> As well as being much more frequent than in *Filostrato*, the added mythological additions in *Troilus and Cryseide* are often quite sophisticated.[1]

The epigraph above is a note to Chaucer' s *Troilus,* book IV, line 791[2] in David Benson's recent study on the work. The explanatory note gives some significant examples of Chaucer's learned additions to his main source besides the aforesaid line, where the allusion is to the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, but Benson does not specify here what the sophistication of these additions actually consists in. Hence the sophistication is perhaps to be understood chiefly as formal or rhetorical, rather than at the semantic narrative level. The fact that Chaucer's allusion to Orpheus and Eurydice seems practically ornamental must explain why it has deserved very scarce critical attention. The present analysis, however, seeks to elicit the potential significance of *Tr* IV 791 in connection with Boethius's version of the Orpheus legend.

It has been forcefully argued that Chaucer had read the Auchinleck manuscript, and that it influenced his conception of

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1.- David C. Benson, *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 82, note 3.

2.- All our references to lines in Chaucer's works are from Larry D. Benson (general editor), *The Riverside Chaucer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

romance in some of the *Canterbury Tales.* Thus the lay of *Sir Orfeo* was known to him, and had a particular effect in transforming Boccaccio's *Filoloco* into the *Franklin' s Tale.*[1] However, the fantastic story of marital fidelity with a happy ending that *Sir Orfeo* tells cannot be said to have any bearing on the tragic story of Troilus. Conversely, it is commonly acknowledged that Chaucer used Boethius, whose *Consolation of Philosophy* he had recently translated, as his main intellectual instrument to give philosophical depth to a love story that in Boccaccio' s *Filostrato*, from which he mainly adapted it, was treated in purely lyrical terms. Since the story of how Orpheus lost his beloved Eurydice is a prominent episode in the *Consolation* (and, of course, in Chaucer's *Boece),* and, more importantly, was very popular in his version throughout the Middle Ages,[2] it is not surprising that Chaucer should somehow have had it in mind when he wrote his *Troilus*, and particularly when he made Criseyde remind us of it.

The intertextuality of the legend is nowhere explicit in *Troilus,* except for Cryseyde's casual allusion. Nonetheless, the legend occupies a very conspicuous place in the *Consolation*. Friedman's summary of the philosophical context in which it appears in Boethius' work is appropriate to our present purpose: "Boethius has just been discussing the importance of unity (…). The highest happiness (…) is to be attained only when the soul has purified itself enough to rise and reunite itself with God."[3] The same critic explains the significance of the Orpheus episode in such a context: "Boethius sees in the story of Or-

1.- See Laura H. Loomis, "Chaucer and the Breton Lays of the Auchinleck Manuscript", *Studies in Philology*, vol. XXXVIII (1941), pp.14-33

2.- See John B. Friedman, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970), pp. 84-145, where the author argues the pervasive influence of Boethius in the medieval interpretation of the Orpheus legend.

3.- Friedman, op. cit., p. 93.

pheus and Eurydice a human soul, freed from the bonds of earth and *temporalia* by a special dispensation and at last moving towards union with the One, suddenly yielding to the power of an earthly concern, in this case love, and so failing of its goal."[1] Having descended to the underworld to rescue his dead wife, Orpheus had, as is said in Chaucer's *Boece,* "moevid to misericordes" the rulers of hell with his songs of complaint, who therefore agreed to allow him to ascend back to the world of the living with Eurydice after him, on condition that he did not turn his eyes to look at her: "But what is he that may yeven a lawe to loverys?" *(Boece,* metrum 12, lines 52-3) - Orpheus looks back, and loses her for ever.

The point Boethius wants to make has little to do with the law of Venus, since love is just an example of earthly concerns. Actually, the "fable apertenith" to anyone "whoso sette his thoughtes in earthly thinges, al that evere / he hath drawen of the noble good celestial he lesith it, whanne / he looketh the helles, that is to seyn, into lowe thinges of the erthe" *(Boece,* m.12, 65-9). The epilogue of *Troilus* leaves many a reader with the same uneasy impression that Troilus did wrong to have been so involved in earthly matters, subjecting himself to the law of love and misplacing his natural (natural in Boethius' Christian Platonism) yearning for union with the One.[2] A

1.- Ibid., p. 95.

