# CHAUCER'S CRISEYDE: "LADY BRIGHT OF HEWE" AND "GENTIL WOMMAN," TOO.

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# ABSTRACT

## CHAUCER'S CRISEYDE: "LADY BRIGHT OF HEWE" AND "GENTIL WOMMAN," TOO

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This thesis examines some elements of ambiguity in Chaucer's characterization of Criseyde in Troilus and Criseyde, and offers argument to support the view of Criseyde as a problematic figure.

Poetic strategies of generic and stylistic complexity are proposed: a triple image of Criseyde as "lady bright" of courtly romance, as tragic heroine in the context of Boethian philosophy, and as "gentil womman," naturalistically imaged.

Critical opinion is reviewed in order to assess Chaucer's position with regard to amour courtois, and a comparison is made between Chaucer's unusual handling of the topos of corporeal radiance and practice in major sources and analogues.

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Rosalind Languedoc

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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Chaucer's characterization of Criseyde in Troilus and Criseyde. I shall consider the sustained ambiguity with which she is portrayed and offer some argument as to the nature and purpose of Chaucer's strategy in the creation of this character. The mere documentation of previous criticism on the subject of Criseyde's characterization would comprise a thesis in itself. My reason for re-opening the topic is that the elements of ambiguity which I have noticed have not, to my knowledge, been dealt with at length before, and my conclusions, though not unprecedented, are derived from my own viewpoint.[1]

The Troilus is often referred to as Chaucer's major meditation on love, a central preoccupation of medieval poets. The influence of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy is also pervasive. In the treatment of these two themes, those of romantic love and of destinal forces, Criseyde has a triple function. She is first of all the "lady bright" of courtly romance whose radiant

[1] For the text of Chaucer I use The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F.N. Robinson, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957).

beauty attracts the knight and sets in motion the bittersweet process of falling in love. Secondly, in her Boethian frame she is seen as Fortune's gift, representative of the splendour and impermanence of earthly bliss.[2] Thirdly, Criseyde is portrayed naturalistically as a "gentil womman," a problematic character perilously balanced between winsomeness and weakness. This triple image with all its interactions and nuances results in a figure of shimmering ambiguity, so complex that she remains a perennial challenge to scholarship. As P.M. Kean rightly says, we see the characters so handled that we are shown the working out of only Troilus's destiny;[3] nevertheless, such is the vitality of Criseyde's portrayal that it stands unique, "the earliest portrait of a lady in English literature."[4]

A major element in the complexity of Criseyde's characterization is that of stylistic and generic

[2] In these roles she is linked by imagery with two other "bright" ladies who preside over the course of love, Venus and Fortune. See Donald W. Rowe's discussion of how metaphors of light relate "the three bright ladies" in O Love O Charite! Contraries Harmonized in Chaucer's Troilus (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1976), pp. 95-96, 99.

[3] P.M. Kean, Chaucer and the Making of English Poetry (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), I, p. 144.

[4] J.S.P. Tatlock, The Mind and Art of Chaucer (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), p. 45.

complication. As Charles Muscatine has so ably demonstrated:

> There seems to be no limit to the ways in which style can exist in literature, and the ways in which it can be taken hold of. . . . It may be that apart from the most obvious characteristics--syntactic habits, imagery, lexicon, and the like--stylistic categories are as much dependent on meaning as meaning is on style, and that stylistic criticism is a kind of dialectical strategy, in which the critic attends just as much to felt meanings while he tries to locate their stylistic bases as he attends to stylistic traits and wonders what meanings they may be helping to convey. In either case the question is the same, what is the style saying and what does it mean?[5]

Given the fact that Criseyde was already notorious to the medieval audience as the type of the fickle woman,[6] how do we account for her undoubted appeal? Granted that ambiguity and paradox are her chief qualities, what is Chaucer thereby saying about her love for Troilus and about love in general?

Until comparatively recently the major frame of reference in understanding the Troilus was generally

[5] Charles Muscatine, Poetry and Crisis in the Age of Chaucer (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1972), p. 11.

[6] See Gretchen Mieszkowski's thorough study of "The Reputation of Criseyde 1155-1500," Transactions, [New Haven: Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences], 43 (Dec. 1971), 71-153.

assumed to be the concept of courtly love.[7] However, there is now more controversy than consensus among scholars as to what precisely the term "courtly love" refers. J. Huizinga admits that "[i]t is very difficult to pierce the clouds of poetry and to penetrate to the real life of the epoch." He concludes that courtly notions of love offered no more than a charming game or a literary amusement, and "were never corrected by contact with real life."[8] On the other hand, many have maintained that there was in fact a code of social behaviour corresponding to the literature of the day. Taking recent scholarship into account, I would suggest that in the Troilus the target of Chaucer's irony is courtly love (whether as corrective of literature or social custom or both may never be settled) and that the presentation of Criseyde as both the conventional "lady bright" and as a realistic "gentil womman" illuminates the disparity between literary stereotypes and real people but also between an idealistic but sterile romanticism and a more substantial and fertile context

[7] See F.N. Robinson's introduction to Troilus and Criseyde in Works, p. 388: "It is now generally recognized by critics that the Troilus is governed by the conventions of courtly love."

[8] J. Huizinga, The Waning of the Middle Ages (1949; rpt. New York: Doubleday, 1954), pp. 122, 127.

for love, that of marriage.[9]

The tendency of medieval writers to focus on the lover hero's concerns (or the poet's as lover) is evident in descriptions of the lady which ignore individual characteristics.[10] However, Chaucer's structural and figural irony uses the traditional highly stylized "matere" of feminine beauty in subtle ways, as my survey of some of Criseyde's analogues and of Chaucer's sources will show. J.W.H. Atkins has commented on Chaucer's evolutionary art:

> Sound in his artistic judgment on a declining form of contemporary literature, the romance, he is yet more illuminating in his challenge of the orthodox poetic theory with its "rhetorical" rules, and in his inculcation of a more natural form of utterance and of an art based on psychological grounds . . . while his conception of tragedy marks a definite stage in the evolution of that literary form.[11]

Much critical energy has been focused on the generic

[9] See Kean, I. p. 30, and II, pp. 48ff. and 139ff. for a convincing discussion of Chaucer's views on marriage.

[10] Joan M. Ferrante explains this tendency in Woman as Image in Medieval Literature: From the Twelfth Century to Dante (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1975), p. 65.

