

A Comparative Study of Two Images in Ovid's Amatory Poems and Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

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Abstract: Chaucer not only owes a great debt to, but also departs radically from Ovid. While Ovidianizing *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer “de-Ovidianizes” Ovid as well; more than an Ovidian artist, Chaucer is saliently un-Ovidian too. The same images figure and function in very different manners in the two poets. Starting from an analysis of two images common in Ovid's amatory poems and Chaucer's *Troilus*, that is, those of sailing and the door/gate, this essay explores how Chaucer rewrites Ovid by considering larger thematic concerns and designs. In particular, the two poets' disparate attitudes toward and treatments of history determine, to some extent, the tones of their works. The weight of history in Chaucer distinguishes him from the characteristic Ovidian lightness. Chaucer's artistry empowers him to be the parodic Ovid more than the “medieval Ovid.”

Key words: Ovid; Geoffrey Chaucer; *Troilus and Criseyde*; imagery; comparison

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标题: 奥维德爱情诗与乔叟《特洛勒斯与克丽西德》中两个意象的比较研究

内容摘要: 乔叟不仅大大受益于奥维德，而且显著区别于奥维德。他不仅将长篇叙事诗《特洛勒斯与克丽西德》奥维德化了，而且对奥维德进行了“非奥维德化”；乔叟不仅仅是奥维德式的作家，而且特别地非奥维德式。同样的意象在两名诗人那里的作用和功能截然不同。本文分析了奥维德爱情诗和乔叟《特洛勒斯与克丽西德》中共有的航海和门的意象，结合作品主题和艺术构思的考量，试图探讨乔叟如何改写奥维德。其中，两名诗人对历史的不同态度和处理方式在某种程度上决定了其作品的不同语气，乔叟作品中沉重的历史有别于奥维德典型的轻佻。乔叟的艺术天赋使得他超越“中世纪奥维德”的常见标签，而成为戏仿的奥维德。

关键词: 奥维德；杰弗里·乔叟；《特洛勒斯与克丽西德》；意象；比较

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Discussions regarding the literary relationship between Chaucer and Ovid began as early as within Chaucer's lifetime, at least when the contemporary French poet Eustache Deschamps hailed the English poet in an encomium as “Ovides grans en ta poëterie” (a great Ovid in poetry; qtd. in Windeatt 109). Metamorphosed into a range of forms, Ovid was extensively and profoundly influential in medieval times.¹ The images of Ovid in the medieval period vary from one to another: dangerous immoralist (such as for Christine de Pizan), tragic exile, natural or ethical philosopher, medical doctor, magician, but most importantly *magister* or *praeceptor amoris* (Lyne 291). “To medieval readers and writers, Ovid was first and foremost a love poet” (Desmond 161). The medieval reception of Ovid is distinguished by a tendency toward Christian moralization (Miller and Newlands 114), as shown in two 14th-century popular formulations: *Ovide moralisé* in French, *Ovidius moralizatus* in Latin (Galloway 189; discussed in Fumo 118-24). Ovid is Chaucer's favorite poet or “poetic soulmate” (Barney 2006, x), and Chaucer is often regarded as the “medieval Ovid” (Calabrese 1; Nolan). In the composition of *Troilus and Criseyde* (abbreviated as the *Troilus* henceforward), Chaucer relied on Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* as the primary source. C. S. Lewis points out that “the process which *Il Filostrato* underwent at Chaucer's hands was first and foremost a process of *medievalization*” (8). “[I]n the process of ‘medievalizing’ the Italian story,” writes Michael A. Calabrese, “Chaucer also, to coin an ugly word, ‘Ovidianizes’ it, by alluding to and echoing passages from Ovid” (35). Chaucer's medievalization of Boccaccio and Ovid is deeply embedded in the medieval tradition, but it is also characteristically Chaucerian. This essay focuses on Chaucer and Ovid. Calabrese makes the point that Chaucer presents two separate attitudes toward love and art while appropriating two Ovids: “the young, brash, urbane poet of the *Ars Amatoria* and the older victim of impending, or imposed, exile in the *Metamorphoses* and the *Tristia*” (35). Winthrop Wetherbee maintains that “To the extent that Ovidian allusion opens a window onto the world of the *Metamorphoses*, we may see Chaucer as an Ovidian artist” (93). Whether proposing Ovidianized text or Ovidian artist, both critics perform a source study based on allusions, picking

