Menippean Satire in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*

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Abstract

There is little consensus as to how to read Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*. Critics such as C.S. Lewis, D.W. Robertson, and Elizabeth Salter, for example, have come to very different conclusions regarding the *Troilus*’s emphasis on love. Such irreconcilable views open the text to a reconsideration. I reexamine love and its binary, war, in the *Troilus* through the lens of Menippean satire to offer a more inclusive reading of the text while admitting its exclusive tendencies. Here menippea attempts to ameliorate previous readings and to shed light on the degree of play that Chaucer employs in interpreting earlier narratives of *Troilus and Criseyde* through innovation and contemporizing the text.

The paper begins with a conspectus on Menippean satire and the *Troilus*. I draw from critics of menippea such as Bakhtin, Northrop Frye, Erik and Marshall McLuhan, and Anne Payne to lay the groundwork of menippea as applied to the *Troilus*. I invoke the McLuhans’ work on the tetrad to understand better how Menippean satire is a literary tool to provoke the role and limits of the reader. Concerning war, this essay explores how the matter of Troy was employed in the 14th century to show how the text speaks to events of the day, and how the character Troilus represents not only a knight of courtly love, but a mercenary initially bereft of *gentilesse*. Concerning love, this thesis explores the limits of love in the text by juxtaposing Andreas Capellanus’s *Rules of Courtly Love* to illustrate how Troilus and Criseyde’s love transgresses the literary conceit of courtly love to point to the greater phenomenon of *fin’ amors*. This paper contends that of all the ways to consider Chaucer’s *Troilus*, the most apt and productive is a Menippean satirical reading.
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Introduction

The aim of this essay is to examine Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* through the satirical lens of Menippean. I contend that Chaucer’s text exhibits many elements that could be considered Menippean, so in this paper I will show some of these satiric possibilities. I say possibilities because satire is contingent on the reader’s ability to “get it.” A Menippean reading of a text ensures an investigation on the part of the reader, a questioning and consideration of one’s epistemological limits through one’s relation to the text, its sources, its allusions, its time, and its genre. What this means is that a Menippean text urges a reader’s active engagement. In light of Chaucer’s the *Troilus*, a successful Menippean reading necessitates an understanding of the conditions and sources that inform the text. Menippea jolts the reader out of a tacit acceptance of the text and offers new ways to see the world. As we shall see, it accomplishes this by denying and questioning the commonsense assumptions that a reader brings to the text. Menippean satire is rhetorical, so because of the playful focus on the reader, it is particularly challenging to attend to as a study, chiefly because its effect is most powerful when it is least seen, that is described. As a description, menippea is best said to be an effect on the reader.

In part one I provide a conspectus of Menippean studies on the *Troilus* to show how unattended menippea has been as a topic of study, let alone as a possibility, to evaluate Chaucer’s work. I suggest that the *Troilus* is a menippea, and then explain more fully what Menippean satire is. In parts two and three I conduct a close reading of the *Troilus* to argue how the text is Menippean. I focus on the thematic binaries of love and war, each motif comprising the centrepiece for my discussion. In turn I attend to the role of the matter of Troy in the text, and the ways in which Troy is not simply a classic backdrop of war against which a tale of double sorrow plays out. Rather, it is rich in its evocative and allusive power. Here, the
problems that war presents in the text matches those of its complementary theme, love. The motif of love, which is my focus in part three, is presented in the text in ways that resist singular readings. Common to these last two parts are historical accounts of the late 1300s, which juxtaposed to literary conceits of the day, reflect satire in Chaucer’s text. This is promulgated by Chaucer’s stylistic freedom with informative texts and sources to further call into question the intent of the poem.

I hold that *Troilus*’s rhetorical power owes to the ways in which Chaucer does not adhere to received narratives, but plays with the parent texts and cultural codes to produce a literature that simultaneously admits and denies its readers. The result is an esoteric literature aiming to break new ground for the burgeoning literacy of England in the late 1300s. Of all the ways in which *Troilus* has been received as ambiguous, problematic, and ambivalent by critics, the best and all-embracing term to describe it is Menippean satire.
A Conspectus on Menippean Satire in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*

Much, of course, has been written about Chaucer and the *Troilus*, but the lens of Menippean satire in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* would offer fresh insights. Many discussions of the *Troilus* consider issues that are qualities of Menippean satire, yet none of them name it as such. My approach, however, is to frame the *Troilus* as a Menippean satire so as to enhance our comprehension of its inner workings, thereby understanding the poem not as an exemplum of courtly love, but more as a work reflecting and commenting on social and political changes in Chaucer’s day. The dearth of Menippean commentary in Chaucerian criticism is also true of general criticism on satire itself. Menippus’s works are not extant, and those who write on satire often leave out a discussion of menippea. Critical works that deal directly with Menippean satire are, therefore, hard to come by. Those critics who do discuss menippea tend to approach the subject descriptively, as, for instance, F. Anne Payne does in her *Chaucer and Menippean Satire*. Her study, nevertheless, offers a prelude to my study of the *Troilus*, which will examine criticism of the *Troilus* in combination with work on Menippean satire.

Because Menippean satire is peripheral to other forms of satire, it is easily overlooked (Frye, *Anatomy* 292). Criticism on satire often emphasizes Horatian and Juvenalian satire while excluding the Menippean. Dyson’s *The Crazy Fabric*, for example, only attends to the Horatian and Juvenalian, and Higet’s *The Anatomy of Satire* is similar. Although Higet does discuss menippea (144), he treats the form as a sub-category. Worster’s *The Art of Satire* fails to attend to menippea, even while recognizing the irony of the *Canterbury Tales* and the *Troilus*. For Worster, Chaucer is a detached, ironic observer, whose individualism and literary independence owes to his use of litotes (98; 101). Worster’s identification of Chaucer as a conspicuous voice in his day implies him to be a nonconformist, but Worster’s failure to recognize the plurality of
voice in Chaucer’s text as Menippean satire shares the limitations of other critics such as Salter, Jones, Mann, Windeatt, Robertson, and the Exegetes. These critics point out incongruities and alternate perspectives in Chaucer’s work, but appeal only to a generalized sense of satire (Jones, Knight 31; Mann, Medieval Estates 106). In Chaucer’s Tale, Paul Strohm writes of Chaucer’s situation in the mid-1380s. Here, in the face of reversals of fortune, Chaucer forsook the “customary comforts of a familiar audience,” and found not one, but “a plurality of voices” in which to speak to a broader readership (12). Okun’s MA thesis “The diversity of love: multiple voicing of the narrator in Troilus and Criseyde” focusses on the polysemy of love in the text, and even cites Bakhtin’s notion of heteroglossia, but does not address the text as Menippean. Owing to its subtlety, intertextuality and possible confusion with parody, irony, doggerel, nonsense, or other forms of satire, Menippean satire tends to be overlooked. It is not a form that readers readily perceive. Payne notes, “We do not attempt to master the necessary art of reading this [Menippean] satire” (4).

The problem of reading menippea owes in part to its slipperiness as a genre. It is a moving target that is not definitively descriptive, but is more an effect on the reader brought about through devices that open up ways of reading the text in more than one way. A definition of menippea, once recognized by its structural characteristic of a mixture of prose and poetry, has evolved to include thematic and philosophical concerns that follow traditions of earlier Menippists. The mixture aspect of Menippean satire seems to have been retained to include encyclopedic didacticism, as Korkowski notes of menippea in the Middle Ages (136), and Huizinga specifies in the Romant de la rose (127), but in the age of post-modernity this phenomenon might be articulated by intertextuality, particularly an intertextuality that presents dilemmas and contradictions. Interesting here is Korkowski’s dismissal of any menippea evident
in Chaucer’s work, noting the absence of a traceable genealogy of menippea from the Italian to medieval England (153-54) as a degeneration of menippea in the Latin West “into a literature of didascalic encyclopedism and didactic Christian allegorizing” (154). His assessment is debatable for two reasons. The first is that indeed a Menippean line from the Italian to the English can be found via the second rhetoric of the French (Kelly 3), which covered vernacular prosody. Here the French influence on rhetoric, notably imagination (imaginatio) by writers such as Machaut, helped give rise to euhemerization, or the separation of a fixed symbolic meaning with the author’s imposed meaning. As a result, a multifaceted object is presented in the text, which is problematic when it is a symbolically conventional motif, such as the literary conceit of courtly love in the 

Troilus. The second is that the breadth of Korkowski’s ambitious conspectus raises questions regarding his intimacy with Chaucer’s work, as shown in his comment that “nowhere, within the works of de Lorris and de Meun, Gower, Chaucer, or Langland, is there any mention of an early Menippist” (145)1. He continues that “whatever “definitions” of Menippean satire that others have applied to these works, are definitions of a self-serving type; contact with the Menippean tradition in these works is very remote.” Korkowski’s shifting definition of menippea speaks to its slipperiness, which can be seen as a self-serving tool to categorically include or exclude. This second point is also pronounced and developed better in Anne Payne’s counterexample in arguing for Menippean satire in Chaucer.

Payne’s Chaucer and Menippean Satire employs menippea to interpret Chaucer’s work, notably the intertextual aspect of the 

Troilus. She interpolates Bakhtin’s list of Menippean characteristics, and adds four points of her own (see appendix A). These descriptors serve her

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1 Korkowski deals quite extensively with the Consolation, marking it as Menippean based on its personification and mixed prose of different classical metres, even though it is generally sombre (136). He notes the “vestiges of early Menippean scoffing” (136), a digressive quality, and secular learning (137). For him, later medieval writers fail as Menippists in not harkening past Boethius to trace an earlier generic model (137).
argument, but are limited in that they are descriptive, a position echoing Frye’s view that menippea deals with attitudes (Anatomy 292). She juxtaposes Boethius’s the Consolation to show how Chaucer bastardizes Boethian conceptions, thus challenging a reading of the Troilus as philosophically Boethian. For Payne, Chaucer’s innovations on Boethius make the poem a Menippean tragedy. She contends that departures from source texts can give rise to menippea by speaking otherwise. Her argument opens avenues of seeing menippea through literary devices such as allusion and allegory, which suggests that allusion and allegory can evince menippea. Nevertheless, Payne’s treatment of menippea in Chaucer favours the Canterbury Tales at the expense of the Troilus. Although her work pertains to my study, the overall paucity of work attending to menippea in the Troilus show a lack of research on the subject. My approach differs from Payne’s in that I examine historical factors to reveal ways in which the text is decentered. Popular readings centre the poem as a commentary on love, most notably a courtly love. Critical examinations of this text “underread” the high degree of play that Chaucer employs in his work through heteroglossia. Though my goal is similar to Payne’s in that I am arguing for a reconsideration of the text, my understanding of the instances of menippea at play in the text vary enough to consider my particular approach a new way of regarding Menippean studies in Chaucer.

The suggestion that the Troilus is a Menippean text is implicit in criticism on the motif of love which, collectively, acknowledges the text’s multi-facetedness that “defies interpretation from any single viewpoint” (Windeatt 71). There are certain critics whose work stands as hallmarks, and whose comments inform later criticism. C.S. Lewis’s The Allegory of Love is a

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2 Payne also calls the Consolation a Menippean comedy (122), and Frye implies that it is Menippean when he calls it an “anatomy.” Eric McLuhan denies the text is Menippean because it aims to placate the reader, not provoke her (“Satire in the tetrad”).
case in point with its argument that the *Troilus* is a “great poem in praise of love” (197). The *Troilus* is “perfectly medieval” (178) to Lewis, and yet historically significant because its theme of love is trans-historical (179). The end of the *Troilus* is an example of “pathos pure and unrelieved,” in which “All is to be endured, and yet nothing is to be done” (195). Lewis makes courtly love the stabilizing principle in the narrative dynamics (Salter 215). He traces the source of his interpretation back to Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* (*The Lover’s Handbook*) through Andreas Capellanus’s *De amore* (*The Art of Courtly Love*), texts widely acknowledged as integral to understanding a medieval conception of love, especially the latter (Robertson 393; see appendix B). Lewis’s assertion of romantic love as the principle of the *Troilus* has Christian undertones; the strict discipline of the knightly-lover translates into a “solemn amatory ritual” (Lewis, *Allegory* 3). As a man who was regarded by many as the best-read of his generation (Duriez 35), his opinions have had considerable influence.

D.W. Robertson has a different point of view on the role of love in the *Troilus*. In *A Preface to Chaucer* he argues against love mirroring Christian values (503), insisting instead that Troilus’s love for Criseyde reflects the world’s undependability in matters of love (5.1832), and that their love is motivated by lust (500). Robertson points out that Capellanus’s *De amore* contains a “double lesson” on love (395). The narrator tells his young reader, whose name is Walter, that following his treatise may lead to love if the instructions are adhered to, but that by following this path Walter will lose the grace of God. *De amore* thus warns against and discourages a pursuit of love (395). Robertson reminds the reader that appeals to sentiment, as seen in Lewis—and critical works that adopt such a view—reflect a romanticism not part of medieval culture. He writes that readers should attend to rhetorical devices and logic grounded in classical and Biblical learning, rather than sentimentality and indulgence towards the amorous
Robertson’s *Preface* stands as a signpost in Chaucerian criticism and signals a departure from previous readings of the *Troilus* as a poem in the celebration of courtly love.

Robertson’s *Preface* is of consequence for two reasons. The first is that it influenced a school of readers called the Exegetes, whose readings focus on a text’s historical time, and question the ways the Romantic movement has influenced modernist interpretations of medieval texts. Patterson writes in “Historical Criticism and Development of Chaucer Studies” that the Exegetes attacked previous critics and readings for their misunderstandings and misrepresentations of history, “incomplete” interpretations, and sought authentic ways of seeing the text (2). The result was the introduction of an alternate voice in the middle of the twentieth century that took Chaucerian scholarship in a fresh direction. For example, Robert Payne’s “Chaucer and the Art of Rhetoric” addresses the educational use of the *trivium* in the fourteenth century to show how Chaucer employed a rhetorical style to persuade his audience (41), and indicates the *Troilus*’s explicit handling of rhetoric (3.1324-36). From such a standpoint it becomes easier to examine the “complex ironic perspective which has for so long seemed to modern readers distinctively Chaucerian” (55).

The second, and more interesting, reason that Robertson’s work is important is that, unlike earlier criticism, it discloses in the *Troilus* what Bakhtin calls the polyphonic voice. Bakhtin explains that polyphony arises from “objective complexity, contradictoriness, and multi-voicedness” of the age (31). This is where the consideration of menippea begins. Bakhtin’s mode of artistic vision is not one of evolution, but one of coexistence and interaction (28). To him, the ideas presented in a text can speak at once, which can evoke a multiplicity of voices, each speaking to an individual consciousness (81). Bakhtin observes that historical reflection on any age tends to be reductive, selecting from a diversity of perspectives something that offers to
represent that age as unified; whatever deviates from that standard is accidental, and therefore, unessential (82). Frye reminds us that philosophy is concerned with such a “selection of standards,” and that the “inconvenient data” is what satirists emphasize (Anatomy 214). Indeed, there is a tendency for critics to collapse historical periods into a monolithic “collective” consciousness. Here menippea becomes a critical tool to challenge this simplification, for Menippean satire is a unifying frame defined by a plurality of voices. In this light, the disparate criticism on matters of love in the Troilus elicits the possibility that a consideration of the text as Menippean could reconcile these interpretative differences.

Lewis and Robertson’s incongruent ways of reading love in the Troilus suggest a plurality of voices at work, which opens up the possibility that love is treated in this text in a Menippean fashion. In English and International Elizabeth Salter adds to the likelihood of polyphonism in Chaucer’s poem by introducing a third consideration of love: Love in the Troilus is not a courtly nor passionate love, but a celebration of earthly love (1.979), “set into some cosmic pattern” (219). Salter, like others, recognizes the variating and fluctuating meanings in the text, but contends that this is a “co-ordinate rather than complex construction” (230). Salter seeks concord, yet understands that the Troilus is a discordant text (230). She calls the Troilus “distressful” because it “fails to report its findings meaningfully” (230). Her reading of Chaucer’s text accords with Eric McLuhan’s comment that menippea seeks to provoke the reader, to jolt its audience (Role of Thunder 7).

