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Chaucer's Changing Conceptions of the Humble Lover

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VI

CHAUCER'S CHANGING CONCEPTIONS OF THE HUMBLE LOVER

IT IS evident that Chaucer's depiction of and attitude toward the lover were not always the same. In some of his works, notably his earlier, shorter poems, the conception of the lover conforms apparently in all particulars to the conventional pattern of the romantic lover of chivalry. In other works he shows a definite deviation from this concept. What the character of these deviations is, where they occur, and what deductions may be drawn from them, it is the purpose of this paper to indicate. At the outset of our inquiry two possible explanations of this change may be noted: first, the possibility that Chaucer's attitude changed as he grew older either in revolt against or in conformity to the standard ideal, secondly, the possibility that the changes in his attitude were the result of shifting moods instead of modifications produced by age and experience.

The character and conduct of the romantic lover were very clearly defined in English society, having been introduced without modification from France.¹ Regulations for the actions of the lover were not governed by the wishes or the interpretation of the individual in either country; they were definitely stated in the thirty-one articles that made up the code of the Cour d'Amour of Paris in the twelfth century.² Chief among these were the stipulations that no person might give himself to two loves, that love revealed rarely lasted and "les obstacles lui donnent du prix," that the lover grew pale at the sight of his beloved one, etc.³ These rules were numerous and were elaborated in detail, but all emphasized the fact that service was the ideal of a lover's conduct, and humility

¹ Eleanor of Aquitaine (Alienor of Guienne) was the chief instrument in the introduction of the French love ideals into England. She had been one of the ladies presiding over the Cour d'Amour of Paris prior to her marriage to Henry Plantagenet of England.

² It must be borne in mind that these rules, however stereotyped in the fourteenth century, had their genesis in the sincere and ardent, though frequently exaggerated, love expressions of the earlier French poets. Cf. William G. Dodd, *Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower*, p. 21.

³ LaRousse, *La Grande Dictionnaire Universel du XIX Siècle*. See "L'Amour dans l'histoire et dans la littérature."

his highest virtue. The aim of the humble lover, briefly, was "loyalement servir une dame."⁴

In order that definite and correct conclusions may be drawn in this study, it is necessary to consider Chaucer's works singly and in chronological order as nearly as it is possible in view of the fact that exact dates are not available for many of his works, and any chronology must of necessity be largely conjectural.⁵ If his works when examined chronologically fail to show increasing deviation from the accepted standards we should be justified in concluding that Chaucer's rebellion against the formal code was prompted merely by the impulse and mood of the moment.

In the *Romaunt of the Rose*, Chaucer's first work that remains to us,⁶ Chaucer consistently follows the formal concept of the humble lover throughout. In Fragment A, known to be Chaucer's work beyond a doubt,⁷ the theme and treatment are strictly those of conventional love, built about the French devices of the love vision and the court of love. Two passages⁸ in this portion make definite statements concerning the lover. In the first the suitors of Richesse

. . . . besy weren hir to serve;
For that they wolde hir love deserve,
They cleped hir 'Lady,' grete and smalle.

The second occurs in the story of Narcissus. Echo asks that Narcissus "shulde . . . fele in every veyne what sorowe trewe lovers maken," a plea that is granted later when Narcissus dies because of unrequited love. Fragment B, in dealing at length with the conduct and character of the humble romantic lover, is wholly conventional. The instructions of the God of Love to the dreamer are nothing more nor less than an amplification of the articles in the code of the Cour d'Amour. The subsequent experiences of the dreamer are also in accord with the code, and are carried out in all formality with much detail and repetition. While Fragment C is concerned with a dialog between Love and other persons of the allegory, it contains no lines that have a direct bearing on the case

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ For the chronology followed throughout this study, see Robert Dudley French, *A Chaucer Handbook*, pp. 75-132 and 384-5.

⁶ Writtten before 1370. See French, *A Chaucer Handbook*, p. 384.

⁷ The three fragments are considered here, although there is considerable doubt as to the authenticity of Fragments B and C.

⁸ *Romaunt of the Rose*, Fg. A, ll. 1045-47; 1496-7.

of the lover; however, the personification of Love is in itself conventional.