[11] J.W.H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Medieval Phase (1943; rpt. London: Methuen, 1952), p. 162.

complexity of the Troilus and opinion is divided as to whether the work should be considered as romance, tragedy, comedy, or as the forerunner of new forms to come. W.P. Ker credits Chaucer above all medieval authors as the one to leave romantic convention behind and to create the poem "in which medieval romance passes out of itself into the form of the modern novel."[12] Charles Muscatine believes that "[b]ecause of its particular range of style, the Troilus can be called neither romance nor realistic novel. Though it has traits common to both, it cannot even be called both. . . . [It] is best called a genre unto itself."[13] Sanford Meech reaches the same conclusion, recommending that we evaluate the work on its own terms, sui generis.[14] D.W. Robertson, Jr. regards it as a tragedy involving "the fall of a prince who subjects himself to Fortune through an unworthy love."[15] Robert O. Payne notes that

[12] W.P. Ker, Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature (1908; rpt. New York: Dover, 1957), p. 367.

[13] Charles Muscatine, Chaucer and the French Tradition: A Study in Style and Meaning (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1957), p. 132.

[14] Sanford Meech, Design in Chaucer's Troilus (1959; rpt. New York: Greenwood, 1969), pp. vi, vii, 429-30.

[15] D.W. Robertson, Jr., A Preface to Chaucer: Studies in Medieval Perspectives (1962; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), p. 473.

despite the conventionality of much of its content and of its affinities with romance, love-vision, legend, and complaint, it is none of them, and borrows his definition from Dante: "an exercise of the eloquent and courtly vulgar tongue (though not entirely in the high style); it is a piece of rhetoric set to music, to move the hearts of men."[16] More recently, Monica McAlpine's study of The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde suggests that the prevailing critical view of a fictionalized and simplistic narrator-persona "offers the only adequate account of the complexity with which the poem confronts us."[17] She discusses two distinct roles for the narrator--those of love poet and de casibus tragedian--and argues convincingly for her view of

[16] Robert O. Payne, The Key of Rembrance: A Study of Chaucer's Poetics (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1963), pp. 172-73.

[17] Monica McAlpine, The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1978), pp. 40, 118 et passim. This view of a fictionalized Chaucer has been proposed by many critics, among them Dorothy Bethurum, "Chaucer's Point of View as Narrator in the Love Poems," PMLA, 74 (1959), 516-17; Morton W. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in Troilus and Criseyde," in Chaucer Criticism II, eds. Richard J. Schoeck and Jerome Taylor (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1961), p. 206; Robert O. Payne, pp. 228-29; Ida L. Gordon, The Double Sorrow of Troilus: A Study of Ambiguities in Troilus and Criseyde (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 61-92; John Stevens, Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches (London: Hutchison, 1973), pp. 217-18.

Troilus as comic hero and Criseyde as tragic heroine. This view is borne out by my own stylistic analysis, and as I further maintain, within these two sets of conventions there emerge the three related images of Criseyde as the realistically drawn woman, as Fortune's shining token, and as the "lady bright" of romance.

There is considerable stylistic evidence for Criseyde's paradoxical quality. As Tatlock's Concordance makes evident at a glance, Criseyde's radiance increases to a significant extent as her integrity wanes, and particularly in Books IV and V.[18] Although no amount of statistical analysis can exhaust her mystery, it can add weight to critical opinion: "[Chaucer's] undertaking . . . was not to explain how an attractive woman became faithless,--had he meant to do this, there could be no mistaking it,--but how infinitely appealing a woman notoriously to become faithless could be."[19]

Such a remark would be inconceivable in connection with Boccaccio's heroine. Once the action begins we are under no illusion as to that lady's nature, and although

[18] John S.P. Tatlock and Arthur G. Kennedy, A Concordance to the Complete Works of Chaucer (1927; rpt. Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1963), p. 103. All references to a Concordance will be to this edition.

[19] J.S.P. Tatlock, "The People in Chaucer's Troilus," in Chaucer: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. Edward Wagenknecht (1959; rpt. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 344.

her beauty is conventionally radiant her infidelity is entirely plausible. Moreover, at the conclusion, when at last Troilo acknowledges her faithlessness Boccaccio in propria persona extinguishes the aura of her beauty. Doubtless as an indirect appeal to his own mistress, Maria d'Acquino, to whom the poem is addressed, his repetitio rings with pathos as he transfers Criseida's brightness to the hero:

> Such end had the hapless love of Troilus for Criseida, and such end had the wretched sorrow of him who never had equal; such end had the bright splendour that fitted him for a royal throne; such end had the vain hope that Troilus set on base Criseida.[20]

In the French translation (c. 1380) of Il Filostrato by Beauvau, Seneschal of Anjou, the heroine is allowed the adjective, "belle," but cynically, for his version even amplifies Boccaccio's resounding condemnation:

> Ceste fin eut Troïlus en l'amour de Brisaïda. Ceste fin eurent toutes ces miserable douleurs, lesquelles jamais à autre ne furent pareilles. Ceste fin eut le filz du roy, qui estoit bel entre les beaulx, avecques son palaiz royal.

[20] The Story of Troilus: as told by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Robert Henryson, trans. R.K. Gordon (1934; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1964), p. 124. All citations from Il Filostrato will be from this translation.

> Ceste fin eut l'esperance vaine qu'avoit Troilus en la belle Brisaïda, faulce, traitresse et desloialle.[21]

Karl Young makes the point that Chaucer transformed Boccaccio's "mature and voluptuous woman of real life" into "a hesitant, timid, youthful heroine of romantic idyll," and, also, that for all its moments of comic or psychological naturalness, "in its sparing use of actuality Chaucer's poem is more romantic than some of the romances are."[22] Realism was not an invention of Chaucer's and his Criseyde is certainly the courtly lady--decorous and radiantly lovely. But she is also lifelike in a way that the Italian Criseida is not, presenting us with the uncertainty which we experience in our own relationships with complex human beings.

In subsequent chapters I will further examine Chaucer's handling of the _topos_ of corporeal radiance, his use of the traditions of courtly love and Boethian philosophy as well as his strategies of characterization, especially in contrast to those of Boccaccio and Beauvau.

[21] _Le Roman de Troïlus_, in _Nouvelles françoises en prose du XIV^e siècle_, eds. L. Moland and C. d'Héricault (Paris: P. Jannet, 1858), p. 302. All citations from Beauvau's _Roman_ will be from this edition.

[22] Karl Young, "Chaucer's 'Troilus and Criseyde' as Romance," _PMLA_, 53 (1938), 46, 62.