Salter’s third approach to the issue of love proposes that there is a disunity at work in the text. Windeatt comments on this aspect of the text frequently in the Oxford Guides to Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde, and speaks to the double-nature of human love for disorder and harmony (224). Indeed, the double sorrow at the outset of the Troilus underscores this fact (1.1-4).
Windeatt states that a proliferation of interpretive possibilities in the text counters the ability to realize the poem from a single viewpoint (299). Although the predisposition of readers is to celebrate consistency in the text, the *Troilus*’s design challenges readers to see a wholeness other than one composed of congruency. Windeatt urges a consideration of the text as “a unity more through inclusion than exclusion, more in process than product” (299). Windeatt here describes the Menippean dynamic of the *Troilus*, though without naming as such. Like many critics, he has missed the heuristic possibilities that lie in treating the text as a menippea.

Menippean satire is a mode of satire that challenges the reader’s expectations. It is an old form generally attributed to the Romans, and differs from Horatian and Juvenalian. Menippea is frank, holds no pretenses, and is the least caustic of the three modes. Menippea is difficult to trace as a literary tradition, but the Cynic philosophers are often credited with menippea’s origins. As one story goes, the Cynic Diogenes of Sinope was once accused of knowing nothing of philosophy. His reply that because he was a pretender to wisdom he was a philosopher offers a glimpse at menippea’s objective (Korkowski 43). Menippean satire holds that nothing is sacred, and targets totalizing discourses. It counters this vanity of absolutism a variety of ways, including coarseness, obscenity, and inversions of worldly values (Kirk, *Annotated Catalogue* xvii). Menippea can even indulge in long, fantastic narratives, and rampant displays of learning to make its point through overloading the reader with information. Menippea maintains that no one knows anything for certain, least of all the reader (to whom it is carefully attentive). Menippean satire never mollifies the reader, never moralizes, but plays within the text to question and challenge the reader’s certainties of form, of text, of society, and even of self. For the Menippean satirist, uncertainty is the only certainty. When Korkowski writes that menippea
is antagonistic to decorum (*Conspectus x*), he refers to menippea’s constant questioning of the ideologies and beliefs that are perceived as absolute.

Frye’s discussion of Menippean satire in *The Anatomy of Criticism* is the most commonly used touchpoint for Menippean satire, but it is Bakhtin’s earlier *The Problems with Dostoevsky’s Poetics* that deals more comprehensively with the subject. His central principle for menippea has to do with an understanding of literary language: “[it] is not a product or detachable attribute of a person; it is an energy negotiating between a person’s inner consciousness and the outer world” (*xxiv*). The readers are to avoid the placating effects of passive reading, and instead to understand themselves as engaged agents within the text, not a passive audience. What ensures a reader’s engagement, as Bakhtin explains, is the device of σπουδογέλοιον [spoudegoioion] (106). This is a seriocomic form that challenges intellectual orthodoxy not only philosophically, but structurally and linguistically as well (107). It tells the truth with a laugh, discussing serious things with light-heartedness (Highet 233).

In his anatomy of the seriocomic, Bakhtin describes three parts. The first is that it uses “the living present” as its starting point for understanding, judging, and shaping reality (108). Heroes are contemporized, and thus the epic and tragic components “speak in a zone of the open-ended present” (108). The outcome of this topicality is engagement with the contemporary audience, pointing outward to the immediate world around them. Marshall McLuhan alludes to menippea’s timeliness when he considers humour both as a system of communication and as a probe of what’s really going on around us. He says that satire “affords us our most appealing anti-environmental tool. It does not deal in theory, but immediate experience, and is often the best guide to changing perceptions” (*Massage 92*). According to Ann Astell, the topicality of satire allows politico-historical insights because it voices dissent (164). In this light, menippea is
less a literary device and more a historical tool that evinces competing positions and discourses on events of the day. Frye states that an understanding of menippea would clarify many *problema* of the history of literature (*Anatomy* 292). Indeed, the topicality of a satirical voice is central to Terry Jones’s arguments in both *Who Murdered Chaucer?* and *Chaucer’s Knight*. Astell too recognizes the importance of topicality for a reader in her *Political Allegory in Late Medieval England* when she writes of a dialogism formed between reader and writer, and their culture(s) as mirrored in the text (163), citing the *Canterbury Tales* as an example (40).

The second part of the serio-comical is closely attached to the first: experience and free-invention dominate in the text. Narratives separate themselves from legend and tend toward skepticism, if not cynicism, so that the literary image is reimagined (108). Swift’s *A Tale of a Tub* touches on this point, for it addresses the serious question of sanity in a crisp, digressive way. If the reader cannot read beyond his whimsy, *spoudegeoion* is lost.

The third part of the serio-comic is multi-voiced, multi-toned narratives that mix high and low. Bakhtin states that these three components in kind and degree result in a renewed relationship to “the word as the material of literature,” and that texts which apply this form show signs of experimentation by inserting genres, retold narratives, letters, mixtures of forms, and authorial masks. As Bakhtin states, “alongside the representing word there appears the *represented* word” (108) so that polysemy, puns, and plays on words figure prominently in the text, stretching and challenging a singular understanding. Signifiers take on new significations, much like Carroll’s Humpty Dumpty performs with his solipsist logic. As a result, new relationships between the word and reality are created.

With its plurality of voices in the text, menippea forecloses on the dominance of any single voice, thereby disallowing monolithic readings. The polyphony in the text aims to rouse
the reader from passivity, and invites diverse insights through its multifariousness and discordance (A. Payne 7). In short, menippea is a constructive method of allowing disagreements within narratives to coexist, and is a technique that broadens a reader’s epistemological base in order to investigate human dilemmas that conflicting aspects of a text suggest (35).

As Payne points out in her work, polyphony can be the symptom of devices that point outside their parent texts. Allegory, for example, recognizes reader-centredness by its topicality, and admits alternate considerations of the text. As Frye states, allegory alludes to the reader’s experience through an incongruous idea (Anatomy 210). The way allegory affects the reader is by appealing to one’s experience with a voice that means more than what it states. Thus, allegory adds a plurality of voices to a text, making it polyphonic. But whereas allegory is not necessarily Menippean, menippea makes use of allegory. In menippea, the experience that the reader brings to the text is the narrative upon which the interplay of incongruous voices is set. Isidore of Seville says as much of poets, who modify actual events and truths into other forms through indirect representations (181). The difference here is that menippea uses heteroglossia in a disjointed text to unanchor a single interpretation.

Menippean satire plays at affecting the reader’s ways of identifying in the text. Frye states in The Educated Imagination that the narrative of losing and regaining one’s identity is the framework of all literature (455). Literature is a window, but it is also a mirror. The transformative power of literature is that it permits an investigation of the self through the text. By presenting multiple voices, menippea challenges a reader’s schema. It probes the reader’s epistemological limits through myriad perspectives, but forecloses on validating any of them. As an effect it is counterpoint, rebuttal: that what one holds as an absolute truth is refutable because
what one thinks is limited to what one knows. Menippean satirists base this method of inquiry on the fact that humans perceive by imposing “the form of the old on the content on the new” (McLuhan, *Medium* 86). Put another way, readers are prone to frame new content in terms of what they already know.

How menippea operates reflects Marshall McLuhan’s maxim that “the medium is the message”: any human innovation becomes an extension of the human, altering his interaction with the environment. How then does Menippean satire affect the reader? How, as an innovation, does it change the human environment or condition? Critics of satire tend only to deal with it descriptively, and as an external rather than internal condition. McLuhan and his son Eric, however, out of their research on media studies, devised what they called the tetrad to examine an innovation’s effect on a user. This diagnostic tool evaluates the shifting conditions of perception in the individual.

As a heuristic device, the tetrad inventories the effects of an extension of a human, and shows that any technology or media simultaneously engages four aspects. It is verbal in nature, built on the idea that words are metaphors (Frye, *Great Code* 25; McLuhan, *Laws* 120). Metaphor “not only stores but translates our experience from one mode to another” (McLuhan, *Laws* 225), so it is an apt foundation for the tetrad, because human innovations are transformations of experience. The McLuhans anatomize metaphor into four parts, each one a binary corresponding to a dimension of an innovation’s formal cause (227): metaphor/enhancement, metonymy/retrieval, synecdoche/obsolescence, and irony/reversal. Both sides of these binaries work simultaneously on the individual.

The first aspect, enhancement, is an extension of the human faculty—psychic or physical, which as metaphor, A is seen *through* B (231). A car, for example, is an extension of
the foot. The second aspect, retrieval, recalls a previous technology. It stems from metonymy: the relation of A to B through quality or association. Using the same example, a car retrieves fire. The third aspect, obsolescence, makes a previous technology redundant, and corresponds to synecdoche: the whole of A for the part of B, or *vice versa*. The horse and buggy would be displaced by the car here. The last aspect is reversal, the condition arising from the new technology being overloaded—backfiring, which entails irony: “a double signification” that can mean the opposite of what it is, so that A is not A (232). Reversal for a car means gridlock.

The tetrad’s effects on the reader are commonly misrecognized as external conditions, which is why many critics approach phenomena—including satire—descriptively. In fact, a technology is informed by a simultaneity of experiences from a human’s interaction with it. The tetrad is thus poetic and not mimetic. The McLuhans remind us that technologies such as satire change the environment, and evoke unique ratios of sense perceptions: “The extension of any one sense alters the way in which we think and act—the way we perceive the world. When these ratios change, men change” (*Medium*, 41). In research that was awaiting publication in 2013 Eric McLuhan specifies how satire affects the individual. Here he shows the three forms of satire as parsed by the tetrad (see appendix C). According to him, menippea enhances wit, which is the “quality of speech or writing which consists in the apt association of thought and expression, calculated to surprise and delight by its unexpectedness” (“Wit,” def. 8). It retrieves grammar and dialectic to play with them, and thus, obsolesces Horatian and Juvenalian satire. The retrieval, or flip form of menippea explains why Frye and Payne appeal to it: it is serious art and high culture (E. McLuhan “Re: Satire in the tetrad”). McLuhan’s theory is that the three forms of satire stem from the *trivium*, so that menippea originates from rhetoric, Horatian satire from grammar, and Juvenalian from dialectic (“Satire in the tetrad”). This idea seems congruent
with what the tetrads suggest, and is attractive for its plausible etiology. The McLuhans’ work on satire helps in my studies by showing that Menippean satire, like all innovations of man, is recognized best as an effect in the reader.

Menippean satire is a neglected form that is transformative. Owing to its nature, it offers a myriad of critical and theoretical applications. Bakhtin’s reattention to the form has prompted certain critics to research menippea further; critics such as Frye, Kirk, and the McLuhans have contributed much to its viability as a legitimate mode of satire. Payne’s work on menippea coupled with her interest in Chaucer shows how menippea can be used as a diagnostic tool to evince a plurality of voices in a text. Here a reading of the text as Menippean is an analytical technique to allow the dynamics of the text to become open to view. The employment of menippea to challenge normalizing discourses in the reader also suggests that it is a tool of protest, and so the identification of a Menippean text as menippea can elicit a better understanding of competing discourses at play during the text’s composition. As I intend to show, it is a discursive tool that can provide politico-historical insights, and can even hint at authorial intention. If my work opens up new possibilities of reading the *Troilus*, it is indebted to both A. Payne and the McLuhans’ work on menippea. If not, it still is.
The Matter of Troy

The matter of Troy is an aspect often overlooked in the *Troilus*. For example, C.S. Lewis argues in *The Allegory of Love* that the *Troilus* is a misunderstood poem in the medieval tradition that focuses on courtly love (117). To him, Chaucer’s text has ubiquitous appeal because, unlike his other works, the *Troilus* requires no historical explanation. The poem stands out because it is from the Italian and has much humour; his other poems originate from French sources\(^3\) and have little humour. Moreover, his other poems read as allegorical to inattentive readers, “while it [the *Troilus*] is not allegorical at all” (117). He continues that it is deceptive to interpret the *Troilus* as a rift from medieval tradition, and to consider it as a modern poem, replete with comic and ironic aspects: “In reality, the writing of the *Troilus* betokens no apostasy from the religion of Cupid and Venus” (117). Lewis’s identification of the *Troilus* as “the consummation, not the abandonment, of his labours as a poet of courtly love” reflects a common reading of the text (117), but Lewis’s bias toward courtly love’s prominence in the poem owes to a neglect of the backdrop of love’s counterpart, war. Love “speaks to the heart of every reader” because the context of war prepares the speech. As Beebee notes, “War exists, but we must imagine love” (5). In fact, Lewis refuses to address how an admittance of “reading war” in the poem opens possibilities in the text that he denies.

An investigation of Chaucer’s retelling of the Trojan War in the *Troilus* reveals not only how the motif of war is integral to the notion of love in the text, but additionally, how this motif follows a medieval tradition. The conceit of the matter of Troy speaks “to the heart of every reader”—particularly for the fourteenth-century reader—because it positively addresses issues of identity. Chaucer’s retelling of Troy, however, also questions and plays at identities,

\(^3\) Kelly claims that “Chaucer’s use of Imagination and its cognates conforms to the practice of the French poets” (195). He then cites 4.200-201 and 4.1695-96 from the *Troilus* as examples (196).
specifically—like Lewis urges—the question of reader-identity as realized in the text. Contrary to what Lewis implies, the humour found in the *Troilus* is found in equal measure through the discourse of war, but as we shall see, the comedy is Menippean satire, which targets the reader as the butt of the joke.

Troy is an ideal backdrop to stage a narrative. Dramatic war attends to matters of life and death, and the heroism inherent in a war narrative transfers into any text that adopts it. A look at Chaucer’s contemporaries shows its popularity. Both “moral Gower” (5.1856) and Lydgate invoke Troy in their works, as does the *Gawain* poet (1-15). Troy becomes for these writers something to be interpolated, or hailed. Through the convention of Troy, the writer elevates the profile of his text. The mythological implications of Troy offer strong connections for the reader not only because of the heroic deeds of powerful characters, but also, because of the epic tradition that the Trojan War carries by its reference in a text.

In a tale of love such as the *Troilus*, the motif of war is incorporated into romance through the knight of courtly love. The chivalric code exemplifies this mix of war and romance, blending the historical, aristocratic knight with the rise of courtly vernacular literature (Amtower 257). The knight becomes a key figure in texts that employ both the war narrative and romance because he bridges both worlds. Lewis admits the knight of courtly love lives in a hostile world: “We must picture a castle which is a little island of comparative leisure and luxury, and therefore at least of possible refinement, in a barbarous countryside” (12). Scholars disagree whether the literature informed the chivalric code or *vice versa* (Amtower 257), but by the time of *Troilus*’s composition in the 1380s, one sees in the eponymous character the embodiment of both the aristocratic knight and the romantic lover. The character Troilus suggests to the reader nobility paired with a strict code of conduct on how to conduct oneself in matters of love, and this is the
vision that Lewis emphasizes. Here the motif of war serves only to relieve the motif of romance, so that the knight is foremost a protector of the heart’s desires. In this way the metaphor of war is essential to understanding the chivalric implications of love. For a romance, the effect is an increased dramatization of love in the story. The investigation of the narrative of war—particularly the narrative of Troy—can also elicit an effect that diminishes or overshadows the dramatization of love. A question is which aspect is a digression to the other. Mindfulness of the role of war in the text results in a poem no longer a monolithic testament to love, but a questioning of the text as a romance through the ways in which the narrative of war is employed to highlight the limits of love.

The Troy story held a particular place in the hearts of the English, and for good reason. Tradition held that after Aeneas escaped Troy to found Rome, his grandson, Brutus, discovered Britain, founded London, and begat “a line of kings of whom Arthur was the greatest and the last” (Brewer 101). Troy was for the English people an etiological narrative. Smith reminds us that London was even called “Troynovant” or “Trenovant” [New Troy] (17). As a rhetorical device, Troy in a text brought “home” to the English mind, and in the burgeoning nationalism of the 1380s this was a powerful, discursive tool to help unify the English people.

