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CHRISTIAN REVELATION AND THE CRUEL GAME OF COURTLY LOVE IN *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

by Tison Pugh

Scholarship has amply established that Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* concerns the failure of the earthly game of courtly love and its paradoxical pedagogical value in death.[1] For Troilus, the limitations of play stimulate his Boethian—and ultimately Christian—understanding of the world and his place in it. Criseyde's part in the game is predicated upon her struggle for survival; traded by rival forces, she focuses on her earthly needs. Pandarus, with his playful vision of reality, directs the game of romance, knowing full well play's fun and possible deceptions.[2] Playing the game of courtly love, the three characters advance their individual goals of romantic pleasure. Reading from this perspective, Richard Firth Green concludes that "The elegance and order of the game of love, truly played, is an attractive alternative to the chaos of a fallen world; that Troilus finally learns to relinquish it in favor of a higher order is an appropriate reminder . . . not to take the game . . . too seriously."[3]

Whereas Green insightfully analyzes the pleasures of play in *Troilus and Criseyde*, I seek to explore, in a complementary fashion, its perils. Quite simply, play and game are not always fun, and from this perspective we see that the play of courtly love partakes in the chaos of the fallen world by masking performative cruelties. By obfuscating their agency in the play of courtly love, the three primary characters reveal their willingness to resort to tactics of cruelty to advance their individual agendas. At the conclusion of the narrative, this game of courtly love is then transformed into a pedagogical experience of Christian revelation. The game ends, but only after Troilus and Criseyde suffer greatly from Pandarus's and each other's machinations. The ostensibly happy ending of Troilus's comic revelation exposes, moreover, the arbitrary cast of Christian teleology "rewriting" a pagan narrative, as readers find that Troilus "wins" the game of life for no real reason at all, and that this victory is ultimately meaningless. The narrative's end reveals a Christian game of salvation, reconfiguring

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for all the ludic meaning of courtly love and life, and posing for the reader the troubling question of the meaning of Christian teleology for pagans, in that the pleasures of salvation are tantalizingly displayed but then hastily withdrawn.

Game, Play, and Competing Cruelties

The basic structure of a game comprises rules and players who agree to pursue a goal while abiding by the rules. Bernard Suits offers a definition of *game* that highlights this structure, discerning a universal framework to the many permutations of game:

> To play a game is to attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs (prelusory goal), using only means permitted by rules (lusory means), where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favour of less efficient means (constitutive rules), and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity (lusory attitude).[4]

If one plays a game, one must obey its rules and requirements. Suits's belief that game players adopt a "lusory attitude" indicates that the players recognize their involvement in the game. Most games also include strategies (tactics by which players seek advantage over one another) and stakes (what is won or lost in the game, whether they be trivial or tremendous). In a similar vein, Johan Huizinga's famous definition of *play* offers a remarkably clear vision of a phenomenon notoriously difficult to pinpoint:

> we might call [play] a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordinary" life as being "not serious," but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner.[5]

From these modern analyses of game and play, we see that both are ostensibly cordoned off from the "real world" through their valence as mirth and entertainment. Many medieval thinkers also describe play as such a mirthful experience and frequently compare it to the experience of the divine.[6]

Play and game, however, often bleed beyond the parameters of mere fun and enjoyment and bear deep repercussions for the players. Realizing

this potential for seriousness arising from play, some medieval thinkers observe that light-hearted pastimes frequently devolve into harmful affairs. In the *Confessio Amantis* John Gower adumbrates the manner in which mirthful play metamorphoses from "pure game" into "grame," highlighting the dire mutability of recreation:

> Yit cam ther nevere good of strif,
> To seche in all a mannes life:
> Thogh it beginne on pure game,
> Fulofte it torneth into grame
> And doth grevance upon som side.
>
> (III.731–35)[7]

Games are not always stable constructions with referees and umpires preserving order. In this flux of the game arise insights into the characters of *Troilus and Criseyde:* as Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus negotiate the possible mutability of the "pure game" of courtly love, their varying strategies reveal the ways in which play constructs each of their characters. How one plays a game often reveals core truths about who one is. Indeed, medieval thinkers and exegetes describe play and game as indicators of a person's morality: Maurice of Provins outlines three types of engagement with play: *culpabile, tollerabile,* and *laudabile.* John Bromyard likewise classifies three types of play: *vituperabilis, tolerabilis,* and *commendabilis.*[8] These tripartite constructions of play indicate that medieval thinkers see in play the potential revelation of a person's Christian morality.[9]

Beyond the utility of play as an ambivalent and latent moral standard by which we can measure the behavior of Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus, other medieval conceptions of play and game stress the possibility of outright cruelty and terror within the ludic realm. The biblical Book of Job provides a model of demonic play in which God allows his followers to be cruelly tested, a model to which Chaucer refers in the *Friar's Tale.*[10] Likewise, in the Coventry play *Trial Before Herod,* Herod and Satan both describe their evil as a game, with Herod taunting the tortured Christ ("thynkest this good game") and Satan ruing the ending of his reign as the end of his game ("my game is wers than I wend here / I may seyn, my game is lorne").[11] If we look at *The Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge,* in its strident demand that "no man shulde usen in bourde and pleye the miraclis and werkis that Crist so ernystfully wroughte to oure helthe," we may note in it the recognition of a possible conjunction of performativity and sinfulness.[12] I am not suggesting that Chaucer intends for the play of any of his characters in *Troilus and Criseyde* to be confused with diabolical play such as that found in Job or the Coventry plays, nor does it appear that he is specifically and directly commenting on the dramatic

and theatrical qualities of play. Realizing, however, the ways in which play bears the possibility of performative cruelty allows us to assess Chaucer's depiction of play and game in a manner that goes beyond the typical division between seriousness and play that structures the *Canterbury Tales*. The vast semantic range of the words *game* and *plei(e)* in Middle English highlights the lability of these terms as creative and critical constructs.[13] Given this polyvalent perspective on gaming activity, I examine here how Chaucer recognized a dark side arising among ostensible pleasures. My goal is to complement and expand our vision of *Troilus and Criseyde* without necessarily refuting earlier studies of Chaucerian play and seriousness. The fact that a game may be played with cruelty bears deep relevance to Chaucer's text.

