

scenes and characters (Jason, Hercules, perhaps Pelleas) within a poem whose predetermined theme and materials were fundamentally romantic. "Nor was there sufficient art, art of plot especially. Both parts of the narrative are too thin, ... there is not narrative enough to realize the characters of Jason or Hercules or to project the kind of love which Jason & Hercules believed in. There is something admirable in this ruthlessness, this insistence on getting a story told quickly and on telling this kind of story, within limits, that he wished to tell, but it unfortunately left him without incidents or scenes." Imagery saves the poem. Night and "animal images trail after Jason." "What is most interesting in the poem is its concern with plotters and betrayers, with falseness as a way to success, and the curious tone that is created by a not odd combination of the jaunty and the comic, with a dash of the bitter. It is a tone new to Chaucer. The creation of Jason, and within him, of the poem's fresh, astringent tone, is not a negligible achievement."

"Lucrece achieves yet another tone, the pathetic." Frank tells us, "It is probably one of the earliest examples of the tale of pathos, a subgenre in Chaucer's canon that has received curiously little attention." Chaucer's concern with his audience seems manifest in this poem, and to Frank it "seems certain ... that Lucrece is one of the first 'published' tales of pathos and as such provided him with one of his first opportunities to test his audience's reaction to this kind of narrative and to test his success with it." Frank acknowledges the fact that the "roots of Chaucerian pathos have been largely unexplored, but theorizes that "Religious emotionalism might well have been a major influence." (p. 94) "On the secular side, the Roman courtiers undoubtedly encouraged the cultivation of sentiment and sentimentalism. The literature of the "complaint" worked to produce much the same effect: its whole aim is the rendering and the arousing of intense emotion." Chaucer has a set pattern of elements he always uses in his pathetic tales: "threatening violence, helplessness, innocence and suffering, with the central character "almost invariably a woman, a child or both." (p. 95) On page 96 after a long quote from Northrop Frye, Frank tells us the element of helplessness is usually tempered with "almost catatonic passivity."

Frank has been telling us all this because "Lucrece observes the pathetic pattern completely." Chaucer "makes her a saint among her own own people" in the introduction and never loses sight of her "dignity." Frank tells us this tale is told with great skill from Ovid's Fasti, and I will leave that question alone, as it only involves changes when Tarquin comes to pay his evil respects. Chaucer's adaptation shows narrative skill in Tarquin's visit as he "... makes credible Tarquin's ability to later find Lucrece's room stealthily at night" .. and makes Lucrece seem more "defenseless." (pp. 98-100) Tarquin's first visit to Collatine's house also heightens the ~~visit~~ visit. "Chaucer has altered the portrait of Lucrece to make of her a truly pathetic heroine. He has made her a trifle softer and slightly more ~~devoted~~ the devoted wife than she is in Ovid.... (she is also) a little less the Roman matron." Frank feels that "... Chaucer had a very clear image of Lucrece and of the effect he wished to create with her." Her innocence is is also ~~heightened~~ heightened in the rape scene where any handling of her breasts is removed, and her swooning and suffering are focused on.

The central issue of the poem is "... her chaste devotion to her husband." Frank finds the moral of the story in lines (1874-1878),