

MEDIAEVAL MEDICINE AND ARCITE'S LOVE SICKNESS

M. Ciavolella

In *The Allegory of Love* C.S. Lewis, commenting upon the tendency of critics to read their own ideas into the works of Chaucer, wrote:

The stupidest contemporary, we may depend upon it, knew certain things about Chaucer's poetry which modern scholarship will never know; and doubtless the best of us misunderstand Chaucer in many places where the veriest fool among his audience could not have misunderstood.¹

Such a statement holds especially true when the interpretation of a passage or a concept rests upon the correct interpretation of one word misunderstood or forgotten, as is in the case of the word "Hereos" in Chaucer's description of Arcite's love for Emilye in *The Knight's Tale*:

Whan that Arcite to Thebes comen was,
Ful ofte a day he swelte and seyde "Allas!"
For seen his lady shal he nevere mo.
And shortly to concluden al his wo,
So muche sorwe hadde nevere creature
That is, or shal, whil that the world may dure.
His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft,
That lene he wex and drye as is a shaft;

His eyen holwe, and grisly to biholde,
 His hewe falow and pale as asshen colde,
 And solitarie he was and evere allone,
 And waillynge al the nyght, makyng his mone;
 And if he herde song or instrument,
 Thanne wolde he wepe, he myghte nat be stent.
 So feble eek were his spiritz, and so lowe,
 And chaunged so, that no man koude knowe
 His speche nor his voys, though men it herde.
 And in his geere for al the world he ferde,
 Nat oonly lik the loveris maladye
 Of Hereos, but rather lyk manye,
 Engendred of humour malencolik,
 Biforen, in his celle fantastik.
 And shortly, turned was al up so down
 Bothe habit and eek disposicioun
 Of hym, this woful love-re daun Arcite.²

The word "Hereos" is the key to the interpretation of the whole passage and to the concept underlying the nature of Arcite's love. Its meaning has been misunderstood from the very first comment made upon it until 1914, when appeared an article on the subject by J.L. Lowes, "The Loveres Malady of Hereos."³ Studying the etymology of "Hereos," Lowes demonstrated that it was not to be considered, as it had until then, a misreading of "Eros" or "heroes," that the description of Arcite's love symptoms is parallel, almost work for word, with descriptions found in the chapters on love in all mediaeval medical treatises, and that "Hereos" is the scientific name given to the sickness of love. Even so, Lowes seemed content to state that in all probability "Chaucer found many of the *signa* already in the *Teseida*, and proceeded to rearrange and combine them in the light of his knowledge of the malady."⁴ In fact, had he compared more closely Chaucer's description with the corresponding passage in Boccaccio's *Teseida*, he might have come to the conclusion that the two authors rely on independent sources and that Chaucer's description of Arcite's symptoms is much more "scientific" than

Boccaccio's. The purpose of this study is to reconsider the concept of "Hereos" according to mediaeval medical texts, and to re-read Chaucer's and Boccaccio's descriptions in the light of this doctrine.

The passage corresponding to that of *The Knight's Tale* occurs in the fourth book of the *Teseida* where Arcita, believing he will never be able to see Emilia again, is overwhelmed by grief:

E ben che di più cose e' fosse afflitto
 e che di viver gli giovasse poco,
 sopra ogn'altra cosa era trafitto
 d'amor nel core, e non trovava loco;
 e giorno e notte senza alcun respitto
 sospir gittava caldi come foco,
 e ben nel viso il suo dolor pareasi.

Egli era tutto quanto divenuto
 sì magro, che assai agevolmente
 ciascun suo osso si saria veduto;
 né credo ch'Erisitone altramente
 fosse nel viso che esso paruto
 nel tempo della sua fame dolente;
 e non pur solamente palido era,
 ma la sua pelle pareva quasi nera.

E nella testa appena si vedeano
 gli occhi dolenti; e le guance, lanute
 di folto pelo e nuovo, non pareano;
 e le sue ciglia pelose e acute
 a riguardar orribile il faceano;
 le come tutte rigide e irsute;
 e sì era del tutto tramutato,
 che nullo non l'avria raffigurato.