1 See Robathan, “Ovid in the Middle Ages;” Dimmick, “Ovid in the Middle Ages.” For a recent and comprehensive survey of the topic, see Miller and Newlands (eds.), *A Handbook to the Reception of Ovid*, Chapters 8-13 (114-201).

related passages, images or myths in Chaucer and Ovid and then analyzing them.¹ Such a method often confines the research to factual limitations and sometimes reduces it to guesswork, where the evidence of influence is slender. What I propose is a comparative approach, for Chaucer not only owes a great debt to, but also departs radically from Ovid. I argue that Chaucer, while Ovidianizing the *Troilus*, also “de-Ovidianizes” Ovid; more than an Ovidian artist, Chaucer is saliently un-Ovidian too.² Starting from an analysis of two images common in Ovid’s amatory poems and Chaucer’s *Troilus*, that is, those of sailing and the door/gate, this essay will explore how Chaucer rewrites Ovid by considering larger thematic concerns and designs. In particular, the two poets’ different attitudes toward and treatments of history determine, to a considerable extent, the tones of their works.

Both Ovid and Chaucer use the metaphor of sailing to refer to the enterprise of poetry writing and the enterprise of love. In Ovid, these two enterprises are closely entwined and inseparable. The persona is the *magister amoris* himself, teaching his pupils the art and craft of love. In Chaucer, however, the function of *magister* is allotted to the character of Pandarus, and the narrator becomes the counterpart of the Ovidian poet-speaker. The split of the two functions creates a distance between the poet and the story. The original Chaucerian narrator signals an important departure from Ovid, and makes a significant contribution to English literature, winning Chaucer the title of “prince of story-tellers” (Kittredge 1). While Ovid’s love poems are sparkling with comic wit, Chaucer writes the first novel in the world³ and a love-tragedy (Kittredge 1-2).

The metaphor of sailing distinguishes the Ovidian venture of love by conveying transgression. “That pine first taught the evils of seafaring,” the poet cries out over Jason’s adventure for the Golden Fleece, “I wish the Argo’d sunk, and drunk disaster, /And men had left the sea-lanes in peace!” (*Amores* II.11.1, 5-6) Tempting fate by exposing people to the uncontrollable forces of nature (the sea), human voyaging intrudes upon the natural order, and represents an impious

1 More recently, John M. Fyler painstakingly enumerates Chaucer’s extensive references and allusions to Ovid in his works but omits to define or mention Chaucer’s originality (416-22), which is also an important part of the English poet’s creative reception of Ovid.

2 According to Alastair Minnis, Chaucer’s characterization of Criseyde with the major defining feature of fearfulness transforms his sources radically, including Boccaccio, where Criseida appears as an “Ovidian merry widow who is keen to gather rosebuds while she may” (45). In this sense Chaucer is also un-Ovidian. Andrew Galloway touches on Chaucer’s “wry distortion” of Ovid as *magister amoris* (190).