# CHAPTER I

## THE TOPOS OF RADIANCE: SOURCES AND ANALOGUES.

The dominant images clustered about the character of Criseyde are those of light and brightness, or their absence. The reasons for this are historical as well as poetical. The topos of corporeal radiance had many associations for medieval poets, as this chapter will show. In Middle English, the term "bryght" or "bright of hewe," deriving from the Old English "beorht," had a number of synonyms: fair, beautiful, shining, radiant, and was a popular adjective in romance and lyric. Along with "fayre," "clere," "shene," and "schyre," when used to describe a person, "bright" referred to physical beauty, splendour of attire, golden hair, or general demeanor. So common was the tag that "a bri3t" was used as a substantive for "a beautiful woman." In French, "beau" or "belle" was used in much the same way, some of its synonyms being "éblouissant," "éclatant," "splendide," and "radieux." For example, in Chaucer's two major sources, Boccaccio's Il Filostrato and Beauvau's Roman de Troïlus, we find the following terms in parallel passages: le fresche guance--"son beau visage," which

Chaucer renders as "hire brighte face."[1] However, as I propose to demonstrate, Chaucer's use of the topos differs from Boccaccio's and Beauvau's and is, in the case of Criseyde, a stylistic element of ambiguity which indicates a new way of thinking about this type of imagery and thus about the characterization of Criseyde.[2]

A number of studies have traced the development of medieval Neoplatonist esthetic theory to its classical sources. A recent historian tells us: "Three esthetics--those of number, light, and symbol--went to

[1] See R.A. Pratt, "Chaucer and Le Roman De Troyle Et De Criseida," Studies in Philology, 53 (October, 1956), 509-39, esp. 532. Pratt concludes from his interlinear survey of the three works that "Chaucer, as he wrote the Troilus, had before him both Il Filostrato and Le Roman de Troyle. That he used them simultaneously is made evident by the large number of passages which are clearly indebted to both versions" (p. 537).

[2] I have found three critics who have also noticed something unusual in the "lady bright" image in the Troilus; none, however, has dealt with the subject at length. Donald W. Rowe (p. 96) comments briefly that ironically, Chaucer increases the frequency of allusions to Criseyde's brightness in Books IV and V when she has lost her brightness. Sanford Meech (pp. 152-53, 339) has demonstrated Chaucer's unprecedented use of adjectives denoting radiance, as contrasted with Boccaccio, especially "bright." However, Meech's purpose is not to demonstrate any irony but to show Chaucer's aim and method of enhancing his heroine's beauty. Sister Anne Barbara Gill mentions in passing that the epithet "lady bright" acquires a pejorative meaning in Book V; Paradoxical Patterns in Chaucer's Troilus: An Explanation of the Palinode (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Univ. of America, 1960), p. 74 n.

referring to light and brightness and radiant beauty."[5] Wimsatt and Brooks cite as examples the roseate glow at the conclusion of the Commedia, the play of sunlight, moonlight, or starlight on various persons, settings, and objects, and the white skin, golden hair and bright eyes of the ladies, and even of some of the knights, of the romances.[6] Another literary historian quotes from Geoffrey de Vinsauf's thirteenth century textbook, Poetria Nova, which formulates the tradition. "Ornament" must be appropriate, the objectification of an inner radiance, and is consistently described in terms of light imagery; the subject is thereby "polished" with the art of language:

> If you wish to describe, in amplified form, a woman's beauty:
> Let the compass of Nature first fashion a sphere for her head; let the color of gold give a glow to her hair, and lilies bloom high on her brow. Let her eyebrows resemble in dark beauty the blackberry, and a lovely milk-white path separate their twin arches. Let her nose be straight, of moderate length, not too long nor too short for perfection. Let her eyes, those watch-fires of her brow, be radiant with emerald light, or with the brightness of stars. (570) Let her countenance emulate dawn: not red, nor yet white--but at once neither of those colors and

[5] William K. Wimsatt, Jr. and Cleanth Brooks, Literary Criticism: A Short History (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 140.

[6] Wimsatt, Jr. and Brooks, pp. 140-41.

> both. Let her mouth be bright, small in shape--as it were, a half-circle. Let her lips . . . glow, aflame, but with gentle fire. Let her teeth be snowy, regular, all of one size, and her breath like the fragrance of incense. . . . Let her neck be a precious column of milk-white beauty, (580) holding high the perfection of her countenance. From her crystal throat let radiance gleam, to enchant the eye of the viewer and enslave his heart. . . . Let her breast, the image of snow, show side by side its twin virginal gems. . . . So let the radiant description descend from the top of her head to her toe, and the whole be polished to perfection.[7]

Chaucer's use of this tradition ranges from the conventional to the figuratively ambiguous. Even a brief comparison of his Criseyde with the ladies in some sources and analogues and with some of his other female figures will show, I believe, that one aspect of Criseyde's complexity is Chaucer's unusual and ironic treatment of her corporeality.[8]

The original story of Troilus and Criseyde, as far as is known, appears in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's lengthy Roman de Troie (c. 1155), in which one episode, that of

[7] Alex Preminger, O.B. Hardison, Jr., and Kevin Kerrane, eds., Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism: Translations and Interpretations (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1974), pp. 393-94.

[8] I am aware of my limitations in attempting stylistic analysis of works translated from medieval Latin, Italian and French, but I believe the topic to be sufficiently general that my observations are not impertinent.

form the Platonic esthetic system, and medieval thought assimilated all three of them, although not simultaneously nor to the same degree. According to Plato, physical beauty is a reflection of the infinite, intrinsic, completely pure Beauty. The world is beautiful because it is the image of the beauty of God."[3] Medieval poets drew their descriptions of the ideal woman or the perfect man from humanist and scholastic formulae which were derived from classical philosophy and rules of rhetoric. De Bruyne explains: "If God is light, creatures delight the eye and arouse love in proportion to the illumination of their darkness by color and brilliance. If God is Form, everything which exists is beautiful (formosus) insofar as its harmonious composition is irradiated by form. All of the medieval esthetic systems are types of symbolism."[4]

In the Middle Ages, then, luminist philosophy was harmonized to some extent with Christian theology, and the result was a formal literary tradition: "It is a tradition of literary content--it can be described approximately in lists of nouns, adjectives and verbs

[3] Edgar de Bruyne, The Esthetics of the Middle Ages, trans. Eileen B. Hennessy (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1969), p. 6.