The *Compleynt Unto Pite*, the earliest⁹ of Chaucer's numerous love poems, follows the form of the amorous French "compleynt." It is couched in the formal phrases of love, in which the lover humbly seeks his lady's mercy, and relief from his woes.

In the *Book of the Duchesse*¹⁰ we see two lovers: he who dreams and sighs in vain, and he who has loved and lost. Both are conventional, particularly the latter. In the knight as a husband we are not interested, since, strictly speaking, chivalric love had nothing to do with marriage. Courtly love "essaya même d'en faire une sorte d'institution a cotè du mariage et même contre le mariage. . . . Selon le code des Cours d'Amour, l'amour était impossible dans le mariage, car dans l'amour tout devait être de grace et de faveur tandis que dans le mariage tout était de droit."¹¹ All passages concerning the knight as a lover follow the code. He tells of his devotion to his "lady dere" and his "humbleness" from the time he first saw her. At first he dared not tell her of his woe, but at last, lest he die, he revealed his love, swearing to serve and love her always; he

. . . . ne wilned thing but good,
And worship, and to kepe hir name
Over al thing, and drede hir shame,
And was so besy hir to serve¹²

His character and actions follow the accepted pattern throughout.

The *Compleynt of Mars* and *Compleint to His Lady*¹³ deviate neither in subject matter nor in form from the conventional pattern of the French complaint. Many significant passages occur in both poems, of which the following are typical:

'For this day in hir servise shal I dye;'. . . .
'Hir love I best, and shal, whyl I may dure,
Bet than my-self an hundred thousand deel'

⁹ Dated "1367-70?" It "cannot be dated with any certainty, but it may confidently be assigned to the earlier years of Chaucer's career as a poet." French, *A Chaucer Handbook*, p. 85.

¹⁰ Known date, 1369-70. See French, *op. cit.*, p. 384.

¹¹ La Rousse, *La Grande Dictionnaire*, *loc. cit.*

¹² *Book of the Duchesse*, ll. 1262-65.

¹³ Dated respectively ca. 1374 and "1374, or soon after." French, *op. cit.*, pp. 90 and 97.

'Of alle servants, bothe good and badde;
And leest worthy of alle hem, I am he'¹⁴

The lover asks only to serve—the words “servise” or “serve” occur every few lines—and his humility is not so hardy as to desire that she love him. In both poems thought and expression are wholly conventional.

The *Hous of Fame*¹⁵ has a more direct bearing upon this study than any work thus far considered. Hitherto we have been forced to draw our conclusions entirely from interpretation. Hence of utmost import is the conclusive confirmation, in the eagle's explanation to Chaucer of their journey, of our findings concerning Chaucer's conception of the conventional lover up to this time.

. . . thou so longe trewely
Hast served so ententifly
His blinde nevew Cupido,
And fair Venus (goddesse) also,
In thy studie so thou wrytest,
And ever-mo of love endytest,
Of Love, and of his servants eke¹⁶

Thus from Chaucer's own words we know that he has followed, in personal allegiance and in writing, the precepts of conventional love, and has written always of humble lovers.

The next work chronologically that is concerned with the status of the lover is the *Parlement of Foules*.¹⁷ This work is of unparalleled importance as it marks a departure from Chaucer's usual passive acceptance of the formal code. Here the non-conforming point of view is presented as well as the conventional. The royal tercel who seeks the formel's favor is conventional in that they promise service throughout their lives, and mention the dire penalties they may suffer if they are ever false to the laws of the love code. The turtle dove also supports the ideal conception of the lover's conduct.

Thogh that his lady ever-more be straunge,
Yet let him serve hir ever, til he be deed.

¹⁴ *Compleynt of Mars*, l. 189; *Compleint to His Lady*, ll. 34-5; ll. 72-3.

¹⁵ Time of writing uncertain, but a “date between 1374-82 may be accepted with some confidence” French, p. 123.

¹⁶ *The Hous of Fame*, Bk. II, ll. 615-18, 633-4, 625.

¹⁷ Written in 1382. See French, p. 384.

