

A NEW HISTORICAL APPROACH TO CHAUCER'S *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

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Abstract

This paper aims at studying Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* as an adaptation of Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* and examining the changes that Chaucer made in his work. In this article, *Il Filostrato* and *Troilus and Criseyde* are analysed in a comparative way to understand what Chaucer wanted to suggest by making changes in the well-known story of Troilus and Criseyde. New Historicism as a literary theory, which brings together cultural, social, and historical issues in the study of a text, in addition to the poetic choices of the writer, has been applied in this study and characterization, courtly love elements and gardens as settings for courtly love are explored according to the assumptions of New Historicism.

Key words: New Historicism, courtly love, change, gardens, power.

CHAUCER'IN *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE* ADLI ESERİNE YENİ TARİHSELÇİ YAKLAŞIM

Özet

Bu çalışma, Chaucer'ın Boccaccio'ya ait *Il Filostrato* adlı eserindeki aşk hikâyesini *Troilus and Criseyde* adlı eserine uyarlaması ve eserde Chaucer tarafından yapılan değişiklikleri incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu makalede Troilus ve Criseyde hikâyesinde yapılan değişikliklere açıklama getirebilmek için, *Il Filostrato* ve *Troilus and Criseyde* adlı eserler karşılaştırılmalı bir şekilde incelenmiştir. Bir eser incelemesinde yazarın görüşlerinin yanı sıra, kültürel, sosyal ve tarihi konuların da incelenmesini öngören Yeni Tarihselci yaklaşım bu makalenin kuramsal çerçevesini oluşturmuştur ve eserdeki karakter betimlemeleri, saray aşkı öğeleri ve saray aşkına mekân oluşturan bahçeler Yeni Tarihselci kurama göre incelenmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Yeni Tarihselcilik, saray aşkı, değişim, bahçeler, güç

Introduction

As one of the outstanding pieces of Medieval English, *Troilus and Criseyde* is considered to be the first verse novel because of its characterization, and the concept of point of view. The characters, especially the two lovers Troilus and Criseyde, are described with increased depth and are shown in detail, which distinguishes the story from the others. With its artistic expression and thematic concerns it invites literary and social criticism and regarding the assumptions of New Historicism, examining the work in its literary and historical surrounding is helpful to gain a better understanding of it. Chaucer's translation of *Il Filostrato* by the fourteenth century Italian poet Giovanni Boccaccio

both led to his wide borrowing and extension of the text and to his adaptation of the text to his needs. Although Chaucer never mentions Boccaccio's name in his work, he is indebted to *Il Filostrato*. Windeatt indicates that "Substantially indebted in outline and much detail to Boccaccio's poem *Il Filostrato*, Chaucer profoundly transforms what he takes from Boccaccio, both by free invention and by fusing that one adapted source with yet other sources" (1992, p. 37). By following the structure and story of an important literary example, Chaucer manipulates inherited conventions to his own purposes. Doğan maintains that according to New Historicism, "the author, social factors and the text all help us to understand the larger picture" (2005, p. 83). Therefore, in this article *Troilus and Criseyde* is analysed considering the intention of the author, social and cultural factors that help to understand the text and the text itself with its additions and omissions.

According to New Historicism, the text is inseparable from the historical and cultural context in which it exists. As a literary practice which reads literature in relation to history, society, politics and culture, the time when *Troilus and Criseyde* was written is particularly important for New Historicists. Biscoglio notes that "In any historical moment, medieval or modern a particular writer inevitably reveals the ideologies and concerns of his culture" (1993, p.135). *Troilus and Criseyde* was written at a time when chivalric ideals were declining and its effects can be found in the exploration of the theme of courtly love. Haruta suggests that "By the end of the fourteenth century the heyday of chivalry was already over. On the Continent, the period had already witnessed the beginning of the Renaissance, and romantic ideals were regarded as old-fashioned" (1992, p. 353). In this article, gardens as a setting for courtly love convention and privacy of the aristocratic lovers are analysed in questioning courtly love elements and its role in maintaining a relationship. Boccaccio who wrote *Il Filostrato* in c. 1338 handles this old story in a more conventional way than Chaucer does. The use of gardens indicates both the influence of previous writers on Chaucer and also the fact that he makes changes. Gardens haven't been analysed with their physical aspects but with all the elements and ideas suggested by their use in *Troilus and Criseyde*. What Chaucer was critical of and which means he employed to reveal his criticism has been the research problem of this study.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, although characters are caught between established social structures and the possibilities of free will and choice, Chaucer transforms the story by portraying them into new relations. The story is set in a medieval courtly society in which the hero experiences the joy and sorrow in love. By calling his work "tragedie" Chaucer asks for the sympathy of the readers for the lovers in general and double sorrow of Troilus. Nolan maintains that "Like Boccaccio in the *Filistrato*, Chaucer allows Troilus' subjective, lyrical account of his love to draw us sympathetically into his experience even as we witness the woeful consequences of his folly" (1992, p. 200). However, his understanding of love and the importance he attaches to that experience prove to be invalid in Chaucer's contemporary world. The clash between his beliefs and values and the circumstances of his world enables the critique of the nature and permanence of love in a changing world. As Veaser points out with the 5 assumptions of New Historicism that he outlines, "Every act of