[4] de Bruyne, p. 68.

the famous love triangle, begins with the departure of Briseida (as she is then called) from Troy. Benoît mentions the account of "Dares" as his source for the original story, but in that sixth century Latin forgery, De Excidio Troiae Historia, there is no love story, and Dares's Briseida appears only once, in a long series of portraits of Greeks involved in the Trojan war: "Briseida was beautiful and not tall, fair, with soft golden hair, joined eyebrows, lovely eyes, and an evenly proportioned body; also she was gentle, affable, modest, simple in spirit, and pious."[9] From this brief portrait Benoît creates a heroine representative of two antithetic traditions: the radiant creature of courtly romance and the object of antifeminist polemic.[10] He elaborates on Dares's description, turning the ancient Greek beauty

[9] Quoted by Mieszkowski, p. 9.

[10] Giving Benoît his due, Janet Williams Boatner ("Criseyde's Character in the Major Writers from Benoît Through Dryden," Diss. Univ. of Wisconsin, 1970, pp. 23-24, 26) comments on the contradictory image of Briseida and concludes: "Hints are here for all the Briseidas and Criseydes later writers will create. Thus, Guido will heavy-handedly emphasize the anti-feminism. Boccaccio in one way and Chaucer in another will develop the courtly love motif. Henryson will concentrate on the penitent Criseyde and bring her story to one possible logical conclusion. Shakespeare will almost caricature the fickle and wanton Criseyde. They all exist in embryo in Benoît's story."

mark of joined eyebrows into a blemish,[11] and assigning to his heroine, for all time as it turned out, the archetypal inconstant heart:

> Briseïda fu avenant:
> Ne fu petite ne trop grant.
> Plus esteit bele e bloie e blanche
> Que flor de lis ne neif sor branche;
> Mais les sorcilles li joigneient,
> Que auques li mesaveneient.
> Beaus ieuz aveit de grant maniere
> E mout esteit bele parliere.
> Mout fu de bon afaitement
> E. de sage contenement.
> Mout fu amee e mout amot,
> Mais sis corages li chanjot;
> E si ert el mout vergondose,
> Simple e aumosniere e pitose.
> (I. 5275-88)
>
> (Briseida was graceful; she was not small, but yet not very tall. She was more beautiful and more fair and more white than a lily or than snow on the branch; but her brows were joined, which a little misbecame her. She had very beautiful eyes and was very charming in speech. She was very pleasant in manner and sober in bearing. Greatly was she loved, and greatly did she love; but her heart was not constant. And she was also very shamefaced, modest and kindly and full of pity.)[12]

[11] For the subsequent history of Briseida's disconcerting physical blemish of joined eyebrows, see Nathaniel E. Griffin, "Chaucer's Portrait of Criseyde," Journal of English and Germanic Philology, 20 (1921), 39-46.

[12] Citations from Benoît are to Le Roman de Troie par Benoît de Sainte-Maure, ed. Léopold Constans, SATF, (Paris, 1904-12), I-VI. I use the translation by R.K. Gordon in The Story of Troilus, p. 5.

Benoît also includes portraits of Diomede and Troilus. Diomede is given scant and negative description, but consistent with his relative importance and heroic stature in the poem, the portrait of Troilus is almost four times longer than either of the others and is lavished with the most radiant praise:

> Troilus fu beaus a merveille;
> Chiere ot riant, face vermeille,
> Cler vis apert, le front plenier:
> Mout covint bien a chevalier.
> Cheveus ot blonz, mout avenanz
> E par nature reluisanz,
> Ieuz vairs e pleins de gaieté:
> Onc ne fu rien de lor beauté.
> . . . . . .
> Boche ot bien faite e beaus las denz,
> Plus blans qu'ivoires ne argenz;
> . . . . . .
> De ceus de Troie li plus beaus
> E li plus proz, fors que sis frere
> Hector . . . .
>
> (I. 5395-5400, 5409-10, 5438-40)

> (Troilus was wondrous beautiful;
> he had a laughing cheer, ruddy face,
> a clear open look, and broad brow.
> He had a true knightly appearance.
> He had fair hair, very charming and
> naturally shining, eyes bright and
> full of gaiety; none ever had beauty
> like theirs. . . . He had a well-made
> mouth and beautiful teeth, whiter
> than ivory or silver . . . . the
> fairest of the youths of Troy and the
> most worthy, except his brother
> Hector . . . . )
>
> pp. 5-6

"Bele," he pleads with Briseida as she is led away a hostage, "or vos en pri, / S'onc m'amastes, ore i pareisse." (II. 13504-5). (Fair lady . . . I pray you

now, if ever you did love me, let it appear at this time") (p. 10). "Bele," begs Diomede many times as he leads her to the Greek camp, "Jos criasse mout grant merci, / Q'a chevalier e a ami / Me receüssiez tot demeine" (II. 13532, 13541-43). ("Fair lady . . . I entreat you of your great mercy to receive me wholly as your knight and lover") (p. 10). The character of this Briseida is not without subtlety, as Boatner remarks, but the topos of radiance is not an element of her complexity.

The next major re-telling of the tale, over one hundred years later, was by Guido delle Colonne (c. 1287) in a Latin prose redaction of Benoit's poem.[13] Heavily moralistic in intent, Guido devotes relatively few lines to the love affair and echoes Benoît's portrayal of the lady's charms:

> Briseida, the daughter of Calchas, was graced with great loveliness, neither tall nor short nor too thin, endowed with milky whiteness, with rosy cheeks, blond hair, and joined eyebrows; this juncture, which was filled with hair, showed as a slight flaw. She was famous for great eloquence in talking; she was pliable because of great compassion. She attracted many lovers by her charm, and loved many, although she did not preserve constancy of heart toward her lovers.
>
> (pp. 83-84, 192-99)

[13] Guido delle Colonne, Historia Destructionis Troiae, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1974). All citations from Guido will be from this translation.

Subsequently, as she receives the news of her impending transfer to the Greek camp, she is a damp and somber spectacle:

> . . . her clothes were so drenched with the moisture of her tears that if anyone had squeezed them and wrung them out with his hands, her clothes would have poured forth a great amount of water from the wringing. She scratched her tender face with her nails, and her golden hair, released from the restraint of bands, she tore out of the milk-white skin of her head, and while with her hard nails she furrowed her cheeks tinted with ruby coloring, they seemed like torn lilies mixed with torn roses. . . . But oh, Troilus, what youthful credulity forced you to be so mistaken that you trusted Briseida's tears and her deceiving caresses?
>
> (pp. 157, 138-46, 159-60)

As Guido's version of the Troy story was very popular and widely distributed in some one hundred and fifty manuscripts, it is not surprising that Criseyde's reputation (though not her beauty) was tarnished from the beginning.