2.- In this respect, Lee Patterson says of *Troilus* that "the love story the poem tells is about how two people strive, unsuccessfully, to become one." Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 137. On the other hand, the same critic later comments on "the ultimate impotence, even irrelevance, of Boethianism" in Chaucer's love story: ibid., p. 153. See note 146 on the same page for a selection of articles and studies containing various Boethian readings of the poem. Over the past few years, we notice a tendency in criticism to diminish the role of Boethianism in *Troilus*, but in general these are only qualifications of an excessive enthusiasm in stressing the influence of the *Consolation* on Chaucer, not absolute disqualifications of an obvious influence. The most classic study on the subject is probably B. L. Jefferson's *Chaucer and the "Consolation of Philosophy"* (Princeton, 1917).

consideration of Chaucer's view of the Orpheus legend may help to ascertain to what degree such an impression may be well-founded.

An examination of Chaucer's allusions to Orpheus and Eurydice throughout his works reveals, to start with, that Eurydice appears only twice, that is, only in *Boece* (m.12) and in *Troilus* (IV, 791), whereas Orpheus alone is mentioned in three other works. Furthermore, when he appears in *Boece* and *Troilus*, it is with regard to his love for Eurydice, while elsewhere he is just alluded as a musician of extraordinary skills, not necessarily a lover. In the *Book of the Duchess* the mourning knight says that his sorrow could not be soothed even by "al the remedyes of Ovyde / Ne Orpheus, god of melodye …" *(BD,* 568-9); in the *House of Fame* Orpehus has his place at a marvellous orchestra of renowned musicians with Arion and Chiron the Centaur *(HF,* 1203), and in "The Merchant's Tale" *(Canterbury Tales,* fragment IV, 1716), which may owe its presentation of the fairy kingdom to *Sir Orfeo,* it is simply said that even his melodies and those of Amphion of Thebes (another famous harper) could not match the music that old Januarie orders to play for his wedding. In these three cases (most notably in the first and third one) it can be readily admitted that Orpheus has no narrative role, being recalled merely to embellish a scene or strengthen a comparison rhetorically with classical allusion; in *Boece,* however, he is clearly the hero of a significant episode, and in *Troilus,* as we shall argue, his role can be best understood as midway between both extremes: the classical allusion to Orpheus achieves narrative significance through the actual analogies between Orpheus' and Troilus' stories, and especially through those between Criseyde and Erudyce in relation to their respective lovers, who left them behind on their ascent to a higher world.

Once the Orpheus legend has been briefly discussed in relation to Boethius' book and Chaucer's works, our next task is to focus on the moment it appears in *Troilus,* in more detail. Book III ends with

"Troilus in lust and in quiete / (…) with Criseyde, his owen herte swete" *(Tr* III, 1919-20), a happy end which contrasts sharply with the ominous overtones at the opening of the next book, and its statement that "al to litel (…) / Lasteth swich joie" *(Tr* IV, 1-2) under Fortune's rule. The invocation to Venus in the proem of the previous book has given way to one to the "Herynes, Nyghtes doughtren three" *(Tr* IV, 22), that is, the Three Furies, [1] and to "cruel Mars." In order to know more about why the Furies should be invoked here, we need to turn again to some other occurrences of their allusion in Chaucer's works. In *Troilus* they are invoked, together with "dispitouse Mars," on one occasion before book IV, as a part of Pandarus' rhetoric to persuade Criseyde that he meant no "harm or vilenye" *(Tr* II, 435-8) in his dealings as a go-between, having no particular narrative importance beyond the learned allusion. On the other hand, the presence of "the Furies thre with al here mortal brond" courts disaster at the wedding of Tereus and Progne in "The Legend of Philomela" *(Legend of Good Women,* 2252). No wonder, then, that poets from antiquity often tried to gain their benignity: among the Greeks they were also known as the "Eumenides" ("the benevolent"), a flattering name designed to dodge their dreadful wrath.[2] In "The Complaint unto Pity," of Chaucer's early poems, "Herenus quene" *(Pity*, 92), whose name is usually taken to be an error or corruption for "the Erynyes," is identified with Pity, probably because pity (or mercy) can alone control their characteristic vindictiveness.[3] Indeed, in the *Consolation*

1.- The Greek Herynes became identified with the Furies in Roman mythology, and often also with the Fates. Chaucer does not seem to draw any well-defined distinction between these three triads, except that the Furies are more characterized by their wrath than the Fates, though all of them are agents of destiny.

2.- See the entry for "Erinias" in Pierre Grimal, *Diccionario de Mitología Griega y Romana*, trans. into Spanish by P. Pericay (Barcelona: Paidós, 1981), p. 169.