What makes the Troy story powerful to the English is that it was taken to be true (Brewer 101) and therefore expressed the source of English identity. Green explains the degree to which Troy mattered to others:

How firm a place such knowledge of the events at Troy occupied in the historical imagination of the Middle Ages is shown by their key position in the doctrine of

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4 Mandeville writes of The Temple of Our Lord: “Then the Emperor Adrian [Hadrian], who was of the lineage of Troy, repaired the city of Jerusalem, and restored the Temple, and made it again as Solomon had built it, royal and noble” (The Travels of Sir John Mandeville 81).
translatio imperī (the transfer of power from Babylon to Greece) and by the way in which peoples like the Franks and the Britons sought their origins, and therefore their place in history, by tracing them, like the Romans, back to Troy.5 (Medieval Romance 154)

The pedigree of Troy was significant for English readers because it provided an account of their ancestry, a prelude to the English nation and what one might tentatively call a new English subjectivity. By incorporating a classical, albeit pagan pantheon, an English author’s application of Troy positioned the English reader as a member of a powerful lineage that included Brutus, son of Aeneas. Turville-Petre notes that in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s account of English history the recourse to a Trojan past “encouraged a cyclical view of history which the Normans could manipulate to legitimate their own conquest” (81-2). Consequently, texts such as the Troilus could be seen to be nationalist by alluding to a history taken as real.

A question, then, is to what degree the convention of Troy was employed outside of literary parlance. An example that sheds some light on the discursive power of Troy and Troynovant during Chaucer’s day is found in the account of Sir John Philipot’s naval engagement with the Scottish pirate Mercer in 1378. The regency that bridged Edward III’s reign and Richard II’s ascendancy had interrupted the even flow of sovereign power, and had provided Mercer an opportunity to “take advantage of the little attention that had been lately given to naval affairs by the government” (Smith 337). Philipot, already a powerful Londoner and a representative of the City in Parliament at Westminster, outfitted a private navy with himself as Commander in Chief to foil Mercer’s latest escapade, the seizure of all the boats in the

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5 Isidore of Seville is not so kind: “Some suspect that the Britons were so named in Latin because they are brutes (brutus). Their nation is situated within the Ocean, with the sea flowing between us and them, as if they were outside our orbit” (198).
harbor of Scarborough. Philipot’s brash actions brought good fortune to him, and his triumph over Mercer and recapture of the boats echoes Pandarus’s advice to Troilus (4.600-02). What is interesting here is Coulton’s report of Philipot’s victory, in which “God raised up against him [Mercer] one of the citizens of Troynovant [Philipot]” (117, emphasis mine). Philipot, defender of London and England, had a hero’s welcome similar to Troilus’s early successes in book two, in which “the peple cryde, ‘Here cometh oure joye, . . . holder up of Troye!’” (2. 643-44). Philipot was elected Mayor of London the following year, and became one of the Collectors of Customs under Chaucer’s Comptrollership in 1379.

Philipot’s recognition as a hero of Troynovant is curious in light of “his presumption and contempt at undertaking an affair so high in nature without the king’s permission” (Smith 117). Loftie notes that “in spite of his success, Philipot was censured by the council” (183), “at the instigation of a set of weak, indolent, wicked ministers, summoned before the king and council, to answer for his conduct, in presuming to undertake an affair of such high importance” (Chamberlain 32). Acting without permission, even in the realm’s best interest, could still carry the charge of treason. Upon questioning, Philipot responded:

Sir, knowe . . . that I neither sent my money nor men to the danger of the seas, that I shoulde take from you or your fellowes, the goode ronoune of Chivalrie, and win it to me, but being sorrowfull to seeing thy peoples misery, in my Country, which nowe through your sloathfulness, of the most Ladie of Nations, is brought to lie open to the spoyling of every vilest nation, while there is not one of you who doth put his hand to the defence thereof. (Smith 337-8)

Philipot, although dancing close to the edge of discipline according to the Statute of Treason in 1352, was dismissed without incident. Philipot was later knighted in 1381 for his support of the
king during the Peasants’ Revolt. In fact, Philipot’s lenient treatment speaks to the economic implications of his victory, to the weak state of the English monarchy at the time, as well as to Philipot’s reputation. Moreover, Philipot’s designation as a defender of Troyrovant is a flourish that bolsters his character and may even help protect him from his transgressions. The individuality that Philipot exercised bridges treason and patriotism, yet his branding as a citizen of Troyovant points to the power Troy could carry as a discourse of identity in Chaucer’s day.

Troy, then, was a narrative that framed the individual positively. Lewis, however, dismisses this power of Troy to reify identity in *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*. Responding to the effect of nationalist allusions, he questions why authors such as Monmouth delighted in tracing English ancestry to the great kings and peoples, including the Trojans. To him, “the consciousness of race, or (if you prefer) the illusion of race, seems hardly to have existed. Nor is race much use to us as critics” (24). Lewis, an Englishman, neglects the fact that his forefathers delighted in their associations with the ancients. He is correct in describing Troy as a “supposed link” to the history of the English, but to dismiss a narrative as fiction does not cancel its discursive power. Aristotle says as much in the *Poetics* when he claims that poetry (by which he means fictions) is truer than history. While history states what has happened, fiction (poetry) tells of what would happen: “For this reason poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history. Poetry tends to express universals, and history particulars” (16). Lewis’s criticism of nationalist discourses such as Troy values a true historical account, which overrides his ability to recognize the rhetorical power of fiction, and he speaks strongly to his own time by downplaying the importance of race to readers in the late 1300s. Here one questions his understanding of a medieval audience, for Lewis’s racial commentary pits the reader against the fact that indeed race was not a threat to the medieval reader, but a means to validate one’s
identity. His dismissal of the persuasive power of fiction appeals to an inclusive racial politics, but abjures the real way that early English nationalism sought inclusion through the exclusive motif of war.

Chaucer in fact recognizes how the matter of Troy can persuade an audience, and shows an understanding of the rhetorical power of this theme (1.57-61). Troy is “wel wist,” which reifies the popularity of the story to the familiar reader, but tells the naïve reader just how well-known the story is. By stating Troy’s broad appeal, Chaucer subjugates the English reader by inviting one not only to identify with the text, but also because of Troy’s etiological implications for the English reader, to identify through his text. To the English reader, Chaucer’s comments on the popularity of the legend of Troy make engaging with the *Troilus* a self-fulfilling prophesy that reifies her notion of identity, and not necessarily the author’s. His awareness that truth via fiction can create a positive feedback loop shows an awareness of the reader, the power of fiction, and the power of fiction over the reader.

Though the story of the Trojan War and its connotations may have been “wel wist,” Chaucer’s invocation of source authors as authorities (5.1791-92) raises questions regarding the text’s historical trustworthiness. For example, he compares his writing to that of Virgil, Ovid, Homer, Lucan, and Statius (5.1792). Congruent with Lewis’s claim, the narrator says the poem is about love, and directs the reader to Dares for narratives of Troilus’s accomplishments in battle (5.1765-71). As Green states, however, Chaucer’s selection of authorities is problematic, for it questions sound judgment and complicates the fictionality of his text:

Other romances dealing with the fall of Troy introduce what could be regarded as a historical dimension by basing themselves on the written accounts of Dares and Dictys, held to be eyewitnesses of the Trojan War and therefore more reliable as “historians”
than the poet Homer who lived much later. This presence of the extra-fictional even within the fictional world has been further stressed with the observation that fictions can re-assemble details in new communications, so that, whilst constituents may be drawn from reality, it is their occurrence in a new combination that makes up the fiction.

(*Medieval Romance* 5-6)

Chaucer’s mixture of fictional and historical authors problematizes the text’s veracity, and reveals an intention to mystify the reader. What is created is a fictionalization of history that undermines the text’s authority as truth. Windeatt comments that the “*Troilus* insistently fictionalizes its sources and fictionalizes its dependence on that source, so as to bring into the foreground the question of the poem’s authority and its relationship to its sources and to tradition” (42).

For the reader, this fictionalization of history has a Menippean effect, one that plays with the reader’s limits of knowledge, but one that also recognizes the author’s limits (2.1220). What the reader encounters is a text that purports “what is the case,” yet it tests the limits of what one knows, or what one cannot or does not know. For the writer, a text that fictionalizes history is a manifestation of the writer’s epistemological limits. In this way, menippea is inherent and potential in all texts in that the processes of reading and writing necessitate and manifest an inventory of what one knows and does not know. More to the point, Chaucer’s fictionalization of history in the *Troilus* challenges the reader’s knowledge-base, which is symptomatic of menippea. While some readers would be compelled to accept his narrative verbatim, Chaucer’s doubtful sources pronounce in a Menippean way what is inherent in all reading: to make meaning out of what is presented, which is a process that involves questioning and evaluating what one knows.
But not only does Chaucer fictionalize history, he historicizes fiction as well. The Troy-historian Lollius (1.394; 5.1653), the fictional “auctour” that Chaucer includes as a historical authority (Benson 1022), raises questions regarding his sincerity in retelling the Troy story. Lollius becomes for him an imaginary authority that gives him carte blanche to invent, amend, and occlude as he sees fit. Windeatt rationalizes Chaucer’s creation of Lollius when he calls it a rhetorical device “to both claim and yet to play with the tradition of attribution to an ancient authority” (40). Although the name Lollius alludes to a possible mistranslation of Horace’s “Epistle 1.2” (67; cf. Benson 1022), Chaucer, intentional or not, plays on the reader’s understanding of history. In an age when the significance of authorship was gaining ground (Strohm 185), it stands to reason that Chaucer’s invented authority would help establish his name as part of a lineage of authorities on Troy. Windeatt reminds us that “the name of an appropriate classical writer or text is important for Chaucer in lending his poems the authentic associations of an identifiable ancient authority” (40). Here Chaucer anticipates Walter Benjamin’s assertion that “the presence of the original is prerequisite to the concept of authenticity” (39). Moreover, he understands authenticity (auctoritas) as a concept contingent on the reader, controlled by the author himself.6 Although most in Chaucer’s day would not have balked at Chaucer’s use of Lollius as his authority, his inclusion in the text nevertheless plays the reader as a patsy, an ass to the harp (1.731-5). The consequences of historicizing fiction includes a duping of the reader, which alongside Chaucer’s fictionalization of history, suggests Menippean satire. Of course, the same would hold for those who saw past Chaucer’s indulgences with his authorities and considered themselves in on the joke.

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6 See for example Chaucer’s views on this in the opening lines of the prologue in The Legend of Good Women (4-16).
Troubling as his historical and fictional indulgences may be, Chaucer’s deliberation against his reader culminates in his occlusion of the chief source author, Boccaccio. On this point Hussey muses on two possible reasons. The first is that authorship was not a prerequisite to publication: “The manuscript he used may simply not have mentioned Boccaccio at all, for it was by no means axiomatic for a medieval text to include its author’s name” (59). The second reflects a valuation on Chaucer’s part concerning Windeatt’s above observation: “Boccaccio may not have seemed ancient and respectable enough for an ‘authority’ on an episode of the Trojan War” (59; Scanlon 171). Chaucer refers to source texts twenty-nine times in the *Troilus* (Windeatt 40), and at times he even assumes complete omniscience (5.1086-90), eliminating or indicating a lack of need for an authority on the Trojan War. Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato* was a difficult text for British readers to access (Hussey 59), so Chaucer would have been safe in claiming an authority other than Boccaccio. Windeatt claims that “there is no extant evidence other than Chaucer’s poems for the reading of Italian poetry in England until perhaps as late as the 16th century” (48), but French translations may have been available (Hussey 59). These facts speak to the speed of literacy and techniques of literacy circulation in the day, and leads one to question why Chaucer did not omit his authorities entirely. It is not until one looks at Chaucer’s play of history and fiction and his omission of Boccaccio that one realizes his text is not only highly aware of his reader’s limits, but that Chaucer’s manipulations of the narrative of Troy is a series of rhetorical manoeuvres to make the reader dependent on the author’s words.

Whatever Chaucer’s reason for choosing his sources and including Lollius as a fictional authority at the expense of Boccaccio, it remains that the mixture of history and fiction in the *Troilus* is a problematic aspect of the text. Here the “veridical medley” that Chaucer offers is analogous to the prose/verse macaroni traditionally—and descriptively—recognized as
Menippean. Chaucer’s manipulation of fiction and history in the *Troilus* leaves the unsuspecting or naïve reader to understand the text within the framework of a textual tradition of history as a truthful account. Even to the educated reader who recognizes these historical incongruences, the effect of Chaucer’s indulgences is one that the reader’s perceptions of truth and falseness are constantly undermined, questioned. A. Payne notes that “the presence of multiple views in the poem [the *Troilus*] dramatizes both man’s continual attempt to make something meaningful out of life’s events and demands and the impossibility of finding any solution in an undecipherable universe” (116). But to the Menippist, the “undecipherable universe” is the impossible solution. Chaucer’s interplay between the fictional and historical suggests he is well-aware that such a solution is possible only through fiction. In this way, Chaucer’s Menippean interplay of the fictive and historical concerning Troy, while promoting Trojan narratives and associations to the reader, probes the ontological limits of history and fiction as carriers of truth. Similar to a classical definition of menippea as a blend of verse and prose, the menippea in the *Troilus* includes a blend of truth and falseness, which is less structural and more pointed at the reader. If Menippea concerns itself with the big questions (Payne 7), then Chaucer targets the reader with some of the biggest.

The ambiguities that the *Troilus* confronts the reader necessitates that readers seek their own truths in the text. It may seem that the *Troilus*’s simultaneous giving way to and deferment of the matter of Troy might render the text absurd and meaningless, but Chaucer implores the reader to look beneath the surface of the text. His narrator, recognizing the goodness in his guide Venus, says to the reader:

Ye knowe al thilke covered qualitee

Of thynges, which that folk on wondren so
As the narrator tells his story, he undertakes a familiarity with the reader that assumes she understands his motives to why he tells what he does and censors what he does not (5.267-73). When Pandarus relates Troilus’s love to Criseyde, even he hints at how one should read the *Troilus* (2.256-59). Considering her ability to understand what he is saying, Pandarus thinks to himself that telling tales “aught harde” and drawing them out give little pleasure (2.267-69). Rather, it is important to adapt one’s speech to a reader’s level to avoid suspicion of trickery (2.270-74). The fact these thoughts are disclosed not only builds rapport with the reader, but shows Pandarus’s notion in practice in the text. Robertson comments that the “mixed form” Chaucer adopts by including the voices of both the narrator and the characters is indicative of a “mixed tragedy” (473). Because the text’s ambiguous structure frustrates a distinct classification, menippea comes to mind as an apt descriptor. In terms of addressing the reader, this mixed form would be best termed “Menippean” to admit the more playful components of the text, while maintaining the semblance of a tragedy of double sorrow. The *Troilus*’s form, in combination with its direct address of the reader, demands the reader pay special attention to what the poet says, and shows how the reader’s engagement with the text is important to Chaucer. His relationship with the reader, combined with his advice on reading, impels the reader to look deeper into significances—in short—to infer.

As we have seen, the discourse of Troy is potent in respect to engaging the English reader because it inscribes identity. At the same time, Chaucer’s play with fiction and history challenges the reader, encouraging her to make meaning from a mélange of truth and falsehood. The key is the reader’s engagements with the text. But while Chaucer’s retelling of Troy inscribes identity for the English reader, it questions it too. Though inexperienced readers may
not have recognized the issues that Chaucer’s menippea of history and fiction presents, they would have identified ways in which Troy speaks to political events of the day, if for no other reason, because he implies they do (2.22-35). Here, a closer look at Troy contextualized by London in the 1380s suggests an understanding of the Troilus that extends beyond a fictive heritage to speak more directly to events in Chaucer’s day. For the reader of the late Middle Ages, Troy in the Troilus becomes an allegory that serves as an exemplum of tumultuous events in England during the 1380s. Chaucer makes subtle changes to the text and adds veiled comments to contemporize it. It thus becomes serio-comic, a menippea. This is especially the case for readers who prefer the romantic, chivalric elements of the text at the expense of its political topicality. The realization of an alternate voice in the text makes the reader a philosophus gloriaus, one whose lack of attention to commonsensical affairs makes him the fool and a favourite target of the Menippist (Korkowski 58, 60).

