

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF COURTLY LOVE

by

PATRICIA ELLEN THOMPSON

B. A., Kansas University, 1954

---

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1964

Approved by:

W<sup>ms</sup> C. Hammett  
Major Professor

24  
184  
117  
102

## CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION .....	1
THE GILDED AGE OF COURTLY LOVE .....	4
THE "MAD IDOLATRY" .....	32
THE RELICS OF THE COURTLY TRADITION .....	56
CONCLUSION .....	75
LIST OF WORKS CITED .....	78

## INTRODUCTION

The following study is an attempt to view the convention of courtly love as it is reflected in the love theme of the Troilus-Cressida story. Three great English writers, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden, tell their versions of the tale. The fundamental idea of this work is centered around the fact that undoubtedly the temperament of the period influenced each of these writers in adapting this well-known love story to his age, for in each of their three works is reflected a completely different point of view toward courtly love. To establish the fact that the ideological currents of the three periods are directly related to the literary work itself, an introduction is given to each of the three main divisions. The introduction offers a brief outline of the significant historical events of the period, the atmosphere of the court of the time, the important writers within the courtly convention, and some of the attitudes expressed toward love throughout the age.

Chronologically, the study traces the concept of courtly love from its origins in the 12th century to its final decay in the Restoration Period. We begin our study with Chaucer and the 14th century. By Chaucer's time the convention had begun to show signs of ornateness and decadence. Then with the Elizabethan Period of Shakespeare we come upon two distinct attitudes toward the courtly convention. Some of the great writers of the 16th

century wrote within the tradition, while others viewed this old chivalric code as "mad idolatry." It is the complete debasing of the tradition which we find in Shakespeare's rendition of the Troilus story. Finally, at the end of the Restoration in Dryden's adaptation of the love theme, we find only a poor imitation of what was once a beautiful ideal of love in what the 17th century chose to call "heroic love."

But as is so true of history, the fact that the death of any great civilization is replaced by a new one, so it is with the changing concept of love. For as the courtly convention was gradually fading away, a new and more pragmatic attitude toward love was beginning to develop. Such new outgrowths of love can be observed in the Counter-Renaissance of the 16th century and in the Puritanical reformation of the 17th century. As these new concepts of love became stronger and stronger, they eventually smothered out the entire tradition of the old aristocratic code of love. But it should also be noted that the convention did not disappear overnight; in spite of four centuries of decay, some of the motifs of the tradition could still be discerned in the writings of the 17th century. In brief then, this paper is the story of the decline and fall of courtly love.

My approach to this problem has been made much easier because of Kirby's book Chaucer's Troilus: A Study in Courtly Love, Haydn's The Counter-Renaissance, and Grierson's Cross-Currents in Seventeenth Century English Literature. All three of these writers have cleared the way for such a study. For general

guidance and help in the preparation of this work, I am deeply indebted to Professor William Hummel.

## THE GILDED AGE OF COURTLY LOVE

In order to view the courtly love theme of Chaucer's Troilus it might be wise to first trace the origins of this courtly code. The concepts of the courtly conventions had not existed forever. Their development can only be traced as far back as the Middle Ages; before the Middle Ages love was not the topic of literature. As seen in the Song of Roland, the love of Alde for Roland is submerged below the greater love of man for men. In other words, the medieval concept of love was the mutual love of warriors on the battlefield who die together fighting under the banner of their lord.<sup>1</sup> This was the real love in the Song of Roland, the love of Roland for his friend Oliver.

We come upon traces of the courtly love theme in the Latin writings of Ovid. Ovid had composed his Ars Amatoria solely for amusement; to him it was an "ironically didactic poem on the art of seduction."<sup>2</sup> As with Swift's Tale of a Tub, the joke of the Art of Love consists in treating it seriously as it outlines the rules and examples for the conduct of illicit loves. This work was meant to be ridiculous and absurd. Yet it was this ridiculous love which Ovid had satirically presented, this same mocking love, which was later accepted in the courtly love ethics of

<sup>1</sup>C. S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love (London, 1951), p. 9.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis, p. 6.

the Middle Ages.

It is the opinion of de Rougemont that the theme of courtly love came out of the historical conditions of the Provence in the 12th century.<sup>3</sup> It was in the Provence that the Catharist religion had its groundings. The Cathars took their name from the Greek word meaning "pure." To the Cathars, God was love and the world was evil. The most important Catharist dogma which affected the tradition of courtly love was the one which made the third person of God a woman, the Virgin.<sup>4</sup> To them the Virgin was the feminine source of love. They called their religion "The Church of Love." They recognized only the sacrament of Baptism which was performed by the bestowing of the kiss of peace by the priest upon the new brother in the initiation ceremony. Among other things, the neophyte pledged that he would avoid touching his wife if he were married and that he would neither kill an animal nor feed on animal flesh. He also promised to keep his Catharist faith a secret. A forty day fast or "endura" preceded the initiation and another fast of the same length followed. During this "endura" many were known to voluntarily commit suicide. The historical evidence on this movement is flimsy because at the beginning of the 13th century an Abbot of Citeaux led the Albigensian crusade to purge this heretical group. As a result the town inhabited by the Cathars was completely destroyed and

<sup>3</sup>Denis de Rougemont, Love in the Western World (Philadelphia, 1939), p. 74.

<sup>4</sup>de Rougemont, p. 76.

so were most of the evidences of their religion.

Briefly then, the importance of this movement on the courtly love system was: "Most troubadours were heretics; every Cathar was a troubadour."<sup>5</sup> Like the Cathars, the troubadours too glorified a love which was perpetually unsatisfied. To the troubadours, as well as to the Cathars, the Virgin was not only woman of the flesh, but she was their whole church. So here in the troubadour poetry, whose theme centered around a love which was perpetually unsatisfied by a fair lady, we see some of the motifs of the courtly tradition. Such Toulouse troubadours as Guilhem Montanhagol sang, not of a physical union of love, but of a love in which the soul is uplifted to union in death; such a love was not possible in this life. The troubadours described the love of chastity as a ritual. Just as the feudal knight swore fidelity to his lord, so the troubadour swore faithfulness to his lady. To illustrate, de Rougemont tells of the lady giving her troubadour a golden ring while he kneels before her and pledges her his troth. Then she bids him rise and she kisses his brow. It is interesting to note that some of the Provencal priests even entered into this ritual by giving this "consolament" their blessing and invoking a prayer to the Virgin.

Another motif found both in the troubadours' songs and in the courtly love theme was that separation would make love thrive. As one troubadour says: "Heaven . . . The farther off

<sup>5</sup>de Rougemont, p. 79.



I am the more I long for her."<sup>6</sup> In other words, separation was to increase the love of one lover for another. Another motif which is found later in the courtly poetry is that of secrecy. Just as the Cathars had taken the vow of secrecy in their initiation ceremony, so the troubadours sang of lovers who swore that they would in no way betray the secret of their mighty passion of love. But the most striking motif which we find in the troubadour poetry is the cult of the elevation of woman. The Cathars had insisted on including the Virgin in the Trinity and elevating woman to a position in which she was the sovereign over her love. The troubadours continued to sing of the divinity of woman. One of the troubadours, Bernart de Ventadour, describes this mystical experience of love: "She has taken my heart, she has taken my self, she has taken from me the world and then she has eluded me, leaving me with only my desire and my parched heart."<sup>7</sup> With the troubadour tradition of the Provence, womanhood was set on a pedestal; in fact she was set far above man.

Still, even if we can historically trace the source of the courtly tradition and the raison d'etre for the elevation of womanhood, we are still faced with an inconsistency: the fact that courtly love condones adultery. The reason seems obvious. Our conception of "love and marriage" did not exist in the Middle Ages. Love in the feudal society had nothing to do with marriage. All marriages were economic alliances in which the

<sup>6</sup>de Rougemont, p. 82.

<sup>7</sup>de Rougemont, p. 84.

man acquired a wife for the same reason he acquired a piece of property, to increase his estate. So if spouses did not marry for love, then it seems logical that such partners could only find what we know as love outside their married state. This resulted in the beginning of what Lewis calls "the idealization of adultery."<sup>8</sup> In this type of love both man and woman could fulfill their desire for romantic passionate love.

Of course the Church made known its view toward this type of passionate love outside of marriage; it openly condemned it. But even within the married state, the Church ruled that a passionate love was "intrinsically sinful."<sup>9</sup> Gregory clarified the Church's position by stating that the "act is innocent but the desire is morally evil."<sup>10</sup> Thus for the Middle Ages, even the passionate love of a man for his own wife was considered adultery. So it was that outside both the institutions of marriage and the Church a new idea of romantic courtly love began to flourish.

The courtly love advocates were aware of this antagonism from Rome, and they sought to resolve the problem. Because the Church had ruled that passionate love of one spouse for another was a mortal sin, the courtly poets could only conclude that true love was not possible in marriage. In fact the only ground for the sexual act in marriage, according to the Church, was the

<sup>8</sup>Lewis, p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>Lewis, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup>Lewis, p. 14.

desire for offspring. Naturally, the sentimental courtly poets found this idea repulsive. It is also obvious that the courtly poets were aware of these religious attitudes, for they fused religion into the courtly tradition. The emotions of courtly love were described in religious language: the lover prays, sins, repents, and finally obtains his bliss in the lovers' heaven. This "quasi-religious" attitude is shown when the lovers are described as "worshipers, martyrs, and angels..."<sup>11</sup> The courtly code not only emphasized that the lover was to serve his fair lady, but above all he was to serve the God of Love.

For the evidence that the courtly code was carried on in everyday life, we need only turn to the court of Eleanor of Aquitaine which occupied a most important position in this new Court of Love. Eleanor was the granddaughter of William IX, Count of Poitiers, who was one of the first of the troubadours. With her marriage to Louis VII, Eleanor became Queen of France. Her marriage was annuled in 1152, and through her union with Henry of Anjou she became Queen of England on Henry's accession to the throne in 1154. One critic evaluates Eleanor's influence on the courtly tradition: "Les quinze ans pendant Lesquels Eleonore fut reine de France (LL37 - 52) sont probablement l'epoque ou la poesie courtoise due Midi commença a exercer une influence sensible sur celle du Nord."<sup>12</sup> Thus we see that the

<sup>11</sup>Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition (Berkeley, 1957), p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: A Study in Courtly Love (Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1958), pp. 33-34.

ideals of courtly love were not only a literary convention but that they were actually practiced in the European feudal society.

Eleanor's importance to the courtly tradition also stems from the fact that she was the mother of Maria, Countess of Champagne, who was a patroness of Chretien de Troyes. Also another writer of the courtly tradition, Andreas Capellanus, was a resident at Maria's court. In fact, it was Eleanor's daughter, Maria, who provided these two writers with inspiration and encouragements. And it is these two influences, Chretien de Troyes and Andreas Capellanus, whom we will now consider.

As for the first, Chretien de Troyes, it was he who represented courtly love in his Lancelot, dated around 1225. C. S. Lewis points out Chretien's importance: "His Lancelot is the flower of the courtly tradition in France, as it was in its early maturity . . . he was among the first (in Northern France) to choose love as the central theme of a serious poem."<sup>13</sup> So it was Chretien who combined the troubadour formula with the Arthurian legend, and as a result of his writing, King Arthur's court became the ideal courtly love heaven. In the story of Lancelot we find some of the same motifs which were imbedded in the old troubadour poetry. Lancelot treats Guinevere as a saint who is divine; he kneels, sighs, and adores her. When he leaves Guinevere's chamber, he makes a genuflection as if he were before an altar. And for our purpose, the story concerns courtly love because it is a love story of the secret love of Lancelot and

<sup>13</sup>Lewis, p. 23.

Guinevere.

Another contemporary profoundly significant to the courtly tradition is Andreas Capellanus, who wrote the Art of Courtly Love sometime between 1174 and 1186. Andreas' purpose in writing the work is to advise a friend, Walter, in the rules of courtly love. In viewing the Art of Courtly Love, we will emphasize the precepts of the courtly code which will later illuminate the courtly traditions which are found in Chaucer's Troilus. Like the troubadours and Chretien de Troyes, Andreas as well agrees that passionate love is an ennobling force because it is the source of all virtue. The troubadours had often spoken of a love which inspired a man with nobility of character and which offered to him a mystical experience. Andreas carried on the tradition. But his main contribution to the development of the tradition was the fact that he was the first to codify all the rules of courtly love into a single work.

Andreas begins his treatise by describing love as an "art." He says that the purpose of his writing is to teach such lovers as Walter how a "state of love between two lovers may be kept unharmed and likewise how those who do not love may get rid of the darts of Venus that are fixed in their hearts."<sup>14</sup> To the courtly lover the definition of love was an "inborn suffering" which was derived from an "excessive meditation upon the beauty of the

<sup>14</sup>Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love (New York, 1957), p. 1.

opposite sex."<sup>15</sup> Love is suffering because the lover is in constant torment that his love may not achieve its desire and that he, as the lover, is wasting his efforts. The courtly lover not only feared that his mistress would find some reason to scorn him, but he also feared that even after they had pledged their troth that his lady might desire the affection of a rival. The action of the love is brought about by an intermediary who plans first how the lover may find favor with his lady and then plans an opportune time for the lovers to talk for a "brief hour."<sup>16</sup>

According to Andreas' courtly rules, love can exist only between persons of the opposite sex, for "whatever nature forbids, love is ashamed to accept."<sup>17</sup> The total effect of courtly love is that it endows "a man even of the humblest birth with nobility of character."<sup>18</sup> Andreas describes love's transformation power: "O what a wonderful thing is love, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and teaches everyone . . . so many good traits of character."<sup>19</sup> Any person of a sound mind is fit for love and may expect to be wounded by love's arrows unless his age, his blindness, or his excess of passion prevents him.<sup>20</sup> Only the love of lust or excessive passions is not fit for

<sup>15</sup>Andreas, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup>Andreas, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup>Andreas, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup>Andreas, p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>Andreas, p. 4.

