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# A study of Chaucer's Pandarus: His character, his actions, his motives

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A Study of Chaucer's Pandarus:  
His Character, His Actions, His Motives  
(TITLE)

BY

Zita Cobble

**THESIS**

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A Study of Chaucer's Pandarus:  
His Character, His Actions, His Motives

By Zita Cobble

Thesis Abstract

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May 7, 1983

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A Study of Chaucer's Pandarus:  
His Character, His Actions, His Motives

This study of Pandarus is an investigation of his character, his actions, and his motives. These topics are dealt with by analyzing answers to essential questions.

First the paper explores why Pandarus becomes intermediary for Troilus and Criseyde by first providing a brief definition of the chivalric ethic and some background regarding the courtly love tradition as outlined by Andreas Capellanus' De Amore. The go-between is a commonplace character in courtly love affairs, but Pandarus deviates from the normal role in two basic ways: his social status and his close relationship with both lovers. Pandarus reveals himself as an opportunistic voyeur who furthers his own ends by using his family and friends.

The second part weighs Pandarus' responsibilities to his niece against his friendship and loyalty to Troilus. As a responsible uncle, Pandarus should be a staunch guardian of his niece's good name, social standing, and general welfare always guiding her along the right path. As a true friend and loyal knight, he should advise, console, and reason with his friend while acting honorably as a knight himself at all times. Pandarus accomplishes consummation of Troilus and Criseyde's affair by using lies and deception, proving that

honorable ends cannot be achieved through dishonorable means. As a result, Pandarus violates Criseyde's trust, abuses his friendship with Troilus, and fails as an honorable and loyal knight. Relevant background explanations of friendship, knighthood, and loyalty facilitate understanding the conclusions reached in the discussion.

The third part deals with the theme of moderation, particularly personal "governance" as it relates to the well-being of the knight, his lord, and the kingdom. Pandarus should be doing his best to keep Troilus fit for duty and behaving moderately while he himself remains clear-headed and maintains personal "governance" all the while. Instead, Pandarus encourages and aids Prince Troilus in his pursuit of a love affair which excludes all of his intellectual and heroic values and allows his lower appetites to take control over him. This loss of control endangers not only the Prince, but the common good of the kingdom as well. Pandarus' involvement does not end here, however, because he continues his operations until control eventually is taken from him, but he cannot stop his attempts to manipulate a situation which Fate has already decided. His own "governance" is gone, and he never regains it as Troilus does. Troilus is able to transcend his earthly concerns and see how futile and utterly unimportant they are after he dies in battle. So, Pandarus succeeds only in prolonging a painful love affair by exploiting Troilus, Criseyde, and their love.

Pandarus' flawed character causes him to exercise poor

judgement in choosing the immediate gratification of earthly pleasures rather than looking toward a heavenly reward. His actions are dishonorable because he procures his niece for his friend, and he leads his friend into immoderate behavior through lies and deception. He is ultimately motivated by his desire to further his personal ends and put them above both family and friends. He loses everything - his friend, his niece, his good name, and his self-respect.

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I would like to thank Dr. John Simpson, my adviser, for his time and patience, my family for all their help, and F. N. Robinson whose anthology, The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, was the authoritative source of Troilus and Criseyde used as the basis for this thesis.

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Pandarus is a far more vital character than he is often perceived, and he has been described in these terms:

...He runs on hopeful mission, and makes leaping entrance with good news. At one time or another in his niece's presence, he embraces her, whispers in her ear, thrusts a letter into her bosom, kneels in petition, brings her ceremonially to bed and playfully wrestles with her upon it, affects readiness to kill himself with a knife and to let her kill him with a sword, laughs, weeps, and clears his throat. Laughing and weeping with his friend, he is his partner in vigorous exercise in the garden; within doors shakes him, provides him with a light, a cloak, a cushion, strips off his shirt, and tosses him into the lady's bed. A guest in the establishments of two princes of the blood, he had one of his own capacious enough for a party giving and intrigue and hence evidential of rank.

...He is represented or represents himself to be: A preacher of the amatory faith, a physician who ironically cannot cure himself, an architect of plot, a deceiver and relisher of the power obtainable

through intrigue and argument, an individual who knows all the old dance yet steps haltingly to the measure, one though blind able to proceed where the clear-sighted fall....<sup>1</sup>

This study of Chaucer's Pandarus will examine his character, his actions, and his motives. Specific questions are: What prompts Pandarus to become the intermediary for Troilus and Criseyde? Is he perhaps only swept along by the thrill of intrigue? Does Pandarus feel a responsibility to act as his niece's protector, since she is a young widow whose father is a traitor or is he more concerned about his friend and lord the young knight Troilus? Are his motives depraved and immoral, or does he act honorably as a true friend and loyal knight? Is he able to maintain personal "governance" and control, or does he behave immoderately?

To reach valid conclusions, it is necessary to understand relevant aspects of the medieval courtly love tradition and chivalric ethical code which govern the knights. Ideally, the true chivalric knight had a deep love of the Church and was ready to die defending it. He must always be loyal to the land of his birth and his lord. His strength must serve to protect and aid the weak, to champion right against injustice and evil, and never to fail in the face of the enemy, thus enhancing his king's glory through his own. In reality, of course, a knight does not always live up to this ideal. His code of honor and loyalty is sometimes mis-applied, as



in the case of Pandarus.