unmasking, critique and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes” (Veese, 1989, p. xi). This assumption can be true for Chaucer, because Chaucer critiques the very means, that is, the conventions of courtly love he employs in his work. Chaucer was observant of the changing atmosphere of the period and had a critical attitude towards romantic ideals. Unfaithfulness of Criseyde to romantic ideals and Troilus’s sorrow as a result of it put the ideals themselves under scrutiny. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer juxtaposes conventions of courtly love elements with a world of social circumstances that exist outside the system. The contrast between ideal love and real life necessities are brought into light.

Questions of Power and Analysis of Gender Role in *Troilus and Criseyde*

New Historicists examine the exercise of power as a cultural and social issue, and try to see the exercise of power within social relations and relate it to all kinds of discourses. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer is mainly concerned with the status of woman in a male-dominated society. Despite his affinity with the medieval assumptions of the expected role of a woman in the society, Chaucer’s representation of woman challenges both the medieval image of woman and woman in courtly love tradition. According to Biscoglio, “Chaucer’s attitude towards women; however, was far more complex than is indicated by his fictional reinforcement of a favorite literary topos” (1993, p.136). In order to understand the text through the context of Chaucer’s cultural milieu, the medieval society and its attitude toward women should be examined. In the medieval society, women usually did not have a say in choosing their future husbands. The marriages were arranged by fathers or relatives mainly considering the interests of the families. Macfarlane states that “Marriage is a contract between two individuals” (1993, p.19). Besides as the legal texts state, all authority over the woman’s property was vested upon the man after marriage. Upon marriage, the woman was not only deprived of her legal rights on her property, but also involuntarily accepted the dominance of the male in their marriage. Consent to marriage meant consent to male control by pleading obedience to the husband. As cited in McCarthy:

A woman has no power but in all things may be subject to the power of a man.

From Ambrose, in his Book of Questions on the Old Testament: It is agreed that a woman is subject to the power of a man, and has no authority; nor is able to instruct nor to be a witness nor to make a promise nor to make a legal judgment (2004, p. 105).

Deprived of their legal rights through marriage, they were also expected to be passive, moderate, patient and obedient to their husband and such a marriage is generally described in terms of “forming a connection”, “enterprise”, “match” (Macfarlane, 1993, p. 291). In such a society “Love is one thing, marriage another” (Macfarlane, 1993, p. 293). As marriages were arranged with concerns of the families’ own interests, love was excluded from this theory of marriage. Love was something sought for in courtly love which meant adultery for married couples. In courtly love, the knight tries to

woo and win the heart of a married aristocratic lady. The lady is thought to be inaccessible as she is both married and aristocratic. The lover, usually a worthy knight is devoted to the lady like a worshipper and relentlessly seeks the love of the lady. Duby claims that following the conventions of courtly love was an educational game, “the exact counterpart of a tournament” (1994, p. 56). The best man was the one who served the lady with moderation and remained loyal to her. As it can be observed, courtly love reversed the inferior position of the married woman to a higher position, which is devoid of love and power. Power observes that

It was in the essence of courtly love that it should be a thing freely sought and freely given: it could not be found in the marriage of feudalism; which was often a parental arrangement – binding children in the interests of land... This peculiar conception of love had another characteristic. In it the lady stood in a position of superiority towards her lover as uncontested as the position of inferiority, in which a wife stood towards her husband (1989, p. 24).

Chaucer’s presentation of Criseyde in *Troilus and Criseyde* both challenges the medieval image of woman and woman in courtly love. Although Chaucer’s poetry was part of a long tradition, there are some differences in the treatment of courtly love in *Troilus and Criseyde*. First of all, Criseyde is not an aristocratic lady as in the tradition of courtly love. She is inferior to Troilus in terms of rank. Secondly, as she is a widow their relationship is not adulterous. The theme of power is subverted both in her relationship with Troilus and later on with Diomedes. Although the relationship is one of respect and reverence, and she is praised as an object of beauty and it takes some time for Troilus to win her love, after wooing her, he wins her heart and they spend three years in bliss. The competition between Troilus and Diomedes, which is one of the aspects of courtly love, starts after three years of relationship. Furthermore, that competition is not shown as a “joust”, a tournament, but one of revenge, which results in the death of Troilus. The education on the part of the knight as a part of his service to the lady is also subverted at the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, for Troilus finds solace not in the love of the lady but in Divine Love. On the other hand, the competition between the knights could not evade the impression of the lady as an object to be won. The woman is seen as an object not by the husband in pursuit of a larger fortune, but younger knights. By changing the interpretation of the role of women as Biscoglio maintains, “The poet demonstrates, despite the ambiguities and complexities of his vision, a surprisingly modern version of appreciation of women while at the same time writing within the context of his own culture” (1993, p. 148). Criseyde is praised by Troilus as a heavenly beauty and is loved as the ladies in courtly love tradition. This makes her both an object to be desired and a subject superior to the knight who is ready to die for her love. On the other hand, the political realities of her situation reverse her image of power and freedom. As her father left Troy, she is unprotected in Troy as a widow and the daughter of a traitor. She asks for the protection of Hector in Troy, and in Greek camp when she is returned to her father she is again unprotected among the Greek soldiers and has to accept Diomedes as a lover who would offer her protection. She is weak and