<sup>20</sup>Andreas, p. 5.

courtly love because in this sort of love a man's animalistic instincts are prominent, not his rational powers.

After describing what love is, between what persons love may exist, what persons are fit for love, and in what manner love may be acquired, Andreas then proceeds to give some dialogues which are to be helpful aids to the lovers in the various ways in which they may carry on their love. For example in the first dialogue, a man of the middle class is speaking with a woman of the same class. In the course of these dialogues Andreas instructs the lover who wishes to serve in Love's Army: "He should utter no word of blasphemy against God" and His Saints; he should show himself humble to all and should stand ready to serve everybody.<sup>21</sup> He should expect that the love of his lady will be hard to acquire because "if one gets easily what he desires, he holds it cheap."<sup>22</sup> Like the troubadours, the courtly lover was to accept difficulty and adversity because this would make his love even stronger. Again we see that the courtly code condoned adultery as Andreas explains that the term "love" is never to be applied to the marital affection of husband and wife.<sup>23</sup> Andreas presents the courtly love argument which favored adultery when he states that whatever affection married people extend "beyond what are inspired by the desire for offspring or the payment of the marriage debt," that according to the Church these solaces

<sup>21</sup>Andreas, p. 13.

<sup>22</sup>Andreas, p. 16.

<sup>23</sup>Andreas, p. 17.

within matrimony are sin.<sup>24</sup> And so he recommends adultery outside of the married state, for "when the use of a holy thing is perverted by misuse," it is much worse than if "we practice the ordinary abuses."<sup>25</sup>

In Andreas' short work, we see some other echoes from the old troubadour poetry. There are two kinds of love in the courtly tradition: one is pure love and the other is mixed love. It is the "pure love" which is preferred and "which binds together the hearts of two lovers with feeling of delight."<sup>26</sup> This "pure love" consists only in a love of the mind and goes only as far as the kiss and the embracing. But, states Andreas, in "mixed love" there are the desires of the flesh which may well harm the excellence of character of the lady and injure her reputation.<sup>27</sup> This kind of "mixed love" does not last because God has been offended, while "pure love increases without end."<sup>28</sup>

According to Andreas, love decreases when the lovers have too many opportunities for exchanging solaces and too many opportunities for talking to one another. Finally, says Andreas, love may come to an end if the lovers break faith with one another, if one lover goes astray from the Catholic church, or if their love has openly been revealed. These are the courtly traditions as

<sup>24</sup>Andreas, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup>Andreas, p. 19.

<sup>26</sup>Andreas, p. 20.

<sup>27</sup>Andreas, p. 21.

<sup>28</sup>Andreas, p. 21.



outlined by Andreas Capellanus, and these are the courtly traditions which we find in the greatest of all the courtly poems, Geoffrey Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde.

During the 12th century when Andreas wrote his treatise on courtly love, the tradition was flourishing, but by the time of the 14th century the chivalric system was declining. The old feudal system which had been based on military service in return for land was beginning to die out as the merchant class was becoming stronger. Consequently, the 14th century knight was becoming useless. The English had learned from their campaigns in France that the knight in his layers of quilting and chain mail and plate could not protect himself from the new long bow, nor the 14th century invention of gunpowder. Thus, as the chivalric institution became useless, it became ornamental. Yet King Edward still played the game of chivalry with eager enthusiasm. If the English and the French could not meet on the battlefield, they would meet at tournaments. Edward enjoyed the old feudal customs which encouraged lavish living, and he was proud to be recognized as the leader of the international set of gentlemen who were still upholding the obligations of chivalry. But with the death of Edward in 1377, the ideals of chivalry suddenly began to wither. During Richard's reign the courtly circle was kept so busy maintaining peace at home that there was little time for jousts and tournaments.

Still when Chaucer set down to write his Troilus, sometime after 1385, he wrote a poem in praise of courtly love. But he

evidently recognized that the chivalric conventions did not fit into the times, for there is a realistic flavor about his poem. As we read the poem, we see the ideal and the practical equally balanced. Both of these attitudes toward love are expressed in the poem, but we will view the Troilus only from the courtly point of view.<sup>29</sup> This is not to assert that Chaucer's characters can be thoroughly understood in the courtly tradition only. It is also hoped that this will not distort the picture which Chaucer wished to create. But this approach seems necessary in order to limit our perspective to one specialized area.

Chaucer's Troilus was taken from Boccaccio's romance, Il Filostrato. In turn, Boccaccio had borrowed his tale from a Frenchman named Benoit de Sainte-Maure, who had written the Roman de Troie during the 12th century. Yet Chaucer was chiefly indebted to Boccaccio for the principal framework of his tale. One of Chaucer's major departures from Boccaccio is the dichotomy of attitudes toward courtly love which is found in his rendition. As Muscatine points out:

He [Chaucer] sees, as Jean de Meun does, the elements of presumption of naivete and of impracticality in courtly idealism, and he admires the wholesome sanity of ordinary life. But unlike Jean, he also prizes the courtly idealism for its recognition of nobility, of beauty, and of spirit, and he detects in the incessantly practical pursuits of common life the shadow of futility cast over any human activity in which these higher concerns are neglected.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup>On the subject of the practical vs. the idealized see Muscatine's Chaucer and the French Tradition, pp. 131-159.

<sup>30</sup>Muscatine, p. 131.

Thus Chaucer's adaption of the frame-story reflects the attitude of his age toward the courtly tradition.

In viewing the Troilus as an idealization of courtly love, it seems fitting to first turn to Pandarus.<sup>31</sup> For it is Pandarus who lectures on the code, and it is he who is genuinely devoted to it. Pandarus informs us that he has had experience in courtly love. In fact, he says he has been carrying on an unsuccessful love affair for years. In Book I, he tells us he has shared Troilus' woe as a lover:<sup>32</sup>

I, that have in love so ofte assayed  
Grevances, oughte konne, and wel the more  
Counseillen the of that thow art amayed.  
(I, 646-648)

Pandarus is a most appropriate companion for Troilus as he too is a gentleman of a noble family.

There seems to be no question about Pandarus' devotion to the tradition. In his first meeting with Troilus, he warns him that he will play the courtly game of love only if Troilus will be descreet in both his action and appearance. This was one of the rules listed by Andreas: "When made public love rarely endures."<sup>33</sup> Our attention should also be drawn to the fact that all Pandarus' connivings and schemings are done for the sake of the courtly love requirements; the fact that the love is to

<sup>31</sup> See Kirby's A Study in Courtly Love, for a further investigation of the courtly conventions in the Troilus.

<sup>32</sup> Citations from the Troilus in my text are to the New Cambridge Edition The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, edited by F. N. Robinson (Boston, 1957).

<sup>33</sup> Andreas, p. 42.

remain a secret. To Pandarus, as well as to Andreas, the "firste vertu is to kepe tonge." Chaucer uses Pandarus as the intermediary vehicle in the tale. As the go-between, Pandarus is the main instigator of all the action. He not only reveals his nature in his manipulations of the physical action of the story but also in his own personal action. We persistently see him, never walking, but always leaping:

This Pandarus com lepyng in atones,  
 And seyde thus  
 (II, 939-940)

This so-called "leaping" quality which Chaucer gave to Pandarus only reinforces the idea that he is the center of perpetual activity.

Pandarus enjoys his role so much that the art of courtly love is a game to him. In Book II, in the scene which takes place at Criseyde's palace, Pandarus plays a most dramatic game with Criseyde before he reveals to her who it is that loves her. He keeps her curiosity up until:

The gan she wondren moore than biforn  
 A thousand fold, and down hire eyghen caste;  
 For nevere, sith the tyme that she was born,  
 To knowe thyng desired she so faste;  
 (II, 141-144)

Finally, Pandarus reveals the secret that: "The noble Troilus so loveth the,/ That, but ye helps, it wol his bane be," (II, 319-320). Pandarus also plays the game for all it is worth in the scene in which he brings Criseyde to the window as Troilus rides by on his horse. Again he deceives Criseyde because he and Troilus have had this meeting planned for a long time. In

his good natured words he asks Criseyde: "Nece, ysee who comth here ride!/ O fle naught in (he seeth us, I suppose),/ Lest he may thynken that ye hym eschuwe," (II, 1253-1255). Again Pandarus wears the mask of the gay deceiver as he makes plans for the lovers to meet at the palace of Deiphebus. This time he uses the pretense of Criseyde's insecurity in Troy to lure her to the banquet. Finally, after the banquet has ended and Troilus is feigning sickness in an adjoining chamber of the castle, Pandarus has at last joined the two lovers together. Peeking from behind a curtain, he reveals his satisfaction over the whole affair:

Therewith his manly sorwe to biholde,  
 It myghte han mad an herte of stoon to rewe;  
 And Pandare wep as he to water wolde,  
 And poked evere his nece new and newe,  
 And seyde, "Wo bygon ben hertes trewe!  
 For love of God, make of this thing an ende,  
 Or sle us both at ones, er ye wende."  
 (III, 1113-1119)

In all of these above scenes Pandarus shows his fondness for playing the role of the courtly go-between.

Pandarus, too, is intent upon carrying out every detail of the code. He devotes much time to giving Troilus proper instructions on how to write a letter to Criseyde. He instructs Troilus not to be scornful, not to make it sound like a professional lover, and most important, not to forget to "biblotte it with the teris ek a lite."

All the courtly love trappings are in full focus in the scene which takes place at Pandarus' house. It is a rainy night which aids in Pandarus' secrecy. Again, he plans to deceive

Criseyde for the sake of love. When Criseyde inquires into Troilus' whereabouts while she and Pandarus are dining at his house, he tells her that Troilus is not there, he is "out of towne," (III, 573). Conveniently the rain gets worse, and Criseyde is forced to stay over night. As the thunder is crashing loudly, Pandarus leads Troilus in through the trap door. But when Criseyde finds out that Troilus is there, she attempts to leave because she is afraid what people will think of her reputation. But Pandarus deceives her and convinces her to stay by telling her that Troilus has become jealous because he has heard the rumor that she loves Horaste. Here Pandarus shows that he is indeed well-versed in the courtly tradition. He knows that "he who is not jealous cannot love" and that "real jealousy always increases the feeling of love."<sup>34</sup> As Pandarus had planned, Troilus' jealousy brings out Criseyde's pity, and once again the lovers are united.

Pandarus' role as the courtly go-between becomes less important in the succeeding books. His role as the intermediary has accomplished its purpose; he has succeeded in having the lovers pledge their troth. But Pandarus frequently seems troubled over the danger that one or other of the lovers may prove false to the courtly ideal. If this were to happen, he would have performed no knightly service as the "go-between"; rather he would have betrayed his niece and branded himself a procurer. Pandarus' apprehension comes true. After Criseyde has been

<sup>34</sup>Andreas, pp. 42-43.

exchanged and he has sought to "werke in this matere" to arrange a meeting between Troilus and Criseyde, he finally realizes that his role has ended. He can do nothing about the whole situation. Pandarus last appears in Book V. In this scene he is listening to Troilus bemoaning the fact that Criseyde has left him. At this moment he feels so sorry for Troilus, and at the same time he feels so ashamed of his niece, Criseyde, that he was "as stille as ston; a word ne koude he seye," (V, 1729). He has done everything that the courtly code had outlined, but he can do nothing about Criseyde's treason:

If I dide aught the myghte liken the,  
 It is my lief; and of this tresoun now,  
 God woote, that it a sorwe is unto me!  
 And dredeles, for hertes ese of yow,  
 Right fayn I wolde amende it, wiste I how,  
 And from this world, almyghty god I preye.  
 Deliverere hire soon; I kan no more seye.  
 (V, 1737-1743)

Just as Pandarus expresses the ideal of the courtly love intermediary, so Criseyde may be viewed as the ideal courtly heroine. Chaucer informs us that she is a lady born in high manner and that she is so beautiful and angelic that she seems almost immortal. She is the epitomy of womanhood which the troubadours had praised. She was "mene" of stature; her golden hair fell "doun by hire coler at hire bak byhynde" bound by a thread of gold, (V, 811). Even her "joyneden" brows depicted beauty; such brows were not only a sign of a passionate nature to the Greeks but also a sign of beauty. We see the motif of the overpowering nature of the courtly heroine when Chaucer says that "Paradis stood formed" in Criseyde's eyes, (V, 817). Criseyde

was not only beautiful, but she was also charitable and sympathetic. In fact, she had all the qualities necessary to the courtly heroine: honor, rank and womanly nobility.