The Troilus has a number of elements that make it a contemporary tale aimed at a contemporary audience. Perhaps most obvious is the fact that the Troilus’s language is in the vernacular. Likewise its apparent idealization of love, which I will explore further in part three, also speaks to a fourteenth-century audience. Chaucer’s integration of classical and Christian, ancient and medieval, points to a holophrastic menippea: a melding of contemporary and “historical” ideas (1.159-161). While the classical elements carry an air of authenticity, Christian additions refresh the text’s timeframe. Windeatt adds that the text’s description of architecture (2.82; 2.1117) is also consistent with that of the fourteenth century (193). Chaucer’s updates to the poem feel natural. When one reads Troy as having walls and gates (5.603; 5.666; 5.730; 5.1112; 5.1120; 5.1177-79), a citified London is presumably evoked. Things familiar in the world of the text invite the reader to identify more strongly with its elements.
Given the span of the Hundred Years War (1337-1453), the story of the Trojan War would resonate with readers of the late 1380s for the plight of the Trojans mirrors at points the plight of the English. Internal and external political turbulence in England in the last decades of the fourteenth century reminded the English of the fragility of statehood, a motif in the *Troilus* stated as early as lines 134-42 of the first proem, and which runs throughout the text (5.1-4; 5.1829-32). Life in war is precarious for both sides (1.138-39), which Chaucer articulates by utilizing the Boethian Wheel of Fortune. Fortune’s fickleness is her only constant, and when she smiles (3.1714-15), she follows with a jape (5.1134). The fate of Troy is cautionary tale. England’s own war effort in the late 1300s, and Fortune’s mercurial nature, invokes a textual voice that interrogates the war effort and the soundness of the nation.

At the turn of the 1380s the English crown jewels were in pawn, which reflected the financial state of the country and the economic system by which military campaigns were funded, but also the necessity of military campaigns to fund the country. The reliance on war to sustain the economy reinforced the *casus belli*, which in the *Troilus* is seen to represent a dangerous economic system. For example, trading Criseyde for Antenor is so disastrous for the Trojans that this system of trading prisoners could be called a Greek weapon (4.202-05). Hector is the lone voice who understands that the spoils of war are not worth war’s cost, and that trading women is aberrant, especially those who are not even prisoners (4.179-82).

The Trojans’ decision to swap the “prisoners” would remind the English of the conditions in which they lived. Thirty years of war had altered the political landscape, and so by Richard II’s reign the English Parliament spoke not only of the war between England and France, but “Spain, Ireland, Aquitaine, Brittany and others—which would soon extend to Flanders, Scotland, and even Portugal” (Seward 128). In this ubiquity of war, England, like the Trojans, adopted a
heavily defensive attitude, such that “the strategy of garrisoned fortresses . . . was to dominate
their conduct of the war with France until the late 1880s” (Sumption 304). A schism between
Rome and Avignon complicated matters further, for now there was no single religious authority
to mediate national conflicts. The English had lost their momentum on the continent, and the
French were now the aggressors in Guyenne and at sea, so that England was in fear of invasion
(128). Many English were weary of the cause, and their weariness was enhanced by lost ground
in territories won by Edward III. Sumption writes that “in the longer term French coastal raids
were probably the largest single factor behind a fresh shift in English attitudes to the war towards
a predominantly defensive outlook and ultimately a weary resentment of the war” (287).
Chaucer intimates his political bias when he writes that the matter of war in the story would only
tire the reader:

   Ne falleth naught to purpose me to telle,
   For it were a long digression
   Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle. (1.142-44)

The tale of the Trojan War, the narrator acknowledges, is tiresome, yet it is recognized as a
necessary feature of the love story. Here the Troilus contextualizes a psychological reality of
1380s London. The ever-presence of war and the grim economic means that fuelled the
machine of war as mirrored in the Troilus suggests that Chaucer’s backdrop of war is more than
a narrative from which “the nobility of western Europe liked to claim descent” (apRoberts,
introduction xii), but a comment on the reader’s own times. For those who could read beyond
the dressings of a tragedy and a double sorrow, the Troilus becomes a muted social satire, best
characterized as menippea.
The truth is that in matters of war both the French and English—like the Greeks encamped around Troy—relied heavily on military victories to bankroll their expeditions. Under Edward III’s reign, England had won land and resources from the continent, but although the war effort continued throughout Richard II’s rule, political and military turbulence had depleted England’s coffers. As a consequence, the English, seeking a way to pay for the war effort, levied a poll tax. Jones comments that the “poll tax, which sparked off the 1381 Peasants’ Revolt” had been pushed through Parliament to fund the ambitions of Gloucester, Arundel, and John of Gaunt (Who Murdered Chaucer? 73). Brown contends that there is an allusion to this revolt in book four, when Parliament discusses the issue of trading Criseyde for Antenor (qtd. in Benson 1045):

The noyse of peple up stirte thane at ones,

As breme blase of strawe iset on fire. (4.183-86)

Chaucer’s following sententia quotes Juvenal, that people’s desires cloud their ability to choose the best course (4.196-201). If Brown is correct, he is only partly correct, for these lines speak to the Peasants’ Revolt as well as the response to the prisoner-trade that England was engaged in and that Chaucer himself experienced in 1360 (Benson, introduction xvii). Regardless of the Trojan Parliament’s verdict, the narrator is clear on his position on the matter (4.206), and the reader gets a glimpse of a pro-Ricardian Chaucer commenting on a flailing war effort, which included a waning ransom system affected by a shift in the composition of armies and a subsequent revolution in military strategies (Green, Hundred Years War 33).

The clamor of the Trojan Parliament is reminiscent of the scene at the opening of the 1386 Parliament when Chaucer was present as a representative for Kent. Given the importance

7 Upon the rebels’ appearance on the fields around London, London shut up its gates, but shortly afterward, Aldgate was opened to let Wat Tyler and his men in. Aldgate was Chaucer’s residence at the time.
and placement of this scene in the text, alongside Chaucer’s own experience, to one aware of the proceedings of the 1386 Parliament, the scene can be seen as an esoteric joke. Strohm says that in the pronunciatio that opened Parliament that year, Richard or his advisors announced an “exaggerated demand on the public purse, cloaked not in broadly accepted platitudes but in a completely spurious rationale” (160). Approximately 1.5 million pounds was asked for so that an inexperienced Richard could invade France. The fulminations against this pretense was immediate, and Chaucer would have been in an awkward situation, having been seeded in Parliament as a supporter of Richard (Strohm 141). The event would be a decisive moment for the appellant Lords, and would be an impetus for the eventual Merciless Parliament in 1388.

The members of Parliament’s shouting down of the king’s appeal in the October 1386 session is not unlike the silencing of Hector (4.194-95), whose ideas are “ghosts” and “fantasies” (4.187; 4.193). Hector is steadfast (4.215), and although he is silenced, Chaucer’s attention to him is noteworthy. Here Giancarlo entertains the possibility that the 1386 Parliament may have stood as the model for Chaucer’s scene (170). This mirrors the events in Il Filostrato. Here Strohm dismisses Chaucer’s intention, citing the scene as Boccaccio’s idea (9-10). But menippea’s dependence on the reader means that Chaucer’s scene could still resonate to one living in similar circumstances. Strohm’s observation that “Chaucer shows an awareness in his writings of a silenced minority” (167) shows how the Parliament’s squelching of Hector and Troilus’s silence (4.219) are telling (suspicio tactita). Interesting here is how this implies Chaucer as an advocate for the liminal, protesting from a marginal position. Indeed, such a challenging standpoint is characteristic of the Menippist. Coulton too notes how Chaucer employs silence to speak (202). In terms of the multi-voicedness of menippea, silence becomes another discourse to add to the polyphony of the text. Even the poet’s absence of voice is telling.
But critics such as Brewer and Coulton deny a critical, contemporary voice in Chaucer’s work, citing Chaucer’s inattention to events of his day. The latter sees Chaucer’s writing as detached from the history of his own times, but admits Chaucer’s lack of comment on topical issues and events is deliberate (60). Astell points out the degree of political instability of the day (63), and Jones writes how these times necessitated partisanship (*Who Murdered Chaucer?* 57). The distant mirror of a story from long ago would be a safe means to comment on events of the day, and safer yet to wrap them in menippea, where the reader is thrown off balance again and again. What makes menippea satirical is that the reader must participate in the text. Intertextual reading demands a reader’s involvement to match the author’s. Once a reader is in tune with the narrative tone, aspects of the text that might otherwise go unnoticed become highlighted. For the political opponent or disagreeable reader, realizing the text as Menippean results in the text representing a coterie literature, so the reader, feeling part of an inner circle of understanding with the author or persona, is more likely to dismiss any offence with a chuckle rather than accusations of libel or treason (Korkowski 65-6).

An example of such a reader-rousing allusion in the *Troilus* is a passing comment in the first stanza of the fourth proem:

Liggyng in oost, as I have er this,

The Greeks stronge about Troie town,

Byfel that, what that Phebus shynyng is

Upon the brest of Hercules lyoun,

That Ector, with ful many a bold baroun,

Caste on a day with Grekis for to fighte. (4.29-34)
According to Root and Skeat, the line “upon the brest of Hercules Lyoun” is a chronographical allegory, indicating the first part of July (qtd. in Benson 1044). July in 1386 was a fateful month for England. France, by now an aggressor, had amassed an armada of 1,200 ships in the harbor of Sluys. In the face of an impending invasion by 30,000 men, the English were terrified. Seward reports that the Londoners, “as though maddened by wine,” demolished suburbs to bolster the city’s defense, even though the French hadn’t even landed (134). England was in uproar, and some wasted “thousands of pounds” on spending sprees because they were certain that London was lost. There are echoes here of Calkas’s omen that, because of King Laomedon’s repudiation of Neptune and Phoebus, Troy would fall to confusion and burn:

For certein, Phebus and Neptunus bothe,
That makeden the walles of the town,
Ben with the folk of Troie alwey so wrothe
That they wol brynge it to confusioun,
Right in despit of kyng Lameadoun;
Bycause he nolde payen hem here hire,
The town of Troie shal ben set on-fire. (4.120-26)

The “walles of the town” (4.121) are significant here, for the French had modular structures for “enclosing walls of a town . . . to be set down in England wherever desired after landing,” replete with quarters for lords (Froissart 304-5; Seward 134). Froissart relates that at the time—presumably in the summer or early fall—the French “considered England to be already crushed and devastated, all her men killed, and her women and children brought to France and held in slavery” (305). How could the English reader of this Troy story not be reminded of their own
potential invasion, in which fire would spread throughout the town and London would turn to ashes (4.118-119)?

For readers in the later 1380s, such a reading of the opening lines of the fourth proem could act as an *exemplum*, reminding them that a state of war left a nation dependent on the fortunes of war. Froissart, recognizing England’s internal and external struggles, writes “Never was any land or realm in such great danger as England at that time” (211). At this point in the *Troilus* the implications of Troy are not triumphant. Instead, Chaucer’s utilization of Troy stands as a warning to the English reader that this tale will offer little comfort or reassurance. His *Troilus* reflects the present day as much as it is rooted in the distant past. The reader is subject to aversive and anxious reaction to this ancient tale just as the prey Troilus reacts against Pandarus’s *olde ensauples* (1.760).

The degree to which the matter of Troy could be seen as a warning is evinced in Nicolas Brembre’s conviction in 1388 for conspiring to rename London Troynovant. Brembre was one of the most powerful men in England in the 1370s. He was also a close colleague of Chaucer’s at the wool customs and brother in-law to John Philipot. A four-time mayor of London and a scrupulous businessman, Brembre was an ardent supporter of Richard II, and was even knighted by him at Smithfield in the aftermath of the Peasants’ Revolt in 1381 (Strohm 111; Froissart 228). However, Brembre’s factionalist politics earned no favours with the Lords Appellant, and during the Merciless Parliament in 1388 he was accused of treason for “his immoderate support of the king” (Strohm 177). The Lords Appellant had found potential to redress their perceived inequities by finding scapegoats such as Brembre *et alia*, all “lords of straw,” whom they accused of high treason (Rogers 106): “appeals of treason in parliament were used by a group of opposition lords in an attempt to devise a mode of attack on royal officials and favourites
stronger than any previous weapon, even impeachment” (124). Of the accused, Brembre was the only one to be tried in person. Eventually and imperceptibly, the charge against Brembre was changed to “misprision of treason,” with “the specific charge against him in 1388, that he had endeavored to have London renamed New Troy (Troynovant) or Little Troy (parue Troie)” (Astell 119). According to Rogers, Brembre’s accusation of high treason “seems the most illegal of all procedures; it can be interpreted either as a double trial, or as the arbitrary conviction of a man on the flimsiest of evidence which was never examined” (113). Astell adds, “apparently only poets, especially Gloucester sympathizers such as John Gower, who regularly allegorizes London as Troy in his Vox Clamantis, could accomplish such a renaming with impunity” (119).

It is unclear why a proposed renaming of London to Troynovant would carry such a heavy sentence. Strohm states, however, that until 1391 it was forbidden by statute to discuss Brembre (178). No doubt Brembre’s trumped-up charge speaks to the political volatility of the day, but still, its employment as a tool to attack Richard II is intriguing, for it shows how the convention of Troy could be read so widely. Even though Brembre’s downfall follows the generally-accepted dates of publication for the Troilus, the incidents informing Brembre’s conviction ultimately shows the mythic power of Troy in Chaucer’s time. Given the significance Troy had in the earlier case of Philipot, one can see the motif’s potent and wide-ranging meaning.

By incorporating the context of the Trojan War, Chaucer can attend to the allegory of love, its joys, its sorrows, and like Troy itself, its frailties. An examination of the discourse of Troy in the Troilus opens up new possibilities of reading truth, fiction, history, and even politics. From its positive significations as found in Philipot, juxtaposed to its negative associations as found in Brembre, the convention of Troy is a powerful narrative in the late fourteenth century that could be used to inscribe identity in the reader. While Chaucer’s retelling of the story of
Troy implicates the English reader by appealing to an etiological narrative, his poetic play that slides between truth and fiction simultaneously reifies and challenges the reader’s identification with Troy. Central to Chaucer’s Troy is the reader, whom he recognizes as crucial to his role as an author. Chaucer’s unwillingness to disclose a certain understanding of the text seats it in unsettling ambiguities. He shows trust in the reader to navigate a field of meanings that undermine themselves, and so too undermine the reader.