The chief rule of the pagan game of courtly love is secrecy. Its every action and strategy seek to hide Troilus and Criseyde's relationship from the prying eyes of the Trojan world.[14] And such a move is necessary because Chaucer depicts the Trojan citizens as spoilsports who would stop the lovers' game.[15] Indeed, Pandarus establishes his own position in the game by reiterating the need for secrecy:

> "For bothe yow to plese thus hope I
> Herafterward; for ye ben bothe wyse,
> And konne it counseil kepe in swych a wyse
> That no man shal the wiser of it be;
> And so we may ben gladed alle thre."
>
> (I, 990–94)

The heightened need for secrecy constrains every move in the game. Pandarus's strategies thus create a means by which Troilus and Criseyde can pursue pleasure while respecting the primary rule of the game. In effect, the Trojan citizens *rule* the game of courtly love, and, to play the game, one must not break secrecy. As Barry Windeatt declares, "In *Troilus* the concern to preserve secrecy has an effect in defining the selves of both Troilus and Criseyde; yet secrecy in a society involves pretence, and the affair necessarily becomes implicated with some of the dissimulation that allows its existence."[16] The lovers' need for secrecy necessitates performative dissembling, and their resulting performances emerge as a central strategy of the game as well as its conduit to cruelty.

Despite an initial agreement on the game's goals (after Criseyde agrees to play along), the characters play it with strikingly different attitudes, and these differences reflect their varying conceptions of the game's stakes, that is, of what is won or lost through pursuit of the game's goals. Pandarus sees love as a game like any other, even comparing it rather basely to a game of dice:

"That, in the dees right as ther fallen chaunces,
Right so in love ther come and gon plesaunces."

(IV, 1098–99)

For him, the stakes are trivial, and if one game ends, another may quickly begin. Troilus is different. He would never agree, as Pandarus asserts, that love is a trivial affair: the stakes for him are Criseyde's love, which he sees as beyond earthly value. For Criseyde, the stakes are both her feelings for Troilus and her personal survival in the Trojan world, where she remains only through the sufferance of her hosts. These three characters address the same game of love but with conflicting conceptions of the stakes, and the tension and "fun" of the game lie in determining which view of love holds sway at any given moment for any given character, as well as who is playing the game lightly and who is pursuing it with utter seriousness. The game thus begins as a cooperative venture in which all three players pursue the same goal, but once Criseyde is traded for Antenor, the motivations change: Pandarus urges Troilus to forget Criseyde and to play a new game; Troilus still desires only Criseyde; and Criseyde struggles for survival above all other considerations.

With the same rules but with changing goals and different stakes, Pandarus, Troilus, and Criseyde share a primary strategy in exploiting the labile border between play as fun and game as structure, a strategy the lovers learn from their pandering friend. The vacillations between play and seriousness allow Pandarus to pursue his playful agenda despite the rule of secrecy. The strategy that emerges involves performativity of identity: "Pandarus . . . is constantly hiding behind different masks, playing different roles in the poem all of which seem calculated to further his grand design, the union of Troilus and Criseyde," argues Charles Rutherford.[17] Play offers a venue in which reality and make-believe merge, in a site where alternate identities may be manipulated and explored. Recent scholarship demonstrates that the idea of assuming roles in a performative manner, of identity play, was familiar to the medieval world. Susan Crane observes that "in several medieval contexts, public appearance and behavior are thought not to falsify personal identity but, on the contrary, to establish and maintain it."[18] Sarah Beckwith similarly notes that, in the performance of personae in social ritual, "identities are changed in ways that persist quite beyond the time of performance."[19] Play thus opens up new options of identity, as the public persona accords the individual the ability of self-determination.[20] Identity is both structured within a social system and articulated by a specific individual. In the game of love, Pandarus teaches Troilus and Criseyde to act their parts with increasing self-consciousness. Their assumption of play-

ful personae allows the lovers to pursue their goals in the game while respecting its chief rule of secrecy.

Looking for the play and performance of identity, we see that Chaucer initially depicts Troilus as helplessly inept in acting the necessary roles. The narrator ironically reports Troilus's playful manner when he enters the temple and first sees Criseyde:

> Withinne the temple he wente hym forth pleyinge,
> This Troilus, of every wight aboute,
> On this lady, and now on that, lokynge.
>
> (I, 267–69)

Although such mannerisms might indicate that Troilus is adept at the game of love, he cannot maintain such posturing after he gazes upon Criseyde; rather, he fails when he hides his emotions from his fellow Trojans—and therefore from his beloved. The private emotions generated by love momentarily affect his behavior before he regains his pose:

> Therwith his herte gan to sprede and rise,
> And softe sighed, lest men myghte hym here,
> And caught ayeyn his firste pleyinge chere.
>
> (I, 278–80)

Troilus performs in this scene, yet he does not play in a way that would win Criseyde's affections. His inept strategies arise in order to protect his reputation and to respect the rule of secrecy, but such inefficient amatory play cannot bring Criseyde to him.[21]

The irony is that Troilus acts in a playful manner to hide his feelings for Criseyde rather than to advance his goal in the courtly love game. He is trapped between private desires and public roles; deceiving the public stands as the game's chief rule, but Troilus is incapable of playing the game strategically enough both to trick the public and to share his true emotions with Criseyde. By teaching Troilus to act like a lover, Pandarus shows him how to assert individual desire through strategic performance. Elaine Hansen notes that Pandarus's instructions to Troilus involve the realization that "romantic or courtly love, as experienced by these characters and in the conventional code by which they are shaped, is a complex performance."[22] When Troilus confesses to Pandarus his love for Criseyde, Pandarus advises him to act the role of the lover if he wants to win her love:

> "Nay, nay, but evere in oon be fressh and grene
> To serve and love his deere hertes queene,

And thynke it is a guerdon hire to serve,
A thousand fold moore than he kan deserve."

(I, 816–19)

To *be* a lover, one must *act* like a lover. Troilus will soon learn that appearing "fressh and grene" is only the beginning of Pandarus's intricately staged courtship. Given the clandestine nature of the love relationship, Pandarus's carefully choreographed seduction emphasizes that the performance of various identities effects the fulfillment of desire.

Pandarus's instructions on performing the role of a lover are given not only to Troilus, however; Criseyde is also the beneficiary of his amatory pedagogy, as when he suggests to her that he "koude . . . telle a thyng to doon yow pleye" (II, 121). Chaucer strikes several registers of the word *pleye* in this passage, simultaneously suggesting 'mirth, amusement,' 'dramatic performance,' and 'sexual intercourse.' For her to enjoy this play, Pandarus advises Criseyde to assume the role of Troilus's friend so that the lovers will be able to avoid the gossip of their fellow Trojans:

"That every wight, but he be fool of kynde,
Wol deme [the relationship] love of frendshipe in his mynde."

(II, 370–71)

It is an easy trick: convince the Trojan community that the pair are friends, not lovers. Pandarus then proceeds to elaborate on his initial advice:

"And ek therto, [Troilus] shal come here so selde,
What fors were it though al the town byhelde?
Swych love of frendes regneth al this town;
And wre yow in that mantel evere moo."

