseyde realized that it would most probably be useless and of the greatest danger to attempt an escape. To her it was thus most logical to remain, for not only was Troy doomed, if what her Father said was true, but at the same time, she would be blessed once again with royal favors and love:

"But herte myn, sin that I am your man,
And been the ferste of whom I seche grace,
To serven you as hertely as I can,
And ever shal, whyl I to live have space."
(V, 939-942)

She realizes that women are weak and in need of a strong arm to lean on, thus she never fights fate in trying to return to Troilus.

Most important to Criseyde is her honor and under no circumstances does she want it to be harmed -- this she considers above Troilus and his royal blood and love. This, too, she emphasizes all through the poem and it is on this condition (among others) that she accepts Troilus:

"And kepe alwey myn honour and my name,
By alle right, it may do me no shame!"
(II, 762-763)

She greatly fears public opinion but finally concludes:

"... 'he which no-thing under-taketh,
No thing ne acheveth ... "
(II, 807-808)

Kirby claims: "Criseyde is complex and it is this very complexity which explains and justifies the many contradictory elements in her makeup; it is this which makes her so radically different from the decidedly simple and correspondingly less interesting Criseida." [6] This is an excellent summary of her character -- complex. She is strong and yet weak; desirous of love yet [illegible] prudent before accepting it; assuring herself, first, that her *prétendant* is worthy of her attentions and that he will watch over her carefully, she being a woman alone.

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[6] Kirby, *op. cit.*, p. 199

CHAUCER - HIS TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

Pandarus

He is the only character with the least sense of homor. The whole poem, as does Boccaccio's poem, evolves around this character once he learns from Troilus who his mistress is. From this point, until Criseyde's departure, Pandarus has complete control of the situation and of the hero and the heroine. He reminds one of an old-maid aunt who, recollecting her youth and unsuccessful love, bustles about providing romantic settings and always encouraging and giving advice.

Like Pandaro, Pandarus is more on Troilus' side than on Criseyde's, but not to such a great extent as his Italian counterpart. Pandarus is the true medieval confident who always wants to share and help solve problems:

> "I have, and shal, for trewe or fals report,
> In wrong and right y-loved thee al my lyve;
> Hyd not thy wo fro me, but telle it blyve.' "
> (I, 593-595)

Too, like Pandaro, he follows the code of Courtly Love rather closely. He brings up a fact typical among lovers: that it is the most normal thing to suffer if one loves, but one should still keep fresh and always have the intention to serve one's lady in mind.

> "What! many a man hath love ful dere y-bought
> Twenty winter that his lady wiste,
> That never yet his lady mouth he kiste.
>
> "What, shulde he therfor fallen in despeyr,
> Or be recreaunt for his owene tene,
> Or sleen him-self, al be his lady fayr?
> Nay, nay, but ever in oon be fresh and grene
> To serve and love his dere hertes quene,
> And thenke it is a guerdoun hir to serve
> A thousand-fold more than he can deserve.' "
> (I, 810-819)

When he learns who the object of Troilus' affections is, it pleases him that his friend has chosen an equal:

> "And whan that Pandare herde hir name nevene,
> Lord, he was glad, and seyde ...
> For of good name and wysdom and manere
> She hath y-nough, and eek of gentilesse;
> If she be fayr, thow wost thy-self, I guesse."
> (I, 876-882)

CHAUCER - HIS TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

Pandarus knows how to go about persuading Criseyde -- for one who has been a failure in love he appears to know women quite well. He leads up to the subject of Troilus slowly. He is gay with his niece and tries to make her forget that she is a widow, wants her to think of herself as being still a young woman. He then praises Troilus in the course of the conversation saying he is a second Hector. For Criseyde, this is a great thing for Hector is her protector in Troy as well as one of the bravest of Trojans. She cannot help but admire Troilus. Pandarus arouses her curiosity just enough so that she begs him to continue his story. Once he reveals Troilus' love to her, he carefully plays on her sympathy claiming that they will both die if she doesn't grant her attentions to the prince:

"But if you lete him deye, I wol sterve;
Have her my trouthe, nece, I nil not lyen;
Al sholde I with this knyf my throte kerve' -
--- 'if that ye doon us bothe dyen,
Thus giltelees, than have ye fisshed faire;
What mende ye, though that we bothe apeyre?"
(II, 323, 329)