If we take the *Troilus* as a comment on the Hundred Years War, we recognize the power of fiction to re-create the reader’s sense of political identity. Chaucer’s adherence to Troy as a literary form is, of course, consistent with Lewis’s idea of the medieval tradition. The convention of Troy, however, also allows an allegorical reading of the *Troilus* as 1380s London, in which events in the text suggest political and martial events around the time of the *Troilus*’s composition. The ageless love that Lewis reads in the text owes to the dramatic, ever-present stage of war that the narrative of Troy sets. Chaucer’s play with fictional authorities of his poem and his refusal to admit a distinct way of reading it also makes the *Troilus* “modern” because Chaucer’s indulgences in the text elicit self-awareness of the reader. As we shall see in the next chapter, his particular portrayal of Troilus as a lover and knight gives credence to the shifting political, military and social environment of his day. Chaucer’s heteroglossia is aimed at the reader in order to unsettle and interrogate naïve assumptions. The *Troilus* is a Menippean text that shows a two-sidedness to Troy, and is thus a double allegory that both reifies and troubles the reader’s ability to relate to the text. The fact that Troy does fall (1.140) only deepens this conundrum. The reader is left with a final wake-up call in which London, just as Troy, can pass as soon as a fair flower (5.1835). As always when reading menippea, the reader is left in a state
of uncertainty, wondering who the butt of the joke is, but knowing that this target is at least necessary to its telling.
What Does it Matter? Of Troilus, Criseyde and Courtly Love

Just as Chaucer plays with conventions and ways of reading the matter of Troy, he also manipulates the motif of love in the *Troilus*, so that love does not read straightforwardly. Sedlak recognizes that the *Troilus* is a complex poem that resists single foundational readings, particularly in matters of love (230). While C.S. Lewis and others see the poem as exhibiting courtly love, Robertson and the Exegetes claim that the *Troilus* critiques the passionate love that is foregrounded by Boethius’s *Consolation*. This is a questionable text to apply to *eros*, but Robertson’s argument is a philosophical one, interpreting Troilus as a sinner, a man who misdirects his love toward a frail, earthly goal rather than the highest good. Salter’s reading of the role of love in the text offers a third possibility, a love that exemplifies the affections of the heart, which Sedlak calls “a courageous and blunt celebration of earthly love” (230). I propose a fourth reading of the role of love in the *Troilus*, a “Menippean love,” which is a master narrative that reconciles previous readings despite their limitations. Regarding Lewis’s claim, Chaucer’s application of courtly love in the *Troilus* is a manipulation of the code that limits and denies the ideal of the courtly lover. Chaucer’s indulgences with courtly love in the poem give rise to rhetorical ambiguity, so that the text neither denies Robertson and the Exegetes’ claims, nor affirms them. The Menippean handling of love in the *Troilus* does not depict it univocally as “a courageous and blunt celebration of earthly love,” but also a blunt testament to the limits of earthly love. Contrary to Salter’s claim, the issues Chaucer raises on matters of love in the text prevent any lasting celebration of earthly love. Even though Chaucer’s depiction of Troilus points to his significance as a knight of courtly romance, Troilus and Criseyde’s love, and the players surrounding it, shows a departure from the conventions of courtly love. The result is a text that points to the limits of courtly, passionate, and earthly love.
The goal of menippea is to raise the consciousness of the reader. It does this by pointing out the limits of a reader’s certainty of understanding a text. A fundamental issue in the *Troilus* is Chaucer’s break from traditional narratives (Windeatt, Salter, Lewis, et al), so claims for uniformity in the text fall short because Chaucer’s multiple narrative perspectives in the text expose the limits of a monolithic perspective. Lewis, Robertson, and Salter’s claims seek a master narrative in matters of love, but the fact that they all see love differently in the text suggests a multivalent voice at work. In fact, Chaucer’s plurality of voices is the unifying element in the text, which seems paradoxical. As Windeatt states, the “*Troilus* reflects a plurality of diverse sources conjoined and fused in a new unity which remakes everything it contains” (37). What Windeatt fails to take into account is that this condition is symptomatic of a literary genre, which explores contradictions and textual issues through simultaneous perspectives. The purpose is to cause readers to see otherwise, and adjust their understanding. What Lewis, Robertson and Salter show in their differences is their agreement to seek unity in the text. Lewis’s reading speaks best to this, for the discourse of courtly love (*courtois d’amour*) offered what seems a monolithic account of how to engage in erotic love in the Middle Ages (*see appendix B*). The primers of Ovid’s *Ars Amatoria* (*Lover’s Handbook*) and Capellanus’s *De amore* (*Rules for Courtly Love*) guide the tradition, and texts such as the *Romance of the Rose* propagate its influence. Interesting is that these books have been questioned as to their sincerity in matters of love (Porter 25, 28), a fact complicated by Porter’s point that “courtly love” did not appear as an expression until 1883 with Gaston Paris (5), and caught on in England, “where interest in the age of chivalry and the Arthurian romances had already become a mass obsession of great force and hypnotic power under the spell of the Gothic Revival” (6). The courtly love that later critics speak of in the *Troilus* stem from a classification of ideas on love found in
medieval texts. Indeed, Troilus embodies the courtly tradition as “this ilke noble knight, As men may in thise olde bokes rede” (5.1751-52). On the surface, it seems that the \textit{Troilus} follows the courtly tradition that is at least a literary phenomenon, not only because of the similar subject matter suggested by other informative texts, but because Chaucer nudges the reader in that direction.

In reality, what later readers recognize as courtly love is a reductionist approach to love that ossifies different conceptions of love in the Middle Ages. Kelly writes that “at the root of the problem is the desire to reduce . . . [courtly love] to a single concept, a clean and neat definition” (13). He notes the Commentator of the \textit{Echecs amoureaux}, who recognizes a carnal and conjugal love, as well as \textit{fin’ amors} in the text (15), as well as texts such as \textit{The Romance of the Rose}, and even Capellanus’s “qualitative distinctions among different kinds of love” (16) in \textit{De amore}. As well, Johan Huizinga notes the developmental differences in courtly love between the French and Latin (127), so that “the beautiful play of love” that “continued to be played in the knightly style” (155) in medieval literature were \textit{forms} of love (141, 155). What is at issue here is the ossified symbolism of the courtly love (via the vehicle of the knight) that critics envision when thinking of the medieval. Here Huizinga reminds us that “The symbolic postulation of identity on the basis of shared characteristics is only meaningful if the qualities shared by the symbol and the thing symbolized are regarded as being truly essential” (236). Like the issue of defining menippea, attempts to understand the concept itself results in a compartmentalization of that idea, bereft of its fluidity. Understanding this, Kelly states that “Courtly love commonly suggests arts of love, rules and directives prescribing specific conduct and fixing sentiment within an exact mold. It is held to be essentially deductive, functioning as an elaborate etiquette covering every conceivable circumstance and action” (20), or to quote
Huizinga, “the medieval image of society is static, not dynamic” (63). If the Troilus was indeed initially intended for the nobility, as suggested by the illumination on the Corpus Christi College MS 61, fol. 1v, then this framed depiction of courtly love is understandable, for this is the isolated, aristocratic society to whom we see Chaucer directing the dignity of courtly love (Kelly 22).

Chaucer’s narrator marks Troilus as a knight of courtly romance. His deference to authoritative sources for this epic tale of love in war implies a tradition of writing that involves Troilus expressing Christian ideals, the courtly love ideals, and the chivalric code. Amtower, outlining the development of chivalry, notes that the title of knight came to imply a regency and high estate, as well as cardinal virtues that were associated with Christian values (257-61). For example, values such as liberality, lovingkindness, continence, courtesy, and piety are represented by the pentangle on Sir Gawain’s shield (Merwin 46; Finch 237). The knight, made more benign than hostile by his virtues, was to guard his integrity both for the nation, and for the Christian faith. With the development of the genre of romance the chivalric code was applied to the court, and the knight was seen to transfer his virtues to the activity of love. As Parry notes of the courtly tradition, “Love is a kind of warfare, and every lover is a soldier” (Capellanus 5). Troilus induces the tradition of courtly love, reflecting a balance between both love and war. Chaucer shows how love guides war (2.627-30), saying it “holden regne and hous in unitee” (3.22; 3.29). Here Venus, with Mars in bridle, masters all. This is the kind of knight Troilus seems to represent: a protector of the realm whose adherence to the code of courtly love informs his prowess as a warrior.

If love is the mastering force that unifies Troilus’s character and gives rise to his relationship with Criseyde, one might infer that Troilus’s gentilesse as a knight of courtly love
prompts his romance with Criseyde. Troilus’s call to action through Cupid’s vengeance reifies this assumption (1.206-10). When Troilus is pierced with Love’s arrow, his reaction is predictable. Upon seeing Criseyde, desire arises in him, and his heart palpitates (1.295-98), in congruence with Capellanus’s sixteenth rule (185). True to his role as a courtly lover, Troilus follows the conventions. Impelled toward his beloved, he decides to keep his love secret (1.379-82). His devotion to his secret love is reflected in his neglect of other obligations (1.442-44), and like the courtly lover, once ensnared in love’s trap (1.507), he is so vexed that he eats and sleeps little (1.484-85).

Troilus’s affliction, however, is a premeditated self-wound. He deliberates on how to proceed with his love (1.380-81), “remembering” that a widely-blown love yields bitter fruit (1.384-85). Interesting here is how an adolescent’s act of remembering love suggests a bookishness on Troilus’s part, for he has no experience. Once alone in his bedchamber he creates a mirror in his mind (1.365), which shows his emphasis on Criseyde’s figure (Robertson 477), and evokes not only the love vision found in The Romaunt of the Rose, but the well of Narcissus:

For he [Narcissus] musede so in the welle
That, shortly all the sothe to telle,
He loveved his owne shadowe soo
That ate laste he starf for woo (1527-30).

Troilus’s fantasized Criseyde makes his love a double love, and he sees himself as the “noble savior who willingly suffers for the sake of his beloved. . . a product of the male imagination showing man as he wishes to see himself” (Huizinga 84). The reader understands Troilus’s love to be aimed at Criseyde, but he is a young man in love with his image of being in love: the
illusory idol that he creates in his mind overshadows any love towards her. His infatuation, considered in relation to Capellanus’s rule that one cannot “be bound by a double love” (184), is ominous. He obsesses what he should withhold or convey, while ironically singing aloud about his suffering (1.386-90). His plaint is overheard by Pandarus, who ingratiates himself to help him. Pandarus admits incompetence as a lover (1.593-95), and Troilus’s decision to have him as a go-between speaks again to his inexperience in matters of love by yielding agency to a third party. He reflects Capellanus’s rule that, “A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved” (185), Troilus is paralyzed by his fixation and cannot live up to the further rule that “a man in love is rarely apprehensive” (Capellanus 185). Troilus’s immobilizing sorrow because of love is what frames him, which begs the question whether his plight renders Capellanus’s rules incoherent or if he fails to understand.

A closer inspection of Troilus’s inaction toward Criseyde reveals amatory forces at work independent of Troilus. It is Pandarus who wakens love in Criseyde by creating in her mind an image of Troilus’s unproven virtues. After greetings and some banter with Criseyde (2.94-99), Pandarus gets to work. He asks her to bare her face, put away her book, and dance with him (2.109-11). This suggestion, as playful as it seems, questions Pandarus’s regard of courtois d’amour. Even Capellanus recognized the importance of a period of mourning: “When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor” (185). Pandarus’s reiteration of the request to Criseyde (2.221-24) shows how crucial it is for him that Criseyde doff her widow’s barb. His suggestion matches his figurative dance of words with her and symbolically prepares her for a new love (2.316-20). To prod her out of resistance he uses words to make her “dance” (2.121). He plays upon her curiosity (2.141-44), by introducing the broader topic of Troy (2.139). The nearest she hits to his intended matter is her inquiry regarding Hector, who more
effectively represents to her the courtly knight (2.179-80; Robertson 475). Pandarus uses the subject of Hector to introduce Troilus (2.173-75), and grooms Criseyde by emphasizing Troilus’s status. Pandarus tells Criseyde that alongside Hector, Troilus is the friendliest man of great estate (2.204-6). Pandarus reiterates Troilus’s nobility, wisdom, honour, freedom, and worthiness (2.160-61), and aligns Troilus’s virtues once again to Hector’s (2.177). According to Pandarus, all virtue abounds in Troilus, as does “alle trouthe and alle gentilesse” (2.160-61). *Gentilesse* in particular is a key term for designating both Troilus’s nobility of character and his social position (Benson 1252). With its equivocal signification, it is an effective advertisement for selling Troilus’s character to a vulnerable widow such as Criseyde (1.108-112). What we see then is not a knight winning a lady’s hand through valour and accomplishment, but a second-hand story from a bootlegger that sells love through metaphor. Early in the text other perspectives on Troilus are given, so that if indeed he is a courtly lover, he is only partly so.

Here it is interesting how Criseyde responds to her uncle, because her ambiguous responses call into question her familiarity with Troilus. This is important to consider because any foreknowledge of Troilus would mean she knows him other than as Pandarus characterizes him, and would validate her uncle’s characterization of him. The text, however, does not disclose any such relationship, and the reader is left to wonder if Criseyde complies with Pandarus for reasons beyond his story. Pandarus raises pity in her with Hector’s wound (2.156), and since Troilus is by now implied in Pandarus’s account, her reaction speaks to both men (2.162-63). Still, it is not clear if she has first-hand experience of Troilus. Does the *compar* with Hector stimulate her to compliance (1.110-25; 2.162-63), or is her comment rhetorical to get to Pandarus’s news “wel bet than swyche five” (2.126) that Troilus loves her (2.319)? In Pandarus’s prolonged lead up, his blending of Hector’s and Troilus’s characteristics blurs the object of her initial compassion,
using a general conceptualization of knighthood to relay Troilus’s qualities to Criseyde. The fact that Pandarus must remind Criseyde that the king has two sons (2.170) gives evidence not only that her focus is on Hector, but that her knowledge of Troilus seems to depend largely on hearsay. Chaucer’s playful portrayal of Pandarus reveals a man who delights in teasing out the narrative. This rhetorical technique speaks to a polyphonic Menippean narrative, deployed by the author, but at play in this character as well. Pandarus’s drawn out elevation of Criseyde’s interest in Troilus is deliberate and necessary, giving Pandarus and Chaucer the needed opportunity and time to build upon Criseyde’s and the reader’s image of Troilus, whose valour as a knight of courtly love is not shown, but told.

Pandarus preys upon Criseyde’s lack of understanding to lead her to believe what he tells her. He expounds on Troilus’s “worthiness welle,” that Troilus “wel moore vertu hath than might” (2.179), and though Criseyde’s response raises further questions to her familiarity with him, we see Pandarus’s plan working. She responds that is true of Hector, and that she believes the same of Troilus (2.183-84). But does she believe (trowe) Pandarus because he says it or because of some untold knowledge of Troilus? That “men tellen” of his worthiness as a knight (2.185-86) suggests she has heard it from a source other than Pandarus, which problematizes Troilus’s depiction as a warrior later in the text, especially when juxtaposed to his virtue (1.186-89). While this disparaging image of Troilus questions his worthiness, Criseyde’s earlier misremembrance of Troilus (2.170) suggests that he may not be as impressive as Pandarus makes him to be. Most problematic, however, is how Criseyde’s impression of Troilus as a courtly lover is bereft of any accolades or achievements on his part to prove his intention or worth. Here Chaucer’s device of filtering narrative through hearsay can be seen as a Menippean device that, similar to Pandarus’s plan for Criseyde, plays with a reader’s understanding and
assumptions to lead to conclusions built upon inferences and expectations. To the astute reader, the effect is an increased criticality of and engagement with the text.

Not only is Criseyde wooed by Troilus’s impression via Pandarus, but her knowledge of Troilus has more to do with his actions on the battlefield and his worthiness as a fighter than his character as a knight. When Criseyde sees him for the first time, she notes the aspects of a warrior (2.624-27). Troilus looks like the god of war (2.630), as shown by his warrior-wounds. His horse’s injuries show that Troilus has seen battle, and although his smashed helm trails by a thread down his back (2.638-39), one assumes Troilus’s visage is unscathed (2.625). The first visual image Criseyde has of him is informed by Pandarus’s earlier notion that Troilus is a knight (2.159-61; 2.186). The narrator relates through Criseyde’s eyes that Troilus is knight-like (2.627), and this similarity is dependent on his appearance. Full of high prowess, he looks like a man of arms and a knight (2.631-32), and his young body seems such that to her he looks like Heaven:

For he hadde a body and a myght
To don that thing, as wel as hardynesse;
And ek to seen hym in his gere hym dresse,
So fresshe, so yong, so weldy semed he,
It was an heven upon hym for to see. (2.633-37)

These last two lines are the consequence of associating Troilus’ physicality with the near-saintly discipline of the courtly knight. What the reader sees, however, is not the ideal knight whose objective is peace, but the historical knight whose living was made through war (Jones 24). Unlike the knight of the Canterbury Tales, who “is not endowed with any physical beauty or grace” (Jones, Knight 2; GP 74), the only attributes Troilus shows the reader are his physical
ones. Green reminds us that “accounts of war written for aristocratic readers... focused on the rivalries and (great) deeds of (great) men because this was the image of warfare in which the chivalric caste reveled and that it wished to project” (The Hundred Years War 24). The reader of the Troilus, like Criseyde, must conclude that Troilus is a knight through his appearance, which runs counter to Capellanus’s rule that “Good character alone makes any man worthy of love” (185). Here the image of Troilus, in combination with his hearsay heroism, leads the complacent reader to conclude that he is a courtly knight. In fact, what Chaucer does here is play with the conventions of worthy character, putting the proverbial cart before the chivalric horse, as it were.