3 Kittredge means the Western world; great novels already appeared in China and Japan before the time of Chaucer.

violation of the *finis* of water. In the Roman culture, *finis* or *terminus* (boundary) has both a physical and a moral sense. It can refer to property boundaries (so the man who removed landmarks was accursed), or civic and geographical boundaries (Gillies 10-11). Wealthy Romans built out into and over the water of the virtually tideless Mediterranean, which constitutes another violation of natural boundaries. "Piles encroach upon the ocean's blue," as Ovid writes (*Ars* III.126). In spite of, or rather, because of his awareness of the transgressiveness of sailing, Ovid flaunts the metaphor persistently throughout *Ars Amatoria*. In the opening lines the poet claims the title of "Love's pilot," just as the arch-transgressor "Typhys steered the Argo o'er the main" (I.8, 6).¹ To achieve his goal, the lover must "add oar to sail" and "haste, lest sails collapse and breezes die" (I.368, 373). The failure of love is compared to the "wreckage of his barque" (I.408). At the end of Book I, the barque pauses and the anchors drop; then at the beginning of Book II, "our barque mid-ocean ploughs /And distant yet's the haven of our vows" (II.9-10). In order to ensure that man and woman reach "rapture's height" simultaneously in love-making, "ne'er must you with fuller sail outpace /Your consort" (II.727, 725-26). Towards the conclusion the poet "bring[s] the weary barque to port" (III.748). If the poet and the lover voyage, by extension the woman is the ocean: "Who the vast Ocean's water wants to spare? /When man by cautious woman is refused, /She just wastes water which she might have used" (III.94-96). The (extended) metaphor of sailing celebrates transgressiveness deliberately, whereby an important aspect of Roman culture is carelessly subverted.²

The sailing of the Ovidian lover transgresses not only metaphorically and culturally, but also in terms of law, because it violates the legal boundary of matrimony. Roman law assumed monogamy and set severe punishments for adultery: once having caught the guilty pair in the act, the wronged husband or the adulteress's father could kill the adulterer immediately (Brundage 37, 31). If a man, whether married or not, copulated with an unmarried girl or widow, then he committed *stuprum*, and was subject to loss of half of his property (for a person classed as *honesti*) or corporal punishment and exile (for *humiles*) (Brundage 29-30). Frequently jealous of the husband of his charmer, the Ovidian lover disregards the institution of matrimony and advocates promiscuous sex, wishing "in mid-act may I expire in bed" (*Amores* II.10.36), and professing a desire for "every

1 According to Seneca, "Typhys bold," the Argo's helmsman, was the first who "on open seas durst show /His hoisted sayles, and for the wyndes decree /New lawes." Quoted in Gillies 24.

2 The condemnation of seafaring in *Amores* II.11 is triggered by Corinna's departure for wayfaring, and building over the water is cited to illustrate the *cultus* of the present age, in contrast with the past when "life was rude and plain."

worthwhile girl in Rome's great city" (*Amores* II.4.43). The speaker, contrary to the upper-class Roman male taste, expresses disgust against sodomy with boys¹ on the ground of unequal sexual delight of the two parties (Brundage 27). It is surprising, for Ovid himself belonged to one of the leisure classes, viz. *equites* (White 6, 218). On the same sexual ground of unequal pleasures rather than on the social ground as in Roman law, the speaker would disapprove of male homosexual relations.² While Roman law was "extraordinarily dispassionate" and largely concerned about the preservation of class structure and social stability (Brundage 22, 49), the Ovidian lover's sailing transgresses social, cultural and legal boundaries by endorsing the principle of pleasure and desire. As Jeremy Dimmick observes, Ovid remains in his medieval reception "an archpriest of transgression, whether sexual, political or theological" (264).

Troilus the sailor is no Ovidian lover at all. Throughout the poem Troilus sails on the ocean of love and life, as indicated in his two songs (I.400-20, V.638-44). The first song is a translation from a sonnet by Petrarch, *Rime sparse* 132, which comprises a cluster of questions, oxymora, and the metaphor of sailing without a tiller:

Thus passed to and fro,
Al stereeles withinne a boot am I
Amydde the see, bitwixen wyndes two,
That in contrarie stonden evere mo. (*Troilus* I.415-18)

Fra sì contrary venti in frale barca
Mi trovo in alto mar senza governo,
[Amid such contrary winds I find myself
at sea in a frail bark, without a tiller,] (Durling 270-71)

Steerless in a boat on the sea, tossed to and fro by contrary winds: the vivid image depicts a helpless lover struggling in the whirlpool of love. The most noticeable thing is that Chaucer, through the mediation of Petrarch, *internalizes* the Ovidian metaphor of sailing, which stops at the act of seeking and keeping and largely lacks a psychological dimension. Chaucer masterfully inserts the lyric mode and mood in

1 "I hate a union that exhausts not both: /To fondle boys it's this that makes me loth" (*Ars* II.683-84). In another place male homosexuality is mentioned: "Or those by lust of male for male possessed" (*Ars* I.524).