seeks for the protection of the male. As a result of her infidelity she is even in a worse status at the end of the poem and her story of infidelity will be repeated in the latter works.

Criseyde's representation is quite different from the aristocratic ladies in courtly love and closer to the representation of women in the medieval ages. Thus, women in the medieval world whether married or widow, occupy an inner circle of life as powerless and inferior. Outside this circle there is the male world associated with social, political and military power. A similar treatment can be found in *Il Filostrato*, in which Criseida is presented as a young lady who is strongly desired by Troilo and at the end is won. However, Criseida's treatment differs from Chaucer's version. In Boccaccio at the beginning of the work she is only an object to be won and at the end of the poem is presented only as an example of infidelity, the poet offering no explanation for her inner world.

Courtly Love in *Troilus and Criseyde*

According to New Historicism, a text is a means for exploring and in *Troilus and Criseyde* appropriate characterization can be found to explore the validity of courtly love. As Chaucer questions love, he not only writes about the romantic aspect of courtly love but also emphasizes the suffering caused to both sexes. The contrasting views that can be found in the text imply that as New Historicism also suggests, there cannot be a single, monolithic explanation for anything. Chaucer by adding necessary qualities to the main characters, Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus and adding reflective quality and monologues, can put the theme of courtly love into question. In order to do so, the poet sets his characters in a conventional world, acting and behaving within conventions; however, the differences in characterization and their inner thoughts become a means of exploration. Chaucer's characters are part of a society shaped by social codes. Their actions are shaped and influenced by these codes. However, Chaucer's poem is important as a medieval work as he creates characters who exhibit self-consciousness, interiority, and free will in a pagan world controlled by these codes, Fortune and pagan gods. Although when all these forces come together they bring forth circumstances that they have no control over, with the influence of Boethius' *The Consolation of Philosophy* Chaucer tries to show that man has freedom of will and can make his/her own decisions.

It is in Boccaccio that Chaucer finds a model for characterization. In *Il Filostrato*, Troilo is the true romance lover, Pandaro is their faithful friend, and Criseida is the unfaithful beloved. The difference between characterization stems from the presentation of the depth of the psychology of the characters in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In Boccaccio, characters are presented as mere types whom the readers come to know only through their actions. However, Chaucer's characters are more reflective than the characters in *Il Filostrato* and monologues are added to the actions of the characters. Benson maintains that "The characters in *Troilus and Criseyde* are described with an increased thickness and variety of detail that distinguishes one from the other" (1990, p. 87). By presenting the feelings of Troilus in detail, Chaucer enables the readers to get access to the feelings and thoughts of Troilus. Criseyde is presented as a character whose choices should be evaluated considering the circumstances

she lives in. She is not drawn as a flat character who should be accused of infidelity as in *Il Filostrato* or other examples of the story. In *Troilus and Criseyde* it is up to the reader to condemn her for infidelity or not. As a widow she appears as a beautiful woman who must protect her name and honour as becoming the social conditions of the period. However, because of the complexity of her inner self, she does not only represent the traditional state of women, there is space in the poem to consider her thoughts and actions. In Book II her thoughts are given to show the anxiety she has on the thought of having a lover:

The fear was this: ‘Alas, since I am free,
Am I to love and put myself in danger?
Am I to lose my darling liberty?
Am I not mad to trust it to a stranger?
For look at others and their dog-in-manger
Loves, and their anxious joys, constraints and fears!
She who loves none has little cause for tears.

(Chaucer, 1971, ii, 771-777)

Criseyde does not fall in love immediately. She thinks of her reputation, considers alternative actions and the readers witness the process she falls in love with Troilus. After Troilus’ passage on his horse, she is left alone and her reflections on how to act are exemplified in her monologues.