The water fowl, however, grow impatient with these long drawn out and courtly protestations and frankly rebel:

'But she wol love him, lat him love another!'
 'That men shulde alwey loven, causeles,
 Who can a reson finde or wit in that?
 Daunceth he mury that is mirtheles?
 There been mo sterres, god wot, than a paire!'
 'Lat ech of hem be soleyn al hir lyve,
 This is my reed, sin they may not acorde.'¹⁸

This dispute between the water fowl and the other birds is nothing more nor less than an argument for and against the prescribed conduct of the romantic lover. It is obvious that the dispute is used by Chaucer as an artistic device to heighten the contrast between the chivalric conception of love and the opposite conception as expressed by the water fowl, thus honoring yet more Anne of Bohemia, in whose honor most scholars believe the poem was written. However, Chaucer himself may have been impatient with the precepts of the code. There is no way of estimating how much of the rebellious sentiment here expressed is Chaucer's own; but even if Chaucer used these passages merely as contrast to enhance the ultimate victory of courtly love, it is a significant fact that nowhere in his writing before this time has he presented the adverse viewpoint even as a literary device. Contemporary readers of Chaucer, though avowedly adhering to the romantic code, could not but be aware of the common sense advice of the goose, "But she wol love him, lat him love another!" It is evident that when Chaucer wrote the *Parlement of Foules* he, if not actually criticizing the standard code, was conscious of its artificiality to the extent that he dared set aside literary and social convention to present the non-conforming point of view.

In *Troilus and Criseyde*¹⁹ there are two lovers, both of whom follow the code in their wooing of Criseyde, but who are distinct in personality and differentiated in point of time as well as in point of circumstance. Of the many passages which describe the abject state of Troilus, the following are typical:

'For I, that God of Loves servaunts serve,
 Ne dar to Love, for myn unlyknesse;

¹⁸ *Parlement of Foules*, ll. 584-5, 567, 590-2, 595, 607-8.

¹⁹ Written 1382-5. See French, p. 385.

My dere herte, allas! myn hele and hewe
 And lyf is lost, but ye wole on me rewe'
 For man may love, of possibilitee,
 A womman so, his herte may to-breste,
 And she nought love ayein, but-if hir leste.²⁰

Altho Diomede is more restrained than Troilus, giving the impression of stronger character, he too acts the part of the conventional lover.

While the actions of Troilus and Diomede are entirely in keeping with the Code d'Amour, those of Pandarus and Criseyde are not. Pandarus in his impatience with the prolonged grief of Troilus may or may not betray commensurate impatience on the part of Chaucer; at any event, his rebellious statements are worthy of notice.

'Hastow not lived many a yeer biforn
 With-outen hir,
 Artow for hir and for non other born?
 in the dees right as ther fallen chaunces,
 Right so in love, ther come and goon plesaunces.²¹

Here, as in the *Parlement of Foules*, the unconventional admonitions may vary in import according to the interpretation of the individual reader. However, this fact is of utmost significance: both the *Parlement of Foules* and *Troilus and Criseyde* are known almost certainly to have been written consecutively within a period of a few years (1382-85), and no one of Chaucer's works previous to this period goes so far as even to present the converse to the accepted concept of the humble lover. Moreover, the deviation is more marked and less easily explained in the later work, *Troilus and Criseyde*. Furthermore, the interpretation of Criseyde was in itself, by Chaucer's own confession, heretical to love. How Criseyde is concerned with Chaucer's increasing nonconformity to the standards of conventional love may best be seen by examining the next work, *The Legend of Good Women*.

If we look for yet more marked revolt in the *Legend of Good Women*,²² we may at first be disappointed. The Prologue returns to the customary springtime pastoral setting, dream-vision, and other

²⁰ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. I, ll. 15-6, 461-2; Bk. II, ll. 607-9.

²¹ *Ibid.*, IV, ll. 1093-1100.

²² 1385-95. Prologue, B-text, written probably in 1385-6—French, p. 385.