(II, 377–80)

If she conceals herself in the role of Troilus's friend, Criseyde may play the many love games Pandarus has prepared for her.[23]

In his position as gamemaster, Pandarus provides pivotal instruction for the two lovers at the climax of their relationship. His heavy hand guides the unfolding of Troilus and Criseyde's love, most notably when he directs the lovers' actions:

But Pandarus, that so wel koude feele
In every thyng, to pleye anon bigan,
And seyde, "Nece, se how this lord kan knele!
Now for youre trouthe, se this gentil man!"
And with that word he for a quysshen ran,

> And seyde, "Kneleth now, while that yow leste;
> There God youre hertes brynge soone at reste!"
>
> (III, 960–66)

The game reaches its climax when everyone—Pandarus, Troilus, Criseyde, and the reader—most fully enjoys the play of love. Pandarus frantically directs the action, and Troilus and Criseyde consummate their love. Pandarus's antics are humorous when he grabs a cushion so the knight will not suffer from washerwoman's knees, as well as vicariously pleasurable when he witnesses the lovers together. As Nancy Reale comments, "Pandarus most fully—and most humorously—acts outs his role in this section of the tale as he primes both lovers for the impending consummation. He finally brings them together, directing their otherwise awkward meeting with considerable energy."[24] Pandarus creates a tableau of love for the two, and his actors finally perform his masterpiece. The game of love reaches a tender and amusing conclusion in which the main characters—as well as the reader—enjoy the play of love in which all have achieved their goals.

The play and performance of love allow the lovers to consummate their relationship, yet one must note that this moment of joy is predicated upon Pandarus's sometimes cruel strategies. Although his tactics are typically harmless, he is unabashedly cruel to Criseyde when he lies to her about Poliphetes's lawsuit. Prevarications are often used to obfuscate agency, and in this manner Pandarus hides his desires by lying to Criseyde. Threatening a widow fearful for her safety due to her father's treason, Pandarus displays a ruthlessness atypical of a pastime lightly labeled "play." Certainly, Pandarus achieves his goal of Troilus and Criseyde's consummation of their love, but the point is that no tactic of cruelty, even threatening a woman marginalized from the Trojan community, lies outside of his "playful" arsenal. Similarly his student Troilus hides his own agency with clumsy lies about Criseyde's supposed relationship with Horaste. Criseyde persistently pressures Troilus to disclose why he believed this fabrication until Troilus realizes that "for the lasse harm, he moste feyne" (III, 1158). He does "lasse harm" to himself in sating his amatory desires, but shows little concern for Criseyde's feelings. A strategic performance saves Troilus from losing his game of love at this crucial moment, but this performance is necessary in response to the cruel lie of accusing Criseyde of unfaithfulness. Confronting Troilus about her alleged affair with Horaste, Criseyde "bar [Troilus] on honde / That this was don of malice, hire to fonde" (III, 1154–55). As this line shows, Criseyde is cagily observant of the duplicities surrounding her.

Criseyde's Obfuscation of Agency in the Earthly Game of Love

Still, if Criseyde sees that this game bears malicious elements in which lies are told and agency is obfuscated, she employs such tactics herself when circumstances change and she must again fight for her survival in a hostile environment. The return of the war to the narrative's forefront ends the play of the game of love, as the proposed trade of Criseyde for Antenor would necessitate that Troilus break the game's primary rule of secrecy, that is, that he confess his love to the world in order to keep her in Troy. Since he can no longer maintain both the game of love with Criseyde and its concomitant demand for secrecy, Troilus sacrifices his personal game of love for the communal pursuit of war.[25] This change in the dynamics of the game of love necessitates that Criseyde alter her strategies; in doing so, she adopts cruel obfuscations of agency much in the manner of Pandarus's and Troilus's lies. Employing Pandarus's lessons in game and play to ensure her survival in a hostile world, she pursues her own earthly game of love after she is traded for Antenor. Her goal changes from enjoying the game of love with Troilus to ensuring her personal survival with Diomede, and as a consequence, the entire game is altered from a cooperative venture among the three players to a fragmented affair in which they no longer share the same goal. Through her strategic performances of desire, Criseyde situates herself in a position to perform roles that privilege her own desires over Troilus's. When Criseyde realizes that she has been caught in a masculine enterprise, not one addressing her unique desires, she asks, "Is this a mannes game? / What, Troilus, wol ye do thus for shame?" (III, 1126–27). Tricked into a man's game, Criseyde can redirect it to her own advantage and prove true her earlier words to Troilus:

> "A kynges sone although ye be, ywys,
> Ye shal namore han sovereignete
> Of me in love, than right in that cas is."
>
> (III, 170–72)

Criseyde's manipulations of the game, her move from player to gamemaster, allow her to maintain sovereignty over herself and to struggle for her survival when Fortune's wheel turns.

If we see Criseyde's actions following the consummation scene as reflecting her desires, and as evidence of a woman playing to her own ends, her final letter to Troilus offers a plethora of interpretative possibilities to demonstrate that she acts for herself in spite of the social limi-

tations she faces.[26] Criseyde's letter appears strategically marked to advance her goals. As Pandarus's earlier lies about Poliphetes's lawsuit reflected his willingness to prevaricate cruelly to advance his goals in the game, Criseyde's multiple lies in her letters bespeak a nascent callousness to ethical play. She hides her desires from Troilus in the letter by neglecting to state them. Her earlier conversations with Troilus about her return stress that she views a potentially dangerous escape back to the Trojans as a simple matter:

> "Now, that I shal wel bryngen it aboute
> To come ayeyn, soone after that I go,
> Therof am I no manere thyng in doute;
> For, dredeles, withinne a wowke or two
> I shal ben here."
>
> (IV, 1275–79)

Indeed, Criseyde sees her return as an advantage to the Trojans, since they will then have both Antenor and her (IV, 1315–16). She furthermore states that she desires to return:

> "Come I wole; but yet in swich disjoynte
> I stonde as now that what yer or what day
> That this shal be, that kan I naught apoynte."
>
> (V, 1618–20)

Stressing both the advantages of her return and her desire to reunite with him, Criseyde tells Troilus in no uncertain terms that she will come back. To determine the sincerity of Criseyde's words, however, is difficult, as the tepid tone of her epistle argues against her expressed desire to return. In considering the perils of returning to the Trojans subsequent to her communication with Troilus, Criseyde sees many more dangers and, hence, many more reasons to remain with the Greeks (V, 694–707). The dramatic differences in Criseyde's view of the difficulties in her return imply that it is her mind that changes, not the journey. The trip, described as so simple in the first communication, now metamorphoses into an impossibility, with fears of her father, of charges of treason, and of the threat of rape.

Regardless of her true reasons for delay, Criseyde's unspoken and unknowable desires remain hidden through her manipulation of the rule of secrecy and Troilus's worries about exposure. She refuses to tell him the cause of her delay, declaring that

"But whi [I cannot return], lest that this lettre founden were,
No mencioun ne make I now, for feere."