La voce similmente era fuggita
 e ancora la forza corporale;
 per che a tutti una cosa reddita

qua su di sopra dal chiostro infernale
 pareo, più tosto ch'altra stata in vita;
 né la cagion onde vania tal male
 giammai da lui nessun saputa avea,
 ma una per un'altra ne dicea.⁵

At first glance the two descriptions seem to reveal certain obvious similarities. Both poets depict Arcite as being anorexic, unable to drink, suffering from insomnia. He has lost weight and his body is dehydrated and feeble. His eyes are hollow, his complexion is pale, his voice weak. At a second and more careful reading, however, we realize that the similarities stop there. No doubt both poets rely upon the same concept of love, as we shall determine shortly, yet the descriptions are quite dissimilar. Boccaccio's description is more vague, Chaucer's more "scientific." To clarify the similarities and differences in these passages we must go back to mediaeval science and refer to those medical texts known, in all likelihood, to both Boccaccio and Chaucer.

Love, in its essence, is not a sickness. This was well understood throughout classical and mediaeval times. Love, however, being a *passio*, can lead man to a state of sickness. Love for God or for one's family, for example, can never be deleterious to the human organism. It can be harmful, however, if its causes are "dispositiones corporis inclinantes ad talem concupiscentiam propter aliquam utilitatem sive necessitatem, sicut est inter virum et mulierem complexio venerea vel humiditas titillans in organis generationis" ⁶ Love is a desire that arises when there is an excess of humours (especially blood) or of pneuma, when, that is to say, the body is in a hot and humid condition. Blood, in fact, produces semen, and an excessive quantity of blood will produce excess semen, a *complexio venerea* responsible for the attraction and the union of the sexes.

Since an excess of blood arouses sexual desire, those who possess a sanguine complexion are more prone to sexual stimuli. And since such a complexion can be acquired through a diet of rich, fat food, or through a sedentary life, those more liable to the passion of love are the wealthy and the nobles. The physician Bernardus Gordonius explains that

"Nobiles propter affluentiam deliciarum istam passionem consueverunt incurrere; quoniam sicut dicit Viaticum:⁷ 'sicut felicitas est ultimum dilectionis, ita hereos ultimum dilectionis'"⁸

These are the physiological causes of desire, yet the main cause is extrinsic, namely, the form of a person of the opposite sex seized by the external senses and judged especially pleasing: "Passio que est amor causatur ex apprehensione alicuius forme visibilis, que quidem comprehenditur . . . sub ratione complacentie . . . , " writes the Florentine physician Dino del Garbo, adding, "nam amor est passio quedam appetitus, qui appetitus consequitur formam rei apprehense per sensum primo exteriorem et deinde per virtutes sensitivas interiores . . . unde in amore concurrat duplex passio sensitiva, scilicet cognoscitiva et appetitiva, quia omnis appetitus qui est in nobis insequitur cognitionem."⁹ Arnaldus Villanovanus, the most famous physician of the School of Montpellier, writes in his treatise on love sickness that the love called "hereos" is "vehemens et assidua cogitatio supra rem desideratam cum confidentia obtinendi delectabile apprehensum ex ea."¹⁰ If one can reach the desired object and fulfil the sexual appetites, the organism will return immediately to a state of normality. If, however, the desire is not fulfilled, yet the lover continues to go on in the *confidentia obtinendi delectabile apprehensum*, then his state of sexual tension produces results that can be ruinous. When someone falls in love, Bernardus Gordonius writes,

ita fortiter concipit formam et figuram et modum quoniam credit et opinatur hanc esse meliorem pulchriorem et magis venerabilem, magis speciosam et melius dotatam in naturalibus et moralibus quam aliquam aliarum. Et ideo ardentem concupiscit eam, et sine modo et mensura, opinans si posset finem attingere, quod haec esset sua felicitas et beatitudo. Et intantum corruptum est iudicium rationis, quod continue cogitat de ea, et dimittit omnes suas operationes ita quod, si aliquis loquatur cum eo, vix intelligit aliqua alia.¹¹

The corruption of the judgement of reason is due to the corruption of the faculty of estimation, one of the animal faculties of the soul

(*virtutes animales*). "Causa huius passionis est corruptio aestimativae:" the cause of "hereos" is the derangement of estimation.