As a subject in Priam's court and a close associate of knights such as Hector, Deiphebus, and Troilus, Pandarus is subject to the same ethical code as governs their behavior. However, his conduct must not be judged by this code alone because he also acts in a role which is sanctioned and approved by the courtly love code or tradition, namely go-between for two lovers, an element of courtly love many times not clearly understood by students and critics of Chaucer in evaluating Pandarus.<sup>2</sup>

The presumed evidence for the "courts of love" as well as for a great deal else concerning "courtly love" appears in the Latin treatise De Amore by Andreas Capellanus. Andreas' third book makes explicit everything he implies in the first two books. In it he explains that no man can devote himself to love and at the same time please God because God detests Venus and fornication. Obsessive physical love is not only offensive to God, but it also injures one's neighbor so it is inimical to charity and to friendship, which is a reasonable relationship. It injures both body and soul. The virtue of chastity is violated in love, and this leads to loss of reputation and blasphemy. Love ruins a woman's good name, "even if she is loved by one of royal race." The delight of the flesh is not a great good but a sin which causes loss of reputation and inattention to duty.<sup>3</sup> This is, in part at least, the reason for placing so much importance on secrecy in the affair of Troilus and Criseyde - to keep

their guilt from being known. All the parties involved, Pandarus included, are guilty of fornication. But, rather than condemn some romantic conception of "courtly love," Andreas condemns instead the foolishness and vice to which unbridled concupiscence, immoderate behavior, leads. What will happen if we slacken the bridle and let the horse run away with us?<sup>4</sup> This is the problem Andreas addresses throughout the treatise.

This problem is quite similar to the one which faces Pandarus. He has a friend, Troilus, whom he has loved "In wrong and right; / ...al my live -" (I, 594), and who has a very serious love problem. The case is so severe it will be fatal if something is not done promptly; Troilus has been immobilized and is neglecting his duty because of this longing for his beloved. So, Pandarus acts at once, making himself available to Troilus and Criseyde as go-between.

As a character in a love poem, Troilus is entitled to have a consoling friend to help him through this affair and to listen to him and to suggest possible tactics when he is asked to do so. Although the role itself is commonplace enough, it was not usually someone of Pandarus' stature who filled it; for,

...Go-betweens were usually servants, retainers, waiting maids, and the like, persons of lower station, with whom a gentleman could not allow himself to be confused....<sup>5</sup>

Also, Pandarus acts alone in a function that was normally carried out by two people.

...A man and woman who embarked on a courtly love affair could each have a confidant to act as go-between, but no one else was supposed to know about the matter. The Troilus and Criseyde story has only one go-between for the two lovers, namely Pandarus....<sup>6</sup>

He makes certain that Troilus sends him to Criseyde by convincing him that he can keep a secret saying:

"And of o thyng right siker maistow be,  
That certein, for to dyen in the peyne,  
That I shal nevere mo discoveren the;  
Ne, by my troughe, I kepe not restreyne  
The fro thi love, theigh that it were Eleyne  
That is thi brother wif, if ich it wiste:  
Be what she be, and love hire as the liste!" (I, 673-79)

However, does Pandarus take the morally proper course of action? After learning it is a lady causing Troilus so much pain, he says he can help only if he knows her identity. Pandarus says remember, "...For whoso list have helyng of his leche, / To hym byhoveth first unwre his wownde..." (I, 857-58). Intimating he might even know the lady, he offers to contact her at once, and she will belong to Troilus forever:

"...To Cerberus yn helle ay be I bounde, / Were it for my suster, al thy sorwe, / By my wil she sholde al by thyn to-morwe." (I,859-61) At last, having convinced Troilus of his capability and reliability, Pandarus becomes his intermediary.

This is, however, only half the task; he must establish himself as Criseyde's go-between and convince her, too, that he is acting in her best interests, which will be no trouble since Criseyde trusts him implicitly:

"But, for the love of God, I yow biseche,  
 As ye ben he that I love moost and triste,  
 Lat be to me youre fremde manere speche,  
 And sey to me, youre nece, what yow liste."  
 And with that word hire uncle anoon hire kiste,  
 And seyde, "Gladly, leve nece dere!  
 Tak if for good, that I shal sey yow here."

(II, 246-52)

He not only delivers Troilus' letters to Criseyde, he even waits for a reply making sure she answers as he wants, "No? than wol I," quod he, 'so ye endite'" (II, 1162), and that no other servant is selected to deliver it. So, Pandarus deviates from the normal role in at least two basic ways. Firstly, he is not a servant to anyone; he is a gentleman with servants and property of his own. He is well accepted in the palace of King Priam and in the quarters of his sons. In fact, he is nearly as friendly with Deiphebus as he is with Troilus. He goes to Deiphebus, "...Which hadde his

lord and grete frend ben ay; / Save Troilus, no man he loved so...." (II, 1403-4) to enlist his aid when he arranges the first meeting between Troilus and Criseyde. Secondly, Pandarus does not fit the role because he is too close to both parties involved. He is a close friend of the lover, and he is uncle to the beloved.

What then can we conclude regarding Pandarus' motives in becoming the only intermediary in this affair? If the intermediaries are servants, they are merely tools the lovers use to their own ends, but Pandarus becomes the manipulator of the situation and the people in it. He has the power of "life" and "deth" in his "hond" (I, 1053). Pandarus may be genuinely concerned for Troilus's welfare, and he may exaggerate when he offers his own "suster," but he becomes somewhat of an opportunist who wants to secure his own future, and a voyeur who wants to enjoy "the old daunce" once more.

No secret is made of the fact that Pandarus is not a great lover; the opposite is nearer the truth. Although he has attempted to love and be loved in return, he has been unsuccessful all his life. He has reached middle age and has lived with unrequited love for so long his frustration must be intense. This feeling could not have been lessened by his friend Troilus' reply to his offer to help him with his situation: "'This were a wonder thing,' quod Troilus. / 'Thow koudest nevere in love thiselven wisse: / How devel maistow brynge me to blisse?'" (I, 621-23). Pandarus does not seem offended by this, but we know he is portrayed as an artful actor. He responds only that a fool may often guide

a wise man, and Troilus should just trust him. An opportunity has presented itself; "Aha! quod Pandare, 'Here bygyn-neth game'" (I, 868), and Pandarus intends to use it to "make up for his own failure in love by sweating to bring Troilus down to earth and persuading Criseyde to meet him there."<sup>7</sup> Pandarus goes far beyond mere advisor and confidant; he all but becomes the lover: "For this or that, he into bed hym caste, / and seyde, 'O thef, is this a mannes herte?' / And of he rente al to his bare sherte;" (III, 1097-99). Pandarus a voyeur? Perhaps.