(V, 1602–3)

Of course, this ostensible motivation makes no sense at all because the letter itself breaks the game's rule of secrecy. Her goal in not stating the reason for her delay is supposedly to hide their relationship from others, but the first stanza of the letter, in which she describes their relationship so openly, in which she calls Troilus "Cupides sone" (V, 1590) and declares

"Syn ye with me, nor I with yow, may dele,
Yow neyther sende ich herte may nor hele"

(V, 1595–96),

reveals what she ostensibly desires to hide. Criseyde's letter by its very existence exposes her relationship with Troilus, and thus her refusal to state why she will not return suggests that it is because she does not want to come back to him. At the very least, the letter is so ambiguous that her real objectives are hidden. In her plea to Troilus, "beth nat wroth, and that I yow biseche; / For that I tarie is al for wikked speche" (V, 1609–10), Criseyde indicts gossipers—the spoilsports of the game, the rule system that cannot be breached—for their possible misrepresentation of her motives. In these parallel statements, Criseyde obfuscates her agency in her decisions, and through this obfuscation, she indeed addresses her own desires—foremost of which is survival in a hostile environment. Behind both fears of and allegations against the social environment of the Greek and Trojan worlds, Criseyde breaks the rule of secrecy when she denies but then invokes its inviolability.

By advancing this interpretation of Criseyde as a woman both deeply cognizant of yet capable of subverting social stricture, I do not mean to suggest that she feels no emotion for Troilus. On the contrary, the descriptions of her feelings prior to their separation portray a woman devastated by her impending loss:

Aboute hire eyen two a purpre ryng
Bytrent, in sothfast tokenyng of hire peyne,
That to biholde it was a dedly thyng.

(IV, 869–71)

Criseyde feels pain at the loss of Troilus, but these emotional torments dissipate such that, during her time with Diomede, she writes her deceitful letter to Troilus. This passage tells us that she has lost her play, and it

thereby underscores the pain Criseyde feels when the game of love takes a decidedly unlucky turn. Criseyde's goal of survival, however, motivates her change of strategy in the game of love, which is now predicated upon the changing circumstances she finds at the Greek camp. When the seriousness of the game of love robs her of its sense of fun and play, she still must engage with this game to fight for her survival.

The view of Criseyde that emerges, then, is of a woman trapped in precarious social systems—both Trojan and Greek—and who, when threatened by these social orders, manages to turn dangerous situations to her advantage by seizing control of and manipulating the game of love. When Pandarus convinces Criseyde to hear of Troilus's love by threatening her with both men's deaths (another one of his somewhat cruel strategies), Criseyde's response underscores the strategy with which she proceeds:

> "And if this man sle here hymself—allas!—
> In my presence, it wol be no solas.
> What men wolde of hit deme I kan nat seye;
> It nedeth me ful sleighly for to pleie."
>
> (II, 459–62)

Criseyde worries about the manner in which the Trojans respond to her, and she realizes that she depends upon their forbearance. At the same time, she views herself as fully capable of responding to the situation with her own shrewd play.[27]

The question thus emerges: did Troilus ever really have a chance of winning Criseyde's love forever? One of the most famously ironic lines of *Troilus and Criseyde* is Criseyde's statement in the consummation scene that

> "Now God, thow woost, in thought ne dede untrewe
> To Troilus was nevere yet Criseyde."
>
> (III, 1053–54)

The adverb *yet* reveals that Criseyde has been true, but she does not commit herself to truthfulness in the future. The irony of this moment—for the knowledgeable reader, not for Troilus—stands in a woman speaking only too honestly while the man fails to grasp the full impact of the words. That her actions result in Troilus's death ostensibly casts him as a tragic figure, but Criseyde, in her earthbound determination to satisfy her own desires, attempts to fill a comic role. As Diane Steinberg observes, "Troilus is very much a tragic hero who finds himself on stage with a comic heroine, one determined to end the play with an affirmation of life on earth, despite all of the difficulties of that life."[28] However, to label Criseyde a comic heroine because she affirms an earthly existence is a somewhat

problematic gesture. The ultimate direction of the poem teaches us that Troilus's death and apotheosis give him the delights of heavenly play; Criseyde may be an earthly comic figure, but then she serves as a tragic figure from a heavenly perspective because she ties herself to the emptiness of earthly life. Safely tucked away with the Greeks, free from the repercussions of Troilus's death and the eventual slaughter of the Trojans, Criseyde lives on through the strategies of her game. If we see Criseyde as "winning" this game of love because she wins her goal of survival, however, the victory is short-lived and ephemeral. She surmises that she will be damned if she betrays Troilus:

> "That thilke day that ich untrewe be
> To Troilus, myn owene herte fre,
> . . . . . .
> And I with body and soule synke in helle!"
>
> (IV, 1551–52, 1554)

Criseyde wins an earthly game and ends up losing her good name, even though she realizes her reputation is at stake in her actions (V, 1058–64). In the end, then, her attempts to be a comic figure fail because she ties herself to the suffering of the earthly world. She may control the human game of courtly love, but she cannot control the game of Christian salvation.

Troilus, Fortune's Game, and the Arbitrariness of Christian Teleology

If we see the game of courtly love as defeating Troilus after he momentarily wins Criseyde's love, it becomes apparent that another game is being played simultaneously. In his many references to the play of Fortune, Cupid, and God, Chaucer portrays the mutability of human endeavors in light of the Divine: human play is rendered insignificant, if not meaningless, when supernatural forces pursue opposing agendas. With the failure of the game, Troilus intimates through his talk of funeral games that games hold no reality or comfort in the face of death:

> "But of the fir and flaumbe funeral
> In which my body brennen shal to glede,
> And of the feste and pleyes palestral
> At my vigile, I prey the, tak good hede
> That that be wel."
>
> (V, 302–6)

Games have hitherto been linked with love, the fulfillment of desire, and the expression of personal desires against the pressures of social conformity, but Troilus now sees their connection to funeral rites. Funeral games also appear in Cassandra's interpretation of Troilus's dream when she describes

> "Archymoris brennynge and the pleyes,
> And how Amphiorax fil thorugh the grounde,
> How Tideus was sleyn . . ."
>
> (V, 1499–1501)

Toward the end of the narrative, games are increasingly linked to images of death and destruction and connote humanity's lack of control over personal destinies.