What Pandarus says during their first meeting is more than enough to win Criseyde. The rest is left to the right timing. Whenever Pandarus wants Criseyde to take another step in the affair he plays on her sympathy and he has Troilus do the same, as when Troilus wrote his first letter to Criseyde:

"Beblotte it with thy teres eek a lyte;"
(II, 1027)

At the same time he advises Troilus not to use any physical terms of endearment. This he fears might frighten Criseyde immediately; he should tell her just enough, so as not to risk making a fool of himself:

"Ne Iompre eek no discordaut thing y-fere,
As thus, to usen termes of phisyk;
In loves termes, hold of thy matere
The forme alwey, and do that it be lyk;
For if a peyntour wolde peynte a pyk
With asses feet, and hede it as an ape,
It cordeth nought; so nere it but a Iape.' "
(II, 1037-1043)

Both Pandarus and Troilus play on Criseyde's sympathy -- later on in Deiphebus' house and finally in Pandarus' own home when he arranges for the two to meet. Although Criseyde suspects her uncle of not always telling the whole truth, basically she trusts him.

It is while arranging and during the first meeting at his house that Pandarus departs from the noble and virtuous side of Love and becomes a schemer and a liar. He takes advantage of Criseyde's weakness, aware that she would knowingly walk into the trap (for Criseyde does suspect all along that Troilus will probably be at Pandarus' home), but that he couldn't come right out and speak the truth to her -- she would go under false pretenses and at least be able to say that it was Pandarus' fault. At times, all three characters are knowingly living the same lie which they ignore as such simply to justify their deeds, especially the lovers. Pandarus' justification is simply that he wants the two to get together to enjoy completely the fruits and goodness of Love.

Pandarus' love and loyalty to Troilus is genuine. After Criseyde's departure he never once leaves Troilus' side. Even before she leaves, it isn't to Criseyde but to Troilus that he runs to comfort. Here Pandarus becomes unduly cruel toward Criseyde: he must consider her simply as another woman, not necessarily his niece, for he soothes Troilus by telling him there are other women in Troy to serve as his companions:

"And over al this, as thou wel wost thy-selve,
This town is ful of ladies al aboute;
And, to my doom, fairer than swiche twelve
As ever she was, shal I finde, in som route,
Ye, oon or two, with-outen any doute.
For-thy be glad, myn owene dere brother,"
(IV, 400-405)

"And this is fayr, and that can good a-right.
Ech for his vertu holden is for dere,
Bothe heroner and faucon for rivere,"
(IV, 411-413)

Thus, Pandarus does not take this love-affair completely seriously and here his respect for Love falls apart. For once, Troilus thinks for himself and answers:

"And though I mighte, I wolde not do so."
(IV, 459)

Pandarus does not consider that Love might drive Criseyde out of her mind; all that he wants is for Criseyde to comfort Troilus in his moments of great suffering.

CHAUCER - HIS TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

But, although Pandarus appears negligent toward Criseyde, one can't help but wonder if he knew her so well to know what she was capable of doing later on.

Thus we have the three main characters of Troilus and Criseyde:

Troilus the instigator (though unknowingly) for he had no intention in the beginning of falling in love with any woman, let alone Criseyde.

Pandarus the go-between and schemer

Criseyde the opportunist.

A COMPARISON - BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER

It is true that Chaucer uses Boccaccio as his main source and, in many instances, translates directly from the Italian:

> "Chaucer has made the fullest use of the Filostrato. Of the 713 stanzas of the Italian poem, there are less than two hundred which find no verbal echo in the Troilus."[1]

But, still, the two works differ greatly from each other. As French mentions, "Chaucer elaborates at greater length and in his own way."[2] Chaucer seems to possess greater analytical powers than Boccaccio; the latter is satisfied to present from a subjective point of view a story of unfaithful love: Boccaccio sees in himself the unhappy Troilo and cannot help but feel bitterly toward Criseida. Chaucer, on the other hand, is objective: he cannot be identified with any of the characters, not even Pandarus, for he takes Troilus' side, whereas Chaucer upholds Criseyde.