French devices which the author consistently used in his works previous to the writing of the *Parlement of Foules*. Here the author represents himself as a humble lover of the daisy, paying tribute to her in the phraseology of courtly love. He is a penitent being tried before the court of love for infidelity in writing of the false Criseyde and in transcribing a work containing the caustic sayings of Jean de Meun (i.e., *Le Roman de la Rose*), thus proving himself heretical to love and effecting the withdrawal of popular support from the Code d'Amour. He promises to renew allegiance to Love from this time on, setting himself the task of writing the legends as penance for his recent dereliction. In spite of his avowed intention of renewing allegiance to courtly love in the *Legend of Good Women*, it is evident that, before many of the legends had been completed, Chaucer once again grew impatient with conventional standards of the lover's conduct. Accounts of the lovers' wooing are soon cut to a minimum and as early as the story of Hypsipyle and Medea is omitted altogether:

As wolde god I leiser hadde, and tyme,
By proces al his wowing for to ryme
Ye gete no more of me, but ye wil rede
Th' original, that telleth al the cas.²³

Obviously "the poet was growing a little weary of the lamentations and reproaches of Cupid's saints,"²⁴ to say the least.

*Merciles Beaute*²⁵ is one of the most delightful of Chaucer's shorter poems. Though conforming to the French pattern in phraseology in the first two roundels, and in form throughout, it does not long leave the reader uninformed concerning the author's true feeling.

Sin I fro Love escaped am so fat,
I never thenk to ben in his prison lene;
Sin I am free, I counte him not a bene
Love hath my name y-strike out of his sclat,
And he is strike out of my bokes clene
For ever-mo; ther is non other mene.

This poem speaks for itself. Here is evidenced a complete break with the romantic lover and his conventional code of conduct;

²³ *Legend of Good Women*, VI, ll. 1552-3, 1557-8.

²⁴ French, p. 130.

²⁵ 1390-1393? French, p. 104.

Chaucer takes him by the hand and frolics gaily. He is freed from homage and does not dissemble his joy at the release. The significance of the poem can hardly be overestimated. The period in which Chaucer wrote was one of extreme conventionality, not alone in regard to standards of conduct, of which the love code is a prominent example. Originality of any sort was frowned upon, but especially originality in literature. Even writers who were well established took care to follow precedent in thought and expression. A person might permit himself a sly smile aside at the conduct of a lover, but to rebel openly and in print was nothing less than heresy. Since "we are preposterous when we laugh at a hero for his love-madness,"²⁶ how great is the significance of a contemporary writer's growing weary of, and laughing at, the medieval lover!

*Rosemounde*²⁷ is written in the same light-hearted vein. Its satirical humor directed at the agonized rapture of the lover is delightful.

For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,
 Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;
 Nas never pyk walwed in galauntynne
 As I in love am walwed and y-wounde;
 I brenne ay in an amorous plesaunce.

Chaucer indulges in laughter at the code which he had supported in all sincerity in his youth.

The *Envoy to Scogan* and the *Complaint to His Empty Purse*²⁸ are the only two poems not hitherto discussed that can be dated with any degree of confidence. In the former Chaucer tells his friend that recent heavy rains were due to tears that Venus shed over Scogan's infidelity toward love. He declares himself to be too old to write love poems, including himself among those that "ben hore and rounde of shape." Chaucer chides his friend in a light and playful manner for his defiance of the code of love, showing again that he had ceased to take the rules of the Cour d'Amour seriously. There is nothing concerning the lover in the "complaint," but the fact that it is written in the words of a lover to

²⁶ Kittredgè, *Chaucer and His Poetry*, p. 124.

²⁷ 1390-1393? "This poem, like the *Merciles Beaute*, must belong to a period when Chaucer had become thoroughly emancipated from the school of love-poetry represented by his more conventional 'compleynts'". French, p. 105, 106.

²⁸ Dated respectively 1393? and 1399. See French, pp. 109 and 113.

his lady is significant; it shows that the author had come to take the conventions of love so lightly that he could employ its phrases in the fashion of a parody.

Up to this time no mention has been made of the *Canterbury Tales*, partly because their respective dates of writing can be estimated only generally, by period, and almost entirely by conjecture; partly because they are so markedly in a class by themselves that it is impossible to consider them amid other works without confusion. The *Knyghtes Tale*,²⁹ a revision of the earlier *Palamon and Arcite*, is the first of the tales to deal with the chivalric lover. Palamon and Arcite are the most ideal pair of Chaucer's romantic lovers; both follow the conventional pattern so closely, especially in the earlier portion of the narrative, that they might be two patterns cut from the same stencil. Palamon, on first seeing Emelya, drew back and "cried 'A' as though he stongen were unto the herte," and as the humble lover swore

"To love my lady, whom I love and serve
And evere shal, til that myn herte sterve."³⁰

Like the knight in the *Book of the Duchesse*, he loses no opportunity to declare that he must die for his lady. Arcite displays the same qualities—her beauty "slays" him and unless he has her mercy "I nam but dead, ther is namoore to seye." His humility and self abasement know no bounds. The frequent coupling of the words "love" and "serve" is noticeable throughout the tale.