"And therwithal hire arm over hym she leyde,  
 And al foryaf, and ofte tyme hym keste....  
 Quod Pandarus, 'For aught I kan asprien,  
 This light, nor I, ne serven here of nought,  
 Light is nought good for sike folkes yen!...  
 And bar the candele to the chymeneye."

(III, 1128-41)

He attained his goal by bringing Troilus and Criseyde together. "From the beginning, it is Pandarus who not only goes to Criseyde and informs her of his lord's love for her; he takes over and tries to persuade her to commit the act of love by extolling Troilus' merits."<sup>8</sup> Pandarus is indeed not only doing for Troilus what he cannot do for himself; he is vicariously doing through Troilus what he has not been able to do himself. ✓

Having been given the full trust and confidence of his friend, Troilus has also given Pandarus a considerable responsibility. His position could also afford this ingenious manipulator a great deal of satisfaction. Pandarus has shown himself to be a shrewd worldly character who, in the beginning, sees things clearly as they are and accepts them: "No wonder is, ...wommen dreden with us men to dele" (III, 321-22). However, whether he means well nor not, his judgement is poor because his overzealousness can only end badly, and in the end both Criseyde and Troilus curse Pandarus for the outcome of their affair. First, not knowing whether to welcome him or turn him away since he is responsible for her present misery, Criseyde says to him:

"And in hire aspre pleynte thus she seyde:  
 'Pandare first of joies mo than two  
 Was cause causyng unto me, Criseyde,  
 That now transmewed ben in cruel wo.  
 Wher shal I sey to yow welcom or no,  
 That alderfirst me broughte unto servyse  
 Of love, allas! that endeth in swichwise?"  
 (IV, 828-833)

Then Troilus turns on him for giving him bad advice:

"O Pandarus, that in dremes for to triste  
 Me blamed hast, and wont art oft upbreyde,  
 Now maistow se thiself, if that the liste,  
 How trewe is now thi nece, bright Criseyde!...  
 (V, 1709-12)

He is even upset with Pandarus for being Criseyde's uncle as if he could expect little else from a traitor's daughter, but his friend's niece should be a different story. Someone as wise as Pandarus surely would know the blame and guilt, or at least share of it, would fall on him when the affair collapses. Further, he realizes that were his actions known he would be considered guilty:

"And were it wist that I, through myn engyn,  
 Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie,  
 To doon thi lust and holly to ben thyn,  
 Whi, al the world upon it woulde crie,  
 And syn that I the werst trecherie  
 Dide in this cas, that evere was bigonne,  
 And she forlost, and thos right nought ywonne."

(III, 274-280)

However, his guilt is not diminished simply because the world does not know about it. Troilus may excuse him on the grounds of "gentillesse, / Compassioun and falawship, and trist" (III, 402), but, if Pandarus himself did not realize his guilt, he would not feel the need to seek understanding from anyone "for that wikked dede" (III, 291). He has involved himself in a situation which becomes unmanageable because of its complexity.

Before he is finished, Pandarus has enmeshed most of the nobility in Troy in his net of intrigue in his effort to effect consummation of this love affair. His complicated plot



involves lying to Deiphebus about some unscrupulous men who are trying to take Criseyde's property:

"...Lo, sire, I have a lady in this town,  
That is my nece, and called is Criseyde,  
Which some men wolden don oppressioun,  
And wrongfully han dire possessioun;  
Wherfore I of youre lordship yow beseche  
To ben oure frend, withouten more speche."

(II, 1416-21)

After such a tale, Deiphebus, of course, offers to be "hir champion" and speak to Helen, Hector, and Paris on behalf of Criseyde. He tells Pandarus also to talk with Troilus on his "bahalve" and ask him to dine with them, an act which tells us that Deiphebus expects Pandarus will see Troilus before he does and that Pandarus is of such high stature he can speak for one prince to another. His next bit of deliberate trickery is immediate; he hurries "to his neces hous, as streyght as a lyne" (II, 1461). Taking her completely by surprise, he rushes breathlessly into her home:

"He seide, 'O verray God, so have I ronnel  
Lo, nece myn, se ye nought how I swete?  
I not wheither ye the more thank me konne.  
Be ye naught war how false Poliphete  
Is now aboute eftsones for the plete  
And brynge on yow advocacies newe?'  
"I? no,' quod she, and chaunged al hire hewe."

(II, 1464-70)

This obvious effort to frighten Criseyde into dependence on Troilus and his family has its desired effect; she pales at the news because she knows Antenor and Eneas are friends of Poliphete, and they do not like or trust her because of Calcas. This is also exactly what makes Pandarus' lie so despicable - he knows just how frightened and vulnerable she is as a young widow deserted by her traitorous father. He knows she fears for her very life and with good reason since:

"...Through al the town, and generally was spoken,  
That Calkas traitour fled was and allied  
With hem of Greece, and casten to be wroken  
On hym that falsly hadde his feith so broken,  
And seyden he and al his kyn at - ones  
Ben worthi for to brennen, fel and bones."

(I, 86-91)

This is a stigma which Pandarus seems to have escaped probably because he is Criseyde's mother's brother and not a blood relative of Calcas. So, rather than appreciate his Niece's fear of "brennen, fel and bones," he uses it against her shortly after she has had to deny her own father and plead for mercy from Hector:

"This lady, which that alday herd at ere  
Hire fadres shame, his falsnesse and tresoun,  
Wel niegh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere,  
In widewes habit large of samyt broun,  
On knees she fil befor Ector adown

With pitous vois, and tendrely wepynge,  
His mercy bad, hirselves excusynge." (I, 106-12)

Rather than being forced to "fil on his knees biforn Ector" or Priam, Pandarus is welcomed by them and comes and goes freely in the palace as well as in their private quarters.

The deceit continues. Realizing he needs Troilus' cooperation if his plan is to work, Pandarus decides to confess what he has been doing so that he can convince Troilus to feign sickness when they all dine at Deiphebus' quarters the next evening.