Although Pandarus appears to be orchestrating and controlling each player's actions, he cannot, in the final analysis, control the game because Fortune subsumes it and all of the characters' actions under its own authority. When Troilus initially realizes that he is caught in Fortune's game, he foreshadows his subsequent inability to act:

> "For wel fynde I that Fortune is my fo;
> Ne al the men that riden konne or go
> May of hire cruel whiel the harm withstonde;
> For as hire list she pleyeth with free and bonde."
>
> (I, 837–40)

Certainly, the Fortune of *Troilus and Criseyde* is no mere allegorical entity with little concern for the outcome of the game. Chaucer depicts the fickle force delighting in the turn of her wheel:

> "And whan a wight is from hire whiel ythrowe,
> Than laugheth she, and maketh hym the mowe."
>
> (IV, 6–7)

Chaucer's Fortune does not turn her wheel mechanically, oblivious to the pleasures and pains she metes out; rather, she delights in the vagaries she provides. In Fortune's laughter we observe a sense of play and fun absent from Troilus after the departure of Criseyde. And much like Pandarus's play of the game, Fortune's laughter suggests that she plays the game for her own pleasure in its unfolding.

In order to deceive Troilus in his pursuit of Criseyde, Fortune's game first favors him by assisting Pandarus's plan to trick Criseyde into staying the night and to sneak Troilus clandestinely to her side. Although Criseyde

prepares to leave Pandarus's home, she changes her mind and stays when Fortune creates a rainstorm to hinder her return:

> But O Fortune, executrice of wierdes,
> O influences of thise hevenes hye!
> Soth is, that under God ye ben oure hierdes,
> Though to us bestes ben the causez wrie.
> This mene I now: for she gan homward hye,
> But execut was al bisyde hire leve
> The goddes wil, for which she moste bleve.
>
> (III, 617–23)

Fortune's actions keep Criseyde in the game when she would prefer to leave. Furthermore, this passage stresses that, under God, Fortune controls the destiny of Troilus and Criseyde: the lovers thus appear to be the pawns in Fortune's game, rather than its players. But as Pandarus's game is shown to be under Fortune's control, so too is Fortune's game ultimately depicted to be under God's control. At the narrative's end, God's participation in the game is revealed when Christianity asserts a meaning to this pagan love story.

In this light, Troilus's musings on God and Fortune in Book IV underscore the meaninglessness of human games in view of supernatural powers. In this long digression (IV, 958–1078), Troilus concludes that destiny is preordained:

> "and thus the bifallyng
> Of thynges that ben wist bifore the tyde,
> They mowe nat ben eschued on no syde."
>
> (IV, 1076–78)

Humans may pursue their own agendas, but they cannot halt the juggernaut of Fortune. Thus, when Troilus declares that God will not blame him for the fallout of the game ("God woot that of this game, / Whan al is wist, than am I nought to blame" [III, 1084–85]), we see another sign of his perception that the game of love, like the game of life, remains under the control of a higher power. Life itself appears to be the ultimate game, played with a gamemaster beyond mortal comprehension. Through this dynamic, Chaucer explores the tension between the pagan past and the Christian present, what John Frankis eloquently describes as

> the common medieval ambivalence towards classical antiquity, in which veneration for the glories of ancient civilizations contrasts with apprehension on behalf of those who had not been granted

the Christian revelation and with doubts about the moral status of paganism.[29]

Fortune may have directed the game on earth, but Christianity reveals the game's meaning in death. The stakes of the earthly game of love were play, sexual satisfaction, and love. Now the stakes of the game are an expanded and heavenly perspective, as well as the possibilities of eternal salvation or damnation.

The full force of this recognition reaches Troilus in death after the game finally ends.[30] When he leaves behind the vain desires of the earthly world and "His lighte goost ful blisfully is went" (V, 1808), Troilus laughs in the heavenly sphere:

> [He] fully gan despise
> This wrecched world, and held al vanite
> To respect of the pleyn felicite
> That is in hevene above; and at the laste,
> Ther he was slayn his lokyng down he caste,
>
> And in hymself he lough right at the wo
> Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste.
>
> (V, 1816–22)

Despising the wretched world he has departed, Troilus laughs spiritually at the petty concerns of the earthly world with amusement predicated upon his "respect of the pleyn felicite / That is in hevene above." The jarring image of Troilus laughing at his own dead body highlights his expanded perception of the foolishness of human concerns with life and death in the light of heavenly rewards. Although Troilus's laugh could be interpreted as scornful or derisive, that Troilus laughs at himself and his mourners suggests more a compassionate chuckle at human misperceptions than a mocking dismissal of their concerns: the tragedy of earthly death transforms into the comedy of heavenly vision, but the earthbound Trojans still do not get the joke.[31] As John Conlee notes, Troilus's fate "emphasize[s] the Boethian concept of the discrepancy between man's limited perception while in this world and his vastly expanded perception after his release from this world."[32] As laughter is a sure sign of play, Troilus is finally playing the right game; rather than Pandarus's earthly game of courtly love, he now enjoys the play of divine love. His laughter signifies a closing condemnation of the earthly world and his realization of its ephemeral ends (V, 1828–34). In death, Troilus understands the limitations of all earthly pursuits and the bliss of heavenly redemption. His understanding of the shallowness of earthly love

signifies his apotheosis and that, in losing Pandarus's game of courtly love, he wins the true game of life and knowledge.

This victory in death becomes most apparent when the narrator reveals the limits of the earthly performative love that served as the chief strategy in the game of courtly love. Troilus's play of love for Criseyde was only a distraction from the true love that the reader should direct to Christ:

> And loveth hym the which that right for love
> Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
> First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;
> For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
> That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
> And syn he best to love is, and most meke,
> What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?
>
> (V, 1842–48)

The performances in the game of courtly love, which were concentrated on earthly objectives and which were themselves feigned and cruel, only created a love in itself feigned and meaningless. Feigned and performative loves fail, but the true love of God, that with which he will never deceive any human, remains.

The close of the narrative thus apparently highlights the stability of celestial love, the transience of earthly delights, and the folly of human games. In this vision, Criseyde serves as a fallen image, an earthly prefiguring, of heavenly love; as Chauncey Wood concludes, "Criseyde's fickleness is an emblem of the mutable Fortune Troilus also embraces. . . . Thus Troilus' allegiance to the unfaithful, mutable Criseyde cannot possibly bring him happiness. . . . In the last analysis, one cannot be true to the false."[33] To this I would add that, although one cannot be true to the false, one can—as Troilus does—learn to laugh at it. And from this realization comes the opportunity to be true to the Eternal Truth that Christ represents in the religious thematics of the poem. With the closing dismissal of the "payens corsed olde rites" (V, 1849), Pandarus's game of courtly love is over, and Troilus, in losing, appears to win the game in his heavenly laughter and increased understanding.

To Troilus's Christian apotheosis, however, I must ask a simple question: why? What has he done in terms of Christian values to deserve such anachronistic revelation? In terms of the game of courtly love, he has lied cruelly, in a manner similar to Pandarus and Criseyde. We know that Criseyde suffers in the narrative future as punishment for her acts; and Pandarus disappears from the romance that he creates. Troilus, however, is rewarded for his actions in the game of courtly love, even though his coercively cruel behavior is morally bankrupt and the love affair itself seems incongruous with Christian values, focused as it is on the carnal

rather than the spiritual. True, he is faithful to Criseyde, but his love for her is painted as excessive and unspiritual, as when he compares her to a saint (V, 553). Why, then, does Troilus achieve this moment of vision? It is an arbitrary, rather than an earned, victory, as Troilus does nothing to merit this reward. His apotheosis is the result of some arbitrariness in Christianity that privileges this sinful man rather than the sinful woman or panderer.