The *Knyghtes Tale*, which by reason both of subject and of teller one would expect to conform to the chivalric code, indicates, on the contrary, strong revolt against that code. The beginning of the *secunda pars* is concerned with a detailed and gruesome description of the pain and woe of "the woful lover, daun Arcite." At first glance this recital might appear to be a most sincere and sympathetic rendering of the humble lover concept. But what happens? One can almost see Chaucer shrug his shoulders in the next three lines:

What sholde I al day of his wo indite?
Whan he endured hadde a yeer or two
This cruuel torment, and this peyne and woo—

²⁹ Written before 1387. French, p. 385.

³⁰ *Knyghtes Tale*, ll. 1143-4.

Chaucer, patently grown weary of Arcite and choosing to spend no more time either on him or on his plight, peremptorily disposes of him in three lines, and proceeds with the story. Shortly another passage rings false to the chivalric note. The court demurs at the sentence pronounced upon Palamon and Arcite:

For gentilmen they were of greet estaat,
And no thyng but for love was this debaat.³³

“No thyng but for love”! Yet chivalry was avowedly the life of the people and “L’amour etait le principe de la chevalrie.”³⁴ Chaucer slyly suggests not only that the love code was not the core of existence, but also that allegiance to the code was merely a popular pose. Further revolt is indicated in the words of Theseus at witnessing the tilt between Palamon and Arcite in the wood:³⁵

‘And yet hath love, maugree hir eyen two,
Ybrought hem hyder bothe for to dye!
Now looketh, is nat that an heigh folye?
Who may been a fole, but if he love?
Bihoold, for Goddes sake that sit above,
Se how they blede! Be they nocht wel arrayed?
Thus hath hir lord, the God of Love, ypayed
Hir wages and hir fees for hir servyse!’ . . .

He drops his playful scoffing momentarily—

And yet they wenen for to been ful wyse,
That serven love, for aught that may bifalle—

but this mood passes quickly. He enjoys the plight of the lovers—ridiculous in his eyes—too much not to make the most of it. His ironic remarks are tempered at the last when he recalls half forgotten memories of his own youthful love affairs. Later Theseus again emphasizes the fact that he does not support the theories of romantic love when he tells Palamon and Arcite that they know they both may not have Emelye, though they be ever so jealous, angry, or fight forevermore.

Chaucer returns to the humble lover pattern, apparently in all sincerity, when Arcite dies—

³³ Previous two quotations, *Knyghtes Tale*, ll. 1380–2, 1753–4.

³⁴ LaRousse, *loc. cit.*

³⁵ *Knyghtes Tale*, ll. 1796–1817.

'To yow, my lady, that I love moost,
But I biquethe the servyce of my goost
To yow aboven every creature'—

and when Palamon's faithful service is advanced and allowed as reason for the bestowal of the lady's favor:

'That gentil Palamon they owene knyght,
That serveth yow with wille, herte, and myght,
And evere hath doon, syn that ye first hym knewe.'³⁶

Like the *Parlement of Foules*, the *Knyghtes Tale* both begins and ends on the conventional note, regardless of revolt within the story itself.

The *Knyghtes Tale* is similar to other works previously discussed in this study. The common sense attitude of Theseus is much the same as that of Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde*, but here the difficulty of estimating how much of the sentiment expressed belongs to the story character, how much to the author himself, is made more complex by the presence of the knight, supposed teller of the story. However Chaucer may have intended the characterization here, he has drawn himself more clearly than either the knight or Theseus. Similar mention of his own youthful love affairs occurs in other works, while the odd combination of satire, human sympathy, ridicule and wistful regret is intrinsically Chaucer's own.