"He admonishes Troilus seriously and at length to keep counsel, to treasure Criseyde's reputation. A boasting lover is a liar, he explains, and we know Pandarus detests lies and liars. Troilus returns a solemn promise. The surfaces must be kept clean."<sup>9</sup>

The stage is set for the first meeting between Troilus and Criseyde by the scheming of her uncle. This meeting proves to be the decisive moment of the story because, although Criseyde has been unable to make a decision for herself, she accepts the decision which has been made for her. She is a widow experienced enough to know "love is yet the mooste stormy lyf" (II, 778), and she is not inclined toward having a "housbonde seyn...chek mat!" (II, 754).

She has serious doubts about granting Troilus a private meeting, but here it is devised for her.<sup>10</sup> Pandarus realizes

this is complete surrender on Criseyde's part, but this knowledge is not enough for such an energetic schemer. He is not finished yet; there are more lies and plots to come in Book III.

In order to bring the affair to consummation without delay, Pandarus invites Criseyde to "Come soupen in his hous with him at eve" (III, 560). She hesitates to accept until her uncle assures her Troilus is,

"...out of towne,  
 And seyde, 'Nece, I pose that he were;  
 Yow thurste nevere han the more fere;  
 For rather than men myghte hym ther asprie,  
 Me were levere a thousand fold to dye,'"

(III, 570-74)

Criseyde joins Pandarus for supper, and while she is there, Fortune influences the heavens to make it rain. Pandarus siezes the opportunity to convince Criseyde. She must spend the night. Then, with no other motive than putting Criseyde on the defensive, thus making her more receptive, Pandarus concocts a story about Troilus being in "swich peyne and distresse" (III, 792) because some friend of his has told him, "...that ye sholde loven oon that hatte Horaste" (III, 797). While she is denying these rumors, Troilus bursts into the bedroom through a trapdoor supposedly beside himself with jealousy. He is so nervous and confused by all of their lies he falls "Aswoune." Pandarus admonishes Criseyde to "pullen out the thorn" (III, 1104); Troilus recovers, embraces his

lady, and Pandarus - at last satisfied his services are no longer needed - retires to the chimney corner.<sup>11</sup>

Pandarus must have some reasons for so painstakingly arranging every detail and setting up the movements of virtually every other character in the poem. Are his motives depraved and immoral, or does he act honorably out of friendship and loyalty? The friendship which exists between Troilus and Pandarus is a special one which we must understand in order to realize the extent of its importance to Pandarus and the part it plays in what he does for his "fulle frend." From the beginning of the poem, they address each other in this way as when Troilus says:

"Suffiseth this, my fulle frend Pandare,  
That I have seyde, for now wostow my wo;  
And for the love of God, my colde care,  
So hide it wel - I tolde it nevere to mo..."

(I, 610-13)

Later, when Pandarus wants to help his friend return to his former stability, he is

"...desirous to serve  
His fulle frend, than seyde in this manere:  
'Farwell, and thenk I wol thi thank deserve!  
Have here my trowthe, and that thow shalt  
wel here.'..." (I, 1058-61)

Pandarus is also friendly with Deiphebus but on a different level. He asks his "grete frend" for help in a family

legal matter, but there is no indication here of the intimacy which exists between Pandarus and Troilus who are closer than some brothers. Several conclusions may be drawn from this - one is that their relationship reflects the ethical relationship between a warrior and his lord. Troilus proves his willingness to serve Pandarus in like manner when he offers one of his sisters:

"And, that thow knowe I thynke not, ne wene,  
That this servise a shame be or jape,  
I have my faire suster Polixene,  
Cassandre, Eleyne, or any of the frape,  
Be she nevere so fair or wel yshape,  
Telle me which thow wilt of everychone,  
To han for thyn, and lat me thanne allone."

(III, 407-13)

It means so much to him that Pandarus has spoken favorably of him to Criseyde, and it appears their physical union is imminent.

Pandarus and Troilus also serve the same king; Pandarus, however, serves Prince Troilus too, so there is a kind of dual bond between them. They serve together as comrades in arms, and at the same time there is the warrior-lord bond between his lord Troilus and Pandarus. Troilus is a knight of such stature that he is second only to Hector in military prowess and he is:

"...the kynges deere sone,

The goode, wise, worthi, fresshe, and free,  
 Which alwey for to don wel is his wone,  
 The noble Troilus. . . ." (II, 316-19)

As such, Troilus is subject to a code of ethics governing his behavior as a prince of "estat roial," a knight, and a warrior in King Priam's service all of which carry certain duties and responsibilities. His first allegiance or loyalty must be to his lord and king who returns his support and security; he must fight always for his own glory, which, in turn, enhances his lord's glory; a warrior must never fail either ethically or morally because this weakens the warrior-lord relationship; and above all he must neither act immoderately nor lose his "gouvernaunce" because this would in turn endanger the "gouvernaunce" of the kingdom.<sup>12</sup> Pandarus, thus, is bound by friendship, comradship, and duty to maintain Troilus' "gouvernaunce."<sup>14</sup>

Although Pandarus cannot possibly know what extraordinary turns Fate has in store for his comrade on this Feast of Pallas, he will have a direct hand in the loss of "gouvernaunce" Troilus will soon suffer.

Troilus, a great Trojan warrior, is leading a group of young knights and squires through the Palladium. There are also many young beautiful maidens at the feast, but he is not impressed and continues to walk "ful faste" through the crowd. With a self-assurance bordering on arrogance, he would "smyle and holden it folye" (I, 194) if any of his troupe stopped to "woo" a maiden calling them "fooles, nyce and blynde" (I, 202).