3.- "The vindictiveness of vengeance," as it is called in *The Riverside Chaucer*, op. cit., p. 1078, note 92).

they are able to take pity on Orpheus when he sings for Erudyce' s release: "the thre goddesses, furiis and vengeresses of felonyes, that / tormenten and agasten the soules by anoy, woxen sorweful and / sory, and wepyn teeris for pite" *(Boece,* m.12, 33-7). The fact that they might also have pity on Troilus and Criseyde is a very likely reason why the narrator of *Troilus* invokes them in the proem of book IV, although he knows that he does it in vain, for the matter he has to present is "the losse of lyf and love yfeere of Troilus" *(Tr* IV, 27-8). When, in the first lines of Book V, they are mentioned for the last time, it is as the Parcas (i.e., the Fates), and it has become most evident they will show no mercy: "Aprochen gan the fatal destyne / That Joves hath in disposicioun, / And to yow, angry Parcas, sustren thre, / Committeth to don execucioun" *(Tr* V, l-4). They are now diligent subordinates of Jove, ready to execute his orders. Diomede is already waiting at the gates of Troy to carry Criseyde away from Troilus. The Fates can resist their duty no more than they could, in *Boece,* prevent Erudyce's return to hell, after Orpheus made the fatal mistake of looking back at her.

In the final book of Troilus we are, therefore, led into a tragic context which is not altogether dissimilar from that of Orpheus in *Boece,* provided that we do not naively put all the blame on Criseyde's infidelity. A shallow recollection of the dramatic events of book IV leading to Criseyde's allusion to Orpheus, though partial and inadequate as most summaries of Chaucer's masterpiece, may suffice for our purposes. Immediately after the proem, we are faced with the historical scene in which Antenor is captured by the Greeks. This will fatally affect the lovers' happiness when Calkas proposes the exchange of his daughter, Criseyde, for the Trojan lord just captured. Troilus is present when the Trojan parliament accepts Calkas' proposal, but he remains silent, mainly because he is bound by the repeated vows of secrecy that he has made to Criseyde and to

Pandarus; to protest the exchange would have meant to make public his liaison with Criseyde, and so to endanger her honour. Troilus' complex bonds (whether they are considered personal, social or political)[1] render him helpless, in a situation that bears some casual resemblance to that of the imprisoned Boethius in the *Consolation*. In the next scene Troilus appears confined to his private room by his own sorrow, and there, like Boethius in prison, he has much to complain against Fortune, though philosophy will not help Chaucer's hero at all.

Pandarus' attempts to comfort him are also in vain. Incidentally, Troilus tells his friend that he would sooner die and go "down with Proserpyne" to "eternally compleyne / My wo, and how that twynned be we tweyne" *(Tr* IV, 473-6) than forget Criseyde.[2] Being unable to take any course of action for himself, Troilus leaves the decisions to Criseyde. Before they meet, as usual through the agency of Pandarus, we are introduced to a monologue by Criseyde in which she appears as genuinely disconsolate as her lover. When the narrator concludes this monologue saying that trying to describe her heaviness would only make it seem less than it really was *(Tr* IV, 799-805), there is no reason why we should understand this ironically. It is in this scene that she expresses her wish to reunite her soul with that of Troilus in the Elysium, "as Orpheus and Eurydice" reunited theirs:

> Myn herte and ek the woful goost therinne

1.- On the complexity and ambivalence of Troilus' bonds, see especially Stephen Barney, "Troilus Bound," *Speculum*, 47 (1972), pp. 445-58.

2.- Proserpina is known as the queen of hell. Troilus' intention to descend to hell, which he never fulfills, may be compared to Orpheus' actual descent to hell to rescue Eurydice with his songs of complaint. It should be noted that, although the queen of hell is not mentioned in the Orpheus episode of the *Consolation,* nor in *Boece,* she plays a central role in Henryson's much fuller version of the legend in his poem "Orpheus and Eurydice": Proserpyne is the one who establishes the condition tnat makes Orpheus lose Eurydice definitively.

