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CHIVALRY AND PRIVACY IN *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE* AND *LA CHASTELAINNE DE VERGY*

by Steven R. Guthrie

This essay grows out of an attempt to understand the character Pandarus, who seems to exceed the acknowledged sources of Chaucer's poem, and to understand his activity in the poem, which seems to exceed the needs of its plot; the essay argues that there is an important thematic reason for these excesses. The key to Pandarus is not his invasiveness itself, or its psychological motivation, or its immediate physical or psychological consequences, but its effect on the overall lives and selves of the other two principal characters in the poem. In this respect his poetic register is less that of bourgeois satire than that of late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century French domestic romance, in particular *La Chastelaine de Vergy*. With Pandarus as agent, *Troilus and Criseyde* focuses on the tensions among three overlapping circles of relationship: the circle of chivalric allegiance, the circle of lovers, and to some extent the circle of the individual self. The poem appears to reject the ethics of the chivalric circle and to move toward a formulation of lovers' rights, and perhaps, although this is more problematical, toward a similar formulation of individual rights. In the process, it appears to struggle toward a concept for which the modern word *privacy* is apt.

In "Chaucer's Much Loved Criseyde," Gretchen Mieszkowski argues that Criseyde has for the same reason been both the darling of male readers like C. S. Lewis and E. T. Donaldson—their wistful image of the girl next door—and a source of disappointment to female readers. Chaucer's poem robs her of voice, activity, and selfhood, and "the more Chaucer diminishes her, the more attractive she becomes; the less there is to admire about her, the more she is admired."¹ Caught between two men, Criseyde "has no idiom of her own. She sounds like Pandarus with Pandarus and like Troilus with Troilus: she speaks colloquially with her uncle and then sings virtual duets with her lover, her vocabulary as formal and her romantic cadences as stately as any of his."² Both indictments, of its male readers and of the poem itself, seem fair. There is indeed something adolescent in the situations and sentiments of *Troilus and Criseyde*—

for someone of my age and times, the poem belongs in places to the register of songs by Bobby Vee or Del Shannon—and adolescence is not harmless. By the end of the poem, the circle of loving men around Criseyde includes at least Pandarus, Troilus, Calchas, Diomed, and the narrator, and such groups can be dangerous, adolescent or not. Still, I think there is more to the story. It seems true that in some way *Troilus and Criseyde* diminishes Criseyde, not only from her stature in the *Filostrato*, as Mieszkowski says, but also between Books Two and Four of Chaucer's poem. But the same can be said of Troilus as well, and it also seems true of Troilus that during much of the poem he too lacks his own idiom, his own stylistic register.

It seems important that this devoicing is a process; both characters start out with their own ways of speaking. Troilus's idiom in Book One is the conventional prideful nonsense of the young romance knight heading for a fall, to which is later added its complement, the voice of the naïf in love. This latter idiom, which consists largely of paralanguage—blushing, stammering, and fainting—has much to do with the quality of “trouthe” as modern critics often read it, and the critics who are fondest of it tend to be the same ones who have crushes on Criseyde.

Criseyde's idiom at her first appearance in Book Two is clearer. Hers are the practical concerns of a private person, and a woman, in precarious circumstance, who must constantly guard her safety; her diction is marked by terms like “estat” (II, 465), “jupartie” (II, 465), and “soveraynete” (III, 171), and by a subtle awareness of the manners and forms of society and of the danger of a careless word or step. Her speeches in this vein are numerous and well known: “He shal me nevere bynde in swich a clause” (II, 728); “I am myn owene womman, wel at ese” (II, 750); “Allas, syn I am fre, / Sholde I now love and put in jupartie / My siker-nesse, and thralen liberte?” (II, 771–73).³ From the viewpoint of high medieval romance, or of the *Second Nun's Tale*, such lines are undramatic, but their register is Criseyde's, and it is different from any other register in the poem. In addition, both Troilus (at any sign of trouble) and Criseyde (for example in III, 813–40) acquire the idiom of Boethian meditation, and both employ it during conversations with Pandarus, who does not use it himself except to co-opt a philosophical discussion for his own immediate ends. It may be that Criseyde acquires this register from Troilus, but if so, the influence occurs behind the scenes; he has not used it with her in the poem before she first uses it herself.

What happens to Criseyde's idiom during the poem, and to Troilus's idiom as well, is that both are overwhelmed by Pandarus. In many conversations he simply drowns out the person he is talking to, imposing his will, his diction, his metaphors, his rhetoric, and his ideas on them; but there are also times when he uses subtler and more interesting methods.

He insinuates rather than bludgeons, adapting his speech to that of his communicant and building his control of the dialogue and the situation on the point of stylistic contact thus established. When, for example, Troilus rails against Fortune in Book One, Pandarus, who has little interest in this line of thought but knows his Boethius well enough, responds in kind for two stanzas (I, 841–54), explaining Fortune and mutability and the need for goodhearted acceptance; but then he adds a third stanza which pretends to follow from the first two but leads in exactly the opposite direction:

“And therefore wostow what I the beseche?
 Lat be thi wo and turnyng to the gronde,
 For whoso lyst have helyng of his leche,
 To hym byhoveth first unwrye his wounde.
 To Cerberus yn helle ay be I bounde,
 Were it for my suster, al thy sorwe,
 By my wil she sholde al be thyn tomorwe.”

(I, 855–61)

“Lat be thi wo” is Boethian; “leche” is conveniently and conventionally ambiguous, suggesting both God and the beloved as physician; and “unwrye his wounde” is similarly ambiguous, suggesting a confession of love (but not to the beloved—to Pandarus) and also both philosophical cleansing and religious confession. The twist is in the couplet, which explodes on the stanza and on Troilus with the force of Pandarus’s will.

Or Pandarus appropriates the very words of his communicant, dissolving their intended meaning in his own:

“Now blisful Venus, thow me grace sende,”
 Quod Troylus, “for nevere yet no nede
 Hadde ich er now, ne *halvendel* the *drede*.”
 Quod Pandarus, “Ne *drede* the nevere a *del*,
 For it shal ben right as thow wylt desire.”

(III, 705–09; my emphasis)

Will is Pandarus’s word. It is not precisely that his is the only voice or will in the poem but that through a sustained effort he takes over the other two principal voices. His control does break down in Book Five, but by then it is too late; by the end of the poem, Troilus has no reason to attempt to reclaim his earlier idiom, and his new voice seems to emerge, again paralinguistically, only in the eighth sphere scene. Criseyde’s voice, with its stubborn insistence on defining and preserving her rights, or at least her defenses, in society, reemerges in Book Five, and it never fades entirely, despite all that the poem does to undermine it.

THE SOURCES FOR PANDARUS

One of the most interesting things about the relationship between *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Filostrato* is that it does not explain Pandarus. He gets his name and even many of his lines from Boccaccio's poem, but his motivating spirit comes from a very different part of the universe, and it is his spirit which animates *Troilus and Criseyde*—defines its characters, creates its dramatic tension, and focuses the development of its major themes.