The soul, according to the accepted mediaeval view, consists of three sections, each one controlling one of the three neuralgic centres of the human organism: the rational soul, placed in the encephalon; the part that controls passions, located in the heart; the part that regulates the appetites, seated in the liver. Each one of these sections of the soul carries out different operations, that is, it has certain powers or faculties that mark the activities proper to that part. Consequently, three types of faculties correspond to the three sections of the soul: the animal faculty, seated in the encephalon; the vital faculty, located in the heart; the natural faculty consisting of two main parts, the power of nutrition in the liver and that of generation in the testicles.

The animal faculties control our apprehension of external stimuli (cognitive powers) and are in relation to the external senses (one for each sense) and to the internal senses:

Hic autem est ordo in apprehensione humana, sicut declaratum est in scientia naturali: quod primo species rei pervenit ad sensus exteriores, ut ad visum vel auditum vel tactum vel gustum vel olphatum, deinde ab illis pervenit ad virtutes sensitivas interiores, sicut pervenit ad fantasiam primo, deinde pervenit ad cogitativam et ultimo ad memorialem. Ab istis autem virtutibus procedit postea ista species ad virtutem nobiliores, que virtus in homine est altissima inter virtutes adprehensivas, et ista est virtus possibilis Intellectus possibilis est ille qui recipit species rei, et recipiendo speciem rei cognoscit rem¹²

The first power of the internal senses is, in the Greek term, *phantasia*, corresponding to the Latin *imaginatio*, that is, retentive imagination. Located in the dorsal lobe of the anterior ventricle of the encephalon, it preserves the impressions of the external senses. The frontal lobe of the anterior ventricle of the brain is occupied by *sensus communis*,

the recipient of external sensations.¹³ The next power is the *virtus cogitativa*, seated in the middle ventricle of the encephalon, close to the vermiform process, and it combines and separates the impressions in the *phantasia*. Next is the *virtus aestimativa*. This power, located in the dorsal section of the brain, perceives the non-sensitive intentions in the single objects of sensation. The *virtus memorialis*, found in the posterior ventricle of the encephalon, preserves the non-sensitive impressions of the single objects of sensation. To sum up, the vital faculty prepares the human organism to receive the sensory and moving powers, that is to say, the vital activities of man. The operation of this faculty is therefore essential in order that the animal faculties may carry out their functions properly. According to the physicians, this faculty is made both of pulsatory powers seated in the heart which regulate the movement of the spirits (*pneuma*) and the blood by means of the dilation and constriction of the heart, and of a motive power (*electiva*) which drives man to pursue or avoid the object of perception.¹⁴

The natural faculties regulate the physiology of man, determining birth and growth. They are divided into several sub-powers according to their functions. The *virtus nutritiva* replaces that which the organism consumes; it is served by four qualities strictly bound to life: heat, cold, moisture, dryness. The *virtus attractiva* draws the nourishment; the *retentiva* retains it; the *digestiva* moulds the nourishment into a substance proper to the organism; the *expulsiva* frees the body of residues. In addition to the *virtus nutritiva* there exists a *virtus crescitiva* that controls the dimensions of the body and a *virtus generativa* that determines birth by generating semen in males and females and by separating and uniting the powers of the semen in order to form nerves, bones and limbs.¹⁵

According to the medical sources the first stage of love sickness is due to the corruption of the faculty of estimation. This faculty, located at the summit of the middle cavity of the brain, perceives the non-sensitive intentions of the objects of sensation and judges whether those intentions will produce good or harm. If the desire for the object is overwhelming, it can offset the judgment of the estimative faculty, and will cause the subject to believe that it is an attainable good.

It necessarily follows, the medical sources explain,

quod propter huiusmodi rei desiderium vehemens eius formam impressam phantasmate fortiter retinet, et memoriam faciendo de re continue recordatur. Ex his vero duabus nascitur tertium consequenter, oritur etenim ex vehementi desiderio et recordatione assiduae cogitationis impulsus; cogitat namque talis, qualiter et quibus ingeniis valeat rem ad libitum obtinere, ut nocivis delectabilis cultum possit assequi, quod concipit.¹⁶

The object of desire becomes an obsessive idea that polarizes all the cogitative activities of the subject, and the corruption of the faculty involves all the other faculties of the soul:

Cum igitur quasi ad imperium aestimativae caeterae inclinent virtutes, patet quod . . . rationis imperium sensibilium virtutum delusionibus subiungatur erroneis, cum decretum aestimationis sustineat, ut informet.