Byquethe I with youre spirit to compleyne
Eternaly, for they shal nevere twyne;
For though in erthe ytwynned be we tweyne,
Yet in the feld of pite, out of peyne,
That highte Elisos, shal we ben yfeere,
As Orpheus and Erudice, his feere.
(Tr IV, 785-91)

For an instant the reader is left wondering why Criseyde pronounces such hope, since, even though Orpheus and Eurydice did meet in the other world, it was only to be painfully parted again soon, and eternally. If, moreover, we bear Boethius' interpretation of the legend in mind, rather than the versions of Virgil and Ovid, it is as if she were already condemning herself as the earthly possession that Troilus has to leave behind on his final ascent through the spheres. The question will not be easily answered, for it is as problematic as the whole relation of *Troilus* to Boethius' philosophy.

The intricate connection between Boethius and the author of the *Troilus* is, in our view, most forcefully and simply defined by David Benson, a devoted practitioner of the reception theory in his full study of the work: "Chaucer is a poet, not a philosopher, and he uses pieces of the *Consolation* in unexpected ways to ask questions rather than to provide answers.[1] The futility of philosophy seems particularly obvious when we analyse Troilus' lengthy Boethian meditation at the temple *(Tr* IV, 956-1078) soon after the allusion to Orpheus: his mind practically never reaches far beyond the tautology from which he begins his thoughts: "al that comth, comth by necessitee" *(Tr* IV, 958). However, discussions of Boethian influence on the *Troilus* usually base their authority upon the claim that they are able to explain why

[1].- David C. Benson, op. cit., p. 149.

Chaucer added to the story the strange coda of Troilus' palinode. Thus Theodore Stroud: "Perhaps these limited, sometimes even fanciful, correspondences between [the *Consolation* and *Troilus*] might be dismissed, if they were not germane to an illuminating view of the epilogue of *Troilus."*[1] Not surprisingly, Stroud posits a unified meaning for the poem, in agreement with earlier views, and particularly that of Willard Farnham:[2] "In my opinion the solution hinges on Farham's view of [Criseyde] as the worldly possession of which Troilus must be deprived."[3] Under this perspective, Criseyde's function is exactly that of Erudyce in *Boece*. As a matter of fact, such interpretation might be highly plausible in the light of the moral exegesis of the Orpheus legend, far more predominant in the Middle Ages (although this can be assumed through *surviving* texts only, that is, in the more clerical, learned context) than the romantic alternative of *Sir Orfeo,* where Heurodis is happily saved by her loving husband, king Orfeo. Both in the case of Eurydice and in that of Criseyde, Robert Henryson had the last medieval word, and his word is a condemnation of his heroines in both "Orpheus and Eurydice" and "The Testament of Cresseid."[4]

1.- Theodore A. Stroud, "Boethius' influence on Chaucer's *Troilus*," reprinted from *Modern Philology*, XLIX (1951-2), pp. 1-9 in *Chaucer Criticism, Vol. II*, ed. by R. J. Schoeck & J. Taylor (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), p. 125.

2.- Willard Farnham, *The Medieval Heritage of Elizabethan Tragedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936).

3.- Stroud, op. cit., p. 130

4.- Friedman, op. cit., pp. 194-208, makes an interesting point about Henryson's "Orpheus and Eurydice" as the culmination of all the medieval views of the Orpheus legend. However, although Henryson's poem incorporates many romantic elements in using, as Friedman puts it, "the romance Orpheus as a vehicle for moral lessons" (ibid., p. 196), it is evident that the Scots poet's close reading of Nicholas Trivet's commentary on the *Consolation*, the complete loss of Eurydice, and the separate "moralitas fabule sequitur" he adds at the end, make Boethian morality the triumphant interpreter of the legend.

There is no end of modern studies finding the Boethian moralitas as the conclusion to *Troilus.* In the one full study we have of the sources and reasons for Troilus' apotheosis, John Steadman hesitates but little before concluding that "the irony of the *Troilus* enables the poet to 'delight' his readers through the details of a secular love story, in full awareness that such delight is transitory and that the story itself belongs in the catalogues of 'wordly vanitees'."[1] In general this could be contested by saying that it makes Chaucer sound like a monk (he was, of course, a Christian, but not one absolutely devoted to instructing doctrine through his writings), and, in particular, that being so concentrated on the epilogue alone, the critic is too intent on providing the whole of *Troilus* with a single meaning. Steadman himself is aware that "a study devoted to the epilogue may seem to overstress the ethical element of the narrative as a whole," and that perhaps in Chaucer's "intention *delectare* was a more immediate and a more generally attractive end than *prodesse,"*[2] even though Steadman's book gives precisely the opposite impression.