Here he is, the "verray parfit knight" with complete "gouvernaunce" scoffing at love and lovers not realizing that the higher he "clomben on the staire" (I, 215), the greater the fall when "he moot descenden" (I, 216). He continues walking around glancing casually first at one lady then another "Til on Criseyde it smot, and ther it stente" (I, 273). He is stricken; captivated by "hire stature," "hire lymes," even "hire mevyng" (I, 281-85); he cannot take his eyes off her; never has he "seen so good a syghte" (I, 294). Then, realizing he is staring all agape, Troilus tries to regain his composure, but it is futile. His pride will not allow him to speak to her with all his friends watching; they would laugh at him. There is nothing he can do except leave the temple, repenting for ever having joked about love - now he must laugh at himself.

When he is alone in his room, he begins to sigh and groan and finally to sing of the love with which he "brennes." In his song he dedicates his spirit, his very soul to the God of Love (I, 421), and even thanks him for bringing him to this. As the days pass, he becomes "al stereless withenne a boot" (I, 416), and his love "... brende hym so in soundry wise ay newe, / That sexti tyme a day he loste his hewe" (I, 440-41). His woe increases "A thousand fold" until at last he is so out of control that he regularly retires to his room to weep and wail. Such behavior, it must be noted, is neither unmanly nor out of keeping with the courtly love tradition.



What is wrong with Troilus' behavior is that it is not going unnoticed as he thinks; it interferes with the performance of his duties. This is why Pandarus follows him one day and listens to his carrying on so that Troilus does not even realize he is not alone until Pandarus speaks to him. Pandarus attacks him with a series of questions designed to make him angry enough to forget his problem. But, it does not work - Troilus says he is dying of a sorrow greater than anything the Greeks have done and Pandarus should "... go wey, ther is no more to seye." Troilus obviously wishes to preserve the secrecy of his love and the good reputation of his lady. Rather than respect his friend's wishes and "go wey," Pandarus appeals to him in the name of their friendship to reveal his problem so that they can do something about it. Upon learning that it is indeed love of a lady, and that Troilus has no intention of making it known to her, Pandarus takes advantage of his vulnerability with the first of his convincing arguments saying:

"Thow mayst allone here wepe and crye and knele,-  
 But love a womman that she woot it nought,  
 And she wol quyte it that thow shalt nat fele;  
 Unknowe, unkist, and lost, that is unsought.  
 What! many a man hath love ful deere ybought  
 Twenty wynter that his lady wist,  
 That nevere yet his lady mouth he kiste."

(I, 806-12)

The first step is taken. Knowing his friend as he does,

Pandarus lets Troilus go on blaming Fortune and feeling sorry for himself. Pandarus knows Troilus will never be satisfied with a strictly Platonic affair, so he presses on.

Pandarus has brought Troilus this far; why not a little farther? He persuades Troilus to reveal his lady's name, and even though it is Pandarus' own niece, they resolve to "Bygynneth (the) game" and pursue it to its natural conclusion. Troilus is so ecstatic that he falls on his knees and throws his arms around Pandarus - his problem is solved, or, more accurately, now it is Pandarus' problem. Pandarus goes away thinking about the best time and place to approach Criseyde with his proposal. Meanwhile, Troilus has,

"... bicom the friendlieste wight,  
The gentilest, and ek the mooste fre,  
The thriftiest and oon the beste knyght,  
That in his time was or myghte be. . . ." (I, 1079-82)

He has become Andreas' "miles amoris" a soldier of love true to the God of Love and the courtly love tradition.

But, his bliss is short-lived because he becomes anxious and impatient:

"But Lord, how shal I doon? How shal I lyven?  
Whan shal I next my deere herte see?  
How shal this longe tyme away be dryven,  
Til that thow be ayein at hire fro me?  
Thow maist answer, 'abid, abid,' but he  
That hangeth by the nekke, soth to seyne  
In gret disese abideth for the peyne." (II, 981-87)

As a result, Pandarus has very little difficulty involving Troilus in his lie to Deiphebus which is discussed earlier. This is not the extent of their deceitfulness. Pandarus also convinces Troilus to go along with his plan to speed consummation of the affair in Book III and to wait beneath a "secre trappe-dore" (III, 759) for admission to Criseyde's bedroom. Thus begins a courtship:

"... grounded on a tissue of lies rather than on 'trouthe.' Both he and Criseyde insisted on an 'up-so-down' relationship directly contrary to reason and honor. And Troilus very carefully renounced, under the direction of Pandarus, his denunciation of 'poeplissh appetit.'"<sup>15</sup>

Pandarus' machinations allow Troilus' lower appetites and instincts to rule his intellect; his "governance" is gone, proving that, as John of Salisbury says, "nothing is more contrary to knighthood than lechery, which disrupts all order."<sup>16</sup> Troilus, however, does begin to see that his lack of personal "governance" could very well endanger the safety of the kingdom when Antenor, one of his companions, is captured by the Greeks. Calkas suggests an exchange of Antenor for Criseyde, and it is all Troilus can do to maintain his composure in front of his father and the council. He is filled with sorrow and despair; "his woful teris nevere stente" (V, 340), so Pandarus suggests drastic action:

"And seyde: 'Frend, syn thow has swych distresse,  
 And syn thee list myn arguments to blame,  
 Why nylyt thiselven helpen don redresse,  
 And with thy manhood letten al this grame?  
 Go ravishe here ne kanstow nat for shame!  
 And other lat here out of towne fare,  
 Or hold here stille, and leve thi nyce fare.'"

(IV, 526-32)

Apparently, it does not matter to Pandarus that what he is suggesting is dangerous and out of the question. Troilus is jarred momentarily back to reality, and for the first time in weeks he remembers there is a "werre" going on, and it would be a "gret unright" for him to go against his father's decree because Criseyde is being exchanged "for the townes goode" (IV, 553). He is still a prince and must consider the "comun profit," so there seems to be a foreshadowing of his restoration to moderation and self-control, that is until Pandarus prods him again, reminding him that if indeed Criseyde loves him as he does her, there would be nothing wrong with seeing her and suggesting they run away together. Troilus washes his tearstained face and returns to his father while Pandarus sets up still another meeting.