Boccaccio, a contemporary of Chaucer, re-arranged the story to suit his purposes and called it Il Filostrato (c. 1336). The character of Troilo represents the poet himself, his sufferings and sensitivities in the conduct of his own love affair with Maria d'Acquino. His main focus is therefore on the character of Troilo and his love for Criseida, and a new character is introduced in the person of Pandaro, Troilo's friend and

confidant. In the Proem, Boccaccio tells Maria that Troilo's "very words, tears, sighs, and agonies" are his own, and that "whenever you find portrayed the beauty of Criseida, her manners, and any other excellent quality in a woman, you can understand that it is spoken of you."[14] Other matters, he assures her, have no reference to him, but he entreats her to "take thought touching your return" (pp. 29, 30). He addresses her with unequivocal praise: "O fairest lady . . . O radiant light of my mind," and invokes her as his muse: "Thou lady, art the clear and beauteous light by whom I live wisely in the dark world; thou art the north star which I follow that I may come to port. . . . O beautiful light of those fair eyes in which love has set all my joy . . . guide thou my hand, govern my wit in the work I am now to write" (pp. 25, 27, 31).

Boccaccio then writes of Criseida in terms which echo the poem's invocation. Again and again we encounter the word "fair" as Troilo woos her with praise far exceeding the sentiments of Benoit's or Guido's Troilus: "Fair lady, sole hope and bliss of my mind, ever before me has been the star of thy lovely face in its splendour and brightness" (p. 61). Finally, when Criseida neither returns nor answers his letters, and when the brooch

[14] See Gordon trans., pp. 29-30.

which he had given her is discovered on the cloak of Diomede, he bitterly addresses another light: "O sovreign Jove . . . dost thou no more keep thy eyes fixed on the faults of mankind? O true light, unclouded skies, which cheer the minds of men, do away with her in whose breast are lies and deceits and betrayals, and let her never be worthy of forgiveness" (p. 123).

Along with the Benoît, Guido and Boccaccio versions of the Troy story, the fourth major telling in circulation when Chaucer wrote his Troilus was, as previously mentioned, the French translation of Filostrato by Beauvau, Seneschal of Anjou. This is a close (sometimes verbatim) rendering, with the chief exception of the framing proem and envoi. In these, Beauvau substitutes his own experience of unrequited love, with Troilus identified, as in Filostrato, as his surrogate. His conclusion, however, differs from Boccaccio's, for Beauvau, love-sick at the outset, is changed by the act of translation: "Et suis content de l'avoir prinse, car mes douleurs me semblent en estre allegées" (p. 304). Stylistically, however, the French work does not differ from the Italian in its image patterns of radiance associated with Brisaida. Without nuance, from beginning to end she is tagged "belle," "si tresbelle," or simply "la belle," along with Boccaccio's other metaphors of

light and radiance: "O clère lumière qui mon cueur enlumine, o belle Brisaïda" (Fil. p. 36; Roman, p. 131); "O doulce lumière de mon cueur" (Fil. p. 50; Roman, p. 158); "O lumière et belle estoile journal" (Fil. p. 97; Roman, p. 253). Much remains to be said in subsequent chapters about Chaucer's use of light imagery in connection with Criseyde as contrasted with what we find in these two major sources. For now, it is more appropriate to continue with the review of sources and analogues which establishes the precedents and departures from them in Chaucer's usage. To that end I will survey quickly a variety of medieval texts that use the language of light and brightness as aspects of characterization.

Chrétien de Troyes, one of the most notable creators of fair ladies, wrote in twelfth century France. In his long verse narratives the protagonists are the warrior knights, Erec, Cligés, Yvain, Lancelot, Gawain, Perceval, and the plots are investigations of the knight's problems associated with love and chivalry. The ladies, from the self-effacing Enide to the unhappy Guinevere, are variously and consistently radiant in their supporting roles, often providing the immediate occasion for knightly feats of valor.[15]

[15] On this point, Erich Auerbach chooses a passage from Chrétien's Yvain as the paradigm for "The Knight

In Chrétien's imagery the lady's customary beauty has a certain reflective and glittering quality. Enide is a perfect "essanplaire" (419)[16] of Nature's pattern (not to mention art's), made to be looked at, for she reflects the beholder himself, as in a mirror:

> Plus ot que n'est la flors de lis
> cler et blanc le front et le vis;
> sor la color, par grant mervoille,
> d'une fresche color vermoille,
> que Nature li ot donee,
> estoit sa face anluminee.
> Si oel si grant clarté randoient
> que deus estoiles ressanbloient;
> onques Dex ne sot fere mialz
> le nes, la boche ne les ialz.
> Que diroie de sa biauté?
> Ce fu cele por verité
> qui fu fete por esgarder,
> qu'an se poist an li mirer
> ausi com an un mireor.
> (427-41)

Mirrors and gems appear to be favourite images of Chrétien's for we find them on a number of occasions. In Cligés, Alexander yearns to gaze upon the brow of Soredamors "que Dex a fet tant cler / Que nule rien n'i

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Sets Forth," his chapter on the courtly romance. See Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature, trans. Willard R. Trask (1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). Auerbach observes that "A self-portrayal of feudal knighthood with its mores and ideals is the fundamental purpose of the courtly romance" (p. 131), a purpose borne out by the highly decorative quality of the ladies' beauty.

[16] Les Romans De Chrétien De Troyes: Erec Et Enide, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1963).

feroit glace, / Ne esmeraude, ne topace" (800-2).[17] Fenice, the beloved of Cligés, is so beautiful that "la luors de sa biauté / Rant el palés plus grant clarté / Ne feïssent quatre escharboncle" (2709-11). Her author spares himself the wasted energy, "ce seroit poinne gastee" (2704), of trying to describe her fully. Rather, he tells how the radiance of the hero's beauty combined with that of Fenice illuminates the palace as the morning sun (2715-20). He then proceeds to describe the luminous beauty of Cligés: "Si chevol resanblioent d'or / Et sa face rose novele" (2736-37). The tresses of Laudine in Yvain also gleam like gold, "que fin or passent, tant reluisent" (1467)[18] and her face is so perfect that "nus cristauz ne nule glace / n'est si clere ne si polie" (1486-87). A potent charm, gleaming yet distanced, identifies the figure of Guinevere in Le Chevalier de la Charrete.[19] She is conventionally mentioned as "une bele dame" (559) but later description of her is concentrated on Lancelot's discovery of her

[17] Les Romans De Chrétien De Troyes: Cligés, ed. Alexandre Micha (Paris: Honoré Librairie Champion, 1965).