One of the thematic concerns of the poem, the exploration of love is achieved by the presentation of Troilus as someone inexperienced in love. As Troilus experiences love for the first time, he talks and thinks about love and how to act more than Troilo in *Il Filostrato*. As opposed to *Il Filostrato* in which Triolo is not only the lover, but the poet himself who announces himself to be experienced in love, Troilus in Chaucer goes through the stages of love as an inexperienced one. The readers also go through these stages and explore the questions of love bearing in mind all the philosophical implications presented in the work. That inexperienced lover is guided by Pandarus who is active in arranging meetings and correspondence between the lovers. Pandarus, who is the uncle of Criseyde not the peer of the lovers as in *Il Filostrato*, is added verbal skills and is more manipulative in Chaucer, which makes him more active than the other examples.

Troilus conceives of love and his lover in a more considerate way and with his loyalty to his lover he proves to be an exemplary lover, whose experience can be explored through his actions and words. Just like the theme of love, no single definition can be given for Troilus. He is presented as the prince, loyal lover, or as someone shy in front of the lady but a great warrior at the battle. On the other hand, in Boccaccio, the characters lack interiority. The readers come to know the characters through their actions but they cannot follow the arguments that lead the characters to make these actions. As Nolan suggests, “None of Chaucer’s emphasis on Criseyde’s fears, her well-placed anxieties about the war, her awareness of her precarious social position is to be found in the *Filistrato*” (1992, p. 237). In Boccaccio, Criseida’s initial resistance comes from the fear that Troilus’

passion will not last long. She does not concern herself about her safety, independence or honour. As a result, having learned that he weeps for her love, she accepts him as a lover not with much resistance and Pandaro who is a friend of Troilo can easily persuade her to meet Troilo. Besides, in *Il Filostrato* there is only a single view on love that is the conventions of courtly love. The readers evaluate the characters and actions in accordance with the conventions. No extra dimension is added, either to the theme of love or the characters. This is one of the major points that makes *Troilus and Criseyde* different from its predecessors.

According to New Historicism, divergent aspects can be found within a single text and the readers are expected to see the text from a variety of perspectives. As Benson suggests, “No single critical approach can explain love in *Troilus and Criseyde*” (1990, p. 122). In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer presents love with contrasting aspects allowing the readers to question its validity in a changing world. Wendeatt indicates that “The themes of *Troilus and Criseyde* are questions” (1992, p. 212). Although the story in *Troilus and Criseyde* is a reworking of an old story familiar to the medieval audience, it explores thematic concerns more extensively than its precedents. Since this is a love story, mainly questions about love arise in the poem. By presenting conflicting and divergent aspects of love he invites a critical approach to his work and adds questions on the theme of love. Each divergent aspect of love operates in shaping the readers’ understanding, and it is the readers’ task to understand what the contradiction corresponds to. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, the lovers would live happily forever under the spell of love if it weren’t for the harsh reality of war and politics which affect the destiny of the two lovers. With the encounter with Diomedes, Criseyde is made to compromise with her circumstances and her readiness to accept him as a lover shows the contrast between the ideals of *fin’ amors* and the circumstances of the 14th century.

In *Troilus and Criseyde* love is presented as a feudal service, as a sickness which may lead to death if unrequited, as a game or a form of religious devotion which tests “trouthe” and “loyalty” on the part of the lovers. The questions on love can be found in the poem’s principal scenes; when Troilus is struck by love’s arrow, in the interviews between Pandarus and Troilus about Troilus’ grief and in Criseyde’s monologue after she learns that Troilus loves her. Among divergent aspects of love one of them is Chaucer’s dramatization of the inability of lovers to resist love. Troilus’ song shows the paradoxical nature of love, and allows for an analysis of what love could be:

If there is no love, O God! What I am feeling?
If there is no love, who then, and what, is he?
If love be good, whence comes this sorrow stealing?
If evil, what a wonder it is to me
When every torment and adversity
That comes of him is savoury, to my thinking!
The more I thirst, the more I would be drinking.

And if so be I burn at my own pleasure,
Whence comes my wailing, whence my sad complaint?
Why do I weep, if suffering be my treasure?
I know not. Nothing weary, yet I faint!
O quickening death, sweet harm that leaves no taint,
How do I find thee measurelessly filling
My heart, unless it be that I am willing?

(Chaucer, 1971, i, 400-413)

How far human love can indeed give true peace and fulfillment in a world of change is the main thematic concern in the poem, which is left unanswered. However, as Pandarus also states, everybody suffers from love either celestial or natural one:

...The learned say
That never man or woman was engendered
Unapt to suffer love; we're all surrendered
To a celestial or natural kind,

(Chaucer, 1971, i, 976-979)

