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ARCITE, PP. 461-485**

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THE SOURCE OF CHAUCER'S *ANELIDA*
AND *ARCITE*

The question as to the source of Chaucer's unfinished poem *Anelida and Arcite* is an unsolved problem. Professor Skeat points out in his introduction to this poem¹ that the first three stanzas are from Boccaccio's *Teseide*, as are also stanzas 8, 9, and 10; and that stanzas 4 to 7 are partly from Statius. The origin of the rest of the poem, which is far the greater part, is unknown.

The poem belongs among that class of lyrics known technically as *complaints*, as its title indicates, *The Complaynt of feire Anelida and Fals Arcite*. Chaucer begins with a proem of three stanzas taken largely from Boccaccio. This proem ends with a verse giving his authorities:

"First folow I Stace and after him Corinne."

The story then opens with an adaptation of some verses from Statius's *Thebaid*, XII, 519, etc. The eighth, ninth,

¹ *Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. I, p. 77.

and tenth stanzas again are from Boccaccio. After line 70, we have no further trace of a source, and for three reasons we may fairly consider the story itself to be an original attempt. First, Chaucer takes his setting, the court of Theseus, from the *Teseide* of Boccaccio; but that source does not furnish the story which he here tells. It is improbable that he would have taken this setting from the *Teseide* if he had had another source for his story. Second, the names, Anelida and Arcite, come from different cycles of stories, Anelida apparently originating in the Arthurian romances,¹ and Arcite coming from the Alexandrian cycle. Third, the story was left unfinished. If Chaucer had been following a definite source, he would no doubt have finished the story.

¹Schick, in his edition of the *Temple of Glas*, E. E. T. S., p. cxx, says in a note upon the list of lovers given in the *Intelligenza*: "This list is interesting as giving, amongst others, the following pair of lovers (stanza 75, l. 2):

'La bella Analida et lo bono Ivano.'

This seems to point to one of the Romances treating of *Ivaina* and the *Round Table* for the origin of the name *Anelida*, which would at once upset Bradshaw's and Professor Cowell's ingenious etymologies from 'Anaira and Anahita: for I do not believe that both the poet of the *Intelligenza* and Chaucer mistook a *i* for an *l*. We have also in Froissart's *Dit du bleu Chevalier* the line (ten Brink, *Chaucer-Studien*, p. 213):

'Ywain le preu pour la belle Atydes.'

One and the same personage is evidently indicated by the two names Anelida and Atydes for Ywain's paramour: I am not, however, sufficiently acquainted with the Arthur-romances to know of the occurrence of such a name. Laudine in Chrestien's *Chevalier au Lion* is not very like it.

On the name Anelida being a misreading of the name of the goddess Anahita of the Zoroastrian religion in some Latin text see Professor Cowell's article on *Chaucer's Queen Anelida* in *Essays on Chaucer*, Chaucer Society, 1892, p. 615.

This would seem a simple enough theory and so we might let the matter rest, but there are two troublesome questions which refuse to down. These are: first, why should Chaucer insist upon giving us an authority, Corinne, whom he apparently never followed; and second, why is this complaint so different from the ordinary complaints of the period?

Let us consider first the possibilities of such an authority as Corinne. There are two whom it has been conjectured Chaucer might have had in mind, Corinnus, a reputed Greek author, and Corinna,¹ a Theban poetess. Either one of these names would assume, of course, the form that we find in Chaucer's verse.

Modern historians of Greek literature, such as Christ and Croiset, make no mention of Corinnus. But from Roscher² we find that Corinnus was supposed to be an epic poet, a native of Ilium who lived before Homer, and during the Trojan war wrote an *Iliad* from which Homer borrowed the argument for his poem. He wrote in the Doric characters which had been invented by Palamedes; for he was a pupil of Palamedes. He also wrote the story of the war of Dardanus against the Paphlagonians. Roscher cites Suidas as his authority.

The mere recital of the reputed facts about Corinnus seems to remove him from the range of possibility. Certainly Suidas is poor dependence in the way of au

¹ See Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, Vol. II, pp. 462-5; Skeat, *Oxford Chaucer*, Vol. I, p. 531; *Globe Chaucer*, p. 336.

Miss Hammond, *Chaucer: A Bibliographical Manual*, p. 88, has, "I have queried if a MS. could have given Chaucer Corinnus instead of Corippus; see Sandys, *Hist. of Classical Scholarship*, 436; but there appears no evidence of Corippus' influence."

² See Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon der Griech. u. Röm. Mythologie*, under Korinnos. Fabricius in his *Bibliotheca Graeca*, Vol. I, p. 16, gives something about Corinnus based also only upon Suidas.

authority. Nobody contends that Chaucer knew of any work of Corinnus; for had there been an abundance of it extant, Chaucer would not have been able to read it on account of his lack of a knowledge of Greek. The question involved in considering Corinnus is whether Chaucer might have heard of him as a great writer and, in his desire to cite an authority, have seized upon his name. There seems, indeed, little probability of this being the case; for Corinnus was certainly little known to the Middle Ages, even as a reputed writer, if his name is found only in such doubtful authorities as Suidas and "Endocia."

In the case of the Theban poetess Corinna we have a little more definite information, at least as to her work. Guilelmus Crönert in an article in the *Rheinisches Museum*, entitled *Corinnae quae supersunt*,¹ gives; first, under the heading "*Testimonia*," a list of writers of antiquity who mention Corinna in any way. The names include Suidas, Theocritus, Pausanias, some Scholia, and Statius.