[18] Les Romans De Chrétien De Troyes: Le Chevalier Au Lion (Yvain), ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1965).

[19] Les Romans De Chrétien De Troyes: Le Chevalier De La Charrete, ed. Mario Roques (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1969).

comb of gilded ivory forgotten on a stone by a spring. The strands of her hair are "si biax, si clers, et si luisanz" (1415), brighter than gold many times refined: "ors .c$^{m.}$ foiz esmerez / et puis autantes foiz recuiz" (1488-89), that the enraptured Lancelot presses them to his brow, eyes, and mouth, then lays them next his heart.

Another of Criseyde's more complex analogues is the unnamed heroine of the Roman de la Rose, a thirteenth century French work which Chaucer translated in part and which, according to Robinson, "probably exerted on Chaucer a more lasting and a more important influence than any other work in the vernacular literature of either France or England."[20] J. Huizinga also stresses the influence of the Roman: "It determined the aristocratic conception of love in the expiring Middle Ages."[21]

The Roman, or to use Chaucer's title, the Romaunt of the Rose, was written by two poets with different purposes in mind. The first part, by Guillaume de Lorris, is a dream vision, an allegorical exploration of the course of love and of the emotions of romantic love in a young man and his beloved. The scene is the Garden of Mirth in springtime, or the inner world of youth. The characters are of several kinds. They can

[20] Works, p. 564.

[21] Huizinga, p. 108.

be said to represent qualities symbolic of the heroine, such as Fraunchise, Beaute, Daunger, Pite, and Bialacoil, of the hero, as Hope, Swete-Thought, Swete-Speche, and Reason, or neutral qualities affecting either of the two, such as the God of Love, Curtesie, Gladnesse, Idilnesse, Jelousy, or Richesse. There are also the less allegorical figures of the Freend and the Olde Vekke.[22] Mildly satiric, in that Reason is rejected by the hero, this part of the Roman idealizes the psychological events of a courtly love affair.

The second and much longer part of the poem, by Jean de Meun, continues the allegory but in poetry of a very different kind--satiric, rationalistic, an encyclopaedic treatise on the manners and thought of the age, particularly with regard to love.

Although Chaucer knew the entire work, of the three English fragments only the first, Fragment A, is attributed to him, and it is this portion which reveals a curious stylistic detail. This Fragment is the beginning of the poem, in which the dreamer enters the garden, a paradisal place of singing birds and abundant flora. There he encounters an aristocratic company

[22] Such a brief summary can only offer a hint of the complexity and psychological insight of the work. See C.S. Lewis, The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition (1936; rpt. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973), pp. 120-24 et passim.

engaged in the graceful measures of the "karole," or dance.[23] The hero is invited by Curtesie to join the dance, which he does, and describes "all the folk that daunced there" (Rom. 815), among them Sir Mirthe and Dame Gladnesse:

> That from she was twelve yeer of age,
> She of hir love graunt hym made.
> Sir Mirthe hir by the fynger hadde
> Daunsyng, and she hym also;
> Gret love was atwixe hem two.
> Bothe were they faire and bright of hewe . . . .
> (Rom. 850-55)

In Guillaume's original, however, Deduiz and Leesce are somewhat differently presented:[24]

> . . .
> que, des qu'el n'avoit que .VII. anz,
> de s'amor li dona l'otroi.
> Deduiz la tint par mi le doi
> a la querole, et ele lui.
> Bien s'entravenoient endui,
> qu'il estoit biaus, et ele bele.
> (Roman, 832-37)

Perhaps even in a French courtly frame, Chaucer's English sense of propriety found seven a bit young. At any rate, he makes her twelve. But more important, we find the

[23] Rom. 759. Dance was a metaphor for the conduct of love in the world of courtly romance. See Works, p. 666, n. 476, and James I. Wimsatt, "The Dance of Love," in Allegory and Mirror: Tradition and Structure in Middle English Literature (New York: Pegasus, 1970), pp. 61-90.

[24] The French edition cited will be: Le Roman de la Rose, ed. Félix Lecoy (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1965).

tag, "bright of hewe," in place of a simple statement "qu'il estoit biaus, et ele bele."

Again, as the hero looks about at the dancers he sees the God of Love with his five arrows. The "fairest" was called Beaute and the others were Symplesse, Fraunchise, Compaignye, and Faire-Semblant, all aspects of Love's power:

> The God of Love, jolyf and lyght,
> Ladde on his hond a lady bright,
> Of high prys and of gret degre.
> This lady called was Beaute,
> As an arowe, of which I tolde.
> (Rom. 1003-7)

If we now look at the corresponding passage in the French original:

> Li dex d'Amors se fu bien pris;
> a une dame de haut pris
> se fu de mout pres ajostez;
> cele dame avoit non Biautez,
> ausi come une des .V. floiches.
> (Roman, 989-93)

we find that in Chaucer's translation of the Roman lines 990-1, (Rom. 1004-5) he has added the tag "a lady bright" to Guillaume's description. These examples suggest to me that there was a certain association for Chaucer of the conventions of courtly love with the terms "bright of hewe" and "lady bright," an association which he was to use ironically in some works.

In Chaucer and in other Middle English literature

the lady (and sometimes the hero) are every inch as resplendent as their continental counterparts. In King Horn (c. 1225), the earliest English surviving romance, both Horn and the two ladies are described in conventional terms, though Horn the hero receives the lion's share of familiar epithets, anticipating his accomplishments:

> For reyn ne myhte byryne
> Ne sonne myhte shyne
> Feyrore child then he was,
> Bryht so ever eny glas,
> So whit so eny lylye flour,
> So rose red wes his colour.
> He wes feyr ant eke bold
> Ant of fyftene wynter old.[25]
> . . . . . .
> "Horn, thou art swythe kene,
> Bryht of hewe, ant shene;
> Thou art fayr ant eke strong
> Ant eke eveneliche long." (97-100)
> . . . . . .
> He eode forth to rythe
> To Rymenild the bryhte.
> Aknewes he him sette
> Ant swetliche hire grette.
> Of is fayre syhte
> Al that bour gan lyhte. (383-88)
> . . . . . .
> Dohter Ich habbe one--
> Nis non so feyr of blod ant bone--
> Ermenild that feyre may,
> Bryht so eny someres day. (915-18)
> . . . . . .
> For Rymenild, that feyre may,
> Soreweth for him nyht ant day. (955-56)

[25] Middle English Literature, ed. Charles W. Dunn and Edward T. Byrnes (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 115, 11-18. All citations from King Horn will be from this edition.