The beginnings of the poems differ -- Boccaccio, in his Proem, addresses Maria d'Aquino, to whom he dedicates his poem. The purpose of the composition of the Filostrato is to show Maria how much he misses her; he wants her to realise that what happened to Troilo may also happen to him if she should stay away much longer:

> "... prego colui che nelle vostre mani ha posta la mia morte, che egli nel vostro cuore quello disio accenda, che solo esser può cagione della mia salute."
> (Proem)

Chaucer's work is not dedicated to anyone in particular; it is written for all lovers -- for those who have suffered from love:

> "But natheless, if this may doon gladnesse
> To any lover, and his cause avayle,
> Have he my thank, and myn be this travayle!"
> (I, 19-21)

The authors' purposes in the two poems differ -- Boccaccio seeks to show how one feels misery even more if he happens to have already known total happiness:

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[1] Robert Dudley French, A Chaucer Handbook (New York, 1958), p. 178-179.
[2] French, p. 179.

A COMPARISON - BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER

"... ma per questo le scrissi, perché la felicità
veduta da alcuno, molto meglio si comprende
quanta e qual sia la miseria sopravvenuta."
(Proem)

Chaucer, on the other hand, writes:

"The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen"

(I, 1)

Both poets claim to be servants of Love and thus the first Courtly Love element is introduced. The second element comes almost completely after; both claim their lady to be of angelic beauty, extreme modesty, and of the highest virtue.

Both young men fall in love in the same way, but it is here that one notices a definite difference in character between the two. Troilo is more the jaunty, experienced young prince, who feels himself free from all the troubles of the world; since he can look upon his friends and laugh, he feels superior to them and mocks them freely. There is a tone of bitterness in Troilo's speech which is not found with Troilus. Troilo must have had an experience or experiences with women to be able to say:

"Che é a porre in donna alcuno amore?
Che come al vento si volge la foglia,
Cosi in un di ben mille volte il core
Di lor si volge, né curan di doglia
Che per lor senta alcun loro amadore,
Né sa alcuna quel ch' ella si voglia.
O felice colui che del piacere
Lor non é preso, e sassene astenere!"
(I, 22)

Troilus shows inexperience for he has only heard about lovers' sufferings and he's simply taking it for granted that to love is folly, since lovers themselves are blind and can't see what goes on around them, "nyce and blinde be ye".

Chaucer seems to praise Love more highly than Boccaccio. He claims that through love one becomes a worthier person and avoids vice and shame; one can find solace in Love from woes:

A COMPARISON - BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER

> "And they that han ben aldermost in wo,
> With love han ben conforted most and esed;
> And ofte it hath the cruel herte apesed,
> And worthy folk maad worthier of name,
> And causeth most to dreden vyce and shame."
> (I, 248-252)

To both young men the fact that their young ladies are noble in character is quite important, again, because they could not love beneath themselves.

Although both are proud, Troilo seems to be the more egois - tical of the two. He has a tendency to think Love a trivial sentiment, for he fears the disapproval of the city elders if he were ever to be found out. In times of war, Love should be ignored:

> "Vedi questi com' é del sonno uscito,
> Che in questi tempi noiosi e dolenti
> Si nuovamente d' amore é irretito,"
> (I, 52)

Troilus on the other hand resigns his royal state to serve her:

> "For myn estat royal here I resigne
> In-to his hond,...."
> (I, 433-434)

Both Boccaccio and Chaucer go into great detail to describe how Love made their heros suffer but, for some reason, I always think of Troilus as the more sincere of the two, perhaps because he does not consider the outside world and what it may think of him. Both young men pray for death -- Troilus because he cannot be with Criseyde, Troilo because he is so tormented by Love and he fears insults:

> "Perché morendo uscire' d' ogni pena,
> Che se il mio mal, del qual nessun s' é accorto
> Ancora, se si scuopre, fia ripiena
> La vita mia di mille ingiurie al giorno,
> E piú ch' altro saró detto musorno."
> (I, 54)

Thus, from the very beginning, one would probably care more for Troilus as a lover than Troilo for there is more sincerity and willing self-sacrifice on the part of Troilus. It is not until the very end that we see that both lovers love their ladies equally -- strongly and devotedly. While waiting in vain for their lady both knights have the same sentiments, are equally as strong and noble and die the same death.