When Criseyde sees Troilus for the first time at the temple, she too feels the first pangs of love. But as the courtly lady, she remains outwardly cool-headed and careful of her actions in public. When she finally consents to please Troilus, she does so under the guarantee that her honor will not be lost. Under the courtly code, Criseyde is here justified, for the courtly lady had no obligation to return affection to her lover unless she felt inclined to do so. This is the contract Criseyde makes, that she will treat Troilus as a sister and pledge to him her loyalty to ease his heart, but she will not be held in the bonds of love.

Outwardly, Criseyde shows signs of "increasing" love in the scene in which Troilus rides by. She blushes and refers to a love potion working on her. But Criseyde is like the lady to whom the troubadours sang, she consistently says "no." The courtly code counselled against a too sudden love and recommended that the lover win his love by slow process. Criseyde reveals the responsibility which the courtly heroine accepts in her soliloquy in Book II in which she debates whether or not to accept Troilus' love. She is in a dilemma because Troilus' "worthynesse" makes him seem desirable. Also the fact that he is the king's son means that he might hold her in contempt if she avoids him. Also if she pledges her love to him, she will have all sovereignty



over his life. Like the courtly heroine, she is not desiring a husband because husbands are either jealous, masterful, or in love with novelty. But Criseyde also realizes that if she admits Troilus to her love, she has an obligation; she must keep busy deceiving the gossips. She repeats the old chastity theme of "pure love" when she says that above all she must keep always her "honour" and her "name." The biggest drawback to accepting Troilus' love is the fact that a woman in love has a "mooste stormy lyf," (II, 778). Lastly, Criseyde who has had experiences in love like Pandarus, realizes that if she undertakes all this, "how bisy," will she be.

As consistent with the courtly love code, when Troilus pledges his undivided allegiance to Criseyde, she then becomes his sovereign mistress. Troilus must devote his life completely to her every wish, even if it means he must die in her services. But Pandarus points out to Criseyde that it is her duty to love and cherish such a worthy knight as Troilus in return, and that unless she does so she is not playing the role of the courtly lady. Finally Criseyde agrees to accept Troilus' service and to henceforth do him "gladnesse." As Andreas had instructed, Criseyde is at last impelled to accept Troilus' love, for "no one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons."<sup>35</sup> Also Criseyde has succeeded in carrying out one of the other rules of courtly love: she has made Troilus' attainment of her love difficult. When the lovers are at last united at Deiphebus'

<sup>35</sup>Andreas, p. 42.

palace, we feel that their love is indeed precious or in the words of Capellanus "prized." In this bedroom scene at Pandarus' house it becomes quite obvious that Criseyde and Troilus will be carrying on a "mixed love" affair; their love is not only spiritual but also sensuous. This too, is of course fully in keeping with the courtly love practices, for though it recommended chastity and the higher "pure" love, it also admitted and approved of physical relationships.

Andreas had described love as a painful disease which makes one vexed and often makes one eat and sleep very little.<sup>36</sup> Muscatine elaborates on this courtly behavior in which:

. . . extraordinary emotions have their appropriate actions and gestures. Sorrow . . . is accompanied by sinking of the head, weeping and sighing, failure of the voice and swooning, and more passionate gestures, as wringing and beating the hands, striking and scratching the face, pulling on the hair and beard, ripping garments, and so forth.<sup>37</sup>

Criseyde, after the Greeks have decided to exchange her for Antenor, reveals this tearful-diseased state as she bursts into tears, wrings her hands, tears her hair, and prays that she may die. She even contemplates taking her own life with a sword, but the best plan for suicide, she concludes, is to starve herself to death and die in a black widow's habit. In this manner, she will have shown her devotion to Troilus. In the lovers' last meeting, she implores Troilus' help and then suddenly faints. Troilus at this instant thinks Criseyde is dead and decides to

<sup>36</sup>Andreas, p. 43.

<sup>37</sup>Muscatine, p. 29.

kill himself. But Criseyde recovers from the swoon and all is not lost. They express confidence that they will meet again, and as they leave, Criseyde as the courtly heroine, pledges her trust and sincerity to Troilus. So far, Criseyde has been loyal to the code, for she has not been false to Troilus.

Even when Criseyde first meets Diomede, her behavior is consistent with the courtly tradition. Diomede offers only friendship and "she accepteth it in good manere," (V, 186). So far at the Greek camp she has carried out her proper role. She spends the days gazing toward Troy and all the nights weeping over Troilus. But when Diomede begins to fondly woo Criseyde, we become apprehensive about Criseyde's intentions. She denies that she ever loved Troilus when she tells Diomede that she never was in love with anyone but her dead husband. We are convinced that Criseyde has made up her mind when, in their next scene; she gives Diomede a "faire baye stede," a "broche," and a "pencil of hire sleve." (1038, 1040, 1043). At this point, the outcome according to the courtly convention is obvious: if one lover is unfaithful to the other, then their love will come to an end. Criseyde has sinned against the courtly convention, and she herself is aware that her unfaithfulness in love will bring disgrace down upon her name forever:

Allas! for now is clene ago  
 My name of trouthe in love, for evermo!  
 For I have falsed oon the gentileste  
 That evere was, and oon the worthieste:  
 (V, 1054-1057)

It is interesting to note, as Kirby points out, that if Chaucer

had endowed Diomede with the characteristics of the courtly lover and had not emphasized his physical lust, then Criseyde's treason might have been justifiable.<sup>38</sup> According to the code, love could come to an end, and the lady could bestow her affections upon another courtly lover.<sup>39</sup> In spite of the fact that Diomede outwardly appears as a courtly lover as he blushes, points to his royal lineage, and says he will regard Criseyde as his sovereign mistress, we know that in reality he is putting on a good act as he tells Criseyde that she is the first lady whose favor he has sought. Notwithstanding Criseyde's sin against the courtly love convention, Chaucer treats her sympathetically at the end. He does not condemn Criseyde, but he expresses his pity for her weakness. For Chaucer tells us that in her nature there was a tenderness which was revealed in her "slydyngge corage." This was her tragedy, and this was her sin against the courtly code. Chaucer here enters a plea for her:

Ne me ne list this sely woman chyde,  
 Forther than the storye wol devyse.  
 Hire name, allas, is punysshed so wide,  
 That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.  
 And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,  
 For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,  
 Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yit for routhe.  
 (V, 1093-99)

Andreas had described love as an "inborn suffering," and this courtly ideal of the lover who "regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved" and the lover whose heart suddenly

<sup>38</sup>Kirby, p. 223.

<sup>39</sup>Andreas, p. 29.

begins to palpitate as soon as he catches sight of his beloved, all this is seen in the character of Troilus.<sup>40</sup> Troilus is consistently the courtly hero. For after the God of Love has struck Troilus with an arrow to punish him for making fun of the lovers, we feel that love to Troilus is an irresistible passion. As soon as Troilus sees Criseyde, he noticed:

That sodeynly hym thoughte he felte dyen,  
Right with hire look, the spirit in his herte.  
(I, 306-307)

Criseyde's glance was so powerful that he has given himself completely over to her.

We see the predicament of the courtly hero in the scene in which Troilus has left the temple and has gone to bed sighing, groaning, and thinking only of Criseyde. This reminds us of Andreas' rule: "A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved."<sup>41</sup> At this point, Troilus is completely possessed by the mirror of Criseyde in his mind. He contemplates how he may serve her best and how he may conduct himself so that he will not fall from her grace. And like the troubadours of old, he begins to sing of his sorrow, pledge himself to the God of Love, and put himself under the sovereignty of his lady, Criseyde. In fact, he addresses an apostrophe to her that she will entreat him with only one glance or one favor.

We also see that Chaucer has depicted the courtly hero when

<sup>40</sup> Andreas, p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> Andreas, p. 43.

he tells us that Troilus' love has transformed him and that his new-found love has changed his behavior:

For he bicomē the frendlieste wight,  
 The gentileste, and ek the moste fre,  
 The thriftieste, and oon the beste knyght  
 That in his tyme was, or myghte be;  
 Dede were his japes and his cruelte,  
 His hye port, and his manere estraungge;  
 And ech of tho gan for a vertu change.  
 (I, 1079-1085)

In this passage, we see again the old motif of the regenerative force of courtly love. In fact, Chaucer later says that this new spiritual love had such power over Troilus that there spread throughout the world such talk and rumor of his honor and generosity that it "rong unto the yate of heven," (III, 1725). Both of these virtues, honor and generosity, were necessary for the courtly lover. In fact all of Troilus' vices have disappeared with his love for Criseyde:

Thus wolde Love, yheried be his grace,  
 That Pride, Envye, and Ire, and Avarice  
 He gan to fle, and everich other vice.  
 (III, 1804-1806)

We are reminded of Andreas' description of love as an "in-born suffering" in Book IV when Troilus hears that Criseyde will be exchanged. Here Troilus indeed goes mad for his love. He becomes as pale and as wan as a dead man. Like a wild bull, he storms around his chamber pounding his breast with his fists and dashing his head against the wall. Like Criseyde, he implores death to come:

O death, allas, why nyltow do me deye?  
 Accorsed be that day which that nature  
 Shoop me to ben a lyves creature!  
 (IV, 250-252)

He begs Criseyde to receive his spirit when he dies, for he will always serve her, even in the lover's heaven. He bids Criseyde:

. . . when ye comen by my sepulture,  
 Remembreth that youre felawe resteth there;  
 For I loved ek, though ich unworthi were.  
 (IV, 327-329)

Typical of the courtly lover, Troilus spends much of his time weeping; his tears never end. A thousand sighs hotter than a burning coal come from his breast until finally he sinks into a trance.

In Troilus' soliloquy on predestination, we here too see reminders of the courtly love theme. In this speech Troilus discusses the cause of the necessity of circumstances and then concludes that whatever happens, happens out of necessity because man has no free will. This is the motif found in the courtly tradition. The lover has no choice as to whether he should love or not, for once he is struck by love's arrow, he has no free will. Nor does the lover have any free will after he has pledged his service to his lady. He does as she commands. So, Troilus says that in courtly love as well as life:

. . . al that comth, comth by necessitee;  
 Thus to belorn, it is my destinee.  
 (IV, 958-959)

After Troilus has bid farewell to Criseyde, we see him again moping and sighing on his bed. He curses the day he was born, the gods and goddesses, Jove, Apollo, Cupid, Criseyde, Bacchus, and Venus. He mourns for his beloved lady, her white breasts and her clear eyes. All he has to embrace in all this sorrow is his pillow. In all these prostrations and agonies,

we picture Troilus as the love sick lover Andreas had described. Troilus' melancholy never disappears. As he and Pandarus walk by Criseyde's house, his heart grows cool, and his face turns pale because the house represents to him a "shryne, of which the seynt is oute," (V, 553). His only consolation in his grief is to stand on the walls of the city and gaze toward the Greek camp. For, he seems to imagine that the strong winds represent Criseyde's sighs.

Troilus is indeed the ideal courtly hero; he never fails to have complete confidence and devotion for his lady. But finally when he realizes that Criseyde will not return, jealousy begins to seethe within him, and he cannot eat nor drink. He becomes lean, pale, and so feeble that he must use a crutch. His sickness is due, he says, to a grievous disorder about his heart. Cassandra's brusque interpretation of his dream doesn't help his sorrow:

This Diomedé hire herte hath, and she his.  
 Wep if thou wolt, or lef! For, out of doute,  
 This Diomedé is inne, and thou art oute.  
 (V, 1517-1519)

Even after Troilus has seen on Diomedé's coat the brooch which he had given Criseyde, he still finds it impossible to "unloven" her.

Thus, we see in Chaucer's characterization of Troilus, a love which is ennobling, regenerating, and enduring. Even after Troilus has ascended to the lovers' heaven, he is described by Chaucer as the ideal hero:



Swich fyn hath, lo, this Troilus for love!  
 Swich fyn hath al his grete worthynesse!  
 Swich fyn hath his estat real above,  
 Swich fyn his lust, swich fyn hath his noblesse!  
 Swich fyn hath false worldes brotelnesse!  
 And thus bigan his lovyng of Criseyde,  
 As I have told, and in this wise he deyde.  
 (V, 1828-1834)

We see that the Troilus is what Chaucer meant it to be, a poem in praise of courtly love. In the history of courtly love poetry, beginning with Ovid, through the Troubadours, and then on to Chretien de Troyes, Chaucer's Troilus represents the crowning achievement of the courtly love tradition. And in the story, the old idea of love outside of marriage is celebrated. Here we see all the sentiments and conventions of the courtly love tradition poured into one great poem, the Troilus.

## THE "MAD IDOLATRY"

Before considering in detail Shakespeare's treatment of the courtly love theme in his play, Troilus and Cressida, it would be well to first trace some of the medieval traditions and ideals of love which has survived from Chaucer's time until Shakespeare's age. In viewing the theme of courtly love historically, we see a striking similarity to the same traditional themes of love, and we also see that some of the Renaissance attitudes toward Platonic love have been fused into the old framework. This is not to assert that by analyzing the play in this historical light that Shakespeare's greatest "problem play", Troilus and Cressida, can be thoroughly assessed. We still are faced with a mystery which will forever remain unsolved and that is: how did Shakespeare intend his audience to interpret the love story of Troilus and Cressida. This, no doubt, will remain a scholarly problem on which critics may debate for years to come. On the other hand, it seems to be the task of this paper to trace the love theme and the influential elements surrounding it from Chaucer's age of the 14th century, which saw the waning of chivalry, to Shakespeare's age of the 16th century, which saw the rebirth of humanism.