Several sources have been suggested for Pandarus outside the *Filostrato*, most of them associated with the tradition of Jean de Meun and his own sources and analogues. Charles Muscatine traces the "substantial qualities" of Pandarus, in short his bourgeois realism, to the worldly cynicism of La Vieille and the expanded Amis in Jean's portion of the *Rose*, with additional mention of various other go-betweens in fabliau and romance.⁴ Thomas Garbaty points to structural similarities with the figure Anus, the ancestor of La Vieille, in the twelfth-century Latin play, *Pamphilus*.⁵ Gretchen Mieszkowski finds a closer source for Pandarus's language—his earthiness, his pedantry, his use of proverbial expressions—in the character Houdee, based on Anus, in Jean Brassefer's early fourteenth-century French narrative *Pamphile et Galatee*.⁶

For these qualities these sources seem plausible, but they do not fully comprehend the process by which Troilo's friend and Creseida's cousin Pandaro is transformed into the complex, comic, morally troublesome stage manager of Chaucer's poem. There does seem to be something of Amis's tone in Pandarus's speech from time to time, particularly in his quips on human behavior, but much of Amis's subject matter (tactics against Male Bouche, the advantages of Largesse, the woes of poverty, the value of gifts, the folly of jealous husbands) is irrelevant to Chaucer's poem. Where Amis expatiates, Pandarus more often makes specific demands or gives specific orders or predictions, and that makes for an overall tonal difference in his speech. The comic irrepressibility which is cited as a point of contact between the two actually describes Pandarus better than it does Amis. Similarly, La Vieille occasionally resonates with Pandarus, but their subject matters are different and their postures are entirely different. La Vieille's authority is experience; Pandarus's is observation. Both Amis and La Vieille are important source material for Chaucer, but they are far more important to the Wife of Bath, Jankyn, January, and other characters from the Canterbury period than they are to Pandarus. There are also situational similarities between Pandarus and a variety of bedroom interlopers, particularly in fabliau, but these characters give no basis for the particular dynamism—and the particular bedroom presence—of Pandarus.

The most important difficulty with the *Rose* tradition as source material is one of mood. If what Chaucer added to Pandaro were La Vieille, the overall effect of the change would be to blanket the poem with cynicism. But cynicism is at most a secondary quality of Pandarus, his face-saving refuge when determination fails—his hatred for Criseyde in Book Five (V, 1732) is the disillusionment of the idealist, not the I-told-you-so of the habitual cynic—and his primary effect on the poem is to focus attention not on the folly of lovers but on their vulnerability, and specifically on their vulnerability to their friends. Pandarus adds to Pandaro not the worldliness of La Vieille or Anus—indeed Pandaro seems his superior in that respect—but his own imagination, not knowledge but curiosity. He is voyeuristic not from the cynic's desire to be confirmed but from the lover's—or poet's—desire to know, and invasive less from the need to serve than from the need to participate. And it is these qualities which make the biggest difference in the two love stories.

One limitation of Pandaro and Amis as sources is Chaucer's need for a go-between who can not merely influence but psychologically control his young knight. One limitation of Anus-Houdee-La Vieille is the importance of Pandarus's identification with Troilus's desire for Criseyde, of which the corollary hint of homoeroticism is a secondary aspect.⁷ Muscatine places Pandarus in a long tradition of intermediaries which includes both men and women, and in a general way that is reasonable, but Pandarus's closest structural similarities in this tradition are with procuresses, and the third person presence of an older male in the trysting chamber creates a much different effect from the presence of a woman of the Juliet's-Nurse type. Nor are these structural similarities limited to fabliau. Muscatine mentions the mother in *Du Prestre et d'Alison* who tricks a lecherous priest by substituting a prostitute for her daughter through a sort of trap door.⁸ The detail of the door is suggestive, but the switch of paramours is the trick played on King Mark on the night of his marriage to Iseut. It is the romance note of older-male/younger-male conspiracy that governs the menage in *Troilus and Criseyde*, as it does in the thirteenth-century *Chastelaine de Vergy* as well.

Pandarus's invasiveness, however, is not motivated by any basic change in Chaucer's plot. The story as Boccaccio tells it needs a conventional go-between to arrange Troilo's love affair, thus allowing Troilo himself to remain a *fin' amant*, and to sympathize with him afterward. Chaucer's basic plot is identical to Boccaccio's and has the same need for a go-between, but what Chaucer gives it instead is a go-between who comes between, surrounds, and overwhelms the two lovers. The curious thing is that he does this without justifying the excess by any major plot consequence.

There is, however, one significant complication, not of plot precisely

but of character and theme. The interesting thing about both the *Filostrato* and *Troilus and Criseyde* as stories of *amor celee* is that their tragedy requires not the betrayal of the secret but its keeping. Neither plot has a need for, and indeed either would be ruined by, a conventional *losengier* to betray the lovers to the world. On the face of it, their enemy is not within the surrounding court at all but outside the walls of the city. Their love is incubated, then, in an unusually protected, unusually private environment, and this adds to the pathos, or at least to the shock, of the final separation and tragedy. In Chaucer's poem, however, there is an added twist. Secrecy is never compromised, and the surrounding court, if potentially antagonistic, is not visibly inquisitive, but in *Troilus and Criseyde* there is a new danger to the affair, from within the inmost circle, in Pandarus himself. Again, this does not change the basic plot: there are still the secret love affair, the exchange of prisoners, the breaking of the vow, and the death of Troilus. But plot gives way to character as the poem's primary element, and there is a corresponding change in thematic interest, from the vicissitudes of love to a less easily definable preoccupation, which has to do with the conduct of not so much a secret love affair as a private one, and with the rights and responsibilities of those involved in it. If the enemy without makes for emotional drama, the enemy within makes for ethical drama.

Troilus and Criseyde is an extension rather than a parody of romance ideas, and the place to look for an understanding of Pandarus is not in bourgeois satire but in court romance. This essay is not strictly speaking a source study, and while it seems probable or at least plausible that Chaucer would have known of *La Chastelaine*—the poem was extremely popular in the fourteenth century, and its heroine is included in catalogues of famous lovers by Boccaccio, Deschamps, Froissart, and others⁹—I am more interested in the mutual perspective offered by Chaucer's poem and *La Chastelaine* than in the question of direct influence. For whatever reason, *La Chastelaine* offers that crucial resonance with *Troilus and Criseyde* which the *Rose* tradition does not and which the *Filostrato*, for all its exact verbal parallels, cannot. This resonance includes mechanical details which Pandarus inherits directly from Pandaro but which come to life in the presence of the third text. Chaucer may have begun with a character much like Pandaro, but at some point two external changes became necessary: the character must be more mature than the lovers, Criseyde's uncle, not her cousin; and he must be present at the consummation scene. Everything else follows from these two details, and a great many things which remain superficially unchanged from Boccaccio's poem assume new significance as a result of them.

THE IDEA OF PRIVACY

With Pandarus as catalyst, Chaucer's poem becomes an attempt to explore the idea of personal privacy as an ethical value apart from the rights of domicile, an attempt both motivated and complicated by the fact that the late fourteenth century offers no clear authority for the concept. The poem's approach is to assert the right to privacy by demonstrating the consequences of its transgression, and this strategy, which seems intentional in the sense of structurally motivated, partly accounts for Pandarus's dramatic stature.

Privacy has been a difficult enough concept even for the late twentieth century, and scholars who discuss the theme in late medieval writing sometimes add to the difficulty by assuming that their readers will understand what they mean by the term in the modern world and by assuming that the same understanding will work for Boccaccio or Chaucer. By dictionary definition (the *OED*, *American Heritage*, and *Random House* are in substantial agreement) *private* and *privacy* include three basic elements: the right to exclusive use of property, especially domicile; the rights or privileges of personal intimacy (including but not limited to sexual intimacy); and the rights or privileges of self. There is also the oldest sense of private (from *privatus*), peripheral to this discussion, having to do with the actions of the citizen apart from public office; and there is the sense which conflates *private* and *secret*, two terms it will be more useful to keep separate here.