Chaucer re-presents Troilus as a courtly lover who goes through all the stages of courtly love; however, is sorrowful at the end. In both works the principal subject is love and most of the conventions of courtly love can be found. Both Troilo in *Il Filostrato* and Troilus in *Troilus and Criseyde* abide by the codes of courtly love: they elevate their lady, they are both humbled with the love of their lady, to both, the lady is the most important thing in life and they could do everything to preserve the lady's honour, for them secrecy has utmost importance to protect the honour of the lady, they have a go-between to provide this secrecy and letters are the best means to correspond with her. The only element that we have in neither work is that, in courtly love convention the woman is generally married and this requires utmost secrecy. Both in *Il Filostrato* and *Troilus and Criseyde* the ladies are unmarried, but they would like to keep their affair secret for the sake of their names. Chaucer manipulates the story to explore the limits of conventional systems. In Chaucer the characters and their actions have been changed to re-present them as true courtly lovers. Lewis observes that "Chaucer approached his work as the poet of courtly love" (1969, p. 35). As a court poet he explored courtly love elements set in medieval times; however, at the same time he offered a complex of comments on the story itself. Although Chaucer praises love and Troilus as a true lover, he also adds passages to suggest the pain and deceit of love.

Both in *Il Filostrato* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Troilus exemplifies the symptoms of courtly love. After being struck by the arrow of God of love, Troilus becomes inarticulate, he refuses to talk or eat, and shuts himself in his room. With these qualities Chaucer complies with the main features of the conventions of the courtly love as Troilus is depicted similar to the description of a courtly lover in *the Art of Love* by Capellanus:

And from then on love robbed him of his sleep
And made an enemy of his food; his sorrow
Increased and multiplied, he could not keep
His countenance and colour, eve or morrow,
Had anyone noticed it; he sought to borrow
The names of other illnesses, to cover
His hot fire, lest it showed him as a lover.

(Chaucer, 1971, i, 484-490)

Troilo in *Il Filostrato* cannot eat or sleep and turns pale with the fear that Criseida may be in love with someone else: “Love had already deprived him of sleep, reduced his appetite and increased his melancholy to such an extent that the paleness of his face clearly revealed his condition ” (Boccaccio, 1980, p. 29).

Like a courtly lover, Troilus sighs and moans until Pandarus, the uncle of Criseyde offers his hand and arranges a meeting between them. Pandarus is the first and the only person Troilus tells his secret in a desperate and hopeless state:

Dear Pandar, best of friends, I've said enough;
I've told you the whole secret of my woe.
For God's love, think my cares are dangerous stuff
And keep them hidden; only you must know,
For great would be the evils that could flow
From them if they were known; be happy, friend,
Leave me in grief unknown to meet my end.

(Chaucer, 1971, i, 610-616)

Troilus is devoted to the lady like a worshipper. Love is described in terms of service or religion and the lover “as a slave to love” (Chaucer, 1971, i, 231). Apart from his duties as a warrior, his only aim in life is to serve his lady. Love for Criseyde is associated with life and death. He will live as long as he can serve her, and be true to his love. On the other hand, Chaucer also shows one of the good aspects of love, that is the humbling effect of love on lovers. The only wish of the lover is to be granted the permission to serve his lady; “And all my royalty I here resign/ Into her hand, as humbly as I can / As to my lady, and become her man” (Chaucer, 1971, i, 432-34). The same effect of love can be seen in *Il Filostrato* as well. Troilo having fallen in love, frequently addresses to the God of Love and offers his thanks for his love:

And thus I am in love, and of your mighty achievements this one especially pleases and delights me. I bow to it because by its means, if my soul judges rightly, all pleasures become more perfect and fulfilled than can otherwise be. All other pursuits are far less worthy than this one, which leads me to serve a lady who is lady of more virtues than anyone else (Boccaccio, 1980, p. 55).

As a romance hero Troilus keeps his word and remains a true lover until he dies. He proves to be faithful to his love as the blue brooch he presented to Criseyde symbolizes. At the end of the poem, he is rewarded by reaching the eighth sphere and finding eternal love. Through the main characters who mostly obey the codes of courtly love Chaucer poses questions mostly about the experience of love. This criticism sometimes implicitly, sometimes ironically conveyed becomes explicit in the poem's ending. The end of the poem, which is a prayer addressed to divine love, diminishes the effect of courtly love set in a conventional romance. The ending as a parallel to the philosophical questions raised throughout the poem suggests that human love is subject to time, change and circumstances when compared to divine love, which is eternal and immutable. This comparison becomes stronger when the love in *Troilus and Criseyde* is compared to the mainly sensual love presented in Chaucer's main source *Il Filostrato*. In Boccaccio, Chaucer finds a narrative of love in which no judgements of religion and ethics are found. In *Il Filostrato*, Criseida does not concern herself as much as Criseyde about the consequences of falling in love. Although she has her own reservations about it, she accepts Troilo as a lover without much hesitation and this can be seen in her argument whether to love Troilo or not:

I am young, good-looking, attractive and happy; a widow, wealthy, noble and well-beloved; without children and at peace with the world. Why should I not be in love? ... I know of no woman in the city who does not have a lover at the moment, and I am sure that many people are taking delight in love while I am squandering my time to no purpose. To do as others do is no sin, and no-one can be reproached for that (Boccaccio, 1980, p. 38).