During the Renaissance, we find a spokesman for our courtly ideal of love in the writings of Conte Baldassare Castiglione whose book, Il Cortigiano, was most popular in its day. As

Haydn says of Castiglione, he was the "arbiter elegatiarum for all Renaissance Europe."<sup>1</sup> In Castiglione's aristocratic platonic code of love, the ideal courtier possessed social refinements of grace and trained instincts of reason which make one able to do or say difficult things with apparent ease. In comparing this Renaissance courtly ideal with the courtly conventions of the Middle Ages, we come upon a change: this new Renaissance tradition of courtly love was aristocratic, while the courtly tradition of the Middle Ages had even included the members of the peasant class. Yet, within the tradition, we still see some of the same motifs: love still possesses an ennobling power, true love is the marriage of the mind, the lady inspires the gentleman, and he in turn is her servant. All these conventions had not changed in two hundred years.

Still, inevitably, there were other changes. With the Renaissance the courtly tradition had to adjust itself to a new humanistic conception of Platonic love which stressed the importance of virtue and reason. The advocates of the courtly code proposed that their ideas of love were "rational" and that if the courtly lover possessed true honor, undoubtedly his reward would be true "virtue."<sup>2</sup> This concept of love was found in Castiglione's code of love; in other words the courtly code was not opposed to the new Renaissance view of love, rather it added

<sup>1</sup>Hiram Haydn, The Counter-Renaissance (New York, 1960), p. 556.

<sup>2</sup>Haydn, p. 557.

some of the humanist philosophy to it. As Haydn points out:

In the Courtier, the tone remains highly plausible; this relationship between courtier and lady, if basically artificial is at least invested with a combination of gallantry and dignity. Although at times it seems only a game in savoir faire, there is a seriously idealistic undercurrent which bears the accent of sincerity.<sup>3</sup>

So, in brief, in the writings of Castiglione we see the humanist idea of virtue and reason fused with the courtier's ideal of love and honor.

Of all the writers of the Elizabethan age, it was Spenser who was inspired by the principles of the tradition. He sketched the old chivalric knight with his full dress of nobility. His lovers were true to the tradition. This following passage from the Faerie Queene exemplifies how the poet painted so closely the old courtly tradition:

What virtue is so fitting for a knight,  
Or for a lady whom a knight should love,  
As courtesy, to bear themselves aright,  
To all of each degree, as doth behove?<sup>4</sup>

Spenser's Red Cross Knight follows the godly path of the courtly hero. He slays the dragon, aids his friends, bravely resists his foes, and wins his lady Gloriana. It seems that Spenser was attempting to revive the romantic courtly tradition. As Grier-son says:

The spirit of his poetry is that of an age which was passing away, the age of romance and allegory

<sup>3</sup>Haydn, p. 558.

<sup>4</sup>Edmund Spenser, "The Faerie Queene," quoted in Tucker Brooke's The Renaissance (New York, 1948), p. 499.

and the cult of courtly love, the religion of love.<sup>5</sup>

In Spenser's writings we see how the writers of the age adapted their themes of love to the humanistic one. In his Hymne in Honour of Love, II, he tells us that ideal love is the "true Platonic one of a gradually deepening process of understanding whereby each successive object of love is a higher and worthier one."<sup>6</sup> Thus in Spenser, as well as Castiglione, love is under the guidance of reason. The humanist idea of virtue and reason is fused with the old courtier's ideal of love and honor.

In Sidney, too, we see the recurring theme of love and reason. In Sidney's Arcadia, love even has power over reason, for Musidorus says:

I find indeed, that all is but lip-wisdome, which wants experience. I now "woe" is me do try what love can doo. O Zelmane, who will resist it must have either not witte, or put out his eyes. Can any man resist his creation? Certainly by love we are made, and to love we are made.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout the age which preceded Shakespeare, there existed a persistent argument between those within the courtly circles who questioned whether love was a passion and must be governed by reason, and too, there were those who wondered whether love had within it the natural property of reason as the Platonists believed.

<sup>5</sup>Herbert Grierson, Cross-Currents in 17th Century English Literature (New York, 1958), p. 62.

<sup>6</sup>Haydn, p. 559.

<sup>7</sup>Sir Phillip Sidney, "Arcadia," quoted in Haydn's The Counter-Renaissance, p. 561.

On the other hand, there was an element which opposed both the courtly and the humanistic definitions of love. The naturalists saw love only as a bodily passion of the flesh. George Turberville explicitly expresses the naturalists' view:

Shall reason rule where reason hath no right  
 Nor never had? Shall Cupid lose his lands?  
 His claim? his crown? his kindom? Name of might?  
 And yeld himself to be in reason's bands?  
 No friend, they ring doth will me thus in vain.  
 Reason and love have ever yet been twain.  
 They are by kind of such contrary mould  
 As one mislike the others lewd device;  
 What reason wills, Cupido never would!  
 Love never yet thought reason to be wise.<sup>8</sup>

This quotation plainly expresses the ideas of the Counter-Renaissance movement which existed in the Elizabethan world. Such naturalists as Turberville ridiculed the pretensions of the Platonic love of Castiglione and the romantic ideals of such poets as Spenser and Sir Phillip Sidney. Rather, these naturalists defined love as a carnal passion of mere physical appetite. The cynical view toward the courtly ideal is best seen in Marston's play, The Malcontent. Marston's play follows many of the courtly love conventions, but the spirit of the play is bitter disillusionment. Maquerelle, sentinel to the Duchess Aurelia, reflects this sharp reaction against the artifices of courtly love:

. . . He loves ye; pish! He is witty; bubble!  
 Fair-proportioned; meaw! Nobly-born; wind!

<sup>8</sup> George Turberville, quoted in Haydn's The Counter-Renaissance, p. 564. Also see Don Cameron Allen, "The Degeneration of Man and Renaissance Pessimism," Studies in Philology, XXXV(1938), pp. 202-227, and Arnold Williams, "A Note on Pessimism in the Renaissance," Studies in Philology, XXXVI (1939), pp. 243-247.

Let this be still your fixed position;  
 esteem me every man according to his good gifts,  
 and so ye shall ever remain . . . most dear - ladies.<sup>9</sup>

Marston makes Castiglione's ideal court society look absurd with its flattering knaves, lecherous courtiers, and adulterous women-in-waiting who frequent the court.

Another picture of the time which satirizes the courtly tradition is found in Chapman's sketch of the French court in his play, Bussy D'Ambois. Bussy, who is shot up as a courtier overnight, is instructed by the go-between Friar Comolet to pretend with "another color, which my art/ Shall teach you to lay on."<sup>10</sup> Bussy replies: "Give me the color, my most honored father, / and trust my cunning then to lay it on."<sup>11</sup> The friar describes love as false hypocrisy:

. . . ; for, learn this of me,  
 If she dissemble, she thinks 'tis not done;  
 If not dissemble, nor a little chide,  
 Give her her wish, she is not satisfied.  
 To have a man think that she never seeks,  
 Does her more good than to have all she likes.<sup>12</sup>

Chapman describes the Court of Love as completely artificial because there is no genuine love in it.

Besides Turberville, Marston, and Chapman, the most cynical

<sup>9</sup> John Marston, "The Malcontent," Elizabethan and Stuart Plays, ed. Charles Read Baskervill et al. (New York, 1960), Act IV, Scene i, Lines 35-42, p. 706.

<sup>10</sup> George Chapman, "Bussy D'Ambois," Elizabethan and Stuart Plays, Act II, Scene ii, Lines 146-147, p. 740.

<sup>11</sup> Chapman, "Bussy D'Ambois," Elizabethan and Stuart Plays, Act II, Scene ii, Lines 150-151, p. 740.

<sup>12</sup> Chapman, "Bussy D'Ambois," Elizabethan and Stuart Plays, Act II, Scene ii, Lines 178-184, p. 740.

of all the writings aimed at the courtly ideal were the writings of Petro Aretino. In his La Cortigiana is found the tale of how Messer Marco is groomed to become a courtier; it is a complete lampoon on Castiglione's courtier.<sup>13</sup> Like Sir Walter Raleigh, Aretino believed that love is but lust. One of the characters in his story, Parabolano tells the baker that he must forgive his wife because all wives today are whores and are looked upon as more chaste than they really are. Thus, we see that the courtly traditions of the Renaissance as found in the writings of Castiglione, Spenser, and Sidney were completely ridiculed and bombasted by the naturalist movement which has been called by Haydn, the Counter-Renaissance.

Of all the opponents of the courtly tradition, it was Montaigne who expressed this naturalist philosophy most clearly. Montaigne could not accept the ideal world of the Platonists, so in turn he advocated "natural" love. Love to Castiglione was a "craft" or an "art." The Elizabethan courtly gentleman was to possess a feeling of service to his king, to his lady, and above all he was to act according to reason. But to Montaigne, a man was a "sexually potent male, who acted according to nature and instinct."<sup>14</sup> To Montaigne the rules of love were not set down by Andreas Capellanus, but by nature herself. As carried on by Castiglione, ceremony was a most important part in the old

<sup>13</sup>Petro Aretino, "La Cortigiana," quoted in Haydn's The Counter-Renaissance p. 567.

<sup>14</sup>Haydn, p. 568.



"noblesse oblige." To Montaigne such courtly traditions were ridiculous. Here we see that it was the naturalists such as Montaigne who completely deflowered the old code of love and honor.

The naturalists not only attacked the Platonic idea of love, but they also condemned the courtly notion of "honor." They labelled courtly honor as false hypocrisy. In the words of Pierre Charron:

On one hand nature pushes us violently to this action . . . Yet we call it shameful, and the parts which are used shameful . . . The action is not at all in itself and by nature shameful - witness the beasts - Human nature, says Theology, maintaining itself in its original state, would not have felt any shame in it.<sup>15</sup>

In Torquato Tasso's writings, we also see a preference for a love which existed under the old golden laws of nature in which "what'er pleases is allowed."<sup>16</sup> The naturalists blamed the courtly code of honor for the development of this shame and called honor only a prudish restraint. They charged the courtly tradition with having made "sweet acts, wanton," and having "veiled the fountains of delight" by infusing love with art.<sup>17</sup> The naturalists, then, advocated that nature had made love free, but that it was such restraints as the rules of courtly love and the rules of reason which had made love shameful and false.

The naturalists blamed the women more than the men for this

<sup>15</sup>Haydn, p. 569.

<sup>16</sup>Haydn, p. 570.

<sup>17</sup>Haydn, p. 570.

hypocrisy of honor. Of course, they would condemn honor because it prevented a love which was carried on merely according to one's own free will and pleasure. The naturalists said that what the ladies were really thinking of when they refused their favors to honest men was their reputations. This is all honor meant to women, claimed the cynics, for such honor had no connection with virtue nor conscience. But if a lady was sure that her name would not suffer, then all her scruples about honor would disappear. At this point, we can't help but recall Chaucer's Criseyde who was so concerned that nothing would blemish her reputation. Several times Criseyde holds that honor is her ruling principle of conduct. And her ideal of honor, as the naturalists would no doubt say, might well have been that she preferred the world's respect to her own conscience.

The above material is not to in any way imply that this debasing of woman's honor was peculiar only to the Elizabethan age. In Chaucer's age too, there was the same sort of anti-feminist philosophy. To find evidence for this we only need to review the last book of The Art of Love.<sup>18</sup> Here Andreas implores Walter to reject love, and one of the reasons he gives for this rejection is: "The mutual love which you seek in women you cannot find, for no woman ever loved a man or could find herself to a lover in the mutual bonds of love."<sup>19</sup> In this light, woman is

<sup>18</sup> Andreas Capellanus, "The Rejection of Love," The Art of Courtly Love, pp. 44-54.

<sup>19</sup> Andreas, p. 48.

depicted as being inherently evil from the time of Eve. In fact, woman is most "deceiving" because she always has one thing in her heart and another on her lips. "Therefore," states Andreas, "never rely upon a woman's promise or upon her oath, because there is no honesty in her."<sup>20</sup> He goes on to say that every woman is a liar, a drunkard, and a loud-mouthed.<sup>21</sup> He attributes all this to the fact that it was Eve who was the first woman, and it was she who destroyed all womanhood by her sin of disobedience. Thus we have seen that this same stock theme of the wickedness of women can be traced from Chaucer's time down to the anti-feminists of the Elizabethan period. We will later see that this anti-feminist philosophy was in the air when Shakespeare sat down to compose his Troilus and Cressida.

If we are to view the courtly conventions in the Elizabethan society, we might question, as we did in the Middle Ages, whether such a code was actually ever practiced or whether it was a mere literary convention. No, the old "noblesse oblige" was not gone, despite the fact that it was becoming decadent. Chaucer in the days of Edward III had spent many an hour watching the courtly jousts and the knights battling on the fields; so Shakespeare in his day saw the courtly conventions carried on at the court of Elizabeth. The old elevation of womanhood which had been inherent in the courtly code from its founding, was encouraged even more by the elevation of a woman who was the

<sup>20</sup> Andreas, p. 50.

<sup>21</sup> Andreas, p. 51.