Each of these three basic elements includes the idea of withdrawal from the larger society and the idea of a circle of inclusion and exclusion. (The earliest *OED* citation is from Wycliff, and it applies to clerical orders.) The concept of privacy as a whole also implies the obligation of those outside the circle to respect its boundaries, and it is this sense of obligation that distinguishes privacy from secrecy and that makes it possible to speak of privacy as a legal or ethical right. Conflicts over rights to privacy arise when more than one circle claims the territory of an act, for example, in the modern world, in court cases involving sexual conduct laws, where the state claims the right to regulate the activities of an intimate group, even when those activities take place out of public view within a private domicile, on the grounds of the common moral good.

Georges Duby's *A History of Private Life, Volume Two: Revelations of The Medieval World* begins with a discussion of *private* and related terms,¹⁰ covering the same conceptual ground as current dictionaries but with an important emphasis. For Duby, the central element in the medieval concept of privacy—and in any concept before the nineteenth century—is property, specifically the rights of domicile.¹¹ Property rights are legal rights, but in the feudal world they can also produce strictly ethical con-

flicts when, to give one familiar example, the crown's legal right to domicile anywhere in the kingdom overrides the legal rights of the individual householder. In such cases, as in the modern example above, conflict arises in the competing claims of circles with overlapping membership. Practically speaking, as Duby points out, the issue is not property itself but power, and in a larger sense, the tension within the Middle Ages is between two kinds of power, public and private.¹² From a structural perspective, the feudal age was a battle between public and private power which the state, at first in ruins, eventually won by co-opting the privately powerful for its own circle, or that the feudal nobility won by resurrecting the state in its own image and within its own circle. Duby notes that early in the age, "[p]aradoxically, as society became increasingly feudal, there was less private life because power in all its forms had become more and more private."¹³ In the late Middle Ages, as the public circle grew, and as bourgeois life took hold at least in some places, the privacy of private life increased for the family circle and to some extent for the circle of the individual self.¹⁴ Thomas J. Farrell links domestic privacy with the fabliau genre: "The root, etymological meaning of privacy identifies the household as the essentially private domain: Roman civil law gave society no authority over it. The fabliaux develop this principle to an ultimate degree: characters are fully empowered to manipulate private space to their own advantage."¹⁵ This essay argues that *Troilus and Criseyde*, working not from fabliau tradition but from romance materials, takes the opposite approach. It pointedly refuses to base its concept of privacy on the rights of domicile or to define it in terms of empowerment; instead it grounds the concept in the rights and responsibilities of human relationships and defines it in terms of restraint of power.

Duby qualifies his emphasis on property rights with a note on *commendatio*, "an act whereby an individual pledged himself, his very person, to the leader of the group and through the leader to all the group's members. The relation between member and leader, a very powerful emotional bond, was called 'friendship' in both Latin and the vernacular; it was the cement that held the group together."¹⁶ This note serves as a conveniently abstract—or a romantically personalized—characterization of feudal relationships in general and the chivalric code in particular, and as such it will be useful to the discussion of medieval romance literature.

LITERARY TRADITION

The conflict from which treatments of privacy arise in court romance is the conflict between the chivalric circle of *commendatio*, which is exclusively

male, and the overlapping circle of lovers, which brings the sexes together. According to the chivalric code, this second circle is not a rival cult but an adjunct to the knightly one, and its female members have only reflected rights and privileges. Each is sponsored by a knight, and her identity is sometimes known to another knight, the *amis*, but concealed from the group as a whole. As in the case of *Lanval* and *La Chastelaine*, such sponsorship can become a condition of membership for a knight in doubtful standing; on the other hand, as in the case of *Erec et Enide*, too much devotion to love can jeopardize the standing of a knight within the primary circle of his friends. In *La Chastelaine de Vergy*, however, the circle of lovers replaces the chivalric circle as the center of gravity, both dramatically and ethically, and where there is conflict between the two circles, the poem focuses on the rights of those within the circle of lovers. In both *La Chastelaine* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, an additional conflict seems to arise over actions by which the chivalric circle invades the circle of lovers, isolating the heroine and posing the questions of her real status within this second circle and of her rights as an individual. The answers to these questions remain unclear in both poems, but the nature of the ambiguity is instructive and the fact that they are posed at all is interesting.

In its general lines the literary record reflects the political and social history of the age. When the romance comes indoors from the lists and forests in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there is a growing interest in architecturally created exclusion zones and their implications for the overlapping circles of lovers and friends or subjects and lords, and at the same time there is a growing interest in the boundaries of the self with respect to the group. This makes for a somewhat different focus from that of earlier romance, for example Chrétien, in whom there is great interest in individual psychology and the definition of the self but relatively little in the subtler implications of private space. This essay is primarily interested in the dynamics of conflict between overlapping circles of privacy and only secondarily in individual psychology in and of itself, and it is framed largely within the territory of the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century household romance which is Chaucer's home ground. Beroul's *Tristan* gives a useful background perspective on the genre, but the primary comparison here is between Chaucer's poem and *La Chastelaine de Vergy*. In each of these works, issues of secrecy and privacy are in clear focus, and in each of them as well, the relationships among the principal characters are tantalizingly similar, so that the two poems are mutually illuminating, whether or not direct influence seems likely.

In the background of the genre, in Bérout's *Tristan*, two scenes especially demand attention: the garden scene where the lovers protest their innocence to the hidden King Mark, and the forest scene, where Mark

finds Tristan and Iseult sleeping with Tristan's sword between them. In the first of these, which the fragmentary manuscript of Beroul's poem takes up already in progress, the King's shadow in the moonlight gives away his presence to Iseult. She cleverly alerts Tristan by abruptly changing the script of their conversation:

Oiez com el l'a devanci:
 "Sire Tristran, por Deu le roi,
 Si grant pechie avez de moi,
 Qui me mandez a itel ore!"
 Or fait semblant con s'ele plore.¹⁷

[Hear how she warned him: / "Tristan, for God's sake, / You do me wrong / To send for me at such an hour!" / And she pretended to cry.]

With this, their private tryst turns into public performance as, for Mark's benefit, the two lovers lament the injustice of their reputation and protest the innocence of their friendship and the depth of their allegiance to Mark. The secret meaning of their shared lament, and their very ability to stage the public scene impromptu, on the basis of a private communication, keeps their intimate circle intact and even intensifies its intimacy; this conspiracy also helps to cement their emotional sympathy with the audience. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that it provides a good basis for moral sympathy. Their communication is secret—they speak in a code which the audience is allowed to understand but from which Mark is excluded—but their secret is stolen; they have no real right to it, and in fact that is the dramatic point of the scene.