2 The passive male in anal intercourse was considered disgraceful and penalized by Roman law primarily for his treachery to the social order (Brundage 27, 49).

a narrative poem: where Ovid speaks for the lover, Chaucer lets the lover speak for himself. The Ovidian metaphor focuses on the external action and its comic effect, whereas the Chaucerian song delves into the fine feelings of the lover's heart and sets off an expressive, lyrical effect. Ovid tells, Chaucer shows; Ovid is comic (and ironic as well), Chaucer is poetic. Although both poets compare the lover's failure to a shipwreck (Ovid: "The wreckage of his barque will scarcely save." *Ars*, I.408), the Chaucerian metaphor is again internalized. In general Chaucer not only learns psychological description from Ovid, but also elevates the Ovidian psychological depiction to a new level. The second of Troilus's songs, made in his dear lady's absence, employs the same image of a "steereless" boat.

O sterre, of which I lost have al the light,
 With herte soor wel oughte I to biwaille,
 That evere derk in torment, nyght by nyght,
 Toward my deth with wynd in steere I saille;
 For which the tenthe nyght, if that I faille
 The gydyng of thi bemes bright an houre,
 My ship and me Caribdis wol devoure. (V. 638-44)

"Caribdis" alludes to *Metamorphoses* 14.75: *Hunc ubi Troianae remis avidamque Charybdis evicere rates* (When the Trojan vessels had successfully passed this monster [i.e. Scylla] and greedy Charybdis too; see also *Metamorphoses* 7.63). Owing to the loss of the guiding star, Troilus and his ship of love will be devoured by the whirlpool Charybdis. In the *Troilus*, consistent with the unifying metaphor of sailing, the beloved Criseyde is always likened by the narrator and by Troilus to a "sterre." Criseyde is the fairest in Troy and "an hevenyssh perfit creature" (I.104). When she stands at the Pallas Temple in a widow's black habit, "Nas nevere yet seyn thing to ben preyed derre, /Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre" (I.174-5). The narrator does not conceal his wonder at and admiration for Criseyde's "aungelik...natif beaute" (I.102). In the consummation scene Troilus swears his loyalty to his dear lady, saying, "he [i.e. the God of Love] wol ye be my steere, /To do me lyve, if that yow liste, or sterve" (III.1291-2). The word "steere" puns on "steer" and "star:" the star serves to steer, guiding the lover through the perilous seas of love. For Troilus, Criseyde is much more than an object of love; she is also his spiritual guide, the direction, the meaning, the flame of his whole life and existence. Disheartened at the impending separation, Troilus sighs over Fortune: "If that Criseyde allone were me laft, /Nought roughte I whider thow

woldest me steere” (IV.281-2). Without Criseyde, Troilus would be nowhere and know nowhere to sail, entirely subjected to the grips of Fate and Fortune. In the dolorous Book V Troilus addresses “my righte lode-sterre” twice (232, 1392). Both metaphors extending from that of sailing, the Chaucerian metaphor of star is nonetheless contrasted with the Ovidian metaphor of ocean: spirituality takes the place of carnality. In Ovid, the vast water of the ocean is wittily suggestive of the infinite sexual power (desire) of the woman, and the act of sailing is metaphorically equated with the act of copulating. In Chaucer, plaint substitutes pleasure, and the aerial height of the star distills the sailing into a spiritual journey. When, therefore, Troilus’s soul is carried to the eighth sphere, in heavenly melody, he looks down, sees the vanity of earthly pursuits, and laughs at the woe of those weeping for his death and “al oure werk that foloweth so /The blynde lust” (V.1823-4). This is a Christianized destiny to which it would be unimaginable for an Ovidian lover to sail or aspire.

