Troilus and Criseyde
Geoffrey Chaucer
Book IV-V

Emily, Hoai, Rachel
Happy Valentine's Day
LOVE
Godly LOVE VS Earthly LOVE

The poem does not reject human values and earthly love so much as celebrates the all-encompassing, selfless love of God. Human love only achieves its full values only when combined with divine love.

“the poet conveys his tragic awareness of the gulf that separates human love from the divine, and also his belief in the true bond of love that unites them. It is not simply that human loves are false... It is that the limited and imperfect love of man receives its true value only when united to its divine source.”

A. Authorship and Background of the Book

- Troilus and Criseyde has also been termed a ‘romance’.

“There are no quests, magic, or enchantments, yet the all-possessing nature of Troilus’ experience in love makes that experience for him a kind of inward equivalent of adventure...” (Introduction, pp. xviii)

- The story is centred on the protagonist, Troilus’ feelings in his love affair with Criseyde.

- Therefore, emotions such as those of love, grief, loss and betrayal feature prominently in the story and also characterise Troilus as an effeminate figure.
B. Summary

Hey love sucks!

u sak too
NOW KISS
Greeks

Trojans

v hav been captured

Oh no I hav been captured
Greeks

gimme 1 buxom lady
or 1 mil $$ for him

damnit

Trojans

ok here
1 mil $$
Pls she is my dotter
my sunshine my

Traitor

OK FINE, you poor man,
but pls Stop
Quick math

| \times | = | \times |
Wait 10 days beb

Tats lik 4eva
m'lad'y

dis one not bad

who tales ar
C. Predestination vs Free Will

FREEWILL OR PRE-DESTINATION

WHICH OF MY ACTIONS ARE BY MY FREE WILL AND WHICH ARE PRE DESTINED?

LIFT YOUR RIGHT LEG
THAT'S FREEWILL

OK

LIFT YOUR LEFT LEG
THAT'S PRE-DESTINATION

I CAN'T
Troilus invokes the idea of Predestination to **justify his inaction**.

“He was so fallen into despair that day, that he utterly prepared himself to die.” (IV. 954, pp. 107)

However, Morgan argues that the **tragedy** in Troilus and Criseyde is Troilus’ **blind** pursuit of earthly love and not his lack of choice.

“It is **not inevitable in the sense that Troilus lacks freedom, for clearly he does exercise choice**. What is inevitable is the sorrow and disillusionment that results from a **total commitment to the goods of a transient world**.” (Gerald Morgan, “The Ending of “Troilus and Criseyde””, The Modern Language Review, Vol. 77, No. 2, pp. 265)
Morgan’s argues for the **coexistence of Divine Providence and Human Free Will**.

“God's foreknowledge implies a denial of man's free will...the dilemma results from the attempt to bind God to the temporal limitations of man. But whereas man exists within time, God is beyond time. Strictly speaking, therefore, God does not foresee, he simply sees. The eternal vision of God interferes with human free will no more than a human spectator interferes with the free will of contestants in public games. **The coexistence of divine providence and human free will (is) in the eternal present of the divine vision**”

D. Christian God vs Pagan God

- Morgan argues that Chaucer privileges the Christian God over the pagan gods (e.g. Fortune), and urges the reader to **turn from the falseness and transience of the world to the abiding love of God**.

> “the reality of Providence is set over against the falseness of the pagan gods (and so also of Fortune). The works of nature are indeed defective; Criseyde is but a creature of flesh and blood, and so cannot sustain the faith that Troilus places in her. But man is not bound to a material destiny. He has the capacity to see beyond these earthly frailties, and in his wisdom can participate in the abiding love of God.”

Fortune (Pagan) as an earthly construct that is at the mercy of the Christian God.

“But nevertheless, Fortune did not wish that either should die at the other’s hand.” (v. 1758-9, pp. 151)

“But alas - except that it was God’s will - fierce Achilles slew him pitilessly!” (v. 1806, pp. 152)

Both Man and Fortune are subject to the will of Providence.

The reader should turn to the abiding love of God.

“come back home from worldly vanity, and turn your heart’s face up to that God who made you after his own image” (v. 1845, pp. 153)
“he simply laughed outright at the grief of those who wept so much for his death, and condemned all our actions that are so much in pursuit of blind pleasure, which cannot endure, when we should turn our whole heart towards heaven.” (V. 1823-1825, pp.153)

“Such an end had his desire, such an end his nobility! Such an end had the fickleness of this deceptive world!” (V. 1830-1831, pp.153)
• **Falseness of Man**

“But Chaucer sees in the falseness of Criseyde a **deeper falseness in the experience of the world**, and therefore sets beside the falseness of woman the falseness of man:”


“Nor am I saying this solely for the sake of women who are **betrayed by treacherous folk** - God give them sorrow, amen! - who through their great cunning and subtlety betray you.” (V. 1779, pp. 152)

• **Man is by nature imperfect** and hence the **need to turn to God for greater spiritual fulfilment**

“And it is the same illumination that Troilus receives when he has been **blessedly released from the bitterness of the pursuit of a good that is by its nature imperfect, and cannot satisfy the deepest longings of his own being.”

F. Motif of Sight/Blindness

“The poetic emphasis in the ascent of Troilus to the eighth sphere is not so much one of rejection of this world (although there is a sobering recognition of the smallness and meanness of earthly pursuits), but rather one of joyful illumination in the comprehension of a higher spiritual reality [...] a final transition from moral blindness to spiritual enlightenment.”

human desires = “pursuit of blind pleasure”
-> death as a spiritual awakening, opening Troilus’s eyes to the more real and noble kind of love
-> irony because he views death as a consequence of failure to obtain (Criseyde's) love

“he saw with unimpeded vision the wandering stars... directed his gaze down at the place where he had been slain” (p.152)
-> transparency, purity of god's love vs deceptiveness and betrayal

However, NOT a rejection of human desires.
G. Conclusion

“The imperfect and disordered loves of Troilus and Criseyde do not lack nobility, but they are weighed in a mighty balance and are found wanting. It is God and not man who is the measure of the love that fills the created universe:”


“Chaucer wishes to emphasize in the death of Troilus not the misery of his love for Criseyde but the true happiness of his release from the wretchedness of this mortal life.”


- Love as a substitute for longing for spiritual awakening/transcendence
- Troilus’ love for Criseyde as placing faith in material possession which will not get him anywhere
- Therefore, Troilus might as well turn to God instead
THANKS!
GOD
tru luv
false luv