In the second scene, in the forest to which they have stolen in an attempt to create a private space for themselves, the lovers lie down to sleep with Tristan's sword between them. The poet emphasizes that "N'avoit que eus deus en cel pais" ["There was no one but the two of them there," 1831]. They are discovered, however. Mark is told of their whereabouts; he finds them, misreads the sword between them as a symbol not of their fidelity to one another (the circle of lovers' intimacy) but of their fidelity to him (the circles of marriage and feudal allegiance), and replaces it with his own sword (2049), apparently as a token of his understanding and trust, at the same time replacing Yseult's ring with another from his own hand. When the lovers awaken they in turn misread his messages, and they flee in fear and confusion, their privacy spoiled. At this point they are acutely aware of the power not precisely of Mark himself (whom they see as deceitful rather than strong), but of the circles of allegiance he represents and of their proper places within those circles. They analyze the situation structurally instead of personally. At

this point the narrative jumps without transition from the warm night of love to the cold light of day. The love potion which had bound them to one another for three years wears off (of its own accord, of course, but the point here concerns dramatic rather than chemical cause and effect), leaving them miserable and confused. First in separate, private laments and then in dialogue, Tristan and Yseut bemoan the harshness of their present circumstances and long for the comfort of their old lives (2160–2220). More important, they wish to be forgiven for their transgressions of marriage and feudal loyalty, and they part, swearing to sin no more.

The mutual confusion of the wilderness exchange of messages is both comic and tragic and is emblematic of the basic conflict in the poem between the overlapping circles of chivalric allegiance and romantic love. But privacy for Tristan and Yseut remains a stolen advantage, not an ethical right. Even if their blame is mitigated by the origin of their love in a potion mistakenly imbibed (and in the end their love does not die with the effects of the potion), and even if the narrative encourages us to feel for the lovers and to think Mark a fool, the fact remains that the lovers are in the wrong. Nor do we hear them argue otherwise. They lament the cruelty of fate, but they do not claim to be the victims of injustice. They can achieve a measure of temporary privacy by means of elaborate devices of secrecy, but there is never a sense that they have a right to more freedom than their wits or influence can buy them.

In Béroul the focus is on a tragic conflict between intimate circles, that of lovers on the one hand and those of marriage and *commendatio* on the other. This kind of conflict, and the dramatic tension it provides, is central to—in fact structurally inevitable in—medieval romance, even when the poet's explicit concerns seem to focus on the individual rather than on the tensions between groups. In Chrétien, there is a clear focus on the psychology, as opposed to the plight, of lovers, and in *Erec et Enide*, for example, there may be some attempt to define Enide's rights in a commonsense way by showing the effects of their transgression. These lovers are married, so the conflict between intimate circles that an adulterous love represents does not arise; here the main conflict appears to be between Erec's rights within the circle of marriage and Enide's within the circle of her self. Here too, however, a central issue is the tension arising in the conflicting demands of overlapping circles. It is, after all, Erec's sensitivity to the charge that he has forsaken chivalry for marriage that brings on his cruelty toward Enide in the first place. In addition, the poem is so clearly a study of Erec's mind that it seems risky to attribute to it any very basic concern with Enide's psychology. If the point is to define Enide's rights and recourses by Erec's abuses, then it ought to be easier to say what those rights and recourses are.

LA CHASTELAINE DE VERGY¹⁸

The anonymous thirteenth-century *Chastelaine* is 958 lines long, a brief and crystalline drawing room tragedy of *fine amor* which owes something to Marie's *Lanval* (Maraud) and something more to *Tristan et Yseut*,¹⁹ which resembles the contemporary *lai* and anticipates the elegance of the Renaissance *nouvelle* (a version of the story appears in Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*). The poem centers on a vow of secrecy required by the Chastelaine of her Knight; on the *jeu parti* posed when he must either risk losing her by breaking his vow or suffer banishment for keeping it; and on the tragedy that follows his betrayal of the vow. All these elements, singly or in combination, are common in romance, but *La Chastelaine* presents and combines them in unusual ways, beginning with the vow of secrecy. On the one hand it is absolute: if the vow is broken, her love will be withdrawn, without regard to circumstance. On the other hand, it has a curiously explicit emphasis—their love will end if it is ever disclosed *by him* (24–26)—that seems more a test of the Knight's commitment than a safeguard of the Chastelaine's honor.

The poem approaches its catastrophe by a tightly controlled logic of events, and the poet's economy in using each detail to enforce the logic is what gives the work its crystalline quality.²⁰ The principal plot events present themselves as axiomatic. There must be the vow of secrecy, and it must be absolute. Even more, it must be seen as a sort of charm, focusing entirely on the lovers and ruling out any kind of accidental discovery. The Duchess must make overtures to the Knight (as in *Lanval*); he must reject her, and she must falsely accuse him to the Duke, using as proof of his passion for her the fact that no one in the court has heard of his passion for anyone else. The Duke must confront the Knight with the accusation and must offer him the poem's morally central dilemma: reveal his lady's name, thereby refuting the Duchess, or suffer exile. The Knight must choose to betray his vow; the Duke must foolishly betray the secret to the Duchess, who must relay her knowledge of the affair to the Chastelaine herself, closing the circle and setting the tragedy in motion.

The tragedy itself occupies the last quarter of the poem. While the ladies dress for a ball at the Duke's palace, the Duchess hints to the Chastelaine that she knows of her affair (704–18), and leaves the Chastelaine to draw her own conclusions about the source of the knowledge. In a modified Pyramus-and-Thisbe scene, the Chastelaine, alone in the garderobe (except for a maid who is hidden from view), delivers a long soliloquy on love and betrayal (733–834) and dies of grief (835–39). The Knight finds her there, kisses her already cold mouth, and takes his own life, falling over her body in a last embrace (861–900). The Duke finds them both, returns to the ball, and kills the Duchess (909–24). Then he buries the two lovers

together and departs as a Templar for the Holy Land, never to return. Chaucer, of course, flirts with a similar ending for the two lovers in Book Four of *Troilus and Criseyde*, and two important details of his account—the fact that Troilus finds Criseyde already unconscious, and the description of him kissing “hire colde mouth” (IV, 1161)—are in the *Chastelaine* but not in the *Filostrato*. Chaucer rejects the ending, however, leaving us to watch for three thousand lines as his lovers grapple unsuccessfully with an unmanageable set of circumstances and consequences.

This relatively simple string of events accounts for nearly everything in *La Chastelaine*. There is, however, one important thread which seems entirely unnecessary to the great effect and which is therefore extremely interesting. When the Knight confesses to the Duke (breaking his vow of secrecy), “J’aim vostre niece de Vergi” (342), and assures him that no one else knows of the affair, the Duke’s instant response is, “Ce n’avint onques!” [That (the affair’s complete secrecy) could never be (349)]. From this point on, he takes an obsessive interest in the Knight’s liaison, not because he has any objection to it, but simply because he is fascinated by the idea of real secrecy. He extorts information by appealing to the Knight’s sense of allegiance to him; he wants to know all the details. He is charmed by the device of the Chatelaine’s *chien afetie* (her trained lapdog), which fetches the Knight to her chamber when the coast is clear, thus avoiding the risk of a human intermediary. Quickly he goes back on his promise to seek no more proof of the affair than the lady’s name; now he demands to witness a rendezvous, assuring the Knight that “n’en savra ma niece rien” [my niece will know nothing of it (365)].

This interchange sets up the pivotal scene in the orchard outside the Chastelaine’s chamber at the midpoint of the poem. The Duke hides behind a large tree while the lovers exchange greetings, and then, although he has proof positive of all that the knight has told him, he remains at his post all night while the lovers are abed (431–35). He watches their tearful leavetaking in the morning, and, when the Chastelaine has closed the door behind her lover, hurries after him and, in high spirits, reaffirms their friendship (491–95). Later, after the Chastelaine’s dying soliloquy but before her death is discovered, the Duke leads the Knight to the garderobe to seek her, “quar il [the Duke] le veut en tel maniere / por leenz entr’eus solacier, com d’acoler et de besier” [for he wanted them in that way to solace themselves in there, as by hugging and kissing (858–60)]; and again, unnecessarily, he and his imagination wait outside while the Knight is within.