Similarly, consistent with their relative importance to the thought and spectacle of the poem, more radiance is associated with Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, in the work of that name (c. 1390), than with the lady temptress.[26] "Hȯ was the fayrest in felle, of flesche and of lyre" (943), and "Hir brest and hir bryght throte, bare displayed, / Schon schyrer then snawe that schedes on hilles" (955-56); but by contrast Sir Gawain and his mysterious challenger are positively incandescent, particularly the latter as he first appears on horseback. "Bryght gold" and "bryght grene" are horse and rider, clothes and trappings, with glinting jewels and ringing with golden bells. The overall impression is fabulous: "He loked as layt so lyght" (199), lightning conveying a rare intensity of experience for the astonished onlookers. Then, as Sir Gawain is apparelled and armoured for his quest, he too is a brilliant figure in red and gold: "And miche was the gyld gere that glent ther alofte" (569), while the harness of Gryngolet, his horse, "al glytered and glent as glem of the sunne" (604). In The Pearl (pp. 340-75) attributed to the same author, the figure of the marvelous maiden gleams throughout with translucent grace. With differences mainly of degree, the Gawain

[26] Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, in Middle English Literature. All citations from the Gawain poet will be from this edition.

poet's handling of the topos of corporeal brightness "polishes" his subjects with shimmering beauty and variety. However, his ironic intentions, unlike Chaucer's, are less than clear.[27]

In the work of "moral" John Gower, a contemporary of Chaucer, the fair ladies, including Criseide, tend to be described in simple terms, with the notable exception of a lengthy passage from Vox Clamantis, complaining against social corruption. In this rhetorical effictio whose formula we saw in Geoffrey de Vinsauf, Gower describes the beauty of a woman which can ensnare the hearts of knights and leave their rational judgment impaired. The lady's lustre is ultimately diminished in retrospect by a subsequent antifeminist diatribe, but at the outset there is nothing to suggest irony or ambiguity in this conventional praise:

> When the trembling lover admires a woman endowed with radiant beauty, the blush of the rose is in her face. [He admires her] golden hair, her well-shaped ears, the smoothness of her brow which is gleaming white, her youthful cheeks, her eyes which shine like the sun and which a well-composed countenance graces, her straight

27 J.A. Burrow, Ricardian Poetry: Chaucer, Gower, Langland and the Gawain Poet (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp. 40-42.

> nose and delicate opened nostrils, her honeyed lips--and the breath of her mouth is sweet--her even teeth, whiter than milk, and the beauty of her mind, which is in keeping with her. The radiance from her face brightens her ivory neck, together with her throat of crystal; and the luster of her breast glistens whiter than snow, as if two dazzling apples were affixed to it.[28]

Gower continues with the formulaic details as to limbs, hair, shoulders, raiment, complexion, comportment. "When a man sees her womanly beauty--so sweet, elegant and fine, but more like an angel's--he thinks her a goddess, and puts his fate of life and death in her hands." Gower's topic, however, is the destructive effect of all this beauty, and he concludes, "Alas, that love is not curable by any herbs! Neither brawn nor brain can escape its burden. No one can avoid this innate disease, unless it be that divine grace alone watch over him. O how grievous is the nature of man! Driven to his own destruction by it, it forces him to love."[29]

In his Confessio Amantis, the story of "my woful care, /My wofull day, my wofull chance, . . . /How love

[28] Quoted in Chaucer: Sources and Backgrounds, ed. Robert P. Miller (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 196.

[29] Ibid., pp. 197, 198.

and I togedre mette,"[30] Gower uses few radiant adjectives for his ladies, who are offered mainly as exempla leading to moral conclusions. Paulina was "fair and freissh and tendre of age" (I. 779); Florent's bride is "the fairest of visage / That evere in al this world he syh" (I. 1804-5); Maide Rosemounde "was in every mannes sihte / A fair, a freissh, a lusti on" (I. 2482-83); "This faire Maide Tisbee" is given no further embellishment (III. 1374); Phyllis "hadde al that hire beste besemeth" (IV. 745); Rosiphelee is "bothe wys and fair" (IV. 1251); "faire Venus" is simply "lusti" (V. 650, 656); Queen Olimpias is also "lusti . . . in good arrai" (V. 1834); and Lucrece is seen mainly in the mind of her ravisher: "hou hir yelwe her was tresced / And hire atir so wel adresced, / And hou sche spak, and hou sche wroughte" (VII. 4881-83). Criseide receives only unadorned mention:

> And Troilus stod with Criseide,
> Bot evere among, although he pleide,
> Be semblant he was hevy chiered,
> For Diomede, as him was liered,
> Clymeth to ben his parconner.
> (VIII. 2528-31)

[30] John Gower, Confessio Amantis, ed. Russell A. Peck (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1968), pp. 35, 74-75, 85. All citations from Confessio will be from this edition.

It would appear, indeed, that in Gower the *topos* of feminine brightness is neither a characteristic nor a frequent stylistic device.

The conceit of feminine radiance is also characteristic of both the secular and the religious lyric. Sometimes the language of secular love is addressed to the Virgin and sometimes religious rhetoric is addressed to a lady. We find the splendours of high style, the moving simplicity of the ballad, the revelry of dance-songs, and combinations of all three. In these two lyrics praising the Virgin, the language is that of romantic love, but the feelings evoked are of intimacy and devotion.

> Thu asteye so the dais-rewe
> The deleth from the derke night;
> Of thee sprong a leme newe
> That all this world haveth ilight.
> Nis non maide of thine hewe
> So fair, so shene, so rudy, so bright.
> Swete Levedy, of me thu rewe,
> And have mercy of thine knight.
> . . . . . [31]

> This maiden is swete and fre of blod,
> Bright and fair, of milde mod;
> Alle he may don us god,
> Thurh hire besechinge.
> Of hire he tok flesh and blod,
> Jesus, Hevene Kinge.
> . . . . . [32]

[31] *Medieval English Lyrics*, ed. R.T. Davies (1963; rpt. London: Faber, 1971), p. 65, 9-16.

[32] Ibid., p. 78, 7-12.