The essential difference between the Ovidian sailing and the Chaucerian sailing is one of game, play, pleasure versus earnest, *trouthe*, pain. The former is comic, and the latter is tragic. The *magister amoris* confesses, perhaps ironically, “Light loves shall be my teaching’s sole concern” (*Ars* III.27), and *Ars amatoria* ends with *lusus habet finem* (The game is o’er; III.809). In Ovid, the very existence of *Remedia amoris* denies tragedy and pain; pain, if there is any, serves to sharpen and enhance pleasure: “And I don’t love what never causes pain” (*Amores* II.19.8). In Chaucer, the very first line of the *Troilus* declares the poem’s purpose to be “The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen” (I.1). The poem opens with Troilus, and closes with Troilus. The name of Criseyde does not appear until line 55, immediately before which the phrase “the double sorwes of Troilus” is repeated (I.54-55). The narrator seems to be reluctant to mention Criseyde, whose name is polluted with infidelity. The poem is steeped in tears out of pity for Troilus’s misfortunes: “Thise woful vers, that wepen as I write” (I.7). Chaucer invokes Tisiphone, “thow goddesse of torment, /Thow cruwel Furie” (I.8-9), to help him. Toward the close of the poem Chaucer refers to his work as “litel myn tragedye” (V.1786). In a word, the *Troilus* is a tragedy of Fortune, a story of emotional rise and fall: “Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie” (I.4). In the *Prologue* to the *Legend of Good Women*, the poet defends himself before the God of Love by clarifying that his intention in the *Romaunt of the Rose* and the *Troilus* is to “ferthren trouth in loue.”

whatso myn auctour mente.

Algate, God wote, it was myn entente

To ferthren trouth in loue and it cherice.
 And to ben war fro falseness and fro vice
 By swich ensample; this was my menyng. (*Prologue I* 470-74)

Chaucer's *Troilus* is not lacking in fun and comic release, but it is clear that the poet's overall design is a tragedy of *trouthe* in love. It is this that brings about what is called "Chaucerian gravity" (Calabrese 53). Only Calabrese argues for "Chaucerian gravity" in the later three books of the *Troilus*; I believe that "Chaucerian gravity" seeps into the whole of the *Troilus* and constitutes a sharp contrast with "Ovidian lightness." Further, the Chaucerian gravity might have come from another of Chaucer's poetic models, Virgil.¹ The Virgilian impact on Chaucer rechannels the Ovidian light mood into something more serious. According to Lee Patterson, Chaucer's historical narrative is Virgilian with its motifs of Trojan origin and *translatio imperii* (90), but he (Patterson) raises a profound question: "to what—or to whom—should one be true?" (163-64)

Chaucer's metaphor of sailing as poetry writing comes at the beginning of Book II:

Owt of thise blake wawes for to saylle,
 O wynd, o wynd, the weder gynneth clere;
 For in this see the boot hath swych travaylle,
 Of my connyng, that unneth I it steere.
 This see clepe I the tempestuous matere
 Of disespier that Troilus was inne;
 But now of hope the kalendes bygynne. (II.1-7)

Here Chaucer borrows from Dante's *Purgatorio* I.1-6: both sail from despair to hope (Dante ascends from Inferno to Purgatory), and "the boot...Of my connyng" translates *Purgatorio* I.2: *omai la navicella del mio ingegno* (the little bark of my poetic powers). But rather than Dante's Calliope, Chaucer invokes Clio, the Muse of history, following Statius, *Thebaid* 1.41. This is remarkable because Ovid openly defies Apollo, Clio and the Muses: "I'll not pretend to powers by Phoebus given...Nor Clio nor her sisters I espied..." (*Ars* I.25, 27; cf. *Amores* I.1).