At length, this obsessive idea can darken and overpower reason itself, and can drive the lover to seek the gratification of his sexual instincts rather than listen to the voice of reason:

Hic autem amor furiosus, cum particulare rei exemplo lucidius pateat inter virum et mulierem, videtur imperio subiugato rationis incendi, propter singularem coytus delectationem.

Actually, it is not correct to say that the estimative faculty is in error, inasmuch as faculties cannot undergo any change. The causes of any error have to be found in the instruments that the faculty uses in carrying out its functions, that is to say, the middle cavity of the brain and the spirits here contained:

Causa vero propter quam aestimativa virtus in opere vel in iudicio suo claudicat sic et errat, necessario sumenda videtur ex parte instrumentorum quibus dicta virtus suas perficit

actiones, mediae scilicet concavitas cerebri et spiritum receptorum in eas; virtutes namque non senescunt, nec in operationibus vitium patiuntur sui rationi, sed organi recepti spiritus vel etiam apparentis.

According to mediaeval psychology the well-being of the entire organism is controlled by the spirits (*pneuma*), and since they are the instruments of the faculties they are of three types: natural, vital, and animal.¹⁷ The natural spirit is generated in the liver from pure blood and is instilled throughout the body from the liver via the veins. Its function is to carry out all the operations of the natural faculty. The vital spirit, instrument of the vital faculty, comprises two elements, inhaled air and the exhalations of the blood. These two elements are blended in the heart as soon as the inhaled air has been transformed and purified in the lungs through a process quite similar to the digestive one; the result is the vital spirit. This is subsequently passed from the left ventricle of the heart to the arteries and to the retiform plexus, at the base of the brain, where it undergoes a further transformation. Finally it enters the lateral ventricles of the brain, where it is blended with the air inhaled through the nostrils and becomes animal spirit. This spirit occupies the major ventricle of the brain, the paracephalon. It performs all the operations of the rational soul and controls, through the nerves, the sensory activities of man and voluntary motion.

To summarize, in every human being there are three vital centres, the liver, the heart, the brain. From these centres an interlacing network of vital currents branches out across the organism by means of veins, arteries, and nerves. The well-being of man depends upon these currents. These, being formed by inhaled air and by the exhalations of the blood, can easily be perturbed by changes in atmospheric conditions and in the internal conditions of the body, for instance, by the growth of malignant humours and by the resulting alteration of the temperature of the innate heat that regulates the functioning of the heart.

When a pleasing form reaches the internal faculties of the soul, the sudden pleasure causes a sudden multiplication of the vital spirits,

which overheat and spread throughout the body:

Cum enim animae gratum seu delectabile praesentatur, ex gaudio delectabilis apprehensi spiritus in corde multiplicati subito calefiunt, et calefacti subito . . . delegantur ad membra corporis universa.¹⁸

Since the vital spirits generate the animal spirits, the overheating of the former will cause an overheating of the latter. The receptacle of the estimative faculty, the dorsal section of the middle ventricle of the brain, being in contact with the burning spirits coming from the heart, becomes inflamed and is unable to withstand the excessive heat.

This abnormal state of the mind does not disappear, however, once the object of perception disappears. The estimative faculty, in fact, controls the *imaginativa*, and the permanency of the *phantasmata* in the *imaginativa* depends upon its degree of dryness. The overheating of the *estimativa* causes an excessive dryness in the *imaginativa* and in its encephalic area:

Cum itaque firma retentio formarum in multis quibuslibet nequaquam effici valeat sine sicco, necessario sequitur cerebellarem partem imaginativae virtutis aliquantulum exsiccari. Hoc vero ex praetactis sic ostenditur: videtur tamen etiam fortis et frequens sit transitus caloris spirituum ad cellam aestimativae, fluentium ad iudicium celebrandum, pars anterior, in qua imaginativa residet, propter humoris consumptionem a calore spirituum relicta, remanet necessario siccus seu minus humida quam fuerit.

Therefore the *phantasma* remains firmly imprinted in the organ of memory, polarizing the attention of thought, and it remains the only datum present to the consciousness of the lover. It is this obsessive presence of the *phantasma* that causes the pathological condition known as *amor hereos*: "ex hoc igitur impetu cogitationis intenso, gravia quamplurimum accidentia patiuntur amantes heroyci." First of all there is insomnia, which wears out the body by producing an excessive evaporation of the

vital humour:

Assidua namque cogitationis tempestas continuas parit vigiliarum instantias, quibus sic exsiccatis vigiliis, induuntur consequenter omnes eorundem effectus; humor etenim nutrimento devotus, insensibili consumptione vaporat, seu evaporatione vigilando consumitur.