But then we must consider the poem's final cruelty that subverts an optimistic interpretation of Troilus's comic apotheosis: the moment of Christian revelation is coupled with Troilus's immediate dismissal from this revelation. As a pagan, he cannot enjoy eternity in the eighth sphere, and the narrator reports that

> And forth he wente, shortly for to telle,
> Ther as Mercurye sorted hym to dwelle.
>
> (V, 1826–27)

Chaucer is vague about Troilus's final destination, but, since Mercury delivers him there, it seems safe to assume that it represents a pagan rather than a Christian space. The game of life, which appeared to have a comic ending, reveals the ultimately tragic and arbitrary manner in which Christianity treats pagans, who suffer in the afterlife for their inability to know Christ, despite the fact that this knowledge was impossible for them to gain. The game of earthly courtly love leads to death; the game of salvation, at least for pagans, ends in a moment of bliss followed by yet more suffering. Unlike the cruel play of the Book of Job, in which the protagonist ultimately triumphs in the devil's torturous game, righteous pagans can only endure their punishment predicated upon their failure to know what they could never know—Christianity.[34]

Similar to the close of the *Knight's Tale*, with Theseus's lackluster injunction "To maken vertu of necessitee" (*CT*, I 3042), Chaucer's ending of *Troilus and Criseyde* asks the reader to forget the narrative that precedes it—that is, to take comfort in Troilus's ascension to the eighth sphere while ignoring the path that first leads him there and then immediately dismisses him from this spiritual revelation. As Augustine teaches that history contains the shadow of the future, medieval thinkers scoured the past for signs of the Christian present and future, but, like a jigsaw puzzle in which the last piece does not quite fit no matter how many times one turns it, pagan tales frequently cannot account for all of the contours of Christianity. If we "maken vertu of necessitee," we can assert a Christian meaning, but the moral does not quite fit the text. It is doubtful that Chaucer intended *Troilus and Criseyde* as a critique of Christianity or as an indictment of the arbitrary cast of Christian salvation, in that Troilus wins and loses salvation in the blink of an eye. Nevertheless, the attempt

to bridge the classical pagan past with his Christian present confronted Chaucer with insuperable difficulties, which, in the end, are not resolved, and which fracture the promised pleasures of Christian epistemology and teleology within the text. We see again that game and play are not always fun: Chaucer depicts Christian salvation as a playfully optimistic celebration of eternal life, but the structure of the "game" of salvation, in which pagans can never win due to the rules in effect, forecloses a fully optimistic view of Christian revelation for pagans.

In the end, Christianity in *Troilus and Criseyde* appears as its own form of a game that fails to offer its teleological promise of hope and salvation to the characters. Chaucer inserts a Christian lesson about hope into a text that cannot illuminate it empirically, since the pagan past can never be fully reconstructed as both wholly pagan and wholly Christian. In her consideration of the ways in which Chaucer's texts resist closure, Rosemarie McGerr sees the struggle between pagan and Christian perspectives as undermining any teleological bent the text might offer:

> But is the narrator's condemnation of pagan love and poetry the true "end" of the poem? . . . In spite of the intense concern for meaning and ending exhibited throughout the poem, *Troilus and Criseyde* ultimately makes clear the difficulty of determining meaning and the need to resist the illusion of closure in our pursuit of understanding.[35]

This epistemological conundrum arises directly from the tension between a pagan love story and a Christian perspective, in which Christianity fails to account meaningfully for the disparate narrative ends of the three main characters.[36] The ending of *Troilus and Criseyde* is optimistic in the face of pessimism. Yet, because Christianity has the power to relieve the darkness of the pagan past but refrains from doing so, the ending's pessimism outweighs its Christian optimism. Troilus's suffering can only increase as he brings his momentary Christian revelation to a pagan afterlife. Darker than the play of Pandarus and Criseyde, the play of Christianity asserts hope yet does not fully deliver it in this ultimately pagan setting. Readers witnessing an anachronistic Christian ending to a pagan narrative are left with the troubling vision of the arbitrariness of salvation, in which those who could not accept Christianity, through no fault of their own, suffer endlessly. We can only hope that, in rejecting feigned loves, as Troilus does in the end, we will not suffer the narrative fate meted out to the pagan protagonists of *Troilus and Criseyde.*

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1. The definitive study of Chaucer and play remains Laura Kendrick's *Chaucerian Play* (Berkeley, Calif., 1988). Other relevant studies include: Malcolm Andrew, "Games," in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford, 2000), 167–79; Richard F. Green, "Troilus and the Game of Love," *Chaucer Review* 13 (1979): 201–20; Gerhard Joseph, "Chaucerian 'Game'—'Earnest' and the 'Argument of Herbergage' in *The Canterbury Tales*," *Chaucer Review* 5 (1970): 83–96; G. D. Josipovici, "Fiction and Game in *The Canterbury Tales*," *Critical Quarterly* 7 (1965): 185–97; Richard Lanham, "Game, Play, and High Seriousness in Chaucer's Poetry," *English Studies* 48 (1967): 1–24; Carl Lindahl, *Earnest Games* (Bloomington, Ind., 1987); Stephen Manning, "Rhetoric, Game, Morality, and Geoffrey Chaucer," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 1 (1979): 105–18; and Glending Olson, "Chaucer's Idea of a Canterbury Game," in *The Idea of Medieval Literature*, ed. James M. Dean and Christian Zacher (Newark, N.J., 1992), 72–90. These studies, by illuminating the tensions between seriousness and play that structure Chaucer's literature, provide a framework upon which this analysis builds; however, save for Green, these scholars focus primarily on *CT* rather than *Tr*. Lindahl examines the aggressive nature of tale-telling in *CT* (73–155); I pursue his conception of play as an aggressive pastime by analyzing the latent (and sometimes blatant) cruelties of the game of courtly love.

2. Through these games the reader is implicated as well. John Hermann notes that "The labyrinth of interpretation that *Troilus and Criseyde* has spawned is an index of the plurality of the text, the joyfully puzzling game it establishes for the interpreter by supplying evidence for conflicting interpretations" ("Gesture and Seduction in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: "Subgit to alle Poesye"—Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. A. Shoaf [Binghamton, N.Y., 1992], 138–60, at 160). Laura Kendrick suggests that *Tr* was itself intended to be performed and thus to be engaged in as a public instance of play: "[F]or Chaucer's *Troilus* we have pictorial evidence that one manuscript illuminator, at least, was able to conceive of the dramatic presentation of the verbal text that he was engaged in preserving in the authoritative format of a book. The illuminator shows his awareness that he is helping inscribe *play*" (*Chaucerian Play*, 174).