This poet chooses Latinate aureation and alliteration to polish his image of a beautiful lady:

> O excellent sovereigne, most semely to see,
> Both prudent and pure, like a perle of prise,
> Also fair of figure and oreant of bewtye,
> Bothe cumlye and gentil, and goodly to advertise;
> Your brethe is sweeter then balme, sugar, or licoresse.
> I am bolde on you, thoughe I be not able,
> To write to your goodly person whiche is so ameable By reason.
> For ye be bothe fair and free,
> Therto wise and womanly,
> Trew as turtil on tree
> Without any treason.
> . . . . . .[34]

And in this Harley lyric, the vitality of common life is heard as a cleric courts his "lemman" in the clichés of love poetry and is initially and colloquially rejected:

> 'My deth I love, my life ich hate,
> For a levedy shene;
> He is bright so dayes light,
> That is on me well sene:
> All I falewe so doth the lef
> In somer when it is grene.
> Yef my thoght helpeth me noght,
> To wham shall I me mene?
> . . . . . .
> 'Do wey! thou clerk, thou art a fol,
> With thee bidde I noght chide.
> Shalt thou never live that day
> My love that thou shalt bide!
> . . . . . .[35]

[34] Middle English Lyrics, ed. Maxwell S. Luria and Richard L. Hoffman (New York: Norton, 1974), p. 42.

[35] Medieval English Lyrics, ed. Davies, pp. 59-60, 1-8, 17-20.

The note of naturalism stands here in contrast to the conventional "levedy shene."

The foregoing while far from a comprehensive survey of the figure "lady bright" and its synonyms in medieval literature serves to demonstrate the precedents for Chaucer's use of the topos.

When we come to Chaucer himself, we find that most of his ladies are formally "brighte": Emelye "the brighte" of the Knight's Tale (KnT. 1427, 1737), Griselda, "this mayde, bright of hewe" (ClT. 377), the saintly Cecilie, "this mayden bright" (SecNT. 120), the pathetic Ariadne, "my lady bryght" (LGW. 2054), the fair Queen Anelida, "this lady bryght" (Anel. 89), Custance, "This hooly mayden, that is so bright and sheene" (MLT. 692), and the Virgin, "bright Marie" and "lady bryght" (MLT. 841, 850). The deceased Duchess is given a most illustrious aura:

> . . . as the someres sonne bryght
> Is fairer, clerer, and hath more lyght
> Than any othere planete in heven,
> The moone, or the sterres seven,
> For all the world hadde she
> Surmounted hem alle of beaute . . . .
> (BD. 821-26)

and is referred to by her grieving knight as "my lady bright" and both "fair and bryght" (BD. 477, 950, 1180). All these women are beautiful and unambiguous figures of goodness.

A more ironic lustre is suggested by the capricious sisters, Fame and Fortune, and by Venus, who traditionally represented both celestial and libidinous love.[36] In the House of Fame that lady is given radiant characteristics (HF. 1365 ff.) and is addressed as "lady bright" and "lady shene" (HF. 1693, 1536). The many-faceted Venus and Fortune, bearing more directly on the Troilus, will be discussed in due course.

Chaucer's topos of radiance is ambiguously used, albeit with some differences between them, in the characterizations of Alison in the Miller's Tale, May in the Merchant's Tale, and Criseyde in the Troilus. In all three works the conventions of courtly romance are elements of irony, the ladies' brightness being one of these elements. Alison, the "wylde and yong" wife of old John the carpenter in the Miller's Tale, is described in couplets of incongruous imagery, with comic effect:

> Ful brighter was the shynyng of her hewe
> Than in the Tour the noble yforged newe.
> (MillT. 3255-56)

> Fair was this yonge wyf, and therwithal
> As any wezele hir body gent and smal.
> (MillT. 3233-34)

> Hir forheed shoon as bright as any day,
> So it was wasshen when she leet hir werk.
> (MillT. 3310-11)

[36] See Rowe, p. 92.

The Merchant's Tale of the aged knight, Januarie, and his "fresshe May" also contains courtly echoes in style and action. May is pictured as being "lyk the brighte morwe of May" (MerchT. 1748) and "so bright and sheene" (MerchT. 2328); but her "pitee" for her admirer Damyan culminates in gross infidelity to her repulsive old husband. The tales of the Miller and the Merchant are similar in many respects in that, as Muscatine has explained, naturalism is played off against courtly attitudes.[37] In the Troilus, the same strategy is used, but the style is characteristically higher and the radiant imagery relating to Criseyde, as subsequent chapters will show, is more subtle.

In the Franklin's Tale, which is also framed in terms of courtly romance, there is a significant stylistic departure from conventional rhetoric. The teller warns his listeners that he is a "burel man" and asks to be excused for his "rude speche": "I lerned nevere rethorik, certyn; / Thyng that I speke, it moot be bare and pleyn" (FT. 716-20). Although there is considerable use of courtly machinery in the poem, Dorigen is never once referred to as anyone's "lady bright." She is presented with a minimum of amplification and without the inevitable tag. More remains to

[37] Muscatine, French Tradition, p. 237.

be said in the next chapter about Chaucer's position with regard to love and marriage as suggested by this tale. But for the present we shall conclude this review of Criseyde's analogues with a glance at the influence of Chaucer on the work of two later poets.

Twelve years after Chaucer's death in 1400, John Lydgate began his Troy Book.[38] This was a verse retelling based on Guido's antifeminist Historia but with many original lines and with some passages borrowed from Chaucer as well. Lydgate's Cryseide serves partly as a vehicle for his own satiric jibes at women. Notably, when he describes the heroine's beauty, his version of the radiance topos owes less to Guido's vignette than to Chaucer's portrait in Book V:

> þat was in soth of alle þo on-lyue
> On þe fayrest, þis Calchas douȝter dere,
> þer-to of schap, of face, and of chere,
> þer myȝte be no fairer creature:
> To hiȝe nor lowe, but mene of stature--
> Hir sonnysche her, liche Phebus in his spere,
> Bounde in a tresse, briȝter þanne golde were,
> Doun at hir bak, lowe doun be-hynde,
> Whiche with a þrede of golde sche wolde bynde
> . . . . . .
> And Saue hir browes Ioyneden y-fere,
> No man koude in hir a lake espien.
> And, ferþermore, to speken of hir eyen,
> þei wer so persyng, heuenly, & so clere,
> þat an herte ne myȝt hym silfe stere
> Ageyn hir schynyng, þat þei nolde wounde
> þoruȝ-out a brest, God wot, & biȝonde.

[38] Lydgate's Troy Book, ed. Henry Bergen (1906; rpt. New York: Kraus Reprint 1973). All citations from Lydgate will be from this edition.

> Also sche was, for al hir semlynes,
> Ful symple & meke, & ful of sobirnes,
> þe best norisshed eke þat myȝte be,
> