

Understanding the Apotheosis: Troilus's Love Transfigured

...

By Tom Walker

Robertson sees Troilus and Criseyde as a classic tragedy. At the beginning of the poem, Troilus is aware of how foolish lovers are, but, over the course of the plot, Troilus falls into foolish love and is undone by it. Troilus first sees Criseyde at a festival for Pallas (the goddess of wisdom): to whom Troilus pays no attention. As Robertson sees it, by disregarding his duty to the gods, Troilus is both prideful (because he puts his interests above the gods) and slothful (because he does not do his duty).

And eek the pure wise of hir mevinge /
Shewed wel that men mighte in hire gesse /
Honour, estat, and wommanly noblesse
(I.285-287)

And also the very ways of her moving /
Showed well that men might in her guess
[or infer] / Honor, dignity [or estate],
and womanly nobility. (I.285-287)

Progress toward the love of one's lady involves a gradual clearing away of artifices which seem like love and are even called love... At length, Love (the god Amor) comes and tells Dante that the time for simulacra has passed and he moves into the second stage, the adoration of the god himself. (Helterman, "The Masks of Love in Troilus and Criseyde")

But why he nolde don so fel a deede / That
shal I san, and why him liste it spare: / He
hadde in herte always a manere drede Lest
that Criseyde, in rumour of this fare, /
Sholde han been slain—lo, this was al his
care, / And elles certayn, as I saide yore, /
He hadde it don, withouten wordes more.
(V.50-56)

But why he didn't do so violent a deed /
That I shall say, and why he refrained
from it / In his heart he had a manner of
dread / For fear that Criseyde, in the
tumult of his action, / Should have been
slain—for this was all of his care, /
Otherwise it was certain, as I said before,
/ He would have done it without words
more. (V.50-56)

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

Thus would Love—praised be his grace—
/ That Pride and Anger, Envy and Avarice
/ He [Grace] began to chase away, and
also every other vice.
(III.1804-1806)

Enjoyment, after all, consists in clinging to something lovingly for its own sake, while use consists in referring what has come your way to what your love aims at obtaining.
(Augustine, *De doctrina Christiana*)

[Cope] works out a very pleasant literary reason for the choice of this sphere based on Dante's Paradiso where 'those spirits dwell whose lives have been given wholly to divine devotion', a most admirable last resting-place for Troilus. (Bloomfield, "The Eighth Sphere: A Note on Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde'")

And loveth him, the which that right for
love / Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
/ First starf, and roos, and sit in hevne
above; / For he nil falsen no wight, dar I
saye, / That wol his herte al holly on him
laye / And sin he best to love is and most
meeke, / What needeth feined loves for to
seeke? (V.1842-1848)

And love him, who for that right of love /
Upon the cross, to redeem our souls, /
First died, and rose, and sits in heaven
above; / For he will not wrong any
person, dare I say, / That will his heart
wholly lay on him: / And since he is the
best to love and most gentle, / What need
is there to seek feigned love?
(V.1842-1848)

And in himself he lough right at the wo /
Of hem that wepten for his deth so fast,
(V.1821-1822)

And to himself he laughed right at the
sorrow / Of those that wept for his death
so earnestly, (V.1821-1822)