The health of the body depends upon the balanced combination of the four humours. The evaporation of the vital humour breaks this tenuous balance, with disastrous consequences:

Quamobrem spiritus et calor acutiores effecti, quod nutritibile humidum profundiori non etiam fortiori actione devastant hoc et calidum atque siccum, humidum videlicet copiosum suscipit nutrimentum. His igitur causis ad exsiccationem instantibus habitudo corporis extenuata relinquitur.

The spirits and the heat that have invaded the body prevent the instruments of the natural faculty, that is, the natural spirit and the liver, from performing properly their vital functions. As a result the lover becomes anorexic (*anorexia nervosa*):

Virtutes namque naturales nequeunt sublatorum fundere, cum earum instrumenta spiritus seu et calor, quibus suas actiones exercent, ad expletionem operum animalium fortiter detrahuntur in tantum, videlicet ut appetitum tales comendi postponunt, et usum negligunt comestionis, et potius macerantur.

The body becomes gradually thinner and drier, the eyes become hollow and tearless. The medical writers explain in great detail all the symptoms of this fearful sickness: why lovers are pale, why they sigh, why the pulse slows down in moments of sorrow and becomes strong and rapid in moments of joy.¹⁹ They explain, also in great detail, the required therapy: light diet, sleep, frequent baths, blood-letting, intercourse, psychological cures such as listening to music, walking in gardens scented by flowers and crossed by slow-running streams,

conversation with friends. If these cures do not succeed, the continuous overheating of the body will produce an excessive quantity of melancholic humours (*melancholia adusta*) that will dry the body completely, turning the skin dark and causing ultimately utter folly and death:

Nisi huic furiae celeriter obvietur, melancholiam parit in posterum, et ut saepe contingit, praeparat in maniam et, quod gravius est, languent inde quamplurimi mortis periculum incurrere.²⁰

Let us return to Boccaccio's description of Arcita's sorrow. The symptoms in *Teseida* correspond to those given by the physicians but go far beyond them. Arcita produces burning sighs. due to the increase of the inner heat:

E giorno e notte senza alcun respitto
sospir gittava caldi come foco

He is lean, being anorexic:

Egli era tutto quanto divenuto
sì magro, che assai agevolmente
ciascun suo osso si saria veduto

His pale skin has become almost black, due to *melancholia adusta*:

E non pur solamente palido era,
ma la sua pelle pareva quasi nera.

His eyes are hollow:

E nella testa appena si vedeano
gli occhi dolenti

In fact, his aspect has so changed that he looks more like a wild beast than a young man:

E la guance lanute

di folto pelo e nuovo, non pareano;
 e le sue ciglia pelose e acute
 a riguardar orribile il faceano;
 le come tutte rigide e irsute;
 e sì era del tutto tramutato,
 che nullo non l'avria raffigurato.

The problem we face is whether these symptoms are taken as a whole from a traditional language of love, that of the troubadours and of the poets of Dante's circle, or whether Boccaccio retrieves them after verifying them against the medical doctrine of *amor hereos*. Our search is a short one. In the *Chiose* to the *Teseida*, Boccaccio comments upon his own verses, describing Arcita's sorrow in these words:

Amore volere mostrare come per le sopra dette cose si generi in noi, quantunque alla presente opera forse si converrebbe di dichiarare, non è mio intendimento di farlo, perciò che troppo sarebbe lunga la storia: chi desidera di vederlo, legga la canzone di Guido Cavalcanti "*Donna mi priega* etc.," e le chiose che sopra vi fece Maestro Dino del Garbo.²¹

The references are to the difficult canzone by Guido Cavalcanti, the "first friend" of Dante, which centres on the problem of the causes and symptoms of love, and to the commentary on the poem written by a contemporary physician, the famous Dino del Garbo. This commentary is found in only one manuscript, in Boccaccio's own hand-writing, and Boccaccio refers to it again in his discussion of love in the *Genealogia* (IX, 4), and in his exegesis of the episode of Paolo and Francesca in Dante's fifth canto of *Inferno*.²² But we can add a few more points. Boccaccio goes further than his sources, adding a reference to Dante (Erisitone, taken probably from *Purgatory*, XXIII, 25-27: "Non credo che così a buccia strema / Erisitone fosse fatto secco, / Per digiunar, quando piú n'ebbe tema.") He also adds a reference to a literary tradition of love sickness that goes back to Erasistratus²³ and which he uses again in the *Decameron*, II.8 (Arcita's desire not to reveal the causes of his sickness) and a reference to an extreme case of love melancholy

that causes the lover to become, in his aspect and behaviour, similar to a lycanthropus.²⁴

Chaucer, on the other hand, is more concise and less inclined to enlarge upon the medical details than is Boccaccio. His description of the symptoms of love closely follows those of the physicians in structure and wording:

His slep, his mete, his drynke, is hym biraft.
 Signa autem sunt quando amittunt somnum, cibum, potum.
 That lene he wex.
 Et maceratur totum corpus.
 His eyen holwe.
 Et oculi concavantur.
 His hewe falow.
 Et eorum facies sunt croceae propter vigiliis.
 And waillynge al the nyght, makyng his mone.
 Patientes . . . ereos incedunt stridento . . . et clamando
 tota nocte.
 And if he herde song or instrument,
 Thanne wolde he wepe.
 Alteratur dispositio eius . . . ad tristitiam et fletum,
 cum amoris cantilena audit.²⁵

It will be clear now that Boccaccio's description of the physical effects visible in the lover are more poetically imaginative and less scientifically precise than Chaucer's. Yet we can go further. Both poets refer indirectly to that form of love melancholy called lycanthropy, but while Boccaccio describes the physical appearance of the lycanthropic lovers (the dark colour of the skin and the overgrowth of hair), Chaucer emphasizes their habit of wandering all night long wailing and moaning. More important, however, is the fact that the English poet refers to the sickness with its proper scientific name "Hereos" and also the fact that he states quite correctly that madness can arise from love because excessive desire causes an overflow of the melancholic humour in the frontal lobe of the brain, where *phantasia* has its seat. Chaucer is clearly aware of

the phantasmatic nature of love and of the fact that the polarization of thought upon the *phantasma* is the cause of the mental derangement called "Hereos."

In order to find Chaucer's source we should turn, rather than to Boccaccio, to a medical writer, Bernard of Gordon, professor of medicine in Montpellier from 1285 and author of a famous treatise *Liberum medicinae*, who is mentioned by the Doctour of Physic in the General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales*.

One fact seems obvious: by keeping very close to the medical doctrine of love, Chaucer is purposely adhering to traditional *topoi*, where Boccaccio seems to venture beyond them.²⁶ Both poets certainly like to demonstrate their erudition, and whenever possible they integrate their main source with information drawn from secondary sources. Yet their approach to a given model and to story-telling is quite different, because their aims are different. Boccaccio is not interested in setting characters or situations within the perimeter of any clearly defined tradition because he is mainly interested in the narrative possibilities afforded by his sources. His sources are manipulated, played with, in order to heighten the dramatic effects of the episode: Arcita, like all unhappy lovers, sighs; yet his are not normal sighs, for they are "as hot as fire." A very effective detail, yet in line with medical science: erotic melancholy increases the innate heat and therefore the temperature of breathing. Lovers suffer from insomnia, and so does Arcita; he cannot help but sigh continuously, day and night. Lovers are anorexic, and in fact Arcita has no appetite. Boccaccio, however, is not satisfied with a general statement that "he had become so thin that every one of his bones was easily visible," but brings in a highly dramatic simile: Arcita had become thinner than Erysichthon who, we may recall, was punished with such an insatiable hunger, having destroyed the trees of a forest sacred to Demeter, that, in order to satisfy his hunger, he sold all his possessions, even his own daughter, and finally devoured himself. Love sick lovers undergo a change in their physical appearance. Again Boccaccio is not satisfied with giving a list of the obvious signs, paleness, darkening of the overall complexion, hollowing of the eyes. He offers the dramatic vision of a man who has been changed into a savage looking

creature. For besides being reduced almost to a skeleton, Arcita's cheeks are sunken and covered by hair, his brows are frightfully thick and sharp, his hair is stiff and shaggy. He has so much changed, in fact, that he does not resemble a man: "He seemed to everyone to have come back from the prison of hell." Yet the use of medical and literary models and the dramatization of the episode, far from being gratuitous, serves a very important purpose. Just before the central action of the *Teseida* begins, the poet clearly sets out love as the main theme of the romance and defines its nature as an overwhelming force. Hence the use of medical symptoms of love should be understood simply as a restatement of a long known truth: love, in its excessive manifestations, leads man to grief and ultimately to mental and physical derangement. The reference to Dino del Garbo is simply a verification of this truth, a footnote for the curious reader and a further demonstration of the poet's culture.