In the *Squieres Tale*,³⁷ the most fascinating story never told, we learn in the opening lines of the prologue what type of tale Chaucer intended it to be.

'Squier, come neer, if it your wille be,
And sey somewhat of love,'

True to the character of the squire, the tale is one of purely romantic love. The falcon's false lover imitated the usual conduct of the humble lover; he feined to serve her,

Fil on hise knees, with so devout humblesse,
With so heigh reverence, and as by his cheere
So lyk a gentil lovere of manere,³⁸

³⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 2767-9, ll. 3077-9.

³⁷ 1392-4. See French, p. 386.

³⁸ *Squieres Tale*, ll. 544-6.

that at last she loved him. The strange knight also "most han knowen Love and his servyse." The conduct of both the false and the true lover is ideal. In tone and in avowed intention to present a tale of love, the *Squieres Tale* is similar to no other work so much as to the prologue to the *Legend of Good Women*.

The *Frankleyns Tale*³⁹ is the only other of the *Canterbury Tales* to deal with the rôle of the lover.⁴⁰ Here again there are two lovers, in this case Aurelius and Arveragus. With the latter we are concerned only during his courtship of Dorigen, up to the time of their marriage. The tale begins with his wooing of Dorigen:

In Armorik, that called is Britayne,
Ther was a knyght that loved and dide his payne
To serve a lady in his beste wise;
And many a labour, many a greet emprise,
He for his lady wroughte, er she were wonne.⁴¹

At first he did not dare even to tell her of his pain and great distress, but at last "she for his worthinesse, and namely for his meke obeysaunce" had mercy on him; whereupon he promised to obey her always and follow her will in all things, "as any lovere to his lady shal."

The conduct of Aurelius is more conventional than that of Arveragus; indeed Aurelius is so conventional that he loses his individuality almost entirely, becoming a mere puppet, moved, as it were, by the code of love. He had loved Dorigen best above all others for two years and more, never daring to reveal to her his unhappy state, and easing his pain by writing sonnets to her in secret. Not until some time after the departure of Arveragus does he summon up courage to speak to Dorigen. On learning that his suit indeed is hopeless he exclaims that he must then "dye of sodeyn deth horrible." The others continue their merrymaking,

Save oonly wrecche Aurelius, allas!
He to his hous is goon with sorweful herte;
He seeth he may nat fro his deeth asterte.

³⁹ 1392-4. See French, p. 386

⁴⁰ In the *Nonne Preestes Tale* Pertelote and her "sustres" are repeatedly referred to as the "wyves" of Chauntecler, thus precluding Dodd's supposition that the tale is a case of Chaucer's employing the conventions of courtly love poetry for humorous purposes. Cf. Dodd, "Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower," *Nonnes Preestes Tale*.

⁴¹ *Frankleyns Tale*, ll. 729-33.

After addressing a plea to Apollo he falls into a swoon. Up to this point in the narrative, whatever the reaction of the reader may be, the author apparently sympathizes with the distress of the lover. But these are the final lines of the episode:

Dispeyred in this torment and this thought
 Lete I this woful creature lye:
 Chese he for me wheither he wol lyve or dye.⁴²

If it were not for the closing lines of the passage, the *Frankleyns Tale* would be one of entirely conventional love. As it is, the same thing occurs here that happens when Chaucer disposes of Arcite so summarily, with the difference that here he drops the lover even more forcibly than before, plainly betraying his lack of sympathy and complete indifference.

There is a resumption of the formal pattern in several subsequent passages:

Aurelius . . . preyeth hym . . .
 To bryngen hym out of his peynes smerte,
 Or with a swerd that he wolde slitte his herte" . . .
 I woful wrecche, Aurelius, . . .
 Al be that I unworthy be therto . . .⁴³

But the mischief is done. During the remainder of the story we cannot help but feel, regardless of Chaucer's apparent sincerity, that Aurelius doth protest too much, and that he may "chese" for us whether he be woful or not. Those three lines effectively undermine the elements of idealized love as expressed in the remainder of the tale.

While the dates of the *Canterbury Tales* are at best uncertain, three of Chaucer's short poems have up to this time not been dated even conjecturally with any accuracy. *Womanly Noblesse*, *A Balade of Complaynt*, and *An Amorous Complaynt*,⁴⁴ are all conventional in tone, form, and in depiction of the lover. These three minor poems bring to a close the list of Chaucer's works that have to do with the conduct of the lover.