Crönert's second heading includes what he designates as "*Fragmenta apud Veteres servata*." This list is made up chiefly of Scholia and grammarians such as Hephaestion and Herodian.

A third list of "*Fragmenta incertae Sedis*" contains Priscian, Heyschius, and Heraclides Milesius. Of the three classes, there are all told, according to Crönert, forty-one references to Corinna, the poetess. He adds a few which he designates as "*Dubia*" and which we need not consider. He says in a concluding paragraph that Corinna was much read by the Alexandrian poets, authors of antiquities, grammarians, and metricians.

¹ Guilelmus Crönert, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie*, N. F. LXIII (1908), pp. 181-189.

Here, then, was a poetess who was much celebrated in antiquity, but only her name had come down to later times with a few fragments of her work. We have again the same question as in the case of Corinnus. There is no supposition that Chaucer knew Corinna's work or even thought he was copying it; but whether he might not have heard of her as a celebrated ancient who would sound well as an authority is the question. In other words, can it be that he was using her name as a literary device in much the same way as he seems to have done with the name Lollius? This is, as anyone will admit, a tempting theory, but before we can assume it, we must see if it is likely that Chaucer had ever heard of Corinna. It is, of course, dangerous to assert that Chaucer did not know or could not know such and such a thing. We can only proceed from what we can gather from his writings and from what works we know to have been available in his time. So far as has been ascertained, there is no reasonable ground for assuming that he knew any of these writers who mention or quote from Corinna except Statius. Certainly we have abundant evidence of Chaucer's knowledge of Statius, for he quotes from the *Thebaid* in this very poem. Statius's works include two epic poems, the *Thebaid*, already mentioned, and the *Achilleid*, and a series of occasional poems entitled *Silvae*. Now Statius in his *Silvae*, Lib. v, Eclogue III, line 158, has the following mention of Corinna:

"Tu pandere docti
Carmina Battiadae, latebrasque Lycophronis atri
Sophronaque implicitum, tenuisque arcana Corinnae."

This evidence would go far toward showing that Chaucer might have known the name Corinna as a famous authority at least, if it were not true that, though Stati-

us's *Thebaid* and *Achilleid* were well known and quoted, his *Silvae* was practically lost during the Middle Ages. There is only one instance known in all the literature of the Middle Ages of a quotation from Statius's *Silvae*. This is the occurrence of one line which seems to be from the *Silvae* in a letter written during the age of Charlemagne and therefore not later than the early part of the ninth century. After this the *Silvae* was apparently unknown until the discovery of a manuscript at St. Gallen in 1416, sixteen years after Chaucer's death.¹

Such a theory, therefore, as to the origin of Chaucer's use of the name Corinna must rest upon the assumption that it is a literary device and that the name of the Theban poetess was known to Chaucer. For the first we can adduce the parallel of Lollius, but for the second there seems no reasonable basis.

There is one other Corinna of ancient literature whose name has never been connected with this one of Chaucer, but the facts in the case seem much more to point to her name as the one to which Chaucer meant to refer than to either of the others we have considered.

This Corinna was the mistress of Ovid whom he addressed in the *Amores*. Chaucer in the *Anelida* was writing a love-poem, and Ovid was the great authority in the Middle Ages upon love. The great popularity of his works is attested by all authorities.² It is needless to dwell upon how universally Ovid was celebrated in the Middle Ages as the poet of love. One of his works on love so popular at that time was the work which is now

¹ See Sandys, *A History of Classical Scholarship*, p. 618; Manitius, *Phil.* lxi, pp. 538-45; O. Müller, *Rheinisches Museum*, xviii, p. 183.

² A. Graf, *Roma nella memoria e nelle immaginazioni del medio evo*, Vol. II, pp. 296-315; Sandys, p. 615.

known as *Amores*. Most of the poems in this collection, especially in Book I, are addressed to his mistress, Corinna, and from Manitius we learn that it was only the first book which was much quoted by medieval writers.¹

But a curious fate seems to have overtaken this book of Ovid's in the Middle Ages. Its real title, *Amorum*, which was given it by Ovid, seems to have fallen pretty generally into disuse. For it various others were substituted. Numerous manuscripts refer to the work as *sine titulo*; and from the early editors of Ovid, who put themselves to great pains to explain the true name and get it re-established, we find that it was also called *Elegiac* and *Corinna*.

In enumerating Ovid's writings, Vincent of Beauvais gives the *Amores* under the name of *sine titulo*.²

In an *Ovidii Vita ex Lili Gregor. Gyraldi de Poetarum Historia Libro IV*, prefixed to an edition of Ovid's works by Cornelius Schrevelius, Vol. 1, we find another reference to the designation *sine titulo*. Gyraldus, who died in 1552, has the following on this point: "Quae vero ingenissimi Poetae opera supersint, breviter colligam Elegiae Amorum vel de sine titulo: de quibus sunt Grammaticorum controversiae."

Of the extant manuscripts of the *Amores* and those of which the descriptions have come down to us in the catalogues of medieval libraries now lost, six designate

¹ Manitius says,—“Anführungen aus Lib. II fehlen: überhaupt ist im Mittelalter kein Buch so wenig berücksichtigt worden wie Am. II (und III), ausser den Medic. faciei, aus welchem ich überhaupt kein Citat gefunden habe” (*Philologus*, Supplement-Band VII, p. 736).

² Bartsch, *Bibliothek der deutschen National-Literatur*, Vol. XXXVIII, Einleitung, p. 111.