Chaucer, on the other hand, considers himself the interpreter of *amour courtois* in England, and therefore his main aim is to recreate in his work an ideal world of chivalry, to give new life to a poetic world that was disappearing with the disintegration of the feudal system. *The Legend of Good Women*, *The Knight's Tale*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, remarks Mario Praz, "are the result of this refining of chivalric ideals, of this final, flamboyant crystallization of a code of life in the moment of its disintegration."²⁷ Chaucer is not interested simply in telling a story, nor is he interested simply in exploiting the narrative possibilities inherent in a story of unreciprocated love. He wants to offer a doctrine of love faithful to the courtly tradition down to the last detail. In view of this aim Chaucer subjects his sources to a careful analysis. He purges them of all the errors he believes have been committed against the code of chivalric love, and apart from the altogether different question of infusing Boethian ideas into the story, Chaucer tries to draw upon only those elements belonging to the purest courtly tradition.

NOTES

¹ C.S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (New York 1958) 163.

² *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd edition (Cambridge, Mass. 1957) I, 1355-79.

³ *Modern Philology* 2 (1914) 491-546. Beside a brief note by Lowes in *The Nation* 97 (Sept. 11, 1913) 233, and a further note in *MLN*, 31 (1916) 185-87, the problem of *hereos* has been studied briefly by Lawrence Babb in his study of melancholy in Elizabethan England, *The Elizabethan Malady* (East Lansing, Mich. 1951), and by B. Nardi, "L'amore e i medici medievali," in *Studi in onore di Angelo Monteverdi* (Modena 1959). More detailed studies are those by H.J. Crohns, "Zur Geschichte der Liebe als Krankheit", in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 3 (1905) 66-86, and by M. Ciavolella, *La malattia d'amore dall'antichità al medioevo* (Rome 1976).

⁴ Lowes, p. 525 n. 1.

⁵ Ed. L. Limentani (Milan 1964) 361-63. See *The Book of Theseus*, trans. Bernadette Marie McCoy (New York 1974) 101-2: "Since he was afflicted by many sorrows, he took small delight in being alive. Above all, his heart was pierced by Love and he found no rest. Day and night, without respite, he poured forth sighs as hot as fire. He often expressed his grief by tears, and his sorrow showed clearly in his face. He had become so thin that every one of his bones was easily visible. I do not think that the face of Erysichthon during the time of his severe pangs of hunger was any different. He was not only pale, but his skin looked almost black; and his melancholy eyes were barely visible in his head. His cheeks, covered with the down of their new growth, were sunken, and his thick and sharp brows gave him a fearsome appearance, while his locks were stiff and shaggy. He was more completely changed, than anyone could have imagined. His voice had diminished, too, and so had his physical strength, so that he seemed to everyone to have come back to the upper regions from the prison of hell more than from any place in this life. The cause from which his affliction sprang was never known by anyone, for he said one thing for another."

⁶ *De parte operativa*, in *Opera* (Venice 1505), fol. 146v. The

author, Arnaldus Villanovanus, was one of the most famous physicians of the School of Montpellier. Born ca. 1238 probably in Valencia, educated in a Dominican school, he first studied medicine with the Arabs in Spain, then in Montpellier and Paris (ca. 1260). In 1290 he was given the chair of medicine in the same University. As his fame grew he was called to the court of Peter III and James II of Aragon, then to the court of Frederick II. Finally he became the personal physician of Pope Benedict XI and later of Clement V. He died in 1311.

⁷ Traditionally attributed to Isaac Judeus, Gherard of Cremona, or Gherard of Berry, the *Viaticum* is a brief encyclopedia for the traveller, the *Zad al-Musafir* by Abu Jafar Ahmed Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Ali Khalid, translated into Latin by Constantinus Africanus.

⁸ Bernardus Gordonius, *Lilium medicinae* (Lugdonensis 1491) fol. 31v.