To be fair, Troilus is described more fully in book five, but here it is late in the poem and his placement in the text is odd. In the middle of Diomede’s plan to ensnare Criseyde, Chaucer interjects descriptions of Diomede, Criseyde, and lastly Troilus (5.827-40). The passage begins again with a physical description: he is average in height, well-proportioned, and hardy as a lion (5.827-30). It is only then that Troilus is completed as the ideal knight, “Oon of the best entecched creature” (5.832, emphasis mine). Again, he is no degree second in knightly accomplishments (2.836), and the emphasis on his might in line 838 eclipses the reign of his heart to be equal to that of what he desires to do. The line “And certynly in storye it is yfounde” (5.834) refers to an external source, which is consistent with Diomede’s earlier description (5.799; 5.804), as well as Criseyde’s (5.816; 5.826), and provides a rationale for an emphasis on Troilus’s concrete characteristics. Here the reader and narrator suffer the same diluted accounts of the characters as Criseyde has of Troilus through Pandarus. Troilus’s portrayal is unsettling because his knightly qualities are conferred upon him through associating his noble deeds with his physicality, inferring his knightliness through his royal status, and understanding his virtues through second-hand accounts. Chaucer’s framing of emotions with fixed forms is a medieval
conceit (Huizinga 128), but whether Chaucer’s description of Troilus is hyperbolic or bathetic hinges on the predispositions that the reader brings to the text. In true Menippean fashion, what underlines a “clean” reading of Troilus is the question of what one does or doesn’t know, which is a consequence of the reader’s assumptions and familiarity with a plurality of narrative features, including genre, the story itself, knighthood, and courtly love.

Chaucer’s emphasis on Troilus as a warrior can be seen as a satire of the chivalric tradition exactly because it portrays the ideal knight as a fantastic ideal. Throughout the *Troilus* one is led to imagine Troilus as the ideal knight, but the lopsided presentation of his character speaks to an alternate signification of the knight represented by the time Chaucer was composing the *Troilus* in the 1380s (Jones 12). In earlier times the title of knighthood reflected loyalty in arms, yet by the time of William I, knights had become the “landed gentry of the future” (Jones 5). The *otium* afforded to the aristocratic knight developed, reaching a pinnacle in Edward III’s Order of the Garter in 1348, as well as Jean II’s complementary Company of Our Lady of the Noble House in 1350, both grandiose fraternities reserved for the highest nobility which imbued the kingship with a chivalric character and thereby ennobled a knightly ethic (Green, *The Hundred Years War* 36). What one sees here is a move toward the symbolic value of the knight, providing “a fertile source of symbolism and allusion for imaginative literature” (Amtower 267). Huizinga adds that this ultimately superficial spirit of knighthood glorified in the literature “employed the fiction of knighthood as a corrective for the incomprehensibility their [authors’] own time had for them” (72). This is the knight implied by the courtly romance, “an ethical reflection without any socially active reality” (Huizinga 68), and is the knight imagined by readers such as Lewis. But Chaucer’s depiction of Troilus also reflects attitudes prevalent in his
day, which upon closer investigation points to a menippea of knighthood brought about by a shifting social, political and military circumstances.

The real knight of the late Middle Ages was a far cry from the knight encountered in its romantic literature. Knights on active duty, as Jones argues, were more often mercenaries than exempla of Christian ideals (Knight 2). Brewer too notes the bellicosity that the chivalric code practiced when fourteenth-century Christianity blessed the sword-wielding knight with a hair shirt (74), so that the atrocities of the knight could be/ justified under the banner of religion. The knightly values valorized in the literature of courtly love looked much different from the values practiced by the knights on the battlefield in the late fourteenth century. Green reminds us of this disjunct, for chivalry “was not merely a literary construct—an ideal perhaps, but one that few took truly seriously during wartime” (The Hundred Years War 32). For these latter knights, their title served more as a banner that masked the grim practice of war so that the symbolism of the knight became divorced from with the agency of war that the chivalric protector embodied. A younger Chaucer witnessed this “mercenary knight” first-hand as Edward III’s army plundered, raped and pillaged its way through northern France in the late 1360s, though knights composed a minority of the corps. Sumption too relates the first Parliament in October 1377, in which the Commons “complained about the decline of ancient chivalry, about the losses of the warrior class in France, about the end to what they supposed to have been England’s former mastery of the seas” (307). Even in the case of the burgeoning Lollard knights at the end of the century, whose purported Proto-Protestant values and subsequent persecution reflect an iconoclastic discourse (Strohm 249; Amtower 213-15), a chivalric ethic espoused any means by which a knight provided service to the Crown, be it through warfare (however underhanded), or even politically or bureaucratically. Knighthood by Chaucer’s time had become increasingly
outmoded as an ethics touted by the tradition of courtly love, relying more on class structure and the rise of mercantilism to maintain itself. What we see in Troilus is a Menippean knight, a mix of both the idyllically romantic and the pragmatically topical.

In the three-estate model in the Middle Ages, knights belonged to the second estate. Although they were warriors they were “often elided with the nobility—on political authority” (Amtower 71). Yet in this middle tier the knight was in the crosshairs of shifting economic circumstances. New jobs and titles such as Chaucer’s own position of esquire offered new challenges to the three-estate model, and in particular to the second estate. To uphold the status of knighthood in the face of these upstart positions—namely change, innovation, and social mobility (Amtower 72)—laws were put in place to prevent excessive expenditure, but more importantly to “control one source of this social change: an increasingly powerful middle class” (Amtower 94). The sumptuary laws of 1363 and 1463 that dictated what one was to wear attempted to redress the shifting social fabric of the fourteenth century, and spoke to the focus on form one finds in the Troilus. For readers of the late 1300s, Troilus’s outward appearance reflects his inward character. Even in the social upheaval of the late fourteenth century, the recognition of one’s status by one’s appearance, entrenched by the three-estate model, still held sway. The fact that Criseyde internalizes Troilus’s guise speaks to the topicality of the text, and interposes the conceit of courtly love.

As a consequence to these social changes, by the mid- to late 1300s knighthood had taken on new significations, and all of them had to do with an individual’s social position. Jones writes that the meaning of knighthood included the embodiment of noble deeds, military accomplishments, and even hidden forms of taxation (4). It is out of this Menippean multi-meaning of the knight of the late Middle Ages that Chaucer compiles Troilus’s character.
Troilus’s knighthood dictates the role of love in the poem, so his shifting signification informs the differences in reading the role of love. In fact, the *Troilus* mirrors reality, and its knight is one who speaks with a plurality of significations, simultaneously contemporary and historical. Chaucer’s indirect, numerous articulations on knighthood make the *Troilus* less a veiled estates satire in the vein of Langland and Gower, and more a menippea (Amtower 210).

Troilus, then, represents the ideal knight of the courtly romance, as well as the reality of those who practiced as knights in the field. The *gentilesse* of knighthood justified, civilized, and overshadowed a knight’s barbaric actions on the battlefield. Knighthood’s *gentilesse* implies virtue, rank, birth, or lineage, even though the knight himself might be lacking in one or all of these aspects, as in the case with Troilus. Here Strohm reminds us how Chaucer’s own knighthood is as unmerited as Troilus’s. As a shire knight representing the county of Kent in the Parliament in 1386, Chaucer was not a landowner and was a relative upstart to the county he represented (143). He would be marginal amongst the other shire knights and, having gained his title through service rather than birth, he would have had more in common with fringe parliamentarians (143). Though chivalry exercised much influence on conduct and diplomacy, innovations in military technology and strategy, shifted the diplomatic and courtly implications of the knight from the battlefield to positions of office. What we see in Chaucer’s own knighthood is a convenient application of the title, and his appointment to Parliament makes one wonder if Troilus’s depiction as a knight is Chaucer satirizing himself. After all, by Richard II’s ascendancy in 1377, knighthood had become a title less contingent on courtly ideals—indeed, if it ever truly was—and more on economic and political reality.

By the late Middle Ages not only did knighthood ratify prominent social positions, but in many cases knighthood could be conferred and repealed so that it seemed a man’s fortune or
misfortune coincided with his knighthood. Such cases spoke to the exceedingly dangerous
power politics of the day. For example, Nicholas Brembre’s factional support of the King
Richard II resulted in his knighthood on Smithfield during the conflict with Wat Tyler in 1381.
Yet only seven years later he was executed ignobly by the Lords Appellant for the very reason
for which he was knighted in the first place: loyal service to Richard II. Moreover, Brembre was
“refused even the relative honor . . . of a more chivalric beheading on Tower Hill” (Strohm 178;
Amtower 76), suggesting that at the time of his death he was not considered nobility. Here the
need for one to characterize the dual aspects of gentilesse—nobility of rank and nobility of
character—shines, for the absence of one could mean the denial of the other. Brembre’s case
exemplifies that knighthood was a symbolic gesture used to respond to a shifting social order,
and that the twin traits of noble character and social position entailed in knighthood were not
synonymous.

And yet, for many, the strongest impression of the knight seems to be the one of the
courtly romance, the knight of gentilesse. When Criseyde first sees Troilus in the second book,
his misperception of him as a knight leads her to get caught up in the “noble game” (2.647).
During the celebration of his accolades in war Troilus looks down soberly in shame, and she
admits to having impaired perception (2.651). Criseyde’s infatuation is rooted in her projection
of a chivalric ideal independent of Troilus’s proven attributes of the courtly lover. Coerced by
her uncle, Criseyde, full of mercy and pity (2.655), minds Troilus’s distress (2.663) as well as his
“excellent prowess” (2.660)

And his estat, and also his renown,

His wit, his shap, and ek his gentilesse. (2.661-62)
Criseyde’s consideration of Troilus emphasizes his rank (estat), fame (renown), and accolades as a warrior (prowesse). Her focus on form is consistent with her perception in book three (3.160). Based on his “honour of trouthe and gentilesse” (3.163), she is willing to love him, and the reader, like her, associates this honour with his outward appearance. Here Capellanus’s distinction of nobility contradicts the qualities so persuasive to Criseyde. According to him, differences once based on one’s comeliness, physique, or material goods, no longer account for class differences, so that personal attainments such as an excellent character (35) have more importance, rather than as a consequence of one’s class. He warns that “many there are, however, who trace their descent from these same first nobles, but have degenerated and gone in the other direction. . . . Character alone, then, is worthy of the crown of love” (35). Criseyde’s obsession with status reiterates Pandarus’s earlier selling points, and shows how, in the face of fin’amor, her love for Troilus is calculated and unnatural (3.160), prepared by Pandarus and sustained by Troilus’s appearance. As Capellanus states, it is one’s character that informs nobility and class, not the other way around (35). Her feelings for him are primarily ones of mercy and pity (3.2655), and her inverted view overturns Capellanus’s rule that “no one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love” (185). Criseyde’s impetus to love Troilus questions the natural forces engendering courtly love, showing again the liberties that Chaucer takes with the form.

Just as mercy is a prerequisite for Criseyde’s part, so too is gentilesse for Troilus’s. She warns Troilus that her love is conditional, telling him that his gentilesse is necessary for her love (3.169-72). Only after his nobility safeguards his love does she call him her knight (3.176). She focuses on his lineage, but adds that his nobility holds no more influence than is fit in matters of love (3.170-72). What has been hitherto an attractive aspect of Troilus’s character is used by
Criseyde to anchor his virtuosity. Her promise of joy (*lustinesse*) reads as vendible, and hardly as passionate:

Beth glad, and draweth yow to lustinesse,

And I shal trewely, with al my myght,

Youre bittre tornen al into swetenesse. (3.177-179)

Contingency is inherent in Criseyde’s reciprocity, which problematizes Capellanus’s tenet that “love can deny nothing to love” (185). Here Robertson’s claim that the poem is a celebration of passionate love is at odds with the bureaucracy of the lovers’ agreement. If the love in the *Troilus* is one of passion, it is a passion met through contractual obligation.

In fact, Criseyde’s contract with Troilus is an indenture congruent and popular with those made by knights and lords in Chaucer’s day, reflecting a topicality in the text. In the face of ebbing feudalism, the indenture system aimed to preserve the ideals of knighthood and to distinguish the knight from the man-at-arms (Jones, *Knight* 8). Criseyde’s conditional love juxtaposes the tradition of courtly love and with passionate love, as Robertson claims that the text analyzes. One is reminded of Capellanus’s rule that “A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love” (186). Criseyde’s love-brokerage keeps Troilus’s emotions in check, enabling him to live up to that facet of courtly love that “a man in love is rarely apprehensive” (185).

Chaucer’s liberties with the tradition of courtly love in the *Troilus* have posed challenges to critics and readers. According to Salter, it is exactly Chaucer’s revisions of Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato* that disturb the even tenor of the text (218). Even though readers of the day might not have been familiar with Boccaccio’s text, they would have recognized that Chaucer plays with the conventions of courtly love. But the polyphonic voice that Chaucer adopts in order to
embrace a plurality of perspectives on love are not without consequences. Perhaps the biggest consequence is how his liberties with the motif of love lead to narrative incongruities once he attempts to ameliorate his deviation from his sources.

Chaucer’s deviations lead to contradictions in the *Troilus*. The reader is told, for example, that while Criseyde weighs whether or not to allow Troilus to serve her, she casts her eyes easily and debonairly, “Avysing hire, and hied nought to fast” (3.156-8). The detail Chaucer provides on the speed of her deliberation exemplifies consideration and control on her part, which makes her passion one of scrutiny. Robertson contends that Criseyde’s intimations indicate self-love in Criseyde, a connivance that continually seeks Fortune’s favour (486). Her careful behavior here contravenes her earlier impetuousness (2.666-69), and one wonders if her uncharacteristic thoughtfulness is a semblance to Troilus in order to keep her love secret. The narrator defends her celerity (2.670-72), and though she has already been brainwashed by Pandarus, she remains conflicted (2.694). One wonders how “sodeyn” Criseyde’s love is. Her passion-at-first-sight is truncated, suggesting a spasmodic love at best. Chaucer’s need to backtrack on the suddenness of love (2.673-679) complicates Criseyde’s character, and his presentation of a multi-perspective on an established tradition offers little insight on this unfamiliar world. Windeatt writes that Chaucer’s inclusion of traditions challenges basic interpretation, or even introduces a number of signals to teach the reader how to read new ways of interpreting related, myriad materials (212). The narrator’s emendation of Criseyde’s sudden love encourages the reader to gloss over her inconsistency. Because Chaucer’s text is framed on a more traditional foundation, *non sequiturs* created by his unorthodoxy may be overlooked by the reader. For the reader who does pick up on these discrepancies in the *Troilus* the Menippean bearing of the text comes into play.
A danger of the Menippean text, then, is an underreading or overreading on the reader’s part in which the consequences may not be deserved. Criseyde’s character is regarded negatively by many readers (Robertson, Lewis, et.al), even though Chaucer’s narrator urges otherwise (4.19-21). Ironically, it is Criseyde’s genuineness that is most condemned (5.1054-68), a fact that contradicts Robertson’s reading of her as seeking to escape “from the fear of misfortune” (486). Chaucer’s indulgences in narrative produce complexities of character, which for Criseyde, have a punishing effect. Upon the lovers’ pending separation in book four, Chaucer takes an even tack on courtly love, and Criseyde contradicts herself. In declaring her love to Troilus, she states what aroused her love. It is not his royal estate, pomp, worthiness, array, nobility, or richness that constitutes her feelings for him, but moral virtue grounded upon truth (4.1667-1673). The aspects she denies are the ones emphasized earlier in the text (2.661). Her hypocrisy raises doubt as to her sincerity, which compounds judgments against herself. In truth, once in the Greek camp she has limited choices. Here Salter points out that it is not Criseyde who is the problem here, but the narrator with shifting perspective (216-17). Windeatt also pins the problems of reading Criseyde on the poet, for he employs “a narrative method that underlies the complexities in our response and assessment [that] is not necessarily presenting a complex character, but our sense of knowing Criseyde is always accompanied by a sense of what we do not know” (281). This is the heart of menippea, that whatever is claimed, there is always in that claim an inherent understanding of the limits of that claim. McLuhan echoes Bakhtin’s observation of the reader’s preference for singularity in the text when he playfully uses the analogy of perspective art in the Renaissance: “a piazza for everything, and everything in its piazza” (Medium 73). Thus, popular readings of Criseyde’s character as treacherous and fickle have as much to do with the disjointed text as they do with gender politics.8

8 Compare Text G of LGW 338-345.
Criseyde are not independent of what is said in the text—the text makes this clear (1.56; 5.1737-43)—but in the eyes of a reader possessed of a bias towards textual unity. The disunity of the *Troilus* does no favours to Criseyde’s character.