This time it is Criseyde who proves she is truly Pandarus' niece by coming up with a clever, if somewhat deceptive, plan of action. She tells Troilus it would be for the good of everyone concerned if they go ahead with the exchange or give that appearance:

"And thenk right thus, 'Criseyde is now agon.  
 But what! she shal come hastiliche ayenyn!  
 And whanne, allas? By God, lo, right anon,  
 Er dayes ten, this dar I saufly.seyn.  
 And than at erste shel we be so feyn,  
 So as we shal togideres evere dwelle,  
 That al this world ne myghte oure blisse telle."

(IV, 1317-23)

Again, at Criseyde's urging, Troilus is briefly restored, his "resoun bridlede his delit" (IV, 1678), and he is resolved to protect Criseyde's reputation, his own "estat roial" (IV, 1667), and the good of Troy. She tells him it is his "moral vertu, grounded upon trouthe" (IV, 1672) that first causes her to take pity on him, and she knows it is his good sense which makes him choose her "aboven every creature" (IV, 1679-80) because she would be his as long as she lives.

Despite all of Pandarus' schemes and arguments, the exchange is made, and Troilus is left alone in Troy cursing Cupid, Venus, and all the other false gods he has embraced in his idolatrous prayers. What basis can we establish for evaluation of Pandarus' involvement in all Troilus suffers? One factor is the friendship and devotion which exists between Troilus and Pandarus; in fact, this appears to be the one mitigating circumstance in this situation for all of Pandarus' manipulating. But, there is more to this relationship than just a close friendship; on many occasions they address each other as "brother." For example, while Pandarus is trying to

elicit the name of the lady in question, Troilus answers: "certes brother, quod this Troilus" (I, 773). One explanation, of course, is that it is used as a term of endearment between friends, and on one level this is probably the case, but in another sense Troilus calling Pandarus his "good brother" indicates something more. They are brothers in the same knighthood, and as such Pandarus is subject to the same code of ethics, the same "law of Kynde" as Troilus. In reality, he is no more loyal to Troilus and the heroic, knightly code than he is later to Criseyde.

Pandarus may be considered as a loyal knight who owes allegiance to "his lord Troilus" and in turn to King Priam. Pandarus feels a strong sense of loyalty to Troilus, a mighty warrior, a good friend, a brother, who is obviously in serious trouble:

"... 'Now frend,' quod he, 'if evere love or trouthe  
 Hath ben, or is, bitwixen the and me,  
 Ne do thow nevere swich a crueltee  
 To hiden fro thi frend so gret a care!  
 Wostow naught wel that it am I, Pandare?'"

(I, 584-588)

He fears the warrior-lord bond will suffer if he allows Troilus to continue as he is, so he promises to help him no matter what it takes. Pandarus is well aware that keeping his word is a very important part of the chivalric code, and indeed he does what he has sworn to do.<sup>17</sup> This in itself seems very honorable and loyal of Pandarus until we take a closer look at how he

accomplishes his goal. We could be a little more sympathetic toward Pandarus and his dilemma (honor bound to get Troilus into an affair and just as honor bound to keep his niece out of one) if he had not offered his own sister to Troilus. He tries to preserve the "appearance" of honor rather than be truly honorable, for example, when he first insists on secrecy in Book I: "...And konne it counseil kepe in swych a wyse / That no man schal the wiser of it be; / And so we may ben gladed all thre" (I, 992-94). But, he soon reveals why it really matters to him. He does not want it known "than I sholde ben his baude" (II, 353) and guilty of "the werste trecherie" (III, 278). He even causes his "brother Troilus" to begin doubting his loyalty when he suggests, "...This town is ful of ladys al aboute; / ...If she be lost, we shal recovere an other" (IV, 400-06). Troilus cannot believe Pandarus would suggest he "shulde love another" (IV, 456) and questions him: "...But kanstow playen raket, to and fro. / Nettle in, dok out, now this, now that, Pandare?" (IV, 460-1) With this metaphor, Troilus indicates he is beginning to perceive Pandarus' disloyalty to Criseyde as disloyalty to himself (Troilus). There is no more doubt in his mind by the time Pandarus has tried to avoid listening to him "telle hym of his pyne" (V, 290), and then suggests that they "pleye" at Sarpedoun's palace for a few days. Pandarus' "honor" seems superficial, and his "loyalty" is to himself.

We may also examine Pandarus' actions on the grounds of the moral and ethical code of knighthood. He gives several clues to his moral character beginning with telling Troilus it



would make no difference to him if the lady he loved were Helen "thi brother wif" (I, 678); he could love her as he pleased and trust Pandarus to say or do nothing about it. Again Pandarus may be merely overstating himself in order to make the point to Troilus that he is trustworthy and would keep his secret, but he cannot be excused for lying to everyone and using his friends and family to set his plan in motion. He even seems to prefer lying to telling the truth, an unmistakable clue to his character or lack of it. In fact, being involved in such an affair in any way is unethical because it weakens both Pandarus and Troilus which causes them to fail in two ways: Their relationship with one another breaks down, and the performance of their duties to King Priam suffers because they become so preoccupied with a relatively unimportant matter which may in turn endanger Troy. All of which brings us to the most important element in the code - that of personal "gouvernaunce" and moderation.

As we have seen, Pandarus has perfect control of himself and his intrigue throughout the first three books of the poem, while in the last two he becomes progressively helpless until he is completely ineffective. In the beginning, he knows exactly what it takes to get his niece's attention and how to handle her when he tells her Troilus will "sterve" if she does not take pity on him. But he goes a bit too far when he threatens to kill himself, and there is no need for him to remind Criseyde that age will quickly "devoure" her "beaute." He continues to heap scheme upon scheme, lie upon lie, until all is taken out of his control, and he himself is running "amis."