1 Cf. *Virgilio grauitas* and *Ouidii leuitas* in Baudri of Bourgueil's (c. 1046-1130) apt phrases (qtd. in Dimmick 285). Virgil exerts a great influence on Chaucer, e.g. in *The House of Fame* and *Troilus and Criseyde*. In the latter the poet lists five Greek and Roman *auctores*, among whom Virgil leads the group and Ovid follows (V.1792).

Instead, Ovid calls for Venus's help (*Ars* I.30; II.15: "Venus, Love, and Erato"). Writing a love poem, Chaucer invokes neither the goddess of love nor the Muse of poetry.¹ This extraordinary phenomenon shows Chaucer's attitude to his *auctores*, which he regards as authoritative history and disclaims his own authority. As Stephen A. Barney argues, "Chaucer presents himself in the poem as something of a historiographer, a pedantic scholar" (1987, 472). Chaucer's submission to history causes him to frame the story of Troilus and Criseyde within the context of the Trojan War and the fall of Troy, thus positing the tragedy of character in the tragedy of situation. "The fall of Troy, stripped of epic solemnity and gravity by Ovid's playful optimism, becomes powerful and pathetic once again in the *Troilus*" (Calabrese 45).

The image of the door/gate in the *Troilus* intimately connects the fate of the lovers and their love with the fate of Troy. Troilus, once a scoffer at love, is stricken into instant love for Criseyde nowhere but at the Temple of Pallas, while the latter is standing "neigh the dore" (I.180). The Trojan people are observing an "olde usage" in honor of Pallas Athena, "That was hire trist aboven everichon" (I.150, 154). The safety of Troy depends on the preservation of the Palladium, or the image of Pallas Athena. In such a fatal place is enkindled the fire of love. Troilus is charmed by the indescribable loveliness of Criseyde, who lets fall her look a little aside in such a manner, as if to say, "What! may I nat stonden here?" (I.292) The portrayal emphasizes the particularity of the place. All the story starts at the door of the Pallas Temple. In Book V the separation takes place at the gate of the city of Troy, where, we may say, the sad story comes to an end.

But at the yate ther she sholde out ride. (V.32)

All simple, monosyllabic words, but the line carries an emotional weight beyond any measure. "But"—if only there were no "but"! Bliss, sweetness, ecstasy—all done, all gone. Left only are the cold, hard, curt "But" and the equally cold, hard gate. Separation is the last thing Troilus wants in the world, but he has to face the reality. The heart-breaking scene at the gate rehearses many times in his mind, almost driving him mad. Yet there is the last meeting, "ther." The added word stresses the special place, conveying the complex feelings Troilus (and Criseyde, and the narrator, and the reader) has for it. The word "sholde" points to the helplessness of the lovers, and "out" expresses the fatal consequence, like

¹ Chaucer does invoke Venus and Calliope at the opening of the central book, "[f]or now is need" (III.46). This does not invalidate the truth of the moment under discussion, though.

a thunderbolt. Compare the modal verb and the “out” in a preceding line: “For which Criseyde moste out of the town” (V.5). The word “out” is a key one ringing in Troilus’s mind again and again: “And farwel shrine, of which the seynt is out!” “Ther [yeah, there] as Criseyde out rood a ful good paas” (V.553, 604). Criseyde is out. The fact is unacceptable, unbearable. Troilus haunts the gate, in expectation for the reunion, in memory of the past, and confirming to himself the bleak fact of separation. We read two similar passages.