The presence of a *voyeur* in the modern sense instead of a *veilleur* (look-out) is central to both orchard and garderobe scenes and is an important element in the transition from a psychological drama of *amor celee* to a drama about the ethics of relationships. During the first of these

scenes, the poet draws specific attention to the presence in the only lengthy authorial intrusion of the poem.²¹ The Duke, he says, waited in hiding while the Chatelaine and her knight remained in a bed in her room, and without sleeping played together “a tel joie et a tel deport / qu’il n’est resons que nus recort” [with such joy and sport / that it is not right that anyone record it (435–36)]. And as he goes on to explain that love’s mystery would be desecrated by uncomprehending minds (437–51), he makes a show of drawing a curtain of propriety over the lovers without in any way dispelling either the erotic vision he has just carefully created or the feeling that it is the observers and not, as in *Tristan et Yseut*, the lovers who have just stolen something.

The narrator, like the other observers, implicitly belongs to the chivalric circle, and when he comes into focus in the orchard as a characterized voice, his viewpoint emerges from the Duke’s. The whole scene, down to the image of the Chatelaine, Yseut-like in the doorway watching her knight leave in the morning, is given to us as a limited third person narrative, either through the Duke’s eyes or over his shoulder, and it is colored by the Duke’s fascination. The narrator is thus a willing watcher, but he also becomes an externalized conscience or censor whose dilemma—guard the lovers or save the poem—is a hall of mirrors quite familiar by now to readers of Chaucer and of Machaut as well. Again, during the orchard scene, the group of watchers—and implicitly the membership of the chivalric circle—expands to include the reader, whose complicity as a third voyeur is both openly solicited and subtly chastised by the narrator. However pure our own interest in the lovers, the orchard scene is contrived so that we must watch them through the eyes of the Duke,²² whose fascination is troubled and impure and in excess of his right to know what is going on in his duchy. And even if at first we can ignore the moral discomfort brought on by this perspective, just when the scene approaches its promised level of delight the narrator interrupts the action with a lightly veiled scolding which reactivates the qualm. Chaucer in his consummation scene performs a similar manipulation in similar ways.

To some degree the dramatic interest of the orchard scene in *La Chastelaine*, like that of any eavesdropping scene, arises in the sense of danger, to the lovers of course but also to the voyeurs. In *La Chastelaine*, however—and this seems to be new—there is some sense that the lovers deserve better, that the invasion of privacy we are witnessing, and therefore participating in, is wrong. The difference is that in *La Chastelaine*, the convention of *amor celee* has acquired a new depth. In the Tristan stories and Arthurian romance proper, *amor celee* is a strategy, a way of avoiding the consequences of adultery, and at least equally important, it is a mystery, with a membership bond and a set of rules to enforce it. It can

also become an erotic stimulant, a tactical advantage for cult members, and as a result it is often pursued for its own sake, in excess of practical need. In *La Chastelaine*, however, to some extent this hierarchy of circles seems to break down. For the Duke and the Duchess, the idea of *amor celee* is the standard one, but for the Knight and the Chastelaine it loses most of its strategic and tactical content. Secrecy is in focus mainly as a means to privacy, and the claims of the lovers' intimate circle are legitimate rivals to those of *commendatio*. Or they ought to be; from one perspective the lovers' tragedy is that they deserve better than they achieve, and that on some level they are aware that they do; this is something it is not possible to say of Tristan and Yseut. The poem's deepest interest is not eros or intrigue but ethics. That is why the Knight's too easy acquiescence in the Duke's demand for details of the relationship seems such a betrayal, and it is also why the orchard scene seems so invasive. As they make love, the fact that the Knight but not the Chastelaine is aware of the Duke's presence breaks the circle of the lovers and intrudes upon it the circle of chivalric friendship; psychologically the Duke is in the chamber with them. The Knight of course has a good reason for his failure to warn his lover as Yseut warned hers, but that makes no difference; it is still a failure within the terms of the poem.

For over 900 lines the *Chastelaine* demonstrates the inadequacy of even the most powerful covenant and the most ingenious device to ensure the safety of its lovers against the good intentions of an invader. The outcome of this demonstration is the poem's attempt to replace the exclusive pact of secrecy with the equally absolute but more inclusive idea of privacy. The poet makes use of a conventional formulation ("faus felons enquerers") but strips it of its usual context (the envious talebearer) and provides it a new one (the Duke's voyeurism and the lovers' tragedy) which gives it new meaning. It is said of the *Chastelaine*,²³ as it has been said of *Troilus and Criseyde*,²⁴ that it exposes the folly of courtly love. This is true if courtly love is defined as the machinery of the cult, its rules and devices according to commentators like Andreas. In *La Chastelaine*, however, something more important is at work than a critique of love's machinery. The poem suggests that the conventions of love are foolish because lovers have not explored deeply enough their true meaning.

The attempt to explore the deeper significance of *amor celee* is somewhat halting in *La Chastelaine* because the ethical territory is new. The right to freedom from intrusion regardless of position and circumstance is not self-evident, particularly where the legal system precludes it, and by the thirteenth century it is really no more firmly established in literature than in society. In *Tristan et Yseut*, from which *La Chastelaine* borrows at least suggestions for its Duke, its orchard scene, some traits of its lovers, and its little dog, there are elaborate devices of secrecy, including flight

to the wilderness, but again there is never a sense that the lovers have a right to more freedom than they can steal. In *La Chastelaine*, the idea of rightful privacy is beginning to take shape, but it still rests on no explicit authority; validation must be supplied evidentially by the poem itself. As for the particular resort of wilderness flight—or flight of any kind—it is ruled out categorically and without explanation in *La Chastelaine* (289), and just as categorically but after a great deal of hopeless discussion in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Both poems are in this respect responses to the limitations of the Tristan materials: a flight scene cannot address rights of privacy directly, whereas a flight scene denied can create the kind of longing that statements of human rights are founded on.

Tristan and Yseut are adulterous, so their rights are forfeit, or at least problematic, to begin with. The concept of privacy cannot come into clear focus because their conduct is blamable within the terms of the existing social order; as intruders themselves they have no claim to freedom from the intrusions of others. *La Chastelaine*, however, removes the heroine's marital status from its field of vision entirely.²⁵ Technically the lovers commit fornication, but fornication is victimless and venial in romance, and it is mitigated further by the presence of solemn if unsanctioned betrothals. Technically the Chatelaine's Knight questions his feudal obligations, or at least the Duke accuses him of the lapse, but the poem's sympathies are so clearly with the lovers, and the Duke's curiosity is so clearly in excess of his feudal responsibilities, that the accusation carries no weight. We are left, then, with an innocent *couple*—as opposed to innocent individuals; the knight's complicity is unavoidable but blamable—whose essential relationship with the outside world is their desire to be left alone by it. That this desire has something like the standing of an ethical right is established—or at least suggested—by the weighting of the orchard scene and also by the Duke's speech of confession and act of expiation (his departure to join the Templars) at the end of the poem.

