

EVIDENCE EVALUED

Parting, the final rupture of separation,
 Is a time for summation of themes,
 But episodes recapitulated by the one
 Are to the other fantasy or hallucination,
 A travesty of the past in wishful dreams
 Excusing present emotion.
 Leads even to wondering what has been undergone
 As when in a neutral country
 Someone may say 'Bombing was like this
 And you must have felt so, or so' and I reply
 'Yes, I suppose it was like that,'
 Speaking as of something encountered long ago
 In a tunnel or mine. But what remains
 Is not a sequence of aero-engine strokes
 Or the silhouettes of planes,
 But a sense of relief and shitten pants.
 To recreate the waxed petals
 Of a begonia, the thoraxes of red ants,
 The silky fur of an Angora rabbit,
 To compare the tactile values of diverse metals,
 Or to reconcile the evidence, half lies
 Half delusion, of Sikh witnesses,
 Are not dissimilar tasks, calling for objectivity
 Analytical power and imaginative understanding.
 But then one is the judge
 Standing outside the eddies of association.
 In personal memories
 A moment of silence may mean negation
 And withdrawal, but to the partner in the moment
 It may mean communion and union,
 Inasmuch as silence, requiring great concentration
 Of love and unselfishness, may be offered
 At a time when only words
 Or a caress or kiss are intelligible.
 So one takes ship from latitude to latitude
 Amassing scraps of local information,
 Jade brooches, ebony elephants, orchids, crises,
 But through ignorance of languages
 Hearing only pidgin platitudes,
 Not knowing the thoughts and agonies
 Of fellow passengers, or guessing
 The shapes and contours of the hinterland.
 Existence at this level of communication
 Can only be dissected and exposed
 After removal from it and after contact
 With other planes of living
 By inner experience and overt act,

As we cannot know that we
Are on an island until we glimpse the sea
And the opposite lighthouses and cliffs.
But when this promontory is reached
This other continent established, speech
Precision of thought and vision
Flow as the spring solstice flowers.

'When I have seen
Reflected in another's grace
My face clean
Ransacked and restored,
And in a voice heard the accord
Of sympathy and the harmonic
Echoing my note, all that was sick
Double and faint has sprung hale (hail!)
To erect and consecrate
The single strict and fecund state
In a polyphonous madrigal.
The smell of breasts and hair
Is spikenard and myrrh
Musk, sandalwood and saffron,
And the touch of buttocks
A rounding and satisfying boon.
The taste of mouth gives back to mouth
An answering sacramental oath.
In this freedom what is true and dreams
Are one, as clocks
At twelve blend day and night
And tomorrow and yesterday, darkness and light
In a seamless whole unite.'

So saying I assume a more than temporal order
Some over-riding sanction freely
Imposed by spirit on spirit, mutually
Gifting eye, ear and voice with power
To colour, tune and appraise the hour
Of rapture as a component in a larger figure
Where the pattern enriches what was poor
And uncovers what was hidden.
When we are of the other order we reason
With its counters and within its premises,
So that evidence alters with the appearance
Of nimbus, the increase of humidity
Or the advance of the thermometer,
And love changes as we incline in our vocabulary
To Eros or to Agape.
But once the eye has been clarified
The ear lightened and the tongue cleansed,
The powers of the digit are heightened
From single to the square;

The new idiom and rhythm are there
 Not subject to calamity or tied by time
 But expressing in terms of the known
 The language of the peripheries of speculation,
 The harmony of the inner and outermost spheres.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

CHAUCEER

(1) TROILUS AND CRISEYDE

THE bibliography which Chaucer might be said—from a modern viewpoint—to have omitted to append to his work, the references to sources which he might have subjoined as notes to his poems had he been modern enough to follow a recent procedure, would be most extensive—and as distracting in effect perhaps as the notes to the *Waste Land* have proved. The detective work which this omission has provoked reveals that almost every other line in Chaucer has been deliberately lifted from somewhere or other and that it frequently happens that lines from quite diverse sources adjoin each other. Yet this diversity of origin is invariably quite unfelt in the result which is neither Machaut nor Deschamps, Dante nor Boccaccio, but something distinctly Chaucer. It is this Chaucerian character which is the object for the critic's attention and from the elucidation of which the critic ought not to allow himself to be distracted. If Chaucer is not only quite distinct from but greater than any of his 'sources'—except, of course, Dante—that greatness evidently resides in this Chaucerian character which may so easily be lost sight of in the excitement of the hunt for 'sources.'

I would not be thought to wish to belittle the work that has been done to show Chaucer's direct indebtedness, for example, to Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun and the *fabliaux*, to Machaut and Deschamps—his French contemporaries—to Ovid and Virgil and other Latin poets either directly or as already mediaevalized in the *Roman d'Eneas* and the *Ovide moralisé*, to the *Roman de Troie* of Benoit de Sainte-Maure, to Cicero and Boethius, to numerous mediaeval Latin books—including books on astrology, alchemy, physics, medicine which Chaucer was evidently thoroughly acquainted with—to the *Nova Poetria* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf the rhetorician, to Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch. It establishes the really important fact that (since European poetry of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries had its *locus* in Tuscany and Provence, Italy and France) Chaucer's appearance as a great European in English (for Chaucer is of England and very individually so) was conditioned by an enormous labour of assimilation and adaptation impossible to any poet who did not possess in himself quite extraordinary genius. I have no doubt that something of critical value might be gained from a line-by-line comparison between Chaucer