⁹ Dino del Garbo, *Scriptum super cantilena Guidonis de Cavalcantibus*, in G. Favati, *Rime di Guido Cavalcanti* (Milan 1957) 364, 367-68.

¹⁰ *De amore heroyco* in *Opera* (Venice 1505), fol. 249r.

¹¹ Loc. cit.

¹² Dino del Garbo, p. 364 f.

¹³ See e.g. Avicenna, *Risālah fi al-Nafs*, translated into German and edited by S. Landauer under the title "Die Psychologie des Ibn Sinā," in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 29 (1875) 335 ff. See also the excellent study by H.A. Wolfson, "The Internal Senses in Latin, Arabic, and Hebrew Philosophic Texts," *Harvard Theological Review* 28 (1935).

¹⁴ See Avicenna, *Canon* (Venice 1606), Fen I, doct. vi, ch. 5, p. 75 f.

¹⁵ Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum doctrinale*, lib. XIII, ch. xlviiii (rpt. Graz 1964-65) 1200 f.

¹⁶ See Arnaldus Villanovanus, fol. 249v, and for the following citations.

¹⁷ For this section see Vincent of Beauvais, *Speculum doctrinale*, "De medicina theorica," ed. cit., p. 1199.

¹⁸ See Arnaldus Villanovanus, fol. 249v, and for the following citations.

¹⁹ See the *Problemata* attributed throughout the Middle Ages to

Alexander of Aphrodisia, Angelo Politiano int. (Amsterdam 1655) 214 f., n. 87. See also I.L. Ideler, *Physici et Medici Graeci*, 2 vols. (Berlin 1841-42) I, 28, n. 87: "eamque [i.e. the beloved] se desperant potituros, insitus calor una cum natura in intima penetrat, quo fit ut extremae partes frigescent, obque id ipsum et pallent et tristes evadunt. Contra vero cum aut bona spe ab amico sunt affecti, aut cum vehementer irascuntur, tum innatus calor ad cutem vergit una cum natura, fiuntque calidiores et rubicundiores." For the sighs, *ibid.* p. 190, n. 22, (Ideler, I, 10, n. 21): "Cur dolentes et amantes et irascentes suspirant admodum et frequenter? Quoniam dolentium anima ad ipsam doloris causam conversa est; cupientium ad id quod cupiunt Igitur intenta anima ad id quod movetur, negligit et quodammodum obliviscitur motivam pectoris musculis virtutem praebere. Cor itaque ipsum neque pectoris dilatatione aerem accipiens, ideoque neque perflatum atque refrigeratum, neque item contractione excernentem singultifica excrementa, quae de sanguinis exustione gignuntur, dum suffocationem metuit, animam cogit atque admonet ut quamplurimum musculis motum praebet, majoremque inspirationem atque expirationem efficiat, ut majorem quoque vim frigidi aeris accipiat, majoremque vim excrementorum effluviat, ut quod exiguae crebraeque respirationes facturae fuerant, idem major una efficiat." For the pulses, see E. Rohde, *Der griechische Roman und seine Vorlufer* (Heidelberg 1960) 57 ff., and Ciavolella, *op. cit.*, p. 81 and p. 92, nn. 108-110.

²⁰ Arnaldus Villanovanus, fol. 249v-250r, and Bernardus Gordonius, fol. 32r.

²¹ Boccaccio, *Teseida*, p. 464.

²² Boccaccio, *Esposizione sopra la Comedia di Dante*, ed. G. Padoan (Milan 1965) 318 ff.

²³

See Ciavolella, pp. 23-27.

²⁴ See Galen, *De locis affectis* (Klhn, VIII, 176 ff.), and especially Rhazes (Abu Bakr Muhammad Ibn Zakariyya ar-Razi, 850 ca. - 923 or 932), *Liber Continens (Al-Hawi)* (Venice 1505), lib. I, tr. 20, fol. 23r.

²⁵ For these references, see Lowes, pp. 525-26.

²⁶ Compare, for example, the comment by C.S. Lewis on Chaucer's treatment of the Troilus story in contrast with Boccaccio's: "The process

which *Il Filostrato* underwent at Chaucer's hands was first and foremost a process of *medievalization*;" see "What Chaucer Really Did to *Il Filostrato*" in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association XVII* (1932) 56.

²⁷ Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, scelta introduzione et commento di M. Praz (Bari 1961) 31.