And after this he to the yates wente
 Ther as Criseyde out rood a ful good paas,
 And up and down ther made he many a wente. (V.603-05)
 And on the morwe unto the yate he wente,
 And up and down, by west and ek by este,
 Upon the walles made he many a wente. (V.1192-94)

The gate is mentioned only once in the separation scene, but the unusual frequency of the word after the scene (six times: the two passages quoted above, plus lines 1138, 1140, 1177, 1178) indicates the haunting significance of the place. Besieged by the Greek hosts, the gate signifies the defense of Troy. The exchange of prisoners is fatal, because Criseyde is out and brings to an end Troilus’s happiness, and because Antenor is in and will bring ruin to the city of Troy. The opening of the gate, with one in and one out, determines the fate of Troilus and the fate of Troy. I endorse G. L. Kittredge’s judgment that the love of the couple is “bound up with the inexorable doom” of the city (7). The door of the Pallas Temple and the gate of Troy set a historical framework for the highly personal story. In another sense, the poem begins with the Greek siege and Calkas’s escape and ends with Diomedes’s statement of the fall of Troy and takeover of Criseyde, which strengthens the historical framework. Cassandra’s prediction, “This Diomedes is *inne*, and thou art *oute*” (V.1519; my italics), contains in it an implied metaphor of the door: the wild boar is let in, and the white eagle is kept out. The prophetess’s correct foresight, unbelieved at the time, and then proven true, colors the event with a predestined fatalism. Criseyde’s door is destined to be shut on Troilus (cf. V.531, 552), because the gate of Troy is opened.

The Ovidian door (*foris/ianua/porta*) is not heavy at all; it functions as an instrument to induce fun and laugh. The best example is *Amores* I.6. When the persona’s darling slams the door, “That slammed door has a stronger bolt than [Jove’s]” (*Amores* II.1.20). The word “bolt” is a pun in English as well as in Latin

(*fulmen*), meaning both thunderbolt and doorbolt. Here the poet makes fun of the clandestine lover and the master god simultaneously, who represent love and religion respectively. On the other hand, like the metaphor of sailing, the image of the door is a significant index of transgressiveness in Ovid's poetry. The door is a boundary separating the private space from the public, inside from outside, family from society, whereas what Ovid teaches is seduction, which attempts to gain illegal entrance into such a door for "stolen joys" (*Ars* I.275). The very danger of unlawfulness gives pleasure. "For me, if love's allowed, it's love no more" (*Amores* II.19.52). In particular, the dress of friendship disguises evil intentions and opens the door easily; "All the more pleasing if [people] hurt a friend" (*Ars* I.750). Thus Paris wins the most beautiful woman in the world, when Menelaus the foolish husband leaves "wife and friend" behind under the same roof (*Ars* II.359-72). Generally, to overcome the bolted doors, Sir Locked-Out may bribe the doorkeeper (*Ars* II.259-60), take risks to leap from high (*Ars* II.242-45), or entreat (and threaten) the porter for all night in vain (*Amores* I.6). The door sometimes yields to the charm of poetry (*Amores* II.1), but more often than not it is "deaf to pleas but oiled to presents" (*Amores* I.8.77). In fact it is useless to guard the doors, for, on the one hand, beauty and chastity never go together,¹ "The body you may guard—the mind is guilty" (*Amores* III.4.5); on the other, name-debauchery could do worse, "And though the body's pure, defile the name" (*Ars* II.634). Gathered in Ovid's poems is a wonderful array of a variety of ingenious tricks to deal with the doorpost. The door serves to define social order, and crossing the boundary of the door is likely to create confusions in social order.

I have discussed a lot about the transgressiveness in Ovid's amatory poetry in connection with the two images. But this is not the central matter; the important thing is not transgressiveness *per se*, but the fact that the poet-speaker takes pleasure in transgressiveness. The main course is the Ovidian rhetorical game of light enjoyment; transgressiveness is only a spice. From another angle transgressiveness is not unimportant because the very Ovidian game is a game of transgressiveness, poetical, rhetorical, social, legal, and cultural. Whether Troilus's affairs with Criseyde are transgressive adultery depends on whether they form a secret marriage in the consummation scene, about which scholarly opinion divides (Hornsby 56-66). Therefore it is uncertain whether Troilus and Criseyde are in an ethical dilemma. They are basically passive lovers manipulated by Pandarus and trapped by the awkwardness of history. "Adultery" or "transgressiveness" is, in fact, a strange word for the *Troilus*; we hardly think of it while being immersed in

1 The Ovidian Donne famously sings: "No where /Lives a woman true, and fair."

the text. One probable explanation is that the Chaucerian earnest and *trouthe* make us forget about the legal issues. The door/gate in Books I and V has nothing to do with the law; even the door in Book III have a quite different quality from Ovid's.