Criseyde’s character diminishes when juxtaposed to Troilus’s air of nobility, but reading him as a knight of courtly romance is just as problematic as inferring Criseyde to be a harlot. Indeed, the knightly Troilus portrayed to Criseyde as a knight is a far cry from the Troilus the narrator relates in Book one. The Troilus one finds in the beginning of the text is young in his ways and is a colt to love, unschooled in the decorum that informs propriety (1.183-89). As a prince, Troilus is accorded a *gentilesse* owing to his social position, but his initial behavior suggests an immaturity synonymous with those of his “yonge” knights. Here, “no devoccioun” reflects an aversion to what fascinates him, which leads him to antagonize and denounce whom he sees fit. Capellanus addresses Troilus’s immaturity when he makes a distinction between the age of maturity and the ability to love. He echoes St. Victor that “a girl under the age of twelve and a boy before the fourteenth year do not serve in love’s army” (32). He adds, “However, I say and insist that before his eighteenth year a man cannot be a true lover, because up to that age he is overcome with embarrassment over any little thing, which not only interferes with the perfecting of love, but even destroys it if it is well perfected” (32). For him, an underage lover is changeable, has no constancy, and “cannot think about the mysteries of love’s realm” (33). The later Troilus is enmeshed in war and love, but the early Troilus in the first book is naïve in regard to both. His sarcasm suggests that he is not reigned by Mars, but instead wears the bridle of Pan, a god more congruent with his actions.

Troilus’s immaturity shines throughout his wooing of Criseyde. When Troilus is about to enter Pandarus’s inner chamber to meet Criseyde in book three, he waxes poetic for 23 lines
(3.712-35) before Pandarus calls him a wretched mouse’s heart, and adds, “Artow agast so that she wol the bite?” (3.737). Troilus is unprepared to love, as he shows when he confronts Criseyde (3.953-55). Pandarus capitalizes on Capellanus’s observation that “Jealousy, and therefore love increases when one suspects his beloved” (185). Pandarus even lies to his niece to give Troilus an advantage in love (3.796-97), for jealousy is “the nurse of love” (Capellanus 153). However, upon the lovers’ meeting, it is Troilus who is unprepared and unable to handle the situation:

The felyng of his sorwe, or of his fere,

Of aught ells, fled was out of towne;

And down he fel al sodeynly a-swowne. (3.1092)

Much has been made of this moment, and for many critics Troilus’s swoon is considered parodic and a testament to Troilus’s immaturity, though some like Jill Mann consider it part of the larger picture of the tradition of the courtly romance (*Life in Words* 3). What really frames this event as parodic—or satirical—are the reactions of the characters, who against Troilus’s puerile behavior, show a pragmatism that recognizes the limits of courtly love.

Pandarus and Criseyde’s reactions to the swoon suggest that Troilus’s reaction is not appropriate. Pandarus belies his ulterior motive when he says to her, “O nece, pes, or we be lost!” (3.1095), urging her not to react, lest she wake others in the house, for “love made public rarely endures” (Capellanus 185). But Pandarus’s reaction also chastises Criseyde for her lack of finesse with Troilus. One wonders how she interprets her uncle’s words. Does she understand Pandarus’s objective to unite the lovers? Does her maturity and knowledge, and her experience of her uncle and of love make her complicit in the affair? (2.269-71; 2.387). When Troilus revives, Criseyde suggests he be beaten like a child for his jealousy (3.1168-9), which inverses
Capellanus’s understanding that “He who is not jealous cannot love” (184). Troilus, following the conceit of the courtly lover rather than the reality that is unfolding around him, sighs sorrowfully (3.1170). Here, Criseyde’s reaction to Troilus shows an understanding of the limits of love through her experience. Pandarus advises Troilus not to swoon again (3.1190), which is an act to ameliorate the heaviness of the incident (3.1197) with the gladness that follows, as much as it reflects Troilus’s ignorance.

Upon the lovers’ reconciliation, Troilus is uncertain what to do in Criseyde’s arms (3.1253). He prays to Love and Charity (3.1254), admits to Criseyde the degree to which he is uninitiated in amatory affairs, and asks to be taught (3.1289-95). Again he speaks, but Criseyde understands that his loquaciousness belies fear and uncertainty, so she cuts him off with one word (3.1303). At this point the narrator shifts gears and relates their consummation, but it remains that their act of passion is maintained by a continual effort of Criseyde and Pandarus to play with the code of courtois d’amour. The courtly love Troilus envisions can only exist through others’ willingness to break from the codes of courtly love in order to maintain it.

Troilus’s inability to deviate or question his role as a courtly lover is bound by his immaturity, but his immaturity is bound to the fate of Troy itself. His immaturity is a Menippean dilemma that pertains to both the matter of Troy and the fin’amor. Graves, likely relating the myth of Troy through the First Vatican Mythographer, reminds us that “the city [Troy] was not to fall if Troilus could attain the age of twenty” (The Greek Myths II, 297). This, combined with fact that Chaucer’s narrative unfolds over a two-year period, along with Capellanus’s age restrictions for love, points to the liberties Chaucer takes with his sources. If the text is based on

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9 Notably section 207 in Book two in Peter Kulcsar’s edition (The Vatican Mythographers, Pepin 11; 90). Troy’s fate as contingent on Troilus’s welfare draws another parallel between Troilus and Narcissus, namely Teiresias’s premonition that Narcissus would “live to a ripe old age, provided he never knows himself” (The Greek Myths I, 286). As I argue below, Troilus’s downfall owes in part to his self-knowledge.
the legend of Troy, then the timeframe in the text suggests that Troilus is too immature to love, so it is no wonder his love is destined to fail (1.4). On the other hand, if the *Troilus* is intended to emphasize the tradition of courtly love, then the historical verisimilitude of the tale is compromised. Either way, the ambiguity leaves a reader at odds over what sources guide Chaucer’s text. Windeatt’s comment that the “*Troilus* reflects a plurality of diverse sources conjoined and fused in a new unity, which remakes everything it contains” (37) implies the menippea at work in the text, with its aim to defamiliarize to the reader. It is up to the reader to pick up on these pluralities and reconstructions in the effort to discover meaning.

The continual issue, of course, is that menippea vocalizes many ways of meaning, and by doing so, opens up many ways of reading, but never points which direction to go. For example, the equine imagery in Book one (1.218) speaks to Troilus’s inadequacy as a lover, but also alludes to Boethius’s *Consolation*. Here the parallel to Boethius not only integrates Boethian philosophy with courtly love, but the allusion also means that Chaucer’s text is other than Boethius’s. Once hit “ate fulle” (1.209) by a vengeful Cupid, Troilus becomes a proud, blind Bayard, the proverbial horse (1. 211), and the reader is reminded of fables in which the horse, in all his pride, is grounded by the fact that he is a horse (1.225-31). Troilus, previously superior with his air of nobility, is made common through love. In lines that speak to love not as something to celebrate but as a binding force that levels and limits all men, Chaucer writes that this condition is everlasting:

That Love is he that alle thing may bynde,

For may no man fordon the lawe of kynde. (1.236-39)

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10 Salter states that although this is considered by some to be the greatest problem of the text, it is not (216). Payne writes at length on the Menippean effect of the text through Chaucer’s integration of Boethian philosophy (*Menippean Satire*).
The love that is common to all men grows out of a creaturliness that is neither courtly nor passionate, nor a celebration of earthly love. Aside from Chaucer’s curious placement of the adage, how is one to understand these lines addressed to all people in the context of an epic, and one that plays with the conventions of love at that?

A few hundred lines later Pandarus reintroduces the equine metaphor in an attempt to rouse Troilus from his love-lethargy (1.730). He antagonizes Troilus and asks him if he is like an ass to the harp, who can hear no melody (1.731-35). Lady Philosophy says the same to Boethius early in the *Consolation* (Boece 1.4.2-3). Later, the imagery is more fully explained. Those who waste their own noble nature devolve into the life of a beast (4.3.117-18):

Than folweth it that he that forleteth
Bounte and prowess, he forletith to ben a man;
Syn he ne may nat passe into the condicion of
God, he is torne into a beeste. (4.3.117-18; 4.3.123-26)

This allusion to the *Consolation* indicates that Troilus’s state is, at least according to Pandarus, a base one. Troilus might represent a knight of courtly love, but his hopelessly fervent love signals his apostasy. His passions are too affected and strong, and as a consequence he is ineffectual, so he fails to serve both Venus and God. If love is ubiquitous (1.236-39), then Chaucer’s allusion to Troilus’s condition is cynical, rather than celebratory, as Salter claims. The reader is left to ask whether Troilus, in his love-struck state, is constructed as a draft horse, an ass, or a mule.

What we do know is that Troilus’s prowess on his steed corresponds to his love-victories. In fact, his metamorphosis into the consummate lover is directly related to his victories on the battlefield. The transformation happens in book three, after Criseyde has consented that he serve her. Troilus becomes the ideal knight, whose valour on the field is bolstered by his new love
The narrator’s reiteration of Troilus’s role clarifies his development of character. He “with manhood gan restreyne/ Ech racle dede and ech unbridled cheere” (3.428-9). It is here in the text that the narrator validates him as a tempered knight. But it becomes a loaded word, used as a call to action (3.176; 3.911-917). Troilus, now realized as a knight through love, is full of agency and social grace. While fortune shines on Troilus he lives blissfully (3.1716), jousting, giving feasts, and giving freely through the grace of Love’s nature (3.1718-21). Now in Love’s service (3.1794), Troilus is friendly and unburdened by the pride inherited from his royal lineage (3.1800-1802). Love has transformed him into a better person, and a fiercer warrior (3.1772-78), though second still to Hector (3.1775). From this point on his prowess as a warrior corresponds with his competence as a lover. Troilus becomes a lover through his accolades as a warrior, and therefore his renown as defender increases: war begets love begets war. Contrary to what Chaucer claims in Book three, it is war whetted by love that hones the ferocity of war, albeit in the name of love (3.1714-15). If there is any celebration of earthly love in the text, it is while fortune shines on the lovers in Book three (Salter 221), but love, under the sway of fortune is a fickle friend (1.138-40; 4.1-7). Here one is reminded of a key prerequisite of satire: the satirist must set up his target to destroy it. It is at the end of book three that Salter recognizes Chaucer has transmuted Boccaccio’s text to the point that “the rest of the poem must be a process of disenchantment” (228). Where this dénouement is most telling is in book five, where the limits of love are pronounced. That love’s impermanence impels a celebration of love at all (5.1748-50) is contingent on the act of war, not love. Here an investigation of how the absence of love affects Troilus in book five points to a telling conceptualization of love in the Troilus.

As love runs its course to its end (5.1834), Troilus’s love and death spiral allows him glimpses of self-realization. Troilus’s rudderlessness as a knight of courtly love is emphasized
by Pandarus and Criseyde’s interventions to keep love on track. But Troilus’s failures in love allow him to understand himself better, albeit fleetingly. At the beginning of the fifth proem Troilus has lost his joys, and is without “reed or loore” (5.22). His love has gone full-circle (5.30), and emotions symptomatic of the god of war grow in his heart (5.36; 5.39-40). He keeps his anger at bay by pledging fearfully for love (5.52-54), and begins to question his motives (5.43-5). Conflicted, he questions what the narrator states (5.4), and asks himself why he seeks no remedy (5.48-9). The courteous ways of a knight (5.64) conflict with these stirrings of individualism, and the narrator’s foreclosure of allowing Troilus to consider alternative responses resonates (5.55-56). The silence is ironic, for had Troilus allowed himself to be himself and acted impulsively rather than following a code of conduct, it is likely he would not have lost Criseyde in the first place.11

Troilus’s embrace of the rules of courtly love is seen as a hindrance when compared to Diomede’s approach to love (5.802). While Criseyde is exchanged for Antenor (5.71-72), Troilus hawks with a retinue as is expected of the courtly lover (5.64-7). Diomede knows a thing or two not in the creed (5.89), showing that he is not one to blindly follow the book, but has experience and knowledge to understand the limits of prescriptive approaches to love. He is taken with Criseyde’s beauty, and says to himself, “He is a fool that wol foryete himself” (5.98). He speaks of his intention to win Criseyde (5.774-5), but the line can be applied to Troilus, whose inaction through lack of knowing himself and an overreliance on rules has led to sorrow.

11 Coulton writes of Troilus’s silence in book four (4.219): “All this was written for readers who knew that the parties had only to swear, first that they had plighted troth before witnesses, and secondly, that they had lived together as a man and wife, in order to prove a dissoluble marriage contract... But while he [Chaucer] boldly changed so much in Boccaccio’s conception of the poem, he saw no reason to change this particular point, for it was thoroughly in accord with the conventions of his time for which he kept some respect even through his frequent irony” (203).
The diametrical opposition between the two knights is clear: while Troilus adheres to an ineffectual set of rules to regain a losing love and employs hope, Diomede, a man of agency, understands the limits of courtly love, but adopts fin’amors, which according to Kelly invokes *imaginatio* so that “abstraction and amplification of the individual ego and its thoughts, sentiments and actions” (94) demonstrate an adaptation to the rigid code of courtly love. Unlike Troilus, Diomede knows that the select application of the rules of courtly love can be an effective tool in so far as one does not allow it to overrule one’s autonomy (5.786-90).

Diomede’s large tongue (5.804) speaks to his fluency in matters of love in Boccaccio’s text (*Il Filostrato* 329; 335), but in Chaucer’s he also knows when not to speak (5.798). Diomede is an experienced amorist, and is the antithesis of Troilus. Troilus’s inability to coordinate his words and actions is matched by his incapability to disavow the code of courtly love.

When Troilus finally does move beyond the confines of courtly love, he does so through his wrath. Back at his palace, he curses the gods, himself, and everything except Criseyde (5.206-10), and compares his wheel of fortune to that of Ixion (5.212). He begins to question his beloved, but the power *amour courtois* has on him forecloses any notions beyond its own parameters (5.231). Unspeakable grief and fear are the master emotions of Troilus (5.256; 5.265; 5.271-2), yet through these emotions there are moments that suggest a process of self-realization taking place (5.261-62). Troilus cannot break his pattern of behaviour, however, and again his actions become predictable such that Pandarus, once summoned, knows how the prince will look “withoute book” (5.291). Pandarus is at his wit’s end (5.324-26), for Troilus’s fantasy of how one should suffer for love’s sorrow is too much (5.327-29). Pandarus’s diatribe suggests that he, like Diomede, understands the limits of courtly love. He reminds Troilus of the common experience of love (5.330-35), and points out how the parting of lovers is natural. Pandarus is in
touch with the real world, and momentarily grounds Troilus. His secular advice on love is not tethered to pageantry, nor is it a passionate celebration. In fact, compared to the pomp of courtly love, Pandarus’s advice on love is conclusively Menippean in its frankness: things are as they are, and those things that are not are simply not real, just as dreams are not real (5.377-83). The problem is, of course, that for Troilus they are (5.1235-41). It is his wrath that signals his departure from the conceit of the courtly lover, and yet ironically it is this movement towards self–realization that sets up Troilus’s tragedy.

Disturbed by his dream, Troilus asks his sister Cassandra to assuage his doubt (5.1454). Troilus’s disbelief of his sister’s prophesy is fueled by anger (5.1521-22; 5.1534-35). Left to his own devices, Troilus reverts to his most competent form of wooing as a single agent (2.1023-9). He writes to Criseyde, but her response (5.1640) indicates a diminishment of love (Capellanus 185). Troilus takes small comfort in Pandarus, whose words are now more political and placating than sincere (5.1726). Unhinged by love, Troilus becomes the wrathful warrior bereft of love, and his bellicosity as a knight is noted (5.2765-71). Reigned over by Mars (5.1755; 5.1800), Troilus competently woos death, and his new love is consummated when it embraces him (5.1806).