He no longer has influence over anyone; Criseyde is out of his reach; she has become a pawn in a larger "game" when it is decided she should be exchanged for Antenor. This does not deter Pandarus from trying another approach and attempting to reach her through Troilus when he tells him to: "...Ris up anon, and lat this wepyng be, / And kith thow art a man; for in this houre / I wol ben ded, or she shall bleven oure" (IV, 537-39). He is beginning to sound desperate, and this only intensifies when he realizes Troilus is not "blyndelich" following his directions any more either. Troilus refuses to go kidnap Criseyde because he has to consider his father's "graunt," the "townes goode," and in no case does he intend "to ravysse hire, but if hireself it wolde." Pandarus answers yet another lie: "'Whi, so mene I,' quod Pandarus, 'all this day. / But telle me thanne, hastow hire wil assayed, / That sorwest thus?'"... (IV, 638-40). This is a rather unconvincing response quite late in the conversation. His last desperate attempt to regain his hold is unsuccessful when Criseyde tells Troilus she must go away, but she will return. Pandarus tries to steer Troilus on to something new to take his mind off of Criseyde's absence, so they go to Sarpedoun's to amuse themselves. Troilus wants to leave after only four days, but Pandarus wants to stay the entire ten days, so they compromise on a week - another indication his influence is slipping.

Pandarus realizes how completely his command of the situation has deteriorated when he keeps an anxious vigil with Troilus on the tenth day. The sun is barely risen: "...Whan Troilus his Pandare after sente; / And on the walles of the

town they pleyde, / To loke if they kan sen aught of Criseyde" (V, 1111-13). Until this point, it has been Pandarus who initiates the meetings and visits, but this time Troilus sends for him. Their spirits are high, at first, but: "The day goth faste, and after that com eve, / And yet com nought to Troilus Criseyde" (V, 1142-3). By nightfall, Pandarus realizes the truth, but he cannot convince Troilus to come away from the wall. There is still the possibility Criseyde plans to come into the city under the cover of darkness: "...She comth to-nyght, my lif that dorste I leye!" (V, 1169)

'Pandare answerde, 'It may be, wel ynough,'  
 And held with hym of al that evere he seyde.  
 But in his herte he thoughte, and softe lough,  
 And to hymself ful sobreliche he seyde,  
 'From haselwode, there joly Robyn pleyde,  
 Shal come all that that thow abidest heere.  
 Ye, fare wel al the snow of ferne yere!" (V, 1170-76)

At last, Troilus is forced to give up his watch when, "The warden of the yates gan to calle / The folk which that withoute the yates were" ... (V. 1177-78), thus accomplishing what Pandarus could not. The pragmatic Pandarus knows everything is slipping away from him. This feeling of helplessness makes him stay away from Troilus while he waits alone the next six days. He realizes nothing he does or says to Troilus now will change his mind about Criseyde or about his decision to die if she does not return. Troilus must recognize her betrayal for himself, and, again, it is he who asks Pandarus' advice after his prophetic dream.

Pandarus simply cannot resist an opportunity, however slight, to exert his influence even after he has admitted to himself Criseyde intends to stay with her father. So, why does he presume to do what he says cannot be done? "...Lat be this thought; thow kanst no dremes rede" (V, 1281). Rather than tell Troilus the truth, and step graciously out of the picture, as he should have long ago, Pandarus proceeds to interpret Troilus' dream telling him the "...boor,...may signifie, Hire fader,..." (V, 1282-3). It is his own "vanitee" which will not allow him to admit he does not know the meaning of the dream. He is unable even to control himself, so he continues giving advice he knows is worthless: "...Now writ hire thanne, and thow shalt feele sone / A soth of al; ther is namore to done" (V, 1308-9).

Troilus and Criseyde correspond for two months until she finally decides she must tell him "...how thynges...ystonde;..." (V, 1612). She says, "...For trewely, while that my lif may dure, as for a frend ye may in me assure" (V, 1623-4). Pandarus has only postponed the inevitable, and Troilus is not grateful for the additional weeks of suffering and bad advice:

"O Pandarus, that in dremes for to triste  
 Me blamed hast, and wont art oft upbreyde,  
 Now maistow se thiself, if that the liste,  
 How trewe is no thi nece, bright Criseyde!

...Whom I have ay with al my myght yserved,  
 That ye thus doon, I have it nat deserved." (V, 1709-22)

For the first time, Pandarus has nothing to say; he is "As stille as ston; a word ne koude he seyde" (V, 1729). He is overwhelmed by sorrow and shame and the realization that his actions have far exceeded anything he should have attempted. His only response is that he hates Criseyde and will hate her forever for what she has done to Troilus and to him; there is nothing more he can do except wish Criseyde dead:

"If I dide aught that myghte liken the,  
 It is lief; and of this tresoun now,  
 God woot that it a sorwe is unto me!  
 And dredeles, for hertes ese of yow,  
 Right fayn I wolde amende it, wiste I how.  
 And fro this world, almyghty God I preye  
 Delivere hire soon! I kan namore seye." (V, 1737-43)

Pandarus has, indeed, failed through his immoderate and excessive meddling. Not only has he lost his control over Troilus and Criseyde but himself as well. As a knight, an uncle, and a friend, he fails dismally; he succeeds only as a fallible, corruptible character.

To summarize, this study has shown why Pandarus volunteers to intercede for Troilus with Criseyde. He prefers to be in control of any situation in which he is involved because it is the only way he can be certain of obtaining what he wants. He wants to secure his position with Troilus and the royal family by keeping the prince fit for duty. He also has a more personal, far less noble motive which is to compensate for his own failure in love, his impotence, by

bringing his proteges together, and enjoying their sexual affair.

Next, Pandarus has a responsibility to act as his niece's protector, and he is concerned about his friend Troilus; he should act honorably as a guardian, a true friend, and loyal knight. Instead, he uses lies and deceit to accomplish his goal not as a last resort, but as a matter of course which would preclude any honorable intentions such as protecting his niece or true friendship. The friendship between Troilus and Pandarus is a special one, but Pandarus misuses, even abuses it (just as he violates his niece's trust in him) by manipulating not only Troilus and Criseyde, but every other character in the poem.