3. Green, "Troilus and the Game of Love," 218.

4. Bernard Suits, *The Grasshopper: Games, Life, and Utopia* (Toronto, 1978), 41.

5. Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (Boston, 1950), 13.

6. Texts that address the range of cultural responses to play, games, jokes, and fun in the Middle Ages include: Joachim Suchomski, *Delectatio und Utilitas* (Bern, 1975); Martha Bayless, *Parody in the Middle Ages* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1996); Hugo Rahner, *Man at Play* (New York, 1972); Laura Kendrick, *Chaucerian Play* and *The Game of Love: Troubadour Wordplay* (Berkeley, Calif., 1988); and Thérèse Bouché and Hélène Charpentier, eds., *Le Rire au Moyen Age dans la littérature et dans les arts* (Bordeaux, 1990). On play as a moral force, consider Bede's use of play as an apt metaphor for the relationship between humanity and the divine: "En ludus est credentium / Tuis frui complexibus, / Quae tanta gignis gaudia, / Pandis polique januas" (It is as play for the faithful / To enjoy your embraces. / You bestow such great joys / And you open the gates of heaven) (*PL*, 94:633). At gates of heaven, humanity's play signifies its reception by the divine.

7. John Gower, *The Complete Works of John Gower*, ed. G. C. Macaulay, 4 vols. (Oxford, 1899–1902).

8. Glending Olson, "Plays as Play: A Medieval Ethical Theory of Performance and the Intellectual Context of 'The Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge,'" *Viator* 26 (1995): 195–221, at 218, 220. At the conclusion of this essay, Olson includes an appendix of ten medieval analyses of play's moral function, including the ones cited. He notes that, of these ten tracts, seven "express distinctions between play that is always bad, play that may be bad or good depending on circumstances, and religiously devotional play that is always good" (218).

9. Similar to Maurice Provins and John Bromyard, Thomas Aquinas considers the questions of whether excesses or deficiencies of play are sinful in his *Summa theologiae*. In Articulus 3, "Utrum in superfluitate ludi possit esse peccatum" (Whether it is possible that there is sin in an excess of play), Aquinas concludes: "Et sic patet quod excessus in ludo est peccatum mortale" (And thus it is apparent that an excess of play is a deadly sin). This conclusion may not be surprising, but Aquinas concludes in Articulus 4, "Utrum in defectu ludi consistat aliquod peccatum" (Whether a certain sin exists in a lack of play), that a lack of play is also sinful. Although too little play emerges as less of a sin than an excess—

"defectus ludi minus est vitiosus quam ludi superexcessus" (a lack of play is less sinful than a superabundance of play), it is nevertheless a sin, and therefore Aquinas determines that play should not be avoided altogether (*Summa theologiae*, ed. "cura fratrum eius ordinis" [by the monks of his order] [Madrid, 1956], 1039 [2–2 q.168 a.3] and 1040–41 [2–2 q. 168, a.4]; translations are mine). Aquinas accords play an essential status in the life of humanity because it tests one's ability to find the proper balance between excess and deficiency.

10. All references to and citations of Chaucer are taken from *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn. (Boston, 1987). For the fiend's construction of demonic play as sanctioned by God in *FrT*, see III 1474–1503.

11. K. S. Block, ed., *Ludus Coventriae or The Plaie Called Corpus Christi*, EETS ES 120 (London, 1922), lines 450, 509–10.

12. Clifford Davidson, ed., *A Middle English Treatise on the Playing of Miracles* (Washington, D.C., 1981), 35.

13. The *MED* defines *game* as 'joy, happiness; pleasure, delight; gaiety, mirth; festivity, revelry; a pastime, amusement; music; a play; amorous play, love-making; esp. sexual intercourse; an athletic contest; a joke, jest; a ridiculous circumstance.' In terms of the wider cultural connotations of game, *ertheli game* refers to 'worldly pleasure' and *fleshli game* refers to 'bodily pleasure.' *Plei(e)* is defined as 'merriment, joy, pleasure; play of children, a child's game; games, a game; martial play; sexual play, sexual intercourse; a theatrical play or performance.' The many connotations and denotations of these two words give Chaucer ample authorial room to construct the play and game of courtly love with many conflicting valences.

14. Andreas Capellanus defines the rules of courtly love, which also bears the structure of a game. As Bernard Suits describes how a game's rules purposefully make the achievement of its objective more difficult, Andreas likewise sees the heightened difficulty of pursuing love as one of the game's positive features: "Facilis perceptio contemptibilem reddit amorem, difficilis eum carum facit haberi" (An easy taking makes love contemptible, [but] difficulty makes love dear to be held) (*De amore libri tres*, ed. E. Trojel [Munich, 1964], 310).

15. When Pandarus brings the lovers together, the narrator reports that the Trojans are inimical to the lovers' play: "Dredeles, it cler was in the wynd / Of every pie and every lette-game; / Now al is wel, for al the world is blynd / In this matere, bothe fremde and tame" (III, 526–29). Playing the game requires that the Trojan world be blind to the lovers; this need for secrecy also somewhat explains Troilus's refusal to defend his relationship with Criseyde in Book IV.

16. Barry Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde* (Oxford, 1992), 240.

17. Charles S. Rutherford, "Pandarus as Lover: 'A Joly Wo' or 'Loves Shotes Keene'?" *Annuale Mediaevale* 13 (1972): 5–13, at 5.

18. Susan Crane, *The Performance of Self: Ritual, Clothing, and Identity During the Hundred Years War* (Philadelphia, 2002), 4.

19. Sarah Beckwith, *Signifying God: Social Relation and Symbolic Act in the York Corpus Christi Plays* (Chicago, 2001), 140.

20. The Roman concept of the *persona* offers the medieval world such a model of the performative self. Cicero outlines the basis of the *persona:* "It is thus understood that we are clothed by nature as if with two persons; of those, one is common from them [to all humanity] from the fact that we are all participants of reason and excellence . . . however, the other, which [is] of one's own, is bestowed by individuals. So that, certainly, in bodies there are great differences . . . thus in our souls exist even greater varieties" (*De Officiis*, ed. Hubert Holden [Amsterdam, 1966], 39; my translation). Cicero's duality of identity posits one vision of the self as communal, the other as interior; Gerald Bond describes this *persona* as an "'impersonation,' understanding this term to mean something like 'a character/role staged in public primarily through discourse' and to apply equally well to the sound of individual social existence as to the individual voice of rhetorical invention" (*The Loving Subject* [Philadelphia, 1995], 6).