Il Filostrato ends with the address of the author to his work. However, the ending of *Troilus and Criseyde*, apart from other aspects of love presented in the work, enriches the work as an exploration of love with its various dimensions. At the end of the story, Troilus is killed by Achilles at the battlefield and his spirit goes to the 8th Sphere. He looks down upon the earth blissfully and thinks how vain all the pleasures of the world are when compared to the joys of Heaven. He recognizes that earthly love is mere folly as it does not last long:

As he looked down, there came before his eyes
This little spot of earth, that with the sea
Lies all embraced, and found he could despise
This wretched world, and hold it vanity,
Measured against the full felicity
That is in Heaven above; and, at the last,
To where he had been slain his look he cast,

And laughed within him at the woe of those
Who wept his death so busily and fast,

Condemning everything we do that flows
From blind desire, which can never last,
When all our thought on Heaven should be cast;
And forth he went, not to be long in telling,
Where Mercury appointed him his dwelling.

(Chaucer, 1971, v, 1814-1827)

It may seem contradictory to end a love story with the praise of greater divine love, but it is one of the ways that Chaucer shows the paradoxes of human life. Martin observes that

The late medieval society that recent historical critics have recovered or constructed turns out to be not quietly hierarchical, uniform, and static but limited, plural, mobile, divided, internally subverted and its literature, whether willingly or unwillingly, bears witness to its contradictions (1990, p. xii).

Although love is the main subject to be explored with its various dimensions and it is praised, Chaucer also wants to draw attention to the fact that human beings are not the helpless victims of fate and they are free to control their lives. It is a matter of choice for people, as they can reject the pleasures of this world and love God which will lead them to eternal happiness. With this aspect of the story Chaucer adds a philosophical depth to the work, which is an influence of Boethius on Chaucer.

The Influence of Previous Works

According to New Historicism, the earlier works a writer has read are also influential in the production of a literary work. In addition, New Historicists believe that there is an interaction between all sorts of discourses and as result a text written at a particular time is a product of this interaction. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer makes use of a variety of earlier texts as a result of his accumulated reading and career as “grant translateur” (Howes,1991, p.1). Chaucer acknowledges none of his sources apart from Lollius, a mysterious writer, whose existence cannot be proved. Despite this, it is Boccaccio’s work that he reworks and makes up the main outline of the story and it is *The Consolation of Philosophy* by the Roman literary figure Boethius, which adds a philosophical dimension to *Troilus and Criseyde*. According to Wiener, “literary study stresses that the life of texts only begins with their fashioning. They are always in process; they enact, they perform, they effect” (1998, p. 621). Texts are subject to re-contextualization and they gain a new meaning in the text that may have been produced at a different historical moment.

Many concerns of Boethius’ philosophy are either paraphrased or expressed by the characters in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer enriches his narrative with moral and philosophical reflections by references to Boethius’ philosophy which lets the reader make his/her interpretation in analyzing the theme of love. Chaucer, like Boethius, keeps love as a supreme power which has a control on people’s lives:

And therefore take example, from this man,

You wise ones, proud ones, worthy ones and all;
Never scorn love, for love so quickly can
Put all the freedom of your heart in thrall;
It has been ever thus and ever shall,
For love can lay his bonds on every creature,
And no one can undo the law of Nature.

(Chaucer, 1971, i, 232-238)

According to Boethius' philosophy, Love has the power to bind things together. Lady Philosophy explains that the world maintains a harmony with the effect of good fortune and bad fortune equally. Besides, one of the elements that keeps the world peaceful is Love, as Boethius praises it in the song in Book II:

Love, too, holds peoples joined
By sacred bond of treaty,
And weaves the holy knot
Of marriage's pure love.
Love promulgates the laws
For friendship's faithful bond.
O happy race of men
If Love who rules the sky

Could rule your hearts as well!

(Boethius, 1978, p. 77)

A similar passage can be found in Chaucer in Book III, which shows love in a positive way with its binding power. The influence of *The Consolation of Philosophy* allows all three characters in *Troilus and Criseyde* to reflect on and express their concerns on the sense of Fate and Fortune. Troilus, Criseyde and Pandarus are made to reflect on what happens in the love story which is under the control of Fortune. As an example, Chaucer created a more reflective character with Criseyde and it can be exemplified when she is made to think of past, present and future, which has no parallel in *Filostrato*.

Time past I safely stored in memory,
Time present also I had eyes to see;
Time future, till it caught me in the snare,
I could not see, and thence has come my care.