Finally, he is unable to maintain personal "governance" and control; he behaves immoderately. Rather than respect the love between Troilus and Criseyde and stepping aside after their initial meeting, Pandarus exploits it. He continues until the bitter end, until his niece is exiled and his friend is dead. This involvement shows quite clearly that Pandarus is unable to control himself or the unnecessarily complicated plot he creates.

Pandarus has been described in terms ranging from "a lively rascal," "humorous," "tricky," and "a valiant friend," to "devoid of scruples," "depraved," "immoral," and a "pimp," He is actually all of these, but one side of this description does not balance the other. His lively, vibrant, personality and sense of humor do not compensate for a lack of scruples. When he does experience indecision or uneasiness over his

dilemma, attempting to identify courtly love with christian love and chivalric ethics with heroic ethics, Pandarus invariably chooses the immediate, earthly, and physical pleasures. Although he is undeniably a valiant friend, his loyalty cannot nullify his responsibilities to his own niece. His immoral role as procurer is only made more depraved by using his only niece to satisfy his friend's sexual desires, desires which are unimportant when viewed from a different perspective, "lokyng down" from "hevene above" (V, 1819-20). All has been for nothing. Troilus renounces everything Pandarus symbolizes, "love," "lust," "noblesse," estat real," and all the "false worldes brotelnesse" (V, 1828-32). None of these things matter when compared with the love of "... hym [who died] / Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye" (V, 1842-43). Pandarus' scheming gained him absolutely nothing and lost him everything - his friend, his niece, his good name, and his self-respect.

No matter how we see Pandarus, it is clear he sometimes exercises poor judgement; he sometimes delights in manipulation of a situation and the people involved; he sometimes prefers lying to telling the truth; and he sometimes is faced with a problem that has no desirable solution. Once Pandarus initiates his plan to save Troilus, he cannot alter his course; there is no turning back. He is thrown into the midst of the dilemma of choice between his niece and his friend, and, ultimately, he must choose between Troilus and the well-being of Troy. His attempts to manipulate Fate lead only to his own undoing.

## N O T E S

<sup>1</sup>Sanford B. Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus, (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1959), pp. 417-18.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas A. Kirby, Chaucer's Troilus: A Study in Courtly Love, (Louisiana University Press, 1940), pp. 186-87.

<sup>3</sup>D. W. Robertson Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 393. Andreas' treatise fills three books: The first deals with defining love, being smitten by it, gaining the lady's attention, and all the pitfalls therein. The opening chapters of the second book deal with the retention of love, the increasing of love, the decreasing of love, and the fears and torments of termination of love with emphasis on secrecy, wealth, good reputation and a good appearance. The mere bulk of these books would be enough to discourage a potential lover from studying the guidelines of love. So Andreas suggests in the closing chapter of his second book that his work be summarized into a list of rules and circulated to all lovers everywhere. A lover learns, for example: (5) that which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish, (8) that no one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons, and (26) that love can deny nothing to love. The lover himself must (2) be jealous, (28) a 'slight presumption' is enough to make him suspect his



beloved of infidelity. He must (15) regularly turn pale when he is with his beloved, and (16) his heart must palpitate when he sees her. He must (23) eat and sleep very little, always be apprehensive (20) think always of his beloved (24, 30) and (27) never tire of her solaces. Although (1) marriage is no real excuse for not loving, (18) the lover is made worthy of love only by good character.

<sup>4</sup>Robertson, p. 446.

<sup>5</sup>Robertson, p. 447.

<sup>6</sup>Kirby, p. 182.

<sup>7</sup>Erwin J. Howard, Geoffrey Chaucer, (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 108.

<sup>8</sup>Robertson, p. 403.

<sup>9</sup>Robertson, p. 489.

<sup>10</sup>Robert Kilburn Root, The Poetry of Chaucer, (New York: Peter Smith Publishers, 1950), p. 110.

<sup>11</sup>Robertson, p. 491.

<sup>12</sup>John M. Simpson, "Comparative Structural Analysis of Three Ethical Questions in Beowulf, Nibelungenlied, and the Chanson de Roland," The Journal of Indo-European Studies, (Fall, 1976), p. 253 and "Sapientia Et Fortitudo: The Drama of Athelsteinn," The Journal of Indo-European Studies, (Spring, 1981), p. 119.

<sup>13</sup>Muriel Bowden, A Reader's Guide to Geoffrey Chaucer, (New York: The Noonday Press, 1964), p. 18-20.

<sup>14</sup>Bowden, p. 18-20. These elements represent only one side of the code of knighthood before its evolution into the "orders of Chivalry" of the twelfth century. Until that time



the "knights" are little more than mercenaries on horseback who frequently lack in moral standards. But, near the end of the eleventh century Pope Urban II, in an attempt to prevent plundering of the Holy Land, speaks to the knights of the First Crusade. He exhorts them to "become wise, provident, temperate, learned, peacemaking, truth-seeking, pious, just, and pure; he urges them to abandon cruelty and become true soldiers of Christ."<sup>13</sup> Although his words have very little actual or practical effect, his sermon provides an ideal to strive toward. The rebirth of such Christian concepts as fidelity to God, church, and one's temporal lord, sacrifice of self in a righteous cause, love for one's neighbors, and pity for the weak all serve as a basis for a new "kighthood" - a new "chivalry."

As the twelfth century progresses, there are fewer wars to occupy the knights, so they have more time to fill with war games, jousts and tournaments. The proximity of young men and women on the field and in the gallery also provides opportunity for flirtation. Eventually, the two activities merge, and the young knight begins to fight in honor of his lady; he is her servant in all he does. Love affairs become as important as the fighting for church and state, and "courtly love" with all of its rules becomes accepted behavior. By the mid-fourteenth century, however, much of the pertense and devotion to fair lady has been replaced to som extent by the hard fact of war once again, although not yet in the literature of the period.

<sup>15</sup>Robertson, p. 496.

<sup>16</sup>Robertson, p. 409.

<sup>17</sup>Bowden, p. 31.

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