21. Such depictions of Troilus as incapable of amatory play—though capable of dissembling his emotions—are repeated until Troilus receives Pandarus's lessons in love. For example, when Troilus sees Criseyde and falls in love with her, the narrator stresses that the protagonist is absolutely helpless in acting the role of a lover. He does not act in a flir-

tatious or playful manner because the stakes of courtly love strike him into a state of inaction (I, 295–301). Troilus fails to play the role of a lover in this scene, and, as I will demonstrate, Criseyde certainly has much to learn from Pandarus about the performativity of identity, but the descriptions of her nevertheless hint that she is adept at flirtatious ritual. Her seductive glances certainly suggest that she is aware of an audience (I, 288–94).

22. Elaine Tuttle Hansen, *Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley, Calif., 1992), 151.

23. Pandarus also focuses on Criseyde's clothing to advance the game, as he determines to dress Criseyde in fashions other than her "widewes habit blak" (I, 170). Such a focus on Criseyde's fashions is not surprising; as Gayle Margherita points out, "Criseyde's widow's habit stands in the way of the visual pleasure romance generically promises" (*The Romance of Origins: Language and Sexual Difference in Middle English Literature* [Philadelphia, 1994], 116).

24. Nancy M. Reale, "'Bitwixen Game and Ernest': *Troilus and Criseyde* as a Post-Boccaccian Response to the *Commedia*," *Philological Quarterly* 71 (1992): 155–71, at 166.

25. In this dilemma, we see the tension between knightly chivalry and courtly love, the oppositional obligations the knight bears to himself and to his social world. See Maurice Keen, *Nobles, Knights and Men-at-Arms in the Middle Ages* (London, 1996), 42.

26. In the scene following Troilus and Criseyde's consummation, we see another sign that Criseyde plays a game of which Troilus knows nothing: "I passe al that which chargeth nought to seye. / What! God foryaf his deth, and she al so / Foryaf, and with here uncle gan to pleye, / For other cause was ther noon than so. / But of this thing right to the effect to go: / Whan tyme was, hom til here hous she wente, / And Pandarus hath fully his entente" (III, 1576–82). Although some critics hesitate to read a sexual undertone in this passage, the narrator hints at unseemly behavior in the genteel decision not to describe the scene. The critical responses to this scene include: Haldeen Braddy, "Chaucer's Playful Pandarus," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* 34 (1970): 71–81; Evan Carton, "Complicity and Responsibility in Pandarus' Bed and Chaucer's Art," *PMLA* 94 (1979): 47–61; Richard Fehrenbacher, "'Al that which chargeth nought to seye': The Theme of Incest in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Exemplaria* 9 (1997): 341–69; Louise Fradenburg, "'Our owen wo to drynke': Loss, Gender, and Chivalry in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: "Subgit to alle Poesye"—Essays in Criticism*, ed. R. A. Shoaf (Binghamton, N.Y., 1992), 88–106; Henry Ansgar Kelly, "Shades of Incest and Cuckoldry: Pandarus and John of Gaunt," *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 13 (1991): 121–40; and Beryl Rowland, "Pandarus and the Fate of Tantalus," *Orbis Litterarum* 24 (1969): 3–15. Regardless of any sexual subtext to this scene, Criseyde and Pandarus's play here highlights their sheer enjoyment of the moment, playing for no other cause than play itself ("For other cause was ther noon than so" [III, 1579]). Criseyde's light play, in contrast to Troilus's serious pursuit of the game, evinces a different conception of the meaning of their game of courtly love.

27. Another hint that Criseyde plays to her own objectives while participating in Pandarus's game may be found in her metaphor of love as a game in which she will never be beaten. She proclaims early in the text that she is her own person and that no man will ever capture her: "I am myn owene womman, wel at ese— / I thank it God—as after myn estat, / Right yong, and stonde unteyd in lusty leese, / Withouten jalousie or swich debat: / Shal noon housbonde seyn to me 'Chek mat!' / For either they ben ful of jalousie, / Or maisterfull, or loven novelrie" (II, 750–56). The gaming lexicon of this passage suggests that Criseyde views love as a game, one in which she believes she will never be conquered or checkmated as long as she stays away from marriage. Although she plays along with a "mannes game" in Books II and III, she takes control of it in Book IV.

28. Diane Steinberg, "'We do usen here no wommen for to selle': Embodiment of Social Practices in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer Review* 29 (1995): 259–73, at 269. Alfred David likewise argues that Criseyde is "a comic creation of such vitality that it challenges the idea of tragedy and the authority of the advice that bids us to repair 'hom fro worldly vanyte' (V, 1837)" ("Chaucerian Comedy and Criseyde," in *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Mary Salu [Cambridge, Eng., 1979], 90–109, at 103).

29. John Frankis, "Paganism and Pagan Love in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Essays on Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Mary Salu (Cambridge, Eng., 1979), 57–73, at 57.

30. Ironically, Troilus's death can be seen as a result of Pandarus's commands, as well as of divine forces. Pandarus tells Troilus, when the young man laments his loss of Criseyde, that "Forthi tak herte, and thynk right as a knyght: / Thorugh love is broken al

day every lawe. / Kith now somwhat thi corage and thi myght; / Have mercy on thiself for any awe. / Lat nat this wrecched wo thyn herte gnawe, / But manly sette the world on six and sevene; / And if thow deye a martyr, go to hevene!" (IV, 617–23). Through both divine forces and Pandarus's words, Troilus is directed to repair to his heavenly home.

31. For more on the tension between tragedy and comedy in Troilus's death, see Anne Falke, "The Comic Function of the Narrator in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Neophilologus* 68 (1984): 134–41; Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy* (Cambridge, Eng., 1997); Thomas L. Martin, "Time and Eternity in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Renascence* 51 (1999): 167–79; and Monica McAlpine, *The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1978), 148–217.

32. John W. Conlee, "The Meaning of Troilus' Ascension to the Eighth Sphere," *Chaucer Review* 7 (1972): 27–36, at 27.

33. Chauncey Wood, *The Elements of Chaucer's Troilus* (Durham, N.C., 1984), 166.

34. For medieval constructions of Job as a gamester, see Alberto Ferreiro, "Job in the Sermons of Caesarius of Arles," *Recherches de théologie ancienne et médiévale* 54 (1987): 13–26.

35. Rosemarie P. McGerr, *Chaucer's Open Books: Resistance to Closure in Medieval Discourse* (Gainesville, Fla., 1998), 117–18.

36. Similarly, Claudia Rattazzi Papka argues that *Tr* celebrates the rejection of simple meaning in this clash between the sacred and the profane, declaring "Chaucer, by explicitly introducing a 'sacred' ending to a 'profane' text, seems to be providing a neat condemnation of 'feyned love' but is in fact introducing an epistemological gap into the poem" ("Transgression, the End of Troilus, and the Ending of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer Review* 32 [1998]: 267–81, at 279).