Perhaps an ethical value can come into focus only when its transgression can be clearly shown. The strategy of the *Chastelaine* poet is to focus the study of privacy on the nature of the transgression and the character of the transgressor. As the lovers must not be thieves or adulterers, so the intruder must not be a mere villain—jealous competitor or invidious tale-bearer—but rather someone well-meaning and sympathetic to his victims, a would-be servant of the servants of love. (From the poem's ethical perspective, the more serious offense is not the Duchess's but the Duke's.) He must be interesting enough to engage the complicity of the audience and also intelligent enough to sense the new ethical value on some level but willful enough to ignore it, not from evil intent but from a prideful inability to foresee consequences. The Duke's presence behind the tree outside the Chatelaine's window is wrong, and his crime is not

that he knows they are there or means them harm, or even that his spying is beneath him, but simply that he hovers in the vicinity. Or rather not simply so, for he is not only inquisitive but also imaginative enough to be psychologically invasive and powerful enough to exercise his will. He cannot be dismissed, at this point, as a *losengier*, and his victims cannot be dismissed as adulterers. He wants something from them—edification and delight in love—which the personified poet also wants and which the audience is enticed to want as well, but to which, ultimately, none of these parties has a right, not precisely because the love in question is sacred—the narrator's love cult speech in the orchard scene is a nervous overlay entirely inconsistent with the diction of the rest of the poem—but because the lovers deserve respect.

Rather than base its exploration of privacy on the legal concept of the protected domicile, *La Chastelaine* attempts to work from the more abstract and subversive concepts of morals (the value of trust in all relationships, humility as the remedy of invasive pride), manners (the specific mutual obligations of people in casual or formal relationships), and specifically, because the context is lovers' rights, from the conventional innocence and nobility of lovers and the sanctity of their allegiance. *La Chastelaine* uses *amor celee* not as a game or a stimulant but as a moral imperative, or rather as the means to one, as though in an effort to extract the new concept of privacy from a distilled version of the old concept of secrecy.

La Chastelaine brings the plight of its lovers into focus by demonstrating the effects of the chivalric conspiracy between the Duke and the Knight, and to some extent the same demonstration also brings into focus the rights of the Chatelaine as a person; the poem's clear statements of their culpability make this effect unavoidable. At the same time, however, for most of the poem she is in focus mainly as the object of interest of the male subjects, including the narrative voice, who in effect joins the conspiracy of Duke and Knight. She is an independent woman with a place of her own, but she is also on some level more a place than a person: she has no name except Vergy, and she is the "leu" (262) where the Knight loves. The poem's attempt to define her rights as a person seems real, but its double vision of the terms of her personhood seems equally real. The only other female character in *La Chastelaine* is the Duchess, who plays the wicked queen to the heroine's Snow White. The poem studiously avoids supernatural devices, but its female characterizations are nevertheless from the psychological register of the simplest kind of faery romance, and as a result, while there is sympathy for the Chastelaine, as in the case of Enide it is difficult in the end to say what her rights and recourses were.

TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

Barry Windeatt has raised the issue of personal privacy specifically for *Troilus and Criseyde*, arguing that while the characters in the *Filostrato* enjoy a relatively high degree of individual privacy, Chaucer's world in *Troilus and Criseyde* is more medieval, and his characters must still win their privacy from a more communal surrounding society, as a result of which Chaucer's story focuses to a greater extent than Boccaccio's on a gap between the public and private lives and selves of its characters.²⁶ Windeatt's observation about the different levels of privacy in the two poems seems warranted, and yet it seems not to tell the whole story. I would argue that Chaucer's is actually the more forward-looking poetic treatment, in other words that to a greater extent it addresses rather than accepts the conditions of its external society. Boccaccio's characters enjoy the architectural privacy of wealthy fourteenth-century Italians, and Chaucer's inhabit the somewhat more public living spaces of great English households. In addition, Boccaccio to a greater degree merely ignores—removes from our field of vision—the constraints of private life, in order to simplify his narrative, while Chaucer focuses closely on them, magnifies them, even creates in Pandarus the embodiment of invasion of privacy, not for verisimilitude but in order to explore and define the issue.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, as in *La Chastelaine de Vergy*, the dramatic focus is on the conduct of the love affair and not the psychology of courtship. But whereas the *Chastelaine* ignores the courtship period entirely, Chaucer treats it at some length—greater than in Boccaccio—but not at all in the same way that it is treated in psychological allegory or Machaut's semi-allegorical *dits* or the *Book of the Duchess*. The whole process is telescoped and purified: the knight's education is visionary and transcendental; there are no real lessons or trials, only a minimal exchange of handwriting, and only a token flirtation. What there is, however, and what Chaucer principally adds to Boccaccio's account of the courtship, is a period during which the two pledged lovers are isolated from one another and separately manipulated by Pandarus, and during which the poem focuses on his invasion of their privacy as individuals. After this process, when he has worn them down separately, he joins them, and joins with them, as a couple. Here I may seem to give unnecessary emphasis to an obvious idea: of course he invades their privacy; that is why he is Pandarus. And yet that is not, either by common usage (the generic sense of his name) or in his own wry musings, why he is Pandarus, and it is not self-evident to any of the characters in the poem that they have anything to invade. We do eventually hear stirrings of outrage, especially from Criseyde, but they are the most radical thoughts uttered in the poem, and they are neither fully confident nor fully articulate. If any-

thing like the modern concept of privacy operates in *Troilus and Criseyde*—if the lovers as people have a real privacy to invade—it does so through a focused effort of the poet to which Pandarus’s activities are central. The lovers, despite their wish to be “but we two,” allow Pandarus to hover over their lovemaking because they believe they have no right, and because he has robbed them of any will, to order him away.

Like the Duke in *La Chastelaine de Vergy*, Pandarus acts in ways that draw attention to the vulnerability of lovers to the prying of sympathetic eyes, and like the Duke, Pandarus is linked in important ways to the prying and sympathetic eyes of the narrator. Both narrators are champions of the young knights, and both are fascinated by the events they are called on to relate but uneasy about the implications of their work. The two crucial love scenes themselves—the orchard scene in *La Chastelaine* and the consummation scene in Book Three of *Troilus and Criseyde*—are broadly similar in conduct. Each is structurally central in its poem, and each has its tryst, its lingering listener, its complicitous knight, its ambivalent narrator, its invitation of audience complicity, its dawn lament, and its unanswered questions about the morality of both the episode and its recounting. The role of the narrator, or poetic voice, or narrative persona, has important aesthetic implications, but in both works the specific aesthetic concern serves mainly to bring attention to a more general human one. The poet’s dilemma—invade the garden or be banished from it—parallels the central ethical problem faced in one way or another by the Duke and Pandarus, the Knight and Troilus. And in both poems the problem goes deeper than *amor celee*. In *La Chastelaine*, for all the absoluteness of the lovers’ covenant, there is no sense whatever of its warrant in external circumstance. We never know if the Chastelaine is wife or widow; we never feel the danger of accidental discovery (again, the vow is like a charm) or are warned of possible repercussions. And it is not secrecy that is compromised either in the orchard scene of *La Chastelaine* or in the consummation scene of *Troilus and Criseyde*. What is compromised is privacy. I do not mean to overstate the importance of this theme to a long and complex poem; still, Pandarus is onstage almost constantly—more than either lover—from the middle of Book One through the end of Book Three, and during that time hero and heroine are felt to be in constant danger, even though there is never any real enemy in view or any real threat of discovery or punishment.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the conflict between the circles of love and chivalry is set in motion by Troilus’s complicity in Pandarus’s scheme. Troilus twice abets the deception of Criseyde, first at Deiphebos’s house, where, in an apparently trivial gesture which nevertheless betrays his nagging conscience, he pretends not to recognize her approach (III, 67); and then of course in the consummation scene, when he allows Pandarus