A COMPARISON - BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER

The young men's attitudes toward meeting their lady also differ. Both sincerely wanted only to serve Love and their lady but Troilus goes about it in a seemingly more knightly way, perhaps due to Criseyde's more sensitive and romantic nature, compared to Criseida's forward, sensual and flirtatious ways. Troilus meets with Criseyde many times, speaks with her, and learns to love her more and more. Their love, although finally consummated, is more spiritual, due probably to the fact that their courtship was one of long duration. For Boccaccio, there is no meeting at Deuphedus' house, nor any other meetings -- the first time the couple actually meets and speaks together is at Criseida's house one night and then few words are exchanged because of the mutual passion consuming both of them.

Criseyde is definitely of a more delicate nature than her Italian counterpart. If one thoroughly bares Criseyde's heart, it will be found that she wished from the beginning to accept Troilus as her lover, but she was more prudent and more calculating than Criseida, for whom the affair is more of a lark, at first -- she knows what to expect and she and Troilo go through only the strictest formalities before they are finally together; but that she loves Troilo in the end, before her departure , cannot be denied for truly she did suffer and the parting was very difficult for her to endure. But it is perhaps Troilo's and Criseida's more - or - less light-heartedness at the very beginning and in their approach to one another that makes us consider Chaucer to be more of a poet of Courtly Love than Boccaccio. Chaucer never hurries his characters: they do things, not on impulse, but after much reflection; while Boccaccio's characters are not exactly impulsive, they are not half as cautious nor as spiritually strong as Chaucer's.

Neither Criseyde nor Criseida are hard-hearted heroines of the Middle Ages. They demand nothing of their lovers but secrecy to guard their honour and to always love them; this especially is important to Criseyde, who is more sensitive.

A COMPARISON - BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER

Both women are unforgivable in their unfaithfulness, but one can't blame Criseyde as much as one would blame Criseida, because Chaucer tells us of her fears, her reasoning -- she is a woman with a warm heart but whose mind dominates her whole being.

The main difference between the two Pandares is age. Otherwise both scheme in the same manner to bring the two lovers together, both are sensualists, and love intrigue. Both are more loyal to their friend than to their relative and both have had unhappy love-affairs. Thus, basically they are the same -- go-betweens.

The other major changes made by Chaucer, aside from the lovers' meeting at Deiphebus' house for the first time are:

1. Cassandra's interpretation of Troilus' dream. Troilus is thus given ample warning of what is to come, whereas Troilo does not have his dream interpreted. The only time that Cassandra comes into Boccaccio is to torment Troilo about his love for Criseyde which she found out about by eavesdropping on two of her brothers who heard Criseida's name mentioned in Troilo's delirium.

2. The authors' final conclusions differ greatly in meaning. Although both heros die, Chaucer gives us a moral with a more spiritual meaning than Boccaccio. Troilus flies to heaven and is able to look back and laugh at all earthly suffering, which is of no importance, but human beings cannot realize this until after death. There is no attack on the fickleness of women, not on Criseyde herself. Boccaccio, at this point, is full of bitterness. He blames Troilo's death on Criseida and warns young men against ladies who only appear to have noble hearts, Chaucer advises young people to look to God for true Love:

"O yonge fresshe folkes, he or she,
In which that love up groweth with your age,
Repeyreth hoom from worldly vanitee,
And of your herte up-casteth the visage
To thilke god that after his image
Yow made, and thinketh al nis but a fayre
This world, that passeth sone as floures fayre."
(V. 1835-1841)

A COMPARISON - BOCCACCIO AND CHAUCER

Thus, the main difference between Boccaccio and Chaucer is that one gives a lesson in earthly Love, whereas the other surpasses this, deeming after all, earthly love to be not half as important as human beings think it to be. Although both poems are acclaimed as Courtly Love doctrines, neither has anything to really say in favor of Love itself as mortals know it. Courtly Love is found somewhere between the levels of Love presented by the two authors. It is neither the complicated and treacherous Love of Boccaccio, nor the supreme spiritual Love of Chaucer. Courtly Love is a mutual Love between a man and a woman which is attained only after certain steps have been taken. Both authors follow these rules, but somehow come out with completely differing morals, although, I think, Chaucer comes much closer to Courtly Love through his supreme and spiritual Love than Boccaccio.

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