(Chaucer, 1971, v, 746-749)

Troilus has more monologues than Troilo on philosophical subjects like love and destiny. Chaucer's story is mainly about the difficulties of the code of love, the hardships of gaining and keeping it, and sorrows of love when it is lost. Lovers do not have much chance of happiness when

their life is controlled by Fortune and harsh realities. In this passage, Troilus accuses Fortune of his misfortune in love and its irresistible influence on people's lives:

For – well I know it- Fortune is my foe;
Not one of all the men that come and go
On earth can set at naught her cruel wheel;
She plays with us and there is no appeal.

(Chaucer, 1971, i, 837-840)

It is Pandarus' speech after Troilus, which recalls Philosophy's defense of Fortune in *The Consolation of Philosophy* as to the fact that, as the wheel of Fortune turns there is as much chance of good or bad fortune. In Book II, Lady Philosophy defends Fortune in Fortune's own words trying to make her point in her argument that because change is the nature of things, one must bear with patience whatever befalls on man:

Inconstancy is my very essence; it is the game I never cease to play as I turn my wheel in its ever changing circle, filled with joy as I bring the top to the bottom and the bottom to the top. Yes, rise up on my wheel if you like, but don't count it an injury when by the same token you begin to fall, as the rules of the game will require. You must surely have been aware of my ways
(Boethius, 1978, p. 57)

At the center of Boethius' philosophy lies the criticism of the vanity of worldly goods such as riches, power, beauty or fame. Finding true happiness is possible by a turn to God, the supreme good which governs all things. The unsatisfactory nature of earthly experience, mainly human love in *Troilus and Criseyde*, is directly underscored at the end of the poem. After presenting various aspects of love, celestial love takes over at the end of the poem, and this continues the echoes of Boethius' Philosophy. According to Boethius' Philosophy, Fortune can bring forth all the riches, power, fame and success, as well as misfortunes of this world. However, man also has free will and can choose to stay away from worldly vanities and live to find eternal bliss. Each individual has opportunities for choice and can enjoy the pleasures of this world which are ephemeral or devote himself or herself to divine power. In Book V, Troilus dies and his soul looks down on to the earth from the eighth sphere. He laughs at "this false world's brittleness" (Chaucer, 1971, v, 1832). Under the influence of the philosophy of Boethius, Chaucer presents love with different aspects and invites criticism.

The Gardens in *Troilus and Criseyde*

The study of gardens as a setting for courtly love and a reflection of aristocratic life is important in the analysis of *Troilus and Criseyde* as a means to reflect on the changes made by Chaucer. As medieval texts and illustrations indicate gardens had an important role in the lives of upper classes. Pleasure gardens which separated them from the outside world were a place for dining, walking and the entertainment of their visitors or sometimes a spot for solitude when they wanted.

Gardens are also an integral part of courtly literature in which lovers can find repose and an opportunity for union and correspondence. Gardens and garden illustrations can be found in literary texts as a part of the social life of the middle ages. Wiener maintains that

First, that we can know the past only through texts of one sort or another, texts which necessarily partake of literary characteristics, and second, that these texts' meanings cannot be abstracted from the historical context in which they are produced and consumed (1998, p. 621).

The best way to study a literary text is to study it through the lens of the culture that produced it. For New Historicists, as Wilson suggests, "political pamphlets, religious tracts, medical records, houses and gardens are all of equal critical and political interest as cultural products shaped by a particular knowledge or discourse" (1995, p. 9). To begin with, the study of gardens in Chaucer's works shows the influence of medieval *topoi* in his works and his interaction with previous works. Chaucer in translating *Troilus and Criseyde* into Middle English transformed the well-known story into his own composition. Spiegel asserts that "The historical text is not given but must be constructed" (1990, p. 75). Therefore, in *Troilus and Criseyde* the poet constructs the story not with the aim of continuing the same story but fashioning the story according to his needs. One of the transformations can be seen in the extended use of gardens. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer uses garden images more often than Boccaccio and by this means employs more of the conventional courtly love elements. There are courtly love elements in *Il Filostrato* as well; however, in Chaucer each garden brings with it conventional garden features and the use of vocabulary appropriate to it. Chaucer provides a new point of view to study the gardens with which he and his audience were quite familiar. With his garden images, while he reflects the conventional approach in the garden descriptions, he at the same time makes the readers critical of the social and cultural structure of the period.

In *Il Filostrato*, there is only one garden referred to when the two lovers are happy to be together: "He would sometimes take Pandaro by the hand and go off into a garden with him, and having talked to him about Criseida's nobility and graciousness, he would then in a carefree mood begin joyfully to sing to him" (Boccaccio, 1980, p. 54).

Chaucer uses gardens as settings for the lovers and changes Boccaccio's private spaces, mostly rooms into a setting more suitable to conventional courtly codes. Boccaccio uses rooms, chambers for privacy or sometimes correspondence. Criseida reads Troilo's letter in her own room to keep the affair secret: "Pandaro went away at once he had given it to her, and she, being very eager to know what it said, found an excuse, left her companions, went off to sit in her room, and having opened it, read and re-read it with pleasure (Boccaccio, 1980, p.43).