Indeed, we observe in Chaucer a shift of emphasis from the lover to the go-between in the device of the door. In Ovid, the lover always strolls in front of the bolted door, moaning the cruelty of his mistress. Boccaccio sets the consummation scene in Criseida's house (*Il Filostrato*, 3.23ff.). Chaucer moves the scene to Pandarus's house. The go-between controls everything, pushing the man and the woman into the same bed. Perhaps Chaucer is here following the medieval Latin comedy *Pamphilus*, in which Pamphilus rapes Galathea in the Bawd's house. When Pamphilus knocks at the door and is admitted, the Bawd departs with an excuse, leaving room for the ensuing violence. But Pandarus is much more cunning. He chooses a moonless, rainy night (III.548-51) to invite Criseyde for supper, telling her that Troilus is out of town, so that Criseyde has to stay, and stay without suspicion. Meanwhile Troilus has hidden himself in a "stuwe" and seen Criseyde coming (III.601). When all have gone to bed, Pandarus leads Troilus from the *stewe* through a secret trap-door (III.741, 759) upstairs¹ to the *closet*, where Criseyde sleeps. Nobody might hear them because the rain and wind are so loud outside (III.679, 744). Pandarus's "engyn" (III.274) works well. He is represented as the capable director of a good play. Troilus burns in passion, but is entirely passive. When he is fearful and beseeches this god and that goddess for blessings, Pandarus says scornfully, "Thow wrecched mouses herte, /Artow agast so that she wol the bite?" (III.736-37) Criseyde sounds a note of caution and then submits herself to Pandarus's will: "For I am here al in youre governaunce" (III.945). On the next day the niece accuses the uncle, "Fox that ye ben!...ye caused al this fare" (III.1565-66). Criseyde might have seen through Pandarus's design, yet she pretends ignorance and innocence and acts in compliance with the director's cues.² Saul N. Brody aptly associates Pandarus's trap-door with the medieval stage trap (129-33). Through the trap-door Troilus ascends from the hellish *stewe* into "hevene blisse" (III. 704). Staging his own house, Pandarus is at once "producer, director, and performer" (Brody 134).

To sum up, the weight of *trouthe*, the weight of history in Chaucer differentiates him from the typical Ovidian lightness. The narrator in the *Troilus* sails with difficulty, because as an objective historian, he is supposed to record faithfully the tragic happenings, but as a sympathetic reader, his emotional

1 Brody argues that the *stewe* was below the *closet* (123-25).

2 See Brody for a similar view and a more detailed analysis (135-38).

involvement hinders him from doing so.¹ Lee Patterson insightfully characterizes the *Troilus* as a poem of doubleness (151-52): not only in many repeated details, but also self and nation, private and public, fiction and history, truth and betrayal, involvement and detachment, etc. To this pervasive list I would add still another pair: Ovidian and un-Ovidian. While drawing freely from Ovid, Chaucer consciously distances himself from the classical poet. The same images figure and function in very different manners in the two poets. It is ultimately questionable whether Chaucer is the “medieval Ovid” or not. If anything, he is the Chaucerian Ovid, or the parodic Ovid.

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 1 Cf. Evan Carton’s comment: “The narrator is trapped; his emotional interest and eager complicity in the development and consummation of the love plot are irreconcilable with the stance of detached and foreknowing historian that, for self-protection, he must now assume” (58).

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