Steadman's own commentary on Criseyde's allusion to the myth of Orpheus implies that one-sided interpretations of the *Troilus* are by no means easy. On the one hand he says that "Criseyde's allusion to the myth of Orpheus, and the fact that her reference to Elysium apparently replaces an earlier allusion to Pluto's kingdom, suggest that she may possibly have in mind a subterranean region." On the other hand, he supplies a footnote for this statement, in which he says that "since Pluto's kingdom was sometimes regarded as extending not only over the underworld but also over the *manes* in the atmosphere, Criseyde's allusion does not *necessarily* point to a subterranean location," while Troilus "apparently ascends to the Elysium *secundum theologos* -the

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1.- John M. Steadman, *Disembodied Laughter: Troilus and the Apotheosis Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 164.

2.- Ibid., p. 163.

Elysium *circa lunarem circulum."*[1] In sum, the self-same Elysium seems to be like Heaven for Troilus, and more like Hell for Criseyde (since Pluto is most commonly associated to the underworld, and given that in the Gg manuscript "that highte Elisos" reads "there Pluto reignith"), or, possibly, a middle region "of pity, out of pain," that is, a Purgatory.[2] What is most certain is that, as Steadman concludes, "Criseyde's hope to 'be yfeere' with her paramour in the Elysian fields (…) remains unfulfilled. Troilus himself does indeed mount to this region, but there is little likelihood that Criseyde will ever join him there."[3] She will have to stay alone in the lower Elysium, the middle earth, abandoned like Erudyce in Pluto's reign, from which Troilus' soul will never rescue her. Henryson's "Testament" confirms that she will be expiating her guilt in a kind of earthly purgatory, once Troilus has proudly ascended (actually, in the "Testament" he only revives to pass by and toss her a coin without recognising her in her leprosy) to the higher Elysium, which is also the site of his eternal good fame, as opposed to her perennial dishonour.

Whatever the overall, long term effect of the whole *Troilus* may have been, Chaucer himself did not condemn Criseyde so utterly as Troilus does in the epilogue, and he even made his narrator sympathise with her. It is nearly as likely that the overall effect, perhaps Chaucer's intention, was to show a world in which women, like Criseyde and Erudyce, *would* be condemned. Suffice it to say that the

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1.- Ibid., p. 41 and note 48.

2.- The chapter that Steadman ends with his commentary on Criseyde's allusion to Orpheus actually aims at analysing the connections between Elysium and Purgatory: see ibid., pp. 21-41. Most scholars, however, find good reasons to agree that the Elysium is a subterranean region, as it is in Virgil and Ovid. The allusion to the Elysium has demanded more interpretative attention than the one to Orpheus, as witness the packed notes to these lines in B. A. Windeatt (ed.), *Troilus and Criseyde: A New Edition of the 'Book of Troilus'* (London: Longman, 1984), p. 397.

3.- Steadman, op. cit., p. 41.

"disembodied laughter" of Troilus in the epilogue (when Troilus's soul laughed at those who were mourning him and at the vanities of this life when compared to Eternal Life), which gives Steadman's study its title, appears with a very ambiguous significance when interpreted in terms of the symmetrical patterns the author built within his story, of its doubleness and "Theban circularity,"[1] so that we are led to ask, with David Benson, "is there not an echo here of the prince's callow laughter towards lovers in book I?."[2] Troilus does not seem to learn anything through his experience in the whole book, so it is doubtful whether Chaucer's sole intention was to make an exemplum of him. In a way he did, at least for Christian and Boethian readers. But the really poignant experience is that of Criseyde and of Erudyce, who were left below on the earthly purgatory.

Since in Chaucer's works Orpheus usually has no dramatic function beyond being a famous classical musician, or except when he appears as the lover of Eurydice struggling against the Furies, it follows that Eurydice, not Orpheus, contains the greatest dramatic potential. It is Troilus and Orpheus who have the renown, but in the *House of Fame* Chaucer shows that Fame is a whimsical goddess. By explicitly sympathising with Erudyce in *Tr* IV, 791, Criseyde is lending her own fully articulated voice and character to an otherwise silent female mythological figure who, like herself, had to suffer the fate of being an object of barter (not between Trojans and Greeks, but between her husband and the rulers of hell), which the hero will "do well" to renounce at the end as "blynde lust" *(Tr* V, 1824).

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1. - On this subject, see for example Patterson, op. cit., chapter 2. V, pp. 126-36:"The 'Lavor Doppio' of *Troilus and Criseyde.*"

2.- David C. Benson, op. cit., p. 198.

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