Virgin Queen. It was Elizabeth, herself, who carried on the old traditions of the courtly society. She, like the ladies of old, made her lovers protest, kneel, and spend hours in their beds sulking. In fact, it was said to have been "a favorite trick of Essex'" to play the role of the "love-lorn knight, and take to his bed" and refuse to eat until Elizabeth would bestow a favor upon him.<sup>22</sup> It is also reported that another of Elizabeth's admirers, Raleigh, attempted to drown himself for his Queen mistress. We also see the old traditional code of defending the lady's honor when Essex entered a Spanish town and thrust his pike "demanding aloud if any Spaniard mewed therein durst adventure forth in favour of his mistress to break a lance."<sup>23</sup> There was no reply.

In fact, it might even be said that in the Elizabethan age there was a Renaissance in the courtly traditions, for there was a definite revival of chivalry during Elizabeth's reign. From the day that Elizabeth was crowned and Sir Edward Darnley rode on horseback into the hall, offering to fight any man who would deny Elizabeth to be the lawful sovereign, the Virgin Queen demanded of her admirers the attentions which the ladies of the Provence had demanded of the troubadours. The chivalric practices themselves, such as tilting, hawking, and fencing were still popular. Elizabeth's court, itself, is a sketch of the

<sup>22</sup>William Witherle Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies (New York, 1960), p. 143.

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence, p. 144.

old court of Eleanor of Aquitaine. Let us view her private audience on a Sunday morning:

. . . whoever speaks to her, it is kneeling, now and then she raises some with her hand. While we were there. W. Alawatea, A Bohemian Baron had letters to present to her; and she after pulling off her glove, a mark of particular favour; gave him her right hand to kiss, sparkling with rings and jewels; wherever she turned her face, as she was going along everybody fell down on their knees.<sup>24</sup>

Even the old tradition of sending love letters was still being practiced by the Virgin Queen. For on November 16, 1600, on the anniversary of her coronation, Essex was forbidden to go to the court. He, like the moaning Troilus, implored his lady's favor:

Only miserable Essex, full of pain, full of sickness, full of sorrow, languishing in repentance for his offences past. . . joys only for your majesty's great happiness and happy greatness.<sup>25</sup>

Like Troilus, Essex became insane for his lady's love when she ignored his letter; in fact, he was so mad that on February 8, 1601, he led a rebellion to arouse the citizens of London to take up arms against Elizabeth.

Thus, though the chivalric code of love had become decadent and artificial and though it was only practiced among the aristocracy, still the courtly conventions were a most significant element in the Elizabethan world.

When Shakespeare sat down to write a play, of all the

<sup>24</sup>G. B. Harrison ed., Shakespeare (New York, 1948), p. 21.

<sup>25</sup>Oscar James Campbell, Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida (San Marino, California, 1938), p. 220.

popular tales in his day why did he choose the story of Troilus and Cressida. As Tatlock asserts:

No traditional story was so popular in the Elizabethan age as that of the siege of Troy and some of its episodes; because of its antiquity and undying beauty, of the fame and greatness of the early writers who had treated it and to some extent of the tradition that the Britons were descendants of the Trojans.<sup>26</sup>

There was an increased understanding of the classics among the highly educated in the Elizabethan age; they read Virgil, Ovid, and a new-found Homer. Some of the lower class might even have read Caxton's Recuyell of the Histories of Troy and Lydgate's Troy-book; while some might even have heard a ballad sung on the subject. There is no doubt that Caxton's book was popular. It was reprinted in 1475, 1502, 1553, 1596, and 1617.<sup>27</sup> Lydgate's Troy-book was only printed twice, in 1513 and 1555. There is even further evidence that the story was popular when we realize how many stage plays of the day dealt with this theme. The following were staged in the 17th century:

Troilus ex Chaucero, By Nicholas Grimald  
Troilus and Cressida, Chettle and Deldker  
A Play on Priam, Troilus and Cressida, 1617  
The Welsh Troilus and Cressida (before 1613)  
 Heywood's Iron Age (two parts, printed in 1632)<sup>28</sup>

Indeed, the Troy story must have been popular, for Shakespeare

<sup>26</sup>J. S. P. Tatlock, "The Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature," PMLA, XXX, No. 4 (1915), p. 673.

<sup>27</sup>Tatlock, p. 681.

<sup>28</sup>Tatlock, p. 676.

makes frequent allusions to it in his plays. In the Merry Wives of Windsor, Pistol says to Falstaff: "Shall I sir Pandarus of Troy become,/ And by my side wear steel," (I, iii, 82-83).<sup>29</sup> Doll Tearsheet calls Falstaff: "Thou art as valorous as Hector of Troy, worth five of Agamemnon," (II, iv, 236-238). In Twelfth Night the clown says: "I would play Lord Pandarus of Phrygia, sir, to bring a Cressida to this Troilus . . . Cressida was a beggar," (III, i 58-62). Thus, from the above evidence of the popularity of the Troy story in Elizabethan literature, in the stage plays, and Shakespeare's frequent references to it, we can only conclude that the Troy theme was a popular one.

Yet of all the versions of the Troy love story between Chaucer and Shakespeare, Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid, written in the late fifteenth century, was the most popular. In fact Henryson's version was printed in the Thynne edition of Chaucer in 1532. Henryson invented his own interpretation of the story which centered around poetic justice. In Henryson, Cressida is a harlot who curses the gods after she has left Troilus. So in turn, the gods take vengeance for her blasphemy and strike her with leprosy. When Troilus returns to the city, he unknowingly passes her by. He fails to recognize the leper woman sitting there by the roadside begging with her cup. Still Troilus seems to see something in her face which reminds him of his faithless lady, and he throws her a coin. Afterwards

<sup>29</sup>All allusions to the Troy story in my text are to the New Cambridge Edition of Shakespeare (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1942), eds William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill.

Cressida makes her "testament" and dies of a broken heart. With the popularity of such renditions as Henryson's, by Shakespeare's day Cressida had become synonymous with the name of a harlot.

As Lawrence points out:

With such a tradition as this confronting him, how could Shakespeare make the heroine of Chaucer's poem a sympathetic character for the men of his day. The story was too familiar to alter; its very popularity had stereotyped it. It is safe to say that the Elizabethans would have jeered at a pure and noble Cressida, just as the pit of an English theatre today would jeer at a self-sacrificing and high-principled Guy Fawkes.<sup>30</sup>

Thus, Shakespeare did not choose to change Cressida's bad name because this was the tradition that had come down to him.

We might also ask what sort of an audience the play was written for. With all the scurrilous remarks about courtly love it seems impossible that it could have been played before the Queen. In Shakespeare, Cressida is a wanton coquette. She is in love with love and plays the game of courtly love for all it is worth. She "trolls the tongue and rolls the eyes, invites Troilus and in the same breath denies him."<sup>31</sup> The portrayal of this sort of a woman would have been repulsive to Elizabeth. Nor did Shakespeare write the play for the "groundlings." They would not have understood such mocking attacks on the courtly world of ethics. G. B. Harrison suggests that it "bears all the

<sup>30</sup>Lawrence, p. 152.

<sup>31</sup>Elmer Edgar Stoll, Shakespeare's Young Lovers (New York, 1937), p. 83.



signs of a play prepared for a private and select audience."<sup>32</sup> And the Cambridge editors suggest that the play was just the sort of "fusty stuff" which would have brought "final deep-chest laughs" from the revelling barristers at the Inns of Court.<sup>33</sup> It seems most plausible that the play was written for the Inns of Court. With all the satirical slams and long philosophical passages, it seems most likely that Shakespeare must have written it for just this sort of a courtly intellectual audience.

Troilus and Cressida is dated by the Cambridge editors around 1602. This date is confirmed by the external evidence in the Stationers' Register dated February 7, 1602 and also by the internal evidence in the prologue of the play which is generally regarded as an allusion to the "armed prologue" in Ben Jonson's Poetaster, dated in 1601. For our purposes this date is significant because many of the older critics have ascribed Shakespeare's pessimism in the Troilus to the fact that during this period both his son and his father had died and that too, he was concerned about his friend Southampton who was arrested for his part in the Essex rebellion. It seems more likely that the pessimistic tone of Shakespeare's play only preserved the tradition of his time which saw Cressida as a harlot, Troilus as a young warrior ruined by unworthy love, and Pandarus as a pimp. Too, we might assume that Shakespeare intentionally meant to debase

<sup>32</sup>Harrison, p. 656.

<sup>33</sup>New Cambridge Edition of Shakespeare, p. 311.

the courtly theme as had other playwrights of his day such as Marston and Chapman. Shakespeare must have seen in this famous love story a chance to portray the high-flown courtly ideals as completely ridiculous.

Troilus, the noble courtly hero in Chaucer, has become in Shakespeare a man overpowered by passion. In the following lines we see that his nobility has been reduced to its lowest form, for he was:

. . . weaker than a woman's tear,  
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,  
Less valiant than the virgin in the night.  
And skillless as unpractis'd infancy.<sup>34</sup>  
(I, i, 10-13)

This indeed, is not the chivalrous knight of old, but a sensual man full of lust whom Capellanus had earlier said was not fit for love because he seeks love only for the gratification of his own passions. Troilus has even forgotten his duty to his lord. In the following passage he procrastinates over his reasons for abandoning the field of battle:

Why should I war without the walls of Troy,  
That find such cruel battle here within?  
Each Trojan that is master of his heart,  
Let him to field; Troilus, alas! hath none.  
(I, i, 2-5)

Our hero is here concerned about anything but his reputation as a warrior; he has forgotten his "noblesse oblige." Troilus, instead, is infatuated with the new philosophy of the naturalists who advocated "what'er pleases is allowed:"

<sup>34</sup>All citations from Shakespeare's Troilus in my text are to the New Cambridge Edition of Shakespeare.

I am giddy; expectation whirls me round  
 The imaginary relish is so sweet  
 That it enchants my sense; what will it be  
 When the wat'ry palates taste indeed  
 Love's thrice repured nectar?

(III, ii, 19-23)

The whole theme of Troilus' love is a bitter one. In the above speech he is emulating; he is delirious over his love for Cressida. It seems so futile that he feels all this emotion for a faithless Cressida who is only a shallow woman living only for herself. With such a cynical tone toward the courtly code, Shakespeare is only showing how such a code can ruin the unexperienced lover such as Troilus. Love has made Troilus so "giddy" that his love has become only physical rapture. This is in direct contrast to what the courtly code advocated; Troilus' burning passion is anything but a love of the spirit and a marriage of the minds. Troilus outwardly plays the role of the courtly lover as he pledges his service to Cressida:

O that I thought it could be in a woman -  
 As if it can, I will presume in you -  
 To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love,  
 To keep her constancy in plight and youth,  
 Outliving beauties outward, . . .

(III, ii, 165-169)

Here we feel that Troilus is only wearing the mask of the courtly lover. Shakespeare knew this was the sort of speech a courtly lady would expect, so he loads it with all the terms and all the endearments.

Troilus is finally forced to face reality square in the face when he sees Cressida displaying her love to Diomedes at Calchas' tent. But still, his impassioned world will not admit

that his mistress could be unfaithful and become a harlot to  
Diomede:

This she? no, this is Diomed's Cressida.  
If beauty have a soul, this is not she.  
If souls guide vows, if vows are sanctimony,  
If sanctimony be the gods' delight,  
If there be rule in unity itself,  
This is not she.

(V, ii, 137-142)

After this scene our impassioned hero takes up his arms; again we see Troilus governed by ardent emotions, not reason. He challenges his rival, Diomede, but to no avail. Here is dramatic irony; it is Troilus who wants to die, but it is brave Hector who does. We leave Troilus as he has only one thought in mind, to seek revenge on the field of battle. Indeed he is not a tragic hero. He only portrays a lustful soul in which folly rules, not the high-flown ideals of the courtly hero. To the Elizabethans, such an enamoured passion as Troilus possesses could only end in despair, and so in Shakespeare's characterization of Troilus the courtly hero has been derided to his lowest animalistic form.

As for Cressida, the courtly heroine, she is also degraded at the hands of Shakespeare. She is unlike the "tender-hearted" widow of Chaucer, and more like the voluptuous courtly lady whom Boccaccio had depicted. She is nothing but a cold-blooded schemer and an experienced coquette. But she, like Troilus, knows how to put on the vizard of the courtly lady. As the courtly lady of old, she persistently says no because:

Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing.  
Things won are done, joy's soul lies in the doing.

That she belov'd knows nought, and that knows not this;  
 Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is.  
 (I, ii, 312-315)

But Cressida ends this speech by revealing her real nature. She is not standing aloof for the sake of the courtly convention, but in order to gratify her own physical passion. She continues:

That she was never yet that ever knew  
 Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.  
 (I, ii, 312-315)

Cressida uses all the crafts of the courtly lover, but in reality she is playing the role of the seductress who flaunts and teases her hot-headed Troilus. She knows that all these conventions of courtly love are mere hypocrisy, for:

They say all lovers swear more performance  
 than they are able, and yet reserve an ability  
 that they never perform, vowing more than the  
 perfection of ten, and discharging less than the  
 tenth part of one. They that have the voice of  
 lions and the act of hares, are they not monsters?  
 (III, ii, 91-96)

The above speech by Cressida sounds like an echo from Montaigne. Both Cressida and Montaigne express the opinion that really the laws of love are set down by nature and that all these noble ideas of the courtly code are made by hypocritical "monsters."

In the scenes in which Cressida does seem to present the courtly ideal, it is overdone. After Cressida has been informed of the exchange, we feel that she enjoys all her emulating too much; in other words she does protest too much. First she exclaims: "O you immortal gods! I will not go." And then she becomes concerned about her reputation and swears faithfulness to Troilus. Then she goes in and weeps:

. . . Oh you gods divine  
 Make Cressid's name the very crown of falsehood  
 If ever she leave Troilus.

I'll go in and weep

Tear my bright hair and scratch my praised cheeks.  
 Crack my clear voice with sobs and break my heart.  
 (IV, ii, 105-114)

Here Cressida reveals her shallowness; she knows this is what is expected of the mourning courtly lady upon her departure from her loved one. So she plays the game all the way.

When she arrives in the Greek camp, wise Ulyssus sees her for what she is as he says of her:

. . . Fie, fie upon her!  
 There's language in her eyes, her cheek, her lip  
 May her foot speaks, her wanton spirits look out  
 At every joint and motive of her body.  
 (IV, v, 54-57)

He goes on to say that he has set her down as a wicked woman who is looking only for the "sluttish spoils of opportunity." She is like all the other "daughters of the game," (IV, v, 62-63). In this scene at the Greek camp she shows herself as the wanton woman she is as she kisses all the Greek warriors. After Diomedes's first advance, Cressida no longer plays the role of the hypocritical courtly heroine: she becomes a debauched harlot. For our purposes the coquette of the court has become in her own words a "false wench," (V, ii, 70). She rationalizes and blames her falseness on the inherent evil existing within women:

Troilus, farewell! One eye yet looks on thee  
 But with my heart the other eye doth see.

Ah, poor our sex! This fault in us I find,  
 The error of our eye directs our mind.  
 (V, ii, 107-110)

She, like Andreas, realizes that there is a deceitful nature in women which will never disappear. Cressida in all her actions has become the epitomy of this deceitfulness and faithlessness. Even Troilus at the end expresses this point of view:

O Cressid! O false Cressid! False, False, False!  
 Let all untruth stand by thy stain'd name  
 And they'll seem glorious.

Thus, we see that despite the fact that Cressida seems to display all the trappings of the courtly heroine with her emulations and caresses, she has really become a smirched stain of womanhood. Cressida's love for Troilus is anything but beautiful. And so it was that Shakespeare sought to show the battle of his age which was being waged by the naturalists and the courtly love champions by portraying the hero and heroine as mere mockeries of the old code of love and honor.

Pandarus, too, degrades the courtly ethics. In Shakespeare's play he is far less important as the instigator of the action than he was in Chaucer's same tale. Also Pandarus has lost his aristocratic attitude and his humorous wit. In brief, he has become "a cringing hanger-on of the court and of great houses, whose conversational stock-in-trade consists of honeyed, scented phrases and gossip of the boudoir."<sup>35</sup> In Pandarus' character Shakespeare simply paints a busybody who has been debased from

<sup>35</sup>Frederick S. Boas, Shakespeare and His Predecessors  
 (New York, 1904) p. 377.

an aristocratic courtly go-between to a disappointed procurer:

I have had my labor for my travail, ill thought  
-on of her and ill-thought-on of you - - - gone  
between and between, but small thanks for my  
labor.

(I, i, 70-73)

Neither does he possess any real affection for his niece; he derides Cressida with: "But what care I? I care not an she were a blackamoor, 'tis all one to me," (I, i, 79-80). As Troilus rides by he reveals his base manner with his unpleasant imagery: "Asses, fools, dolt! Chaff and bran, Chaff and bran! Porridge after meat! I could live and die i' the eyes of Troilus," (I, ii, 262-264). Even after he has gotten the lovers together, Pandarus again debases love with his crude insinuations such as: "What, blushing still? Have you not done talking yet?" (III, ii, 109-110). He sees love only as a sensuous passion as he bids the lovers goodnight: "And Cupid grant all tongue-tied maidens here/ Bed, chamber, Pandar to provide this gear," (III, ii, 219-220). At the end of the play we see Pandarus complaining of his aching bones as he realizes that he has become a bawd whose performance will be forever loathed. Pandarus ends as the play ends, in the shamed disease of lechery.

Thus, the code of love has been savagely scorned by Shakespeare's depiction of wanton Cressida, impassioned Troilus, and lecherous Pandarus.<sup>36</sup> This indeed is not an attractive picture of love, but then there is no real love in the play, just lust

<sup>36</sup> See Boas and Campbell for further investigation into the fact that the play is a merciless satire of the high-flown ideals of courtly love.



and passion. And as we have seen in the previous introductory material to the play, throughout the Elizabethan age there was adamant opposition to the courtly code and all it stood for. There were those such as Montaigne who attacked the aristocratic ideal. They believed like Hector, that it was "mad idolatry to make the service greater than the God," (II, ii, 56-57). No doubt, Shakespeare was aware of this movement when he chose to debunk this code of courtly love in his Troilus and Cressida.

## THE RELICS OF THE COURTLY TRADITION

If we are to consider the attitude toward the courtly love philosophy during the Restoration, then we must first deal with the evolution of Puritanism which was one of the strongest intellectual currents between Shakespeare's age and Dryden's. With the Commonwealth, the English gaiety of life disappeared. Conscientious Puritans labelled pastimes, such as wakes, stage plays, and drink as sinful vices, and the popular religious festivals of the Middle Ages and the Elizabethan age were no longer approved. As Grierson points out, there was an overstrained morality in the age which expected even children to live without amusement.<sup>1</sup> And what was true of the age was also true of the love tradition. The old lightsome spirit of pure love and chivalry which had encouraged love outside of marriage was irreconcilable to such puritanical currents. The romance of the courtly traditions had disappeared, and in its place we find a highly intensified moral temper. The Puritans realistically approved only one kind of love and that was "wedded love."

Also it seems to have even been the fashion of the day for such Anglicans as Vaughan and Donne to later denounce their passionate amorous verses. We have only to view the writings of the clergyman, Donne, to realize that this courtly poetry had

<sup>1</sup>Herbert Grierson, Cross-Currents in 17th Century English Literature (New York, 1958), p. 132.

no place in the age:

But since this title honour hath been us'd  
 Our weake credulity hath been abus'd.  
 The golden laws of nature are repealed  
 Which our first Fathers in such reverence held;  
 Our liberty's revers'd, our Charter's gone,  
 And we're made servaunts to opinion.  
 A monster in no certain shape attir'd  
 And whose originall is much desire'd,  
 Formelesse at first, but growing on it fashions,  
 And doth prescribe manners and laws to nations.<sup>2</sup>

Such poets as Donne found the courtly code which was so steeped in the idealization of womanhood and so governed by impractical rules, nonsense. The Puritans even more seriously attacked the tradition. To them the extolling of love outside marriage was licentious. Man's main concern should be whether or not he would be saved. So in the days of the Commonwealth, we find that courtly love has completely been rejected.

But it is interesting to note that one of the motifs of the old tradition, that of the fusing of religious imagery in amorous verse, was carried on in the poems of Henry Constable and John Donne. Constable, a Catholic poet of the time, reminds us of the troubadours as he compares the divinity of his lady and the resemblance of the lover to the martyr and the saint:

Dear! Seek revenge and him a liar prove!  
 Gods only do impossibilities.  
 "Impossible," saith he, "Thy grace to gain."  
 Show then the power of thy divinities  
 By granting me thy favour to obtain!

<sup>2</sup>John Donne, "Elegy XVII," The Poems of John Donne, ed. Herbert Grierson, Vol I (London, 1953), Lines 46-55, pp. 114-115.

So shall thy foe give to himself the life:  
A goddess thou shalt prove, and happy I.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, we must admit that such extravagant praise of romantic love was indeed rare in this age.

However, it was these same religious images in love poetry which made the young John Donne the great 17th century metaphysical poet that he was. We have only to view Donne's poem "The Relique" which he addresses to Magdalen Herbert, to see again the fusing of the religious with the amorous:

Then, he that digges us up, will bring  
Us, to the Bishop, and the King,  
To make us Reliques; then  
Thou shalt be a Mary Magdalen, and I  
A something else thereby;  
All women shall adore us, and some men;  
And since at such time, miracles are sought  
I would have that age by this paper taught,<sup>4</sup>  
What miracles we harmlesse lovers wrought.

The young gallant Donne later retracted this early passionate verse and bid farewell to earthly love when he joined the Anglican clergy in 1615.

The courtly love traditions had indeed become relics in the 17th century, and some of its old grooves could only be found in the secular love poetry of the age. But it was not only this puritanical element which caused the tradition to degenerate; it was also the rising of the middle class and the subsequent loss of power of the aristocracy. In Grierson's salient words:

<sup>3</sup>Grierson, Cross-Currents, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup>Donne, "The Relique," The Poems of John Donne, Lines 14-22, pp. 62-63.

. . . courtly love-poetry was the product of the leisure of the upper class of Feudal society. Idleness is the portress to the garden of the Rose. 'In the days of Racine,' Napoleon said, 'love was the whole content of life.'<sup>5</sup>

Thus, courtly love was an accepted convention in the days in which man's wealth gave him leisure. But these luxurious days were gone. The later 17th century populace demanded a simpler, franker picture of love in which the love of a young man and a woman ends finally in marriage. The courtly conventions of secrecy, complaints, the intrigue of the go-between, all this had no place in the Commonwealth. While Chaucer's audience was well aware of all the courtly traditions and were not in the least shocked that Criseyde and Troilus never contemplated marriage, this view of love could not have been grasped by the Commonwealth. In Jeremy Collier's words, such courtly love was preferring "Debauchery to Marriage."<sup>6</sup>

Even Shakespeare in his plays purports the view that ideal love ends with marriage. In the interim of all the amours which trespass between Romeo and Juliet, marriage plans are frequently referred to. To Shakespeare, as well as to the 17th century audience, love outside of marriage was a sin. Shakespeare's ideal of pure love may be seen in faithful Desdemona's attitude toward noble Othello. Desdemona in this passage reiterates the Restoration as well as the Elizabethan view towards marriage:

<sup>5</sup>Grierson, Cross-Currents, p. 146.

<sup>6</sup>Jeremy Collier, A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage (London, 1738), p. 92.

Here I kneel,  
 If e'er my will did trespass 'gainst his love,  
 Either in discourse of thought or actual deed,  
 Or that mine eyes, mine ears, or any sense  
 Delighted them in any other form  
 Or that I do not yet, and ever did  
 And ever will-though he do shake me off  
 To beggarly divorcement - love him dearly,  
 Comfort forswear me! Unkindness may do much;  
 And his unkindness may defeat my life,  
 But never taint my love.<sup>7</sup>

(IV, ii, 151-161)

Even in Shakespeare, love has been simplified by limiting it to the boundaries of matrimony.

Like Shakespeare, the Puritan poet George Wither, too viewed the ideal love as being that his mistress should love him and be constant. He expresses this view in the "Mistress of Philarete:"

Shall I wasting in Dispaire,  
 Dye because a Womans faire?  
 Or make pale my cheekes with care,  
 Cause another Rosie are?  
 Be shce fairer then the Day,  
 Or the Flowry Meads in May;  
 If She be not so to me,  
 What care I how faire shce be.<sup>8</sup>

Wither here reveals the didacticism of the puritanical moralists who show only a cold intellectual tone in their writings. The burning passion of the chivalric love had disappeared, and in its place is a realistic love which even today seems prudish.

With this new concept of love within marriage the conflicts of love could no longer come from the stand-offish lady; rather

<sup>7</sup> William Shakespeare, "Othello," The New Cambridge Edition of Shakespeare (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1942), pp. 1126-1127.

<sup>8</sup> George Wither, "from Faire Virtue, The Mistresse of Philarette," Seventeenth Century Verse & Prose, ed. Helen C. White et al. (New York, 1959), p. 209.

it was the parents who caused the unhappy love affairs. It was still an accepted view of the day that no child should marry without leave of his or her parents.<sup>9</sup> Thus, it follows that the complaint of the lover was now addressed to the harsh parents.

This new idea of love may be seen in some of the writings of John Milton. For our purposes, it is impossible to outline Milton's attitude toward women from the time of his gay university days, through his turbulent matrimonial experiences to his bitter denouncements of love in his divorce pamphlets. But for our purposes, Milton's famous apostrophe to "wedded love" in Paradise Lost beautifully echoes the attitude of the age. Here is the noblest expression of all of this new idea of love which is found in the puritanical current of the 17th century:

Hail wedded Love, mysterious law, true source  
 Of human offspring, sole propriety  
 In Paradise of all things common else.  
 By these adulterous lust was driven from men  
 Among the bestial herds to range, by thee  
 Founded in reason, Loyal, Just, and Pure,  
 Relations dear, and all the Charities  
 Of Father, Son, and Brother first were known.  
 Far be it that I should write thee sin or blame,  
 Or think thee unbefitting holy place,  
 Perpetual Fountain of Domestic sweets,  
 Whose bed is undefil'd and chaste pronounc'd  
 Present or past, as Saints and Patriarchs us'd.  
 Here Love his golden shafts employe, here lights  
 His Constant Lamp and waves his purple wings,  
 Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smiles  
 Of Harlots loveless, joyless, unindear'd,  
 Casual Fruition, nor in Court Amours,  
 Mixt Dance, or wanton Mask, or Midnight Ball,

<sup>9</sup>Grierson, Cross-Currents, p. 132.

Or Serenate, which the starv'd lover sings  
 To his proud fair best quitted with disdain.<sup>10</sup>  
 (IV, 750-770)

Milton, like the Protestants of his time, honors only "wedded love" and condemns the "court amours" of the "starv'd lovers."

However, Milton too had his passionate moments in which he glorified a sensuous love. If we were not aware that he had dedicated this to his second wife, Katherine Woodcock, who died in February, 1658, we would indeed think it is in the courtly tradition of Chaucer's age:

Methought I saw my late espoused Saint  
 Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,  
 Whom Jove's great Son to her glad Husband gave,  
 Rescu'd from death by force though pale and faint.  
 Mine as whom washt from spot of child-bed taint,  
 Purification in the old Law did save,  
 And such, as yet once more I trust to have  
 Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,  
 Came vested all in white, pure as her mind:  
 Her face was veil'd, yet to my fancied sight,  
 Love, sweetness, goodness, in her persons shin'd  
 So clear, as in no face with more delight.  
 But O, as to embrace me she inclin'd,  
 I wak'd, she fled, and day brought back my night.<sup>11</sup>

Indeed this is a passionate eulogy of love. This "soul in heaven" might have been Chaucer's Criseyde, but in the eyes of the 17th century it could only be Milton's wife. For it was only "wedded love" which was allowed to stir the heart and bring forth gushes of tears from the bemoaning lovers.

Thus we see that this new puritanical, utilitarian view of

<sup>10</sup>John Milton, Paradise Lost, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1935), p. 137.

<sup>11</sup>Milton, "Methought I Saw," Milton: Paradise Regained, The Minor Poems and Samson Agonistes, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York, 1937), p. 398.



love was not only praised by George Wither, but also by John Milton. Still, in the 17th century there were some traces of the courtly tradition in the poetry of John Donne and Henry Constable. It was this same motif of the fusing of the religious with the amorous which was found in the strange metaphysical conceits of Donne and in the too passionate verses of the Catholic poet, Henry Constable. Nevertheless, the conception of the courtly code in its entirety had completely disappeared from the age.

With the Restoration of Charles I in 1660 the court again began to play an important role in the literary traditions of the time. But the wit and fashions of the earlier Elizabethan age were not to the taste of the Restoration court of Charles. Samuel Pepys expresses this view in his diary when he tells us he went to the Duke of York's theater to see The Tempest played. He enjoyed the pleasure of the theater more than the play itself and spent much of the time fondly gazing at "a French lady in the pit."<sup>12</sup> Despite the fact that there were still some deeply religious works such as Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress in 1682, it was mainly the courtly circle which was the arbiter of the taste and fashion of the time. And it was in this courtly circle in which we find the relics of the courtly tradition.

There is no doubt that the courtly tradition influenced both the verse and drama of the time which was so generously

<sup>12</sup>Samuel Pepys, The Diary of Samuel Pepys, ed. Henry B. Wheatley (New York, 1900), December 12, 1667.

patronized by King Charles himself. As for the verse, the old adultery motif of the courtly code was passed down to the gay-blade poets of the court, mainly Rochester, Sedley and Dorset. But we see in their poetry that the old purity and ennobling power of love has completely disappeared and in their place are debauchery and obscenity. These rakes outwardly seemed to praise the king and their lady-loves, but underneath all this flamboyancy one finds only sexual fury. We have only to view Rochester's "Maimed Debauchery" to realize that courtly love has too been "maimed" into "debauchery:"

From his fierce eyes flashes of rage he throws,  
As from black clouds when lightning breaks away,  
Transported thinks himself amidst his foes,  
And absent, yet enjoys the bloody day.

So when my days of impotence approach,  
And I'm by love and wine's unlucky chance  
Driven from the pleasing billows of debauch,  
On the dull shore of lazy temperance;

. . .

I'll tell of whores attacked, their lords at home,  
Bawd's quarters beaten up, and fortress won,  
Windows demolished, watches overcome,  
And handsome ill's by my contrivance done.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, the charms of the courtly poetry in which womanhood was idealized and chastity was praised are not found in the stormy poems of the courtly rakes such as Rochester.

Besides the verses of the rakes of the court, there was still another area in which traces of the courtly tradition were found and that was in the realm of the drama. Restoration

<sup>13</sup> John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, "The Maimed Debauchee," Understanding Poetry, eds. Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren (New York, 1960), p. 205.

tragedy was "primarily a courtly art written for the King's Players, or the Duke of York's Players, to act before the fashionable audiences . . . and not the groundlings of the Phoenix or the Globe."<sup>14</sup> Charles patronized this new species of drama which extolled love and honor. Among the dramatists of the time who took up this new style of writing, undoubtedly John Dryden stands out as the popularizer of the heroic drama. As one critic says of his contribution to heroic tragedy: "It was he who gave it impetus; it was he who, by his recantation, aided in drawing men's minds once more away from rime and heroics to blank verse and Shakespeare."<sup>15</sup> Beginning with the Indian Queen in 1664, Dryden gave numerous heroic tragedies to the theater: The Indian Emperor, or, The Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards (1665), Tyrannick Love or the Royal Martyr (1669), The Conquest of Granada by the Spaniards (1670), and Aureng-Zebe (1676).

Such heroic plays as these mentioned above are all built around a set plan in which there is a hero who has superhuman abilities and superhuman ideals, there is a heroine of unsurpassed constancy and beauty, there is an inner conflict in the minds of the several characters between love and honor, and there is a stirring story of fighting and marital enthusiasm.<sup>16</sup> Hobbes had earlier set the stage for such a drama; in 1650, he

<sup>14</sup>Bonamy Dobree, Restoration Tragedy 1660-1720 (Oxford, 1929), p. 18.

<sup>15</sup>Allardyce Nicoll, British Drama (New York, 1925), p. 226.

<sup>16</sup>Nicoll, p. 227.

wrote to Davenant that he who undertakes a heroic tragedy should depict "settled Valour, clean Honour, calm Counsel, learned Diversion, and pure love" because the delight of the heroic comes from admiration.<sup>17</sup> Such virtues as these are directly parallel to the old virtues of honor and love which were so frequently praised in the courtly love poetry of the Middle Ages. Yet, in the age of the Restoration these virtues have become artificial because there was no virtue, nor valour, nor honor in the age. Chivalry was gone, and the court was licentious. The playwrights could not depict life as it was, but they left it to the audience to use their "willing suspension of disbelief" and project themselves into an imaginary heroic world. There were even those who wishfully yearned that such heroism would cause a reformation in Charles himself. Thus Davenant wrote:

Princes and nobles, being reformed and made angelical by the heroic, will be predominant lights, which the people cannot choose but use for direction, as glowworms take in and keep the sun's beams till they shine and make day to themselves.<sup>18</sup>

It was this heroic ideal of virtue which was to elevate the morals of the day and which was to even correct the vices of Charles himself.

It seems that the ideals of the heroic tragedy which portrayed a superhuman hero and a pure, constant heroine are within

<sup>17</sup>Thomas Hobbes, "The Answer of Mr. Hobbes to Sir Will D'Avenant's Preface Before Gondibert," Seventeenth Century Verse & Prose, p. 227.

<sup>18</sup>Dobree, p. 18.

the conventions of the courtly tradition. But there is one significant element missing from this new Restoration code: there is a lack of passion and of feeling. This is not to say that such writers as Dryden lacked passion. One has only to view his "Alexander's Feast" or the lampoon "Mac Flecknoe" to realize that Dryden certainly had his emotional moments. But the unheroic age of the Restoration demanded that in the heroic tragedy the writer portray love as unnatural and artificial. Dryden in his heroic plays, then, attempted to build up a different kind of love. He was not trying to show the passions of love as Shakespeare had. Rather he sought to achieve an ideal heroic love which had no relation to the actualities in 17th century life. In his introduction to the Troilus, Dryden himself asks that his drama be viewed in the light of what he wished to achieve:

We ought not to regard a good imitation as a theft;  
 But as a beautiful Idea of him who undertakes to  
 imitate, By forming himself on the invention and  
 the work of another man; for he enters into the  
 lists like a new wrestler to dispute the prize  
 with the former Champion.<sup>19</sup>

Thus, Dryden bids us view the love in his heroic tragedy through the eyes of his age, not through his own temperament.

In the Preface, Dryden informs us that he took Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida from one of the Folios. Dryden's adaptation of Shakespeare's play, Troilus and Cressid: or, Truth Found Too

<sup>19</sup> John Dryden, "The Preface to the Play," Dryden: The Dramatic Works, Vol. V, ed. Montague Summers (London, 1932), p. 13. Hereafter cited as Works.

Late, was produced at Dorset Garden in the early months of 1679.<sup>20</sup> It was first entered in the Stationer's Register on the 14th of April, 1679, and is dated in that year. In the original casting, Troilus was played by Betterton, and Cressida by Mrs. Mary Lee. Anthony Leigh was said to have made a striking performance as Pandarus.<sup>21</sup> It was a popular play and was said in its own time to have drawn a "crowded house."<sup>22</sup> On first sight, we would think that Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida with its satirical bent and its vision of weak Cressida and vainglorious Troilus would not have appealed to Dryden's age. As it stood in its satirical form, it did not appeal.

Dryden, himself, in his Preface raises four objections to the play. First, he says that most of the language is obsolete, ungrammatical, coarse and too figurative:

Yet it must be allowed to the present Age, that the tongue in general is so much refin'd since Shakespeare's time, that many of his words, and more of his Phrases, are scarce intelligible . . . and his whole stile is so pester'd with Figurative expressions, that it is as affected as it is obscure.<sup>23</sup>

Consequently, in his play Dryden sought to refine the Shakespearian language which he found obsolete for his time. Dryden found a second fault with the play as it stood: that it had

<sup>20</sup>The Variorum Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida, Vol XXVI, ed. Harold N. Hillebrand (Philadelphia & London, 1953), p. 489.

<sup>21</sup>The Variorum, p. 489.

<sup>22</sup>The Variorum, p. 504.

<sup>23</sup>Dryden, "The Preface to the Play," Works, p. 11.

not been divided into acts and scenes. In adapting the play he gave "order and connection" to it by making only six scene changes from city to camp, instead of the original nine scene changes.<sup>24</sup> His third objection to the play as it stood was that the latter part of the play was "nothing but a confusion of Drums and Trumpets, Excursions and Alarms."<sup>25</sup> Thus Dryden wrote his own fifth act. His final objection to the tragedy was that in Shakespeare "the chief Persons, who give name to the tragedy, are left alive: Cressida is false, and is not punish'd."<sup>26</sup>

In adapting this play to the Restoration stage Dryden's first task was to revamp the hero and the heroine to the heroic tradition of his time. Thus, Cressida attempts to become the ideal heroine. But she has not only lost the variety she had in Chaucer but also the wantonness she had in Shakespeare. She has, in turn, lost our fascination and our sympathy. She is so true that she has become "artificial." In Dryden's version of the love theme, after Cressida has left the town of Troy, Calchas points out to her that Diomedes is their only friend among the Greeks. He appeals to her sympathy by saying that he too has a "woman's longing" to return to Troy. So Calchas, her father, bids her pretend love to Diomedes and give Diomedes Troilus' ring. Thus, when Ulysses and Troilus overhear Cressida and Diomedes flaunting love at Calchas' tent, Cressida tells us aside that

<sup>24</sup>Dryden, "The Preface to the Play," Works, p. 11.

<sup>25</sup>Dryden, "The Preface to the Play," Works, p. 12.

<sup>26</sup>Dryden, "The Preface to the Play," Works, p. 12.

all this is feigned on her part. Later when Troilus pursues Diomede in battle, Cressida, for her father's sake, begs Troilus to spare Diomede's life. Troilus reproaches her for her sympathy toward Diomede. She is stung by Troilus' taunts and consequently commits suicide. Troilus finds out after Cressida has died, that she was faithful to him. This ending explains the second title of the play: Truth Found Too Late.

The following speech will show beyond a doubt how lamentably Dryden failed in calling forth the emotions of the heroine. Cressida is too good and too simple; indeed she lacks the reality of a character. In this scene Troilus suspects Cressida of being false with Diomede. Cressida answers the charge:

If ever I had power to bend your mind,  
 Believe me still your faithful Cressida;  
 And though my innocence appear like guilt,  
 Because I make his forfeit life my suit,  
 'Tis but for this, that my return to you  
 Would be cut off for ever by his death;  
 My father treated like a slave, and scorned;  
 Myself in hated bonds a captive held.<sup>27</sup>

This is a speech of a heroic lady who reveals no feeling nor emotion. The love passages are not tender, but coldly intellectual. We see this new conception of Cressida's character in her first soliloquy in which she contemplates accepting Troilus as her lover:

A strange dissembling sex we women are:  
 Well may we men, when we ourselves deceive.  
 Long has my secret soul loved Troilus;  
 I drunk his praises from my uncle's mouth,  
 As if my ears could ne'er be satisfied:

<sup>27</sup>Dryden, "Troilus and Cressida," Works, Act V, Scene ii, p. 102.



Why then, why said I not, I love this prince?  
 How could my tongue conspire against my heart,  
 To say I loved him not? O childish love!  
 'Tis like an infant, forward in his play,  
 And what he most desires, he throws away.<sup>28</sup>

As seen in the above speech, Cressida has lost the charm she had in Chaucer and the fanciful spirit she had in Shakespeare. In Dryden's Troilus, Cressida has become "nothingness." To illustrate, in the pathetic scene in which Troilus accuses Cressida of unfaithfulness, she shows no feeling of passion. As she is kneeling before Troilus, there is no mention of her love for Troilus; she only bids him to remember that she has kept her "holy vows."<sup>29</sup> But Troilus will not accept her pledge that she has been faithful to him, and as a result she stabs herself and utters:

Enough, my lord; you've said enough.  
 This faithless, perjured, hated Cressida,  
 Shall be no more the subject of your curses:  
 Some few hours hence, and grief had done your work;  
 But then your eyes had missed the satisfaction,  
 Which thus I give you.<sup>30</sup>

In the above passage, we see the charming sound, the strength of words, and the graceful manner, all of which made up Dryden's contribution to the age. Yet, not only in this scene but throughout the play, there is no realism but the tone is one of artificiality. In fact even in the most climactic moment of

<sup>28</sup>Dryden, "Troilus and Cressida," Works, Act I, Scene ii, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup>Dryden, "Troilus and Cressida," Works, Act V, Scene ii, p. 102.

<sup>30</sup>Dryden, "Troilus and Cressida," Works, Act V, Scene ii, p. 103.

the whole play in the scene in which Cressida utters her dying words, there is no emotion. Thus, she says:

Hear him not, heavens;  
 But hear me bless him with my latest breath  
 And since I question not your hard decree,  
 That doomed my days unfortunate and few,  
 Add all to him you take away from me;  
 And I die happy, that he thinks me true.<sup>31</sup>

So Cressida's goodness until the end appears to us to be an impossibility in love. Here then is the fundamental explanation for Cressida's boring simplicity. Dryden had sought to portray the ideal Cressida whom all 17th century womanhood could look up to as their image. Cressida was not meant to stand the test of actuality. For she appears as Dryden meant her to appear; she is all purity and all goodness as the tragic heroine ought to be.

In portraying the character of Troilus, Dryden again follows the rules of heroic tragedy. Like Cressida, Troilus has been elevated to preposterous proportions. All his heroic aspects have been magnified. Troilus had to be portrayed magnificently valarous because only the bravest of warriors deserves the love of faithful Cressida. We feel admiration for Troilus' heroic feats on the battlefield and his even more heroic death, but admiration is all we feel. The role of Troilus as the pitiful brooding, moaning young lover has disappeared, and in its place we have an accomplished warrior who seems always to be in control of the situation. In Dryden's version, Troilus not only

<sup>31</sup>Dryden, "Troilus and Cressida," Works, Act V, Scene ii, p. 103.

plays the role of the lover, but he also plays the role of the devout friend to Hector. Both the friendship motif and the love motif are carried on at the same time. For example, in the following excerpt we see that Troilus is just as concerned that Hector has told him he will call him a friend no more, as he is concerned over Cressida's leaving him. Here he is talking to Hector:

I'm satisfied.  
 You have condemned me, and I'll d't myself.  
 What's life to him, who has no use of life?  
 A barren purchase, held upon hard terms!  
 For I have lost (Oh, what have I not lost!)  
 The fairest, dearest, kindest of her Sex;  
 And lost her ev'n by him, by him, ye Gods!  
 Who only cou'd and only shou'd protect me!  
 And if I had a joy beyond that love,  
 A friend, have lost him too.

You told me I must call you friend no more.<sup>32</sup>

In brief, then, Troilus has been distorted by Dryden into an unloveable hero who shows magnificent valour and magnificent love. In Troilus, Dryden may well have represented the glorious ideal of the 17th century gallants, but to us the unreality of his character makes him seem absurd.

In the character of Pandarus we see the new spirit of wit and reckless immorality of the Restoration age. In Dryden's version of the Troilus, Pandarus has not only become foul and immoral but also ridiculous. All of his romantic qualities which had connected him to the courtly tradition have disappeared. He is called the procurer, and he does not even pretend

<sup>32</sup>Dryden, "Troilus and Cressida," Works, Act III, Scene ii, p. 73.

to play the role of the old courtly go-between. In fact his qualities have been so vulgarized that he does not even fit into the framework of the love scenes. He has become such a decayed remnant of the Pandarus of the courtly tradition that for our purposes he will be passed over. The following citation from Jeremy Collier's A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage sums up in a nutshell Pandarus' qualities: "He is a prodigal Debauchee, unnatural and profane, obscene, sawcy and undutiful . . . he hangs out the Colours of Debauchery."<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Dryden in his characterizations of Troilus, Cressida, and Pandarus has destroyed completely the believable pictures which Chaucer and Shakespeare had painted of them. We must admit that Dryden's characters are indeed false imitations, so are they outrageous and preposterous. But then it was demanded of Dryden that he project this artificiality into his characters. It was his purpose to emphasize the high-flown qualities of the ideal hero and heroine to beget admiration from the audience. But the result of all this splendid heroism is that of falseness because Dryden's characters make no appeal to our sympathies. While Chaucer had shown the spiritual fervor of courtly love and Shakespeare had shown the waste of sensuous passion, Dryden has portrayed in his love only a passion of emptiness.

<sup>33</sup>Collier, p. 92.

## CONCLUSION

As a last reflection upon the history of the courtly tradition, Chaucer's "Parliament of Fowls" seems to be a most fitting analysis of the various cross-currents of attitudes toward love which we have previously seen down through the centuries from Chaucer to Dryden. In this short poem, which is centered around a parliamentary debate among the fowls, we find contrasting attitudes expressed toward the ideal of courtly love. The actual setting of the Parliament has all the trappings of the tradition. The occasion is St. Valentine's day, and the place is the Temple of Venus, surrounded by the romantic Garden of Love.

The Parliament begins when Nature calls on the birds to choose their mates. It is the tercel eagle, the highest rank and most worthy of the birds who speaks first. His formal speech is in complete accord with the courtly tradition as he inclines his head with "ful humble cherre" and implores his sovereign lady to have mercy upon him. He beseeches her to declare that she will be his sovereign mistress, and he, in turn, promises that he will be her faithful servant. So far, the Parliament has presented the old chivalric love in a most serious light. This was the code which Andreas had outlined and which Chaucer portrayed in his Troilus. In spite of the fact that Chaucer was well aware that the old code was becoming decadent, still, he persistently hung on to the tradition in his courtly

love poem, The Troilus. Like the tercel eagle, he admired the tradition and all it stood for.

As the poem continues and the lower fowl begin to talk, the language becomes less courtly and more realistic. With this new pragmatic attitude toward love, we are transported back to the debunking of the courtly code during the age of Elizabeth. The ornate, idealistic tone has begun to fade away, and the loud sound of the middle class is beginning to be heard. The goose declares in a quacking tone that all these high-flown ideals toward love are not "worth a flye." With the "parfit resoun of a goos" he suggests that if the courtly lady will not love the royal tercel, then let him love another. For, claims the goose, all men are like fowls because they "can not be stille." Here we are reminded of the naturalist movement during the Counter-Renaissance. Just as we are suddenly shocked into reality in the poem with the loud quack of the goose, so was the age of Elizabeth astounded by the strong voices of the naturalists such as Turberville and Montaigne. Such men depicted love as lust and as only a carnal, physical passion. They said that there was no such ideal as courtly honor, but that the entire code was all hypocrisy. They felt as the goose did, that all these high-sounding ideas were "mad idolatry." It is this same view of love which we find expressed by Shakespeare in his Troilus.

Finally, near the end of the debate, the goose is interrupted by the cooing of the turtledove. The turtledove suggests that the lovers should never exchange partners, but that they

should love one another until death should part them. In the dove's own words: "Yit lat hym serve hire ever, til he be ded." With this attitude expressed toward love in the poem, we are reminded of the Puritan's complete rejection of a love outside of marriage and their approval of only one kind of love, wedded love. This concept of love until death was in direct conflict with the courtly principles. Still, it was this same fervent moralistic temper which gave the tradition its last blow at the end of the 17th century. Thus, with Dryden's Troilus we are on the barren grounds of the artificiality of the Restoration's heroic love.

Chaucer chose to leave the ultimate conclusion of the debate unsolved as he describes the tercel's flying away to endure a year, at which such a time the final decision of which of the three tercel's was to receive the lady's hand would be made. Chaucer must have foreseen that it would take four succeeding centuries until this debate over love would finally end. From the 14th century to the 17th century many ideologies came in direct conflict with the tradition. These same attitudes eventually destroyed completely the old courtly concept of love. Throughout the period, the middle class was beginning to grow, and man could no longer understand the old aristocratic code of love. Thus, by the time of the Restoration, the courtly convention in its entirety had completely disappeared. With the final fall of the tradition, man had only sympathy for the thoughts of the goose and the turtledove.

LIST OF WORKS CITED

- Allen, Don Cameron. "The Degeneration of Man and Renaissance Pessimism," Studies in Philology, XXXV (1938), pp. 202-227.
- Baskervill, Charles Read et al. Elizabethan and Stuart Plays, New York, 1960.
- Boas, Frederick S. Shakespeare and His Predecessors. New York, 1904.
- Brooke, Tucker. The Renaissance. New York, 1948.
- Brooks, Cleanth and Warren, Robert Penn. Understanding Poetry. New York, 1960.
- Campbell, Oscar James. Comical Satyre and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. San Marino, California, 1938.
- Capellanus, Andreas. The Art of Courtly Love. New York, 1957.
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson. Boston, 1957.
- Collier, Jeremy. A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage, London, 1738.
- Dobree, Bonamy. Restoration Tragedy 1660-1720. Oxford, 1929.
- Donne, John. The Poems of John Donne, ed. Herbert Grierson, vol. I. London, 1953.
- Dryden, John. Dryden: The Dramatic Works, ed. Montague Summers, vol. V. London, 1932.
- Grierson, Herbert. Cross-Currents in 17th Century English Literature. New York, 1958.
- Haydn, Hiram. The Counter-Renaissance. New York, 1960.
- Hillebrand, Harold N. The Variorum Shakespeare: Troilus and Cressida, vol. XXVI. Philadelphia & London, 1953.
- Hobbes, Thomas. "The Answer of Mr. Hobbes to Sir Will D'Avenant's Preface Before Gondibert," Seventeenth Century Prose & Verse, ed. Helen C. White et al. New York, 1959, pp. 224-230.



- Kirby, Thomas A. Chaucer's Troilus: A Study in Courtly Love. Gloucester, Massachusetts, 1958.
- Lawrence, William Witherle. Shakespeare's Problem Comedies. New York, 1960.
- Lewis, C. S. The Allegory of Love. London, 1951.
- Milton, John. Paradise Lost. ed. Merritt Y. Hughes. New York, 1935.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Paradise Regained, The Minor Poems and Samson Agonistes. ed. Merritt Y. Hughes. New York, 1937.
- Muscatine, Charles. Chaucer and the French Tradition. Berkeley, 1957.
- Nicoll, Allardyce. British Drama. New York, 1925.
- Pepys, Samuel. The Diary of Samuel Pepys. ed. Henry B. Wheatley. New York, 1900.
- Rougemont, Denis de. Love in the Western World. Philadelphia, 1939.
- Shakespeare, William. Shakespeare. ed. G. B. Harrison. New York, 1948.
- \_\_\_\_\_. The New Cambridge Edition of Shakespeare. eds. William Allan Neilson and Charles Jarvis Hill. Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1942.
- Tatlock, J. S. B. "The Siege of Troy in Elizabethan Literature," Publication of Modern Language Association, XXX, No. 4 (1915), pp. 673-770.
- Williams, Arnold. "A Note on Pessimism in the Renaissance," Studies in Philology, XXXVI(1939), pp. 243-247.
- White, Helen C. et. al. (eds). Seventeenth Century Verse & Prose. New York, 1959.

THE DECLINE AND FALL OF COURTLY LOVE

by

PATRICIA ELLEN THOMPSON

B. A., Kansas University, 1954

---

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY  
Manhattan, Kansas

1964

The following study is an attempt to view the convention of courtly love as it is reflected in the love theme of the Troilus-Cressida story. Three great English writers, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden, tell their versions of the tale. The fundamental idea of this work is centered around the fact that undoubtedly the temperament of the period influenced each of these writers in adapting this well-known love story to his age, for in each of their three works is reflected a completely different point of view toward courtly love. To establish the fact that the ideological currents of the three periods are directly related to the literary work itself, an introduction is given to each of the three main divisions. The introduction offers a brief outline of the significant historical events of the period, the atmosphere of the court of the time, the important writers within the courtly convention, and some of the attitudes expressed toward love throughout the age.

Chronologically, the study traces the concept of courtly love from its origins in the 12th century to its final decay in the Restoration Period. We begin our study with Chaucer and the 14th century. By Chaucer's time the convention had begun to show signs of ornateness and decadence. Then with the Elizabethan Period of Shakespeare we come upon two distinct attitudes toward the courtly convention. Some of the great writers of the 16th century wrote within the tradition, while others viewed this old chivalric code as "mad idolatry." It is the complete debasing of the tradition which we find in Shakespeare's rendition of the