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, three songs on love are sung in the gardens. The songs on love that are sung in gardens make the gardens a place for reflecting about love and an ideal place for the lovers to come together. The first garden in *Troilus and Criseyde* takes place when Pandarus tells his niece

about Troilus's love for her and his misery from love-sickness. The second garden in *Troilus and Criseyde* belongs to Criseyde, which is described in its physical terms. Having heard of Troilus' love for her, and reflected on the dangers of falling in love, she goes into the garden of the palace. The difference between Troilus' garden and the activities of Troilus and Criseyde in the garden highlight the difference between the attitudes of the lovers toward love. Troilus once struck by the arrow of love is a servant to love; however, Criseyde is quite realistic about the outcome of love and her name in the society and acts by considering them. Therefore, the emphasis on the physical conditions of the garden and her reflective attitude in the garden indicate that Criseyde will act in a realistic way when she has to make a choice between her security and her love for Troilus. Despite its realistic aspect, Criseyde's garden serves its conventional purpose with Antigone's song on love. Her song favours love by suggesting that sorrow is inevitable on the path to love's joy, and although Criseyde is undecided as to love Troilus or not, the song makes Criseyde consent to love and her fear of love lessens. Another garden scene can be found in Book II, when Pandarus delivers Troilus' letter to Criseyde. Letters are an important means of communication between lovers to preserve secrecy. In this part of the poem, Criseyde is reluctant to respond to Troilus' love. Pandarus tries to convince her into loving Troilus by offering to go into the garden to deliver the letter and to seek privacy there. Gardens served privacy as enclosed areas separating the upper class members from the outside world. As Howes suggests, it was also the legal right of people to have privacy in their gardens: "Indeed, privacy from one's neighbour seems to have been protected by legal codes of the fourteenth century" (1991, p.113). Thus, in *Troilus and Criseyde* gardens take place as settings for pleasure, and privacy. Moreover, they help to present love with its different aspects, mostly in a favourable light. In Book III, there are mainly references to the blissful moments of the lovers after the establishment of the secret meetings between them. In this part of the poem, the lovers are quite happy to be able to meet each other secretly:

And often taking Pandar by the arm
Into the garden, in a joyous mood,
He fashioned feasts of language on her charm,
Praising Criseyde, praising her womanhood,
Praising her beauty; it was more than good,
It was a heaven, to hear his praises ring,
And in this manner then he used to sing:

(Chaucer, 1971, iii, 1737-1743)

Through the character of Troilus and with the song he sings in the garden Chaucer refers to the binding power of love, which is also an invocation of Boethius' view of love as "universal equilibrium, virtue, and heavenly accord" (Howes, 1991, p.119). However, in the poem the conflict lies in the necessities of real life and the codes of courtly love. Chaucer juxtaposes conventions of courtly love with political and social realities of real life. In the real world, the lovers' actions are determined by the pressures of the society they live in. After three years of their secret love, Criseyde

has to leave Troilus as she has to obey the claims of her father and leave Troy to be exchanged with Antenor. With the unfortunate separation and the death of Troilus at the end, the validity of courtly values is questioned. To sum up, what Chaucer revises in *Troilus and Criseyde* is not simply adding more courtly elements, but using his narrative as a ground for the examination of the validity of courtly love.

Conclusion

The analysis of a story in different periods reveals that the contexts of literary texts may change in different periods. New Historicists emphasize discontinuous nature of history and related to this view, the transformed meaning of the text. The interpretation can be devised concerning one of the assumptions of New Historicism that the text can be fashioned and adapted to the literary purpose of the writer and changing atmosphere of the period. Transformation that *Il Filostrato* went through in *Troilus and Criseyde* suggests an investigation of the possibility for individual choice and expression within an established convention both on the side of the characters and the writer. New Historicists read histories against established histories. Instead of a sense of a history as unchanging, the context of a work can be seen in a new light by the shifting conditions of the times. Besides, as Montrose suggests, “One has his own vantage points that are intuitively, historically and socially shaped” (cited in Veaser, 1989, p. 23). Therefore, certain differences can be determined in different periods as it can be seen in the adaptation of the story of *Troilus and Criseyde* written by Boccaccio, Chaucer, respectively. This article offers an explanation to the changes and novelties brought forth by Chaucer. It is observed that Chaucer could both reflect the existing ideals and conditions of his era and raise criticism about gender roles, the waning ideals of courtly love and effects of love on people. Although love is the underlying theme, with the influence of Boethius’ *Consolation of Philosophy* philosophical depth is added and characters and themes are presented with a complexity. To sum up, with the additions and changes made by Chaucer, an old story is seen in a new context and larger questions are studied through a seemingly narrow topic, *love*.

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