It is here at his death that one sees a final framing of love as Menippean. Once slain, Troilus’s spirit goes up to the “holughnesse of the eighth sphere” (5.1809), which is the edge of the observable universe, suggesting that Troilus’s perspective is unknowable. His death emphasizes the fantastic journey noted by Payne as characteristic of Menippean literature, and found in texts such as Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland, and Lucian’s “Icaromenippus”. One realizes that Troilus’s love-for-naught is an endless quest. The perspective from a distance allows him to perceive the earth, wretched in its vanity (5.1814-17),
and provides a *momento mori* for the reader. Detached, Troilus sees his folly, and as it dawns on him he realizes how limited all players in love actually are. From Troilus’s viewpoint, “this litel spot of earthe” (5.1815) relativizes the epic tragedy (5.1786). The nobleness that informs the tradition of courtly love is a myth (5.1831), as is passionate love (5.1824). The inconstancy of the world is such that there is nothing to celebrate (5.1832). Troilus’s scornful laugh (5.1821) “of pure satire is the echo to his tragedy” (Frye, “The Nature of Satire” 54). Love, that inescapable condition common to every man, is patently false in all ways of our experience. Our love is a Menippean love, made true only by our experience of it. Because we are limited to that experience, we can only understand it retrospectively, when all we have believed ceases to exist. We are all lost and, at least until our deaths, there is no answer. Any pretense to the contrary is a falsehood. This is the ultimate Menippean condition, and we are all participants in it.

The thread that runs through Lewis, Robertson and Salter’s claims about the nature of love in the *Troilus* is a faith that the text is about love’s bounty. As we have seen, however, Chaucer’s innovations and contradictions in the text deny a definitive statement on the nature of love, but rather play with ideas of love to explore its limits. Troilus’s reaction as he transcends the eighth sphere, although indicating that all we have read is wrong-headed, does not explicate what is correct. After all that has been said, the question remains of how one is to love. More particularly to the text, what is the celebration of love, if there is anything to celebrate? Surely this tale of double sorrow has a point, for if there is no point, then unlike what Anne Payne claims, the *Troilus* cannot be called a Menippean tragedy. Surely its pointlessness would not denote it as a tragedy (5.1786), but rather an absurd comedy. For readers who assume there is a clear delineation of love, or even a moral in the *Troilus*, the text can both affirm and deny their beliefs because Chaucer is multifaceted in his engagement with the issue. The plurality of voices
in the text speaks to a Menippean love, which is ubiquitously fictional and non-fictional, and simultaneously historical and contemporary. What is key is the depth and degree to which the reader is contextual to the text. With each reading one’s appreciation of the text deepens, which allows new perceptions. When the reader sees beyond what she expected, the effect can be jarring and transformative, leading to disorienting question. One comes to be aware, like Troilus, of the limits to one’s knowledge and belief.
Conclusion

Many critics have recognized that the *Troilus* resists “a single, unifying perspective” (Windeatt 299). What most have failed to articulate, however, is that this phenomenon characterizes the text as Menippean satire. To date, A. Payne’s *Menippean Satire in Chaucer* is the only study that broaches menippea in the *Troilus*, but she approaches menippea descriptively, and focuses on the text’s relationship to Boethius’s the *Consolation*. An analysis of the *Troilus* as Menippean accounts for a more holistic understanding of the text. That Menippean satire is an effect reminds us that understanding satire is individual and contingent on one’s experience. By actively engaging and provoking perceptions through a polyphonic text, menippea leads the reader to a series of aporias. A Menippean reading forces one to pay attention to the poem’s topicality. Because the *Troilus* is designed for the reader of the late fourteenth century, the text can admit a reading that allegorizes events of the day. Here menippea becomes an analytic tool that can provide the modern reader historico-political insights on events that surround the text’s composition.

A close reading of the matter of Troy in the *Troilus* shows how the text speaks to the reader in multiple ways. The matter of Troy implicates the English reader in its story by appealing to a legend accepted as historical. Troilus, while representing the epic Trojan hero, contemporizes the text by espousing the chivalric tradition of the Middle Ages. The superhuman idealism of the knight of courtly love that Troilus signifies bolsters the effect on the reader. However, the implications of Chaucer’s historicization of fiction and fictionalization of history denies a conclusive understanding of his sources, and thus destabilizes the reader’s sense of historical authority. At the same time, the background of war in the *Troilus* speaks directly to the fourteenth-century reader through parallels to the Hundred Year’s War, which allows the
reader to identify with the text allegorically. These narrative elements speak variously to the reader to overwhelm textual certainties, and unanchor any definitive position on Chaucer’s part.

The matter of love in the *Troilus* similarly employs a hybridity of voices to challenge a single, unitary, totalizing reading. The result is not a static representation of courtly love, but a diverse, many-sided exploration which by means of Chaucer’s invention and imagination results in a conceptualization of love more akin to *fin’amors*. An investigation of how the text presents three popular readings of love shows the diversity of tone that is essential to menippea. As he does with the matter of Troy, Chaucer blends a literary tradition with contemporary political concerns to allow numerous ways of understanding love in the poem, which disrupts its cohesiveness. The resulting uneasiness that critics have in common about the text—an untrustworthy narrator, ambiguous characterization and tone—is the effect of a plurality of voices at work, and is best described as Menippean satire.

My argument that the *Troilus* is Menippean grows out of an investigation of A. Payne’s text, who attends to both satire and Chaucer. Other writers on satire are scant in their attention to menippea, and Chaucerians speak of “satire” only. Adjunct research on M. McLuhan elicited not only the tetrad, but that he considered himself a Menippean satirist. I wondered how menippea would read in the tetrad, and so I contacted his son, Eric McLuhan, to ask. His advice and work informed my position of menippea as reader-centred, and as based on the *trivium*. This new conceptualization of Menippean satire, combined with further reading on satire in general, allowed a better understanding of its nature, and out of this arose the historical/ allegorical component of my essay. Concerning Chaucer’s text, the diversity of criticism centered on love suggests that these differences flag the poem as Menippean. These appeals to exclusive reading, coupled with historical research on London that unearths ways Troy was employed trans-literally
in the 1300s, spawn possibilities of how Troy represents 1300s-London in the *Troilus*. A dearth of discussion in the *Troilus* criticism on this aspect piqued my interest.

My focus on the *Troilus* is limited to only two aspects of the text, the motifs of love and war, and even here much more can, of course, be said. Wider study of the text as Menippean would make for a more holistic understanding of Chaucer’s poem by embracing the multi-voicedness of criticism. Pandarus’s complex character, for example, seems Menippean. Chaucer’s other works could also benefit from a Menippean analysis as well, for the disjunctive narrative found in the *Troilus* is salient in much of his work. Possible areas of exploration that deal otherwise with satire include readings of the *Troilus* as Juvenalian, or Horatian. Satire as a general subject could benefit from a study that addresses Menippea more, and does not merely make lists of what the author considers satirical. A further consideration is the study of education in late medieval England. What degrees of literacy and reading competence would be necessary to experiencing this and other contemporary texts as satire?

My Menippean reading of Chaucer’s *Troilus* argues for a reconsideration of the text. Menippea is a concept that simultaneously problematizes and rationalizes a text, so for Chaucerians, menippea ameliorates different readings, yet suggests a variety of competing interpretations. This essay also shows how Menippean satire can be used as an analytical tool to open new ways of understanding better what Strohm calls “the writing scene: all those matters of situation and circumstance that permit writing in the first place” (11). In this way, Menippean satire is a valuable diagnostic for discourse studies. It merges the historical and fictional, reconciling these disparate voices by acknowledging and embracing them, and balances the writer and readers’ perceptions. Consequently, menippea can recognize discourses at play in a text that otherwise may be overlooked in favour of a monolithic interpretation.
Lastly, the articulation of menippea in Chaucer’s *Troilus* encourages a reconsideration of the medieval text. Research such as mine challenges the understanding of a literary period speaking with a unified consciousness. Late in life, C.S. Lewis, struggling with the recent loss of his wife, Joy Davidman, wrote:

> This is important. One never meets just Cancer, or War, or Unhappiness (or Happiness). One only meets each hour or moment that comes. All manner of ups and downs. . . . One never gets the total impact of what we call “the thing itself.” But we call it wrongly. The thing itself is simply all these ups and downs: the rest is a name or idea. (*A Grief Observed* 12)

Here in one of Lewis’s darkest moments is a recognition of the flux of all things, the heteroglossia of all things that unpins categorical perceptions. The heteroglossia of menippea speaks to this post-modern sensibility, and cautions against a traditional categorization of a medieval text. I should like to think my interest in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* as Menippean satire encourages the debate on how medieval texts have value in the twenty-first century and speak beyond the late Middle Ages. My work fosters new ways in which the medieval becomes “post-medieval.”
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Appendix A: Anne Payne’s Characteristics of Menippean Satire

The following is a list of characteristics of Menippean satire according to Anne Payne. It consists of Bakhtin’s original tenets, but includes seven of Payne’s own at the end:

1) The comic element is noticeable, although it varies from writer to writer.

2) “Menippea is fully liberated from the limitations of the historical and memoir forms of the Socratic dialogue; it is free of legend and not bound by any requirements of external verisimilitude. It is characterized by extraordinary freedom of invention in philosophy and plot.”

3) The fantastic provokes and tests a philosophical idea, not to embody truth. Throughout, menippea “consists of the adventures of an idea or the truth in the world.”

4) “Menippean satire is frequently an organic combination of free fantasy, symbolism, and mystical-religious elements with (from our point of view) extreme, crude underworld naturalism.”

5) Menippea deals with “ultimate questions.” All problems in the least academic fall by the wayside, as does extensive argumentation. “Invention and fantasy combine with extraordinary philosophical universalism and extreme ideologism.”

6) Menippea often consists of a trilevel construction such as heaven, earth, and hell.

7) An unusual point of view is observed.

8) Atypical psychic states are investigated that include reveries, madness, and odd dreams: “These phenomena destroy the epic-tragic integrity of man and his fate; in him the possibilities of another man and another life are revealed; he loses his “finalizedness” and singleness of meaning.”
9) Scandalous events and words characterize menippea.

10) “There are sharp contrasts and oxymoronic combinations.”

11) Social Utopia is often invoked, or a journey to another land.

12) Other genres are consistently utilized. These genres are presented “at various distances from the author’s position.”

13) Inserted genres emphasize the variety of tones and styles.

14) There is a topicality and publistic quality in Menippean satire.

15) Stereotypical characters from differing points of view are presented, each with clear-cut perceptions: “One is a know-it-all who is free of restrictions and responsibilities faced by ordinary human beings. . . . His interlocutor has a view of man’s struggle with his human burdens different from the one the know-it-all proposes but is persuaded to listen.”

16) One character in menippea is engaged in an endless quest. Any norm that tries to provide an end is satirized.

17) The satire embodies the knowledge that man’s unsuspendable freedom to think is his most elating gift and his most terrifying burden.”

18) The characters exhibit intentions to converse under any circumstances, so long as the work remains comic.

19) Throughout there is an “unquenchable hope and titanic energy” that seeks out the problem.
20) “The satire is based on the feeling that there is probably no abstract certainty outside of us that we can know, merely the infinitely elating possibility that there might be.”

21) There is obscenity without pornography. (Payne 7-11)
Appendix B: The Rules of Courtly Love

The rules of courtly love, according to Andreas Capellanus’s *The Art of Courtly Love*, are as follows:

I. Marriage is no real excuse for not loving.

II. He who is not jealous cannot love.

III. No one can be bound by a double love.

IV. It is well known that love is always increasing or decreasing.

V. That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.

VI. Boys do not love until they arrive at the age of maturity.

VII. When one lover dies, a widowhood of two years is required of the survivor.

VIII. No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.

IX. No one can love unless he is impelled by the persuasion of love.

X. Love is always a stranger in the home of avarice.

XI. It is not proper to love any woman whom one would be ashamed to seek to marry.

XII. A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.

XIII. When made public love rarely endures.

XIV. The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.

XV. Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.

XVI. When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.

XVII. A new love puts to flight an old one.

XVIII. Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.

XIX. If love diminishes, it quickly fails and rarely revives.
XX. A man in love is rarely apprehensive.

XXI. Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.

XXII. Jealousy, and therefore love, are increased when one suspects his beloved.

XXIII. He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.

XXIV. Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.

XXV. A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.

XXVI. Love can deny nothing to love.

XXVII. A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.

XXVIII. A slight presumption causes a lover to suspect his beloved.

XXIX. A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.

XXX. A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.

XXXI. Nothing forbids one woman being loved by two men or one man by two women.

(Capellanus 184-86)
Appendix C: Erik McLuhan’s Satire in the Tetrad

The following pages come from an email sent to me by Erik McLuhan (“Re: Satire in the tetrad”). The tetrad is a heuristic device that inventories effects of a given medium, technology, or extension of man. The page is to read as quadrants, with each quadrant corresponding to an effect the technology has on a reader. McLuhan’s work is an extension of earlier scholarship produced with his father Marshall in *The New Science: An Inventory of Effects*. 
In a Word: Three Quartets
[tetrads on the three strains of satire]

[Introductory note. A tetrad is a four-part "poem," one that lays bare a poesis or making process. Situations, rather than words, provide the rhymes. Tetrad/poems help when trying to see a thing's formal structure and etiology.

Each of the four parts is itself a process. ("Parts" as in a choir, partsinging, voices.) One part: what is Enhanced or amplified, improved? Another part: what is renewed, Retrieved, reactivated? Another: what is the Flip phase, the reversal potential? And: what, then-current, now turns Obsolescent?

The four processes operate simultaneously: there is no sequence to them: all four inhere in the subject from the first.

The four processes are presented as four chunks of information, at the corners of a square, and the letters that identify them (E, O, R, F) appear at the core rather than at the outer corners, as follows.

(enhancement area) (reversal area)

E   F

R   O

(retrieval area) (obsolescence area)

The "rhyme scheme" is, in traditional parlance, both a-a-b-b and a-b-a-b. So: top and bottom "rhyme" and left and right sides "rhyme."

Further, the double-rhyme means that top left is to right as bottom left is to right, and top left is to bottom as top right is to bottom. That means that enhance is to flip as retrieve is to obsolesce, and enhance is to retrieve as flip is to obsolesce. When you get everything aright.

The hunt for rhymes is rather as it is in poetry: mind and ear must harmonize: the information has to be accurate, and yet the rhyming must be true.]
**Horatian Satire**

Puts on view the private vice or public folly and sustains an urbane and civilized style and tone that is smooth and even.

Horace's great contribution was to discover how to treat of common things with dignity and poise, setting aside crude and barbarous forms of attack.

But it is not enough to be reasonable and decorous. The inherent danger of this manner of satire is that it can slip too easily into snobbery and good taste— and out of satire entirely.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>private vice,</td>
<td>good taste,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public folly,</td>
<td>snob appeal: i.e., somnambulism,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>urbane, civilized</td>
<td>group emotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>individual,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reason, decorum,</td>
<td>barbarism,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>literary Rhetoric,</td>
<td>Philistinism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the attack,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Difficile est proprie, communia dicere&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Old (Athenian) Comedy
Juvenalian Satire

Broadcasts the high dudgeon and the righteous moral code
Applies the verbal lash, to drive out wickedness and sin
Brings back idealism, rectitude
But the danger is that the code become a new dungeon ... for the user

dialectic (moral philosophy)
in attack mode

veheemt style of tragedy

theory;
high dudgeon &
moral code

code becomes
trap, dungeon, robotism

a cell for
citters
to cit in

idealism,
rectitude

wickedness,
sin,
frivolity

Lash the buggers
naked
through the world!
Menippean Satire

Enhances play and wit in all forms and by all available means.
Plays with and attunes reader response; loosens up the reflexes to
promote balance and play among the faculties, cure up-tight robotism and self-importance, restore
sense of human scale, proportion
Shuns good taste as refuge of the witless, sets aside moralizing as an
approach
Carried to its logical conclusion, low-and-motley satire turns into serious
art

low and motley;
digressiveness;
serio-comicality;
play, wit

high culture
serious art

elicits user response

wild; non-moral

balance, play
among senses,
faculties
Horatian, Juvenalian satire
decorum
self-importance
moral approach
somnambulism
the up-tight

Human Scale,
individual autonomy

Grammar (etymology/interpretation:
diagnosis) in active mode--
on the attack
Encyclopedism (in low style)

(E. McLuhan, “Re: Satire in the tetrad”)