to lure Criseyde to him unaware. By this point, the two lovers have given every sign that they see themselves as betrothed (Pandarus's fiction of Troilus's jealousy of Horaste, which Troilus also abets, inspires Criseyde's reply, "Horaste! allas, and falsen Troilus?" [III, 806]), which makes this second deception especially troubling. The young knight's capacity to feel guilt for his complicity—though not to escape the complicity itself—is an important aspect of the conspiracy. In *La Chastelaine*, there is the testimony of the knight's anguish at the point of betrayal and of his final speech ("comme trichierres desloial / vous ai morte" [like a disloyal traitor, I have killed you (888–89)] and suicide. In Chaucer's poem there is Troilus's strange outburst in the bedchamber, when he responds to Criseyde's tears, but to no one's accusation, by implying Pandarus's guilt for her suffering and denying his own: "God wot that of this game / Whan al is wyst, than am I not to blame" (III, 1084–85). It is at precisely this moment that he swoons, flirting with a clear choice of allegiance to Criseyde but falling short of it.

The strategy of the poem is to define the rights of its lovers by creating a moral climate which condemns third parties, and second parties, who refuse to respect them, and a crucial element in this strategy, here as in the *Chastelaine*, is the solicitation and chastisement of audience complicity in the invasion of privacy. The problem of voyeurism goes unsolved at the aesthetic level—without such an invasion there is no poet and no poem—but a solution, or at least a statement of the issue, emerges at a more basic moral level. If in the consummation scene we feel both uneasily invasive with Pandarus and uncomfortably invaded with the lovers, then we are on the verge of making our own choice of allegiance, or at least of recognizing that such a choice may be called for.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, as in the *Chastelaine*, the concept in focus is new, and the poem is forced to operate beyond the reaches of received language. The Tatlock-Kennedy *Concordance* unsurprisingly offers hints but no clear picture of the concept. The forms *privee* (56 *Concordance* entries, 2 in *TC*), *prively* (96 and 10), and *privetee* (32 and 3) are fairly common in Chaucer, but they nearly always mean either *secret* (secretly, secrecy) or *exclusive* (privileged) in the sense of personal property ("his privee knyghtes and squieres" [*Clerk's Tale*, 192]). In *La Chastelaine*, privacy is a right of the Duke, who can clear the room in order to hold a conversation whose existence is known but whose content is secret (523–24); and the poem is so sparing of detail that this one seems significant. It conveys that the act is remarkable, even for the Duke, and it also seems to emphasize the contrast between his rights and those of the other characters. Similarly in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Troilus can, in an extremity, clear his room of retainers in order to take his troubled rest (IV, 219–24); and the detail conveys both his privilege and the unusual circumstances that call

for its exercise. Neither poet has convenient linguistic resources for developing the concept of privacy on a wider scale, that is as an ethical value apart from rank and property; however, Chaucer has a few forms which in context appear to go somewhat beyond normal usage. The Wife of Bath, for example, uses the formula “pryvee and apert” (*CT*, D 1114, 1136) in the context of personal virtue and gentility rather than in the narrower context of secrecy and publicity. And in *Troilus and Criseyde* there is Troilus’s plea, “So lat us stelen pryvyly away; / For evere in oon, as for to lyve in reste, / Myn herte seyth that it wol ben the beste” (IV, 1601–03). Strictly speaking *pryvyly* means *secretly* here, but the word seems to expand in context to suggest the longed-for state of well-being in addition to the proposed device of flight. Troilus proposes the idea not because he cannot bear to reveal their secret (for in fact “privee” flight would give them away), but because it would do no good to reveal it, Priam having committed himself publicly to the exchange; and Criseyde rejects it because it would cast doubt on their ability to endure separation (IV, 1611–12; the convention of *amor lonh*). The escape never takes place, but something of Troilus’s longing continues to haunt the poem. Lovers’ privacy, as Chaucer wrestles with the idea, seems to mean not secrecy itself, either physical or linguistic, or the kind of psychological protection afforded by a splitting of inner and outer selves, but a freedom from invasion, not limited to criminal invasion of domicile or corpus (not all such invasions being criminal), the social counterpart of self-determination, defined as a right, or more precisely as an obligation to respect the rights of others. It is the prying, the invasion itself, that is at issue, and as such the principle is absolute; the motive for the intrusion is irrelevant. Thus Pandarus’s good motives do not mitigate his offense, but at the same time the fact that he has good motives is crucial to Chaucer’s development of the theme.

The secret of Troilus and Criseyde is never betrayed except, apparently, to Cassandra late in Book Five, and it causes no sensation then. But for each of the lovers, and more clearly for Criseyde, privacy—the right to be alone if she chooses, the right to love if and as she wishes, the right to have a life of her own, the right to be safe not only from her enemies but from her friends, lovers, and well-wishers—is at issue throughout; and, as in the *Chastelaine*, it comes into focus during a love scene which is both at the center of the poem and in excess of the apparent demands of the plot. In the *Filostrato*, the consummation scene takes place at Creseida’s palace, and Pandaro evaporates before Troilo goes inside. In *Troilus and Criseyde*—this is an important change—it takes place at Pandarus’s house, and his manipulations and contrivances there, as well as his refusal to evaporate once the lovers are abed, are familiar to every reader of the poem. Chaucer is deft with the lingering presence: Pandarus seems finally

to disappear when he bears "the candel to the chimeneye" (III, 1141), but after fifty lines, just as the lovers are settling in, the focus suddenly shifts for a brief moment: "If ye ben wyse, / Swowneth not now, lest more folk aryse!" (III, 1189–90). For the next forty-nine stanzas, no other reminder of his presence is needed.

The house belongs to him, of course, and legally he can go where he pleases in it, but still, according to the poem, he is wrong. He is not a *losengier*; he works hard at his role of go-between; his sympathies are with the lovers; and still he is wrong. He commits no crime under the law of the land or the rules of Andreas. What Pandarus actually commits is an ethical offense which Chaucer defines carefully, concretely, and haltingly because it is not really on the books yet, although now it is *in* at least one of them. His relationship to Criseyde is particularly invasive, throughout the poem, and we see its effects on her tangibly as well as circumstantially, from her early discomfort under the intensity of his stare (II, 274–77) to the morning-after scene in Book Three, when Pandarus invades, to a degree which Chaucer leaves ambiguous, a bed which the law defines as his but which the poem defines as hers, or as hers and Troilus's, for a purpose which is also ambiguous but which is not hers or theirs but "fully his" (III, 1582). A great deal has been made of whether or not Pandarus has sexual relations with his niece in the scene.²⁷ What the poem actually says is that he commits symbolic rape: "With that his arm al sodeynly he thriste / Under hire nekke, and at the laste hire kyste" (III, 1574–75). And that, I think, is precisely what Chaucer meant to say. The whole relationship is a symbolic rape, and this gesture expresses it perfectly.