It must not be thought that Chaucer's changing conceptions of the courtly lover can be traced exactly and consistently, as a graph

⁴² Previous two quotations, *Frankleyns Tale*, ll. 1020-2, 1084-6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, ll. 1256-60, 1303, 1330.

⁴⁴ Considered as being probably genuine, but, with the possible exception of the first named, lacking in external evidence.

upon a chart. Just as, in his work, "he may have had his moments of sudden expansion in youth or of dullness or compulsion in maturity,"⁴⁵ so in his attitude toward the lover, he may have had moments of rebellion in youth, of return to conformity with love ideals when he was older. However, growth of a tendency to rebel against the conventional concept of the humble lover can be traced clearly. In view of this fact, it may not be impossible to offer conjectural dates for those works which have not been convincingly dated. Thus it seems feasible to ascribe *Womanly Noblesse*, *Balade of Complaynt*, and *An Amorous Complaynt* to a date contemporaneous with, or previous to, the writing of the *Hous of Fame*, at a time when no suggestion of revolt enters in. By reason of the findings of this study, it is possible that another item may be added to the long list of "the available evidence upon which a chronology of Chaucer's works may be based."⁴⁶

In retrospect we see the *Romaunt of the Rose* as Chaucer's first work that is concerned with the lover. Although the French original contained satire directed against love as well as glorification of its ideals, Chaucer's transcription is entirely conventional. His writing consistently conforms to the code of the Cour d'Amour through *Complaynt Unto Pite*, *The Book of the Duchesse*, *The Complaynt of Mars*, *A Complaynt to His Lady*, and the *Hous of Fame*. In the latter, indeed, the author represents himself as being rewarded for his long and faithful service to the God of Love. In the *Parlement of Foules* we find the first hint of revolt. While romantic love wins out against the realistic, the mere presentation of the common sense point of view is an innovation. There is considerable doubt as to whether or not the rebellious statements of Pandarus in *Troilus and Criseyde* are significant of personal rebellion on the part of the author; they may be simply skillful characterization on the part of Pandarus. That writing of *Criseyde* and translating from the satirical *Roman de la Rose* was heretical to love Chaucer freely confesses, however. Although the *Legend of Good Women* was calculated to bring him back to courtly love poetry, Chaucer betrays increasing impatience with the code early in the course of the legends. Of the *Canterbury Tales* which depict the conduct of the lover, the incomplete *Squieres Tale* is the only one that is entirely conventional. The

⁴⁵ Hammond, *Chaucer, A Biographical Manual*, p. 70.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

others, although they both begin and end on the conventional note, contain striking instances of Chaucer's impatience with the chivalric lover. All three were probably written at or before the time of the completion of the *Legend of Good Women*. Thereafter his failure to conform to popular standards is frank and undissembled. *Merciles Beaute*, *Rosamound*, the *Envoy to Scogan*, and the *Complaint to His Empty Purse* are as satirical as his early poems are amorous; he frankly rebels, engaging in frequent poetic frolics with the romantics of the lover. We may conclude that, except for a temporary renewal of allegiance to formal love standards in the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer's rebellion against the conventional concept of the humble lover developed, and increased in intensity, after the writing of the *Hous of Fame*.

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This book is generally considered to be the best and latest authority on the chronology of Chaucer's works. Valuable information concerning the authenticity, known or conjectural date, source, and metrical form of each of the poems and tales is presented in concise and accessible form.

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The statements made in this book are very exact, the author not having allowed herself to be misled by conjectural statements, however attractive. The volume contains a complete bibliography of scholarly material concerning Chaucer, up to and including the year of publication. No allusions to Chaucer or annotations of the Chaucerian text are included, nor biographies based upon other than direct investigation. Reprints of early biographies written in Latin add to the interest of the work.

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Kittredge is inclined to make general rather than specific statements. Too often they are open to question, or merely founded on personal opinion. The chronology here endorsed cannot be relied upon. The best portions of the book are those which deal with general conditions existing in the time of Chaucer, and interpretation of his poems.

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