One way to put the question of the poem's range as an exploration of the idea of privacy—of how far it ventures into the circle of individual rights—is to ask whether this gesture is an offense against Criseyde herself, against Troilus and Criseyde as lovers, or against Troilus as a knight. In the context of the whole poem, the answer seems to be all three, but it seems impossible to say which offense is most or least serious—in other words, to what extent the poem escapes the ethic of the chivalric brotherhood while describing its invasion of the other two circles. Both *La Chastelaine* and *Troilus and Criseyde* portray their lovers as vulnerable to persistent, invasive forces, and both identify them as having the right to freedom from those forces, not as holders of property or office but as lovers, that is (under the premises of *fine amor*), as essential human beings. Even so, the idea in focus is somewhat different from the protection conventionally sought by lovers through secrecy, flight, or combat. It verges, implicitly, on the right to conduct an affair without requiring such measures, the right to expect self-restraint from others. The dramatic tension in *Troilus and Criseyde*, as in *La Chastelaine* and *Tristan et Yseut*, centers on the conflict between the circle of knights and

the circle of lovers. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, however, to a greater extent than in the other poems, the boundaries of the circles not merely overlap but blur. Pandarus does not just intrude on the circle of lovers' intimacy, he takes up residence within it, dissolves both circles, and redraws them as a single circle around himself. Tristan and Yseut analyzed their situation structurally, and the Chastelaine and her Knight for the most part do likewise, but Troilus and Criseyde flounder in the attempt to find a useful structural understanding of their situation because the institutional structures and institutional conflicts which would make their situation intelligible have turned to sand. In *Tristan et Yseut* and *La Chastelaine de Vergy*, the defining power of all principal relationships is chivalric-feudal. For most of *Troilus and Criseyde*, all power is Pandarus's, and his relationship to the normal structures of society is ambiguous. He belongs to the chivalric circle by rank but not really by action or attitude; he ironically excludes himself from the circle of lovers and yet he clearly enmeshes himself in this one. His refusal to fit his social roles as easily as Boccaccio's Pandaro or the Duke in *La Chastelaine* does helps to focus Chaucer's poem on the rights of people as people and thus helps to propel it into the unfamiliar ethical territory of individual rights.

Like any good poem, *Troilus and Criseyde* outreaches its grasp. It moves outside the chivalric circle carrying the baggage of *commendatio*. It contrives adolescent situations and indulges adolescent sentiments, but at the same time it reaches toward an understanding of the rights of individuals, both as members of relationships and to some extent simply as people. It is a love poem that diminishes its central characters, stripping them of distinction, advantage, and voice, but at the same time it seems to posit their diminution as an evil in their society and to argue that they deserve better, that they deserve respect as human beings. It seems to take a perverse pleasure in the crimes it relates, but at the same time it creates a perspective from which they can be seen as crimes.

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1. Gretchen Mieszkowski, "Chaucer's Much Loved Criseyde," *ChauR* 26 (1991): 110.

2. Mieszkowski, 122.

3. All quotations from Chaucer are from John H. Fisher, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of Geoffrey Chaucer* (New York, 1977).

4. Charles Muscatine, *Chaucer and the French Tradition* (Berkeley, 1957), 137-42.

5. Thomas Garbaty, "The *Pamphilus* Tradition in Ruiz and Chaucer," *PQ* 46 (1967): 457-70.

6. Gretchen Mieszkowski, "Chaucer's Pandarus and Jean Bradsefer's Houdee," *ChauR* 20 (1985) 40-60.

7. Pandarus's bisexuality seems plausible, but suggestions of his androgyny (Muscatine, 140) seem based on a presumed source in *La Vieille* rather than on his characterization by Chaucer.

8. Muscatine, 139.

9. Jean Frappier, "La Chastelaine de Vergi, Marguerite de Navarre et Bandello," *Mélanges 1945*, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres de l'Université de Strasbourg (Paris, 1946), 106-07.

10. Georges Duby, ed., *A History of Private Life, Volume II: Revelations of the Medieval World*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass., 1988), 3-31.

11. Duby, 7.

12. Duby, 7.

13. Duby, 25.

14. Thus the architectural focus on private space within the Tuscan bourgeois home, with private, locked rooms for both men and women, pointed to by de La Ronciere (Duby, 216-20).

15. Thomas J. Farrell, "Privacy and the Boundaries of Fabliau in *The Miller's Tale*," *ELH* 56 (1989): 773-95.

16. Duby, 8.

17. Bérout, *Tristan*, in Jean Charles Payen, ed., *Tristan et Yseut: Les Tristan en vers* (Paris, 1974). Translations mine.

18. *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, ed. René Stuij (Paris, 1985). Translations mine. The following discussion includes extensive plot summary because many Chaucerians are still unfamiliar with the poem.

19. Parallels are noted by Frappier, 98; and by F. Whitehead, ed., in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*, 2nd ed. (Manchester, 1951), xvii-xviii, lv. In Val d'Aoste's prose version (c. 1400), the Knight is named Tristan (Frappier, 110-11). Payen calls the poem an anti-Tristan (228). Lakits finds specific parallels unconvincing, but acknowledges an atmospheric resonance; Pal Lakits, *La Châtelaine de Vergi et l'évolution de la nouvelle courtoise*, *Studia Romanica* (Debrecen, 1966), 20-22.

20. Apparent incongruities between plot and moral are often noted. See Lakits, 67; Whitehead, xviii-xix; Linda Cooper, "Irony as Courtly Poetic Truth in *La Chastelaine de Vergi*," *Romanic Review*, 75 (1984): 280; Paul Zumthor, "De la chanson au recit: *La chaste-laine de Vergi*," *Vox Romanica*, 27 (1968): 81 and 87. However, the elegance of the plot itself, and the stylistic elegance of the poem, are clear. On plot coherence specifically, see Zumthor, 81, 88.

21. Overall, Zumthor (88-89) and Lakits (76) find the narrator unintrusive, a throwback to the twelfth century, but Rychner notes frequent subtle intrusions which distinguish the poem's narrative strategy from that of Marie in *Lanval*. Jean Rychner, "La présence et le point de vue du narrateur dans deux recits courts: *Le Lai de Lanval* et *la Chastelaine de Vergi*," *Vox Romanica*, 39 (1980): 86-103.

22. Jean-Charles Payen, "Structure et sens de *la Chastelaine de Vergi*," *Le Moyen Age*, 79 (1973): 221.

23. Emilie Kostoroski, "Quest and Query in the *Chastelaine de Vergi*," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, N.S., 3 (1972): 180-83.

24. The ironic treatment of courtly conventions is often noted as an aspect, rather than the guiding principle, of Chaucer's poem, for example by Monica McAlpine, *The Genre of Chaucer's Troilus* (Ithaca, 1978), 125. The question whether *Troilus and Criseyde* ultimately rejects human love altogether (first raised by the poem's own palinode) is separate and operates at an entirely different level. Its answer, if there is one, does not solve the problem of the poem's ethical concerns.

25. Cooper (279) and Whitehead (xix-xx) assume that the Chastelaine is married; Zumthor (80) finds the text ambiguous. J. Reed, "La Chastelaine de Vergi: Was the Heroine Married?" *Romance Notes*, 16 (1974): 197-204, argues convincingly that there is no place for a chatelain in the structure of the poem.

26. Barry Windeatt, "'Love That Oughte Ben Secree' in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *ChauR* 14 (1979): 116-31.

27. The most extreme view is that of James Maybury, "Pandarus and Criseyde: The Motif of Incest in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Xavier Review*, 2 (1982): 82-89, who sees an incestuous relationship between Pandarus and Criseyde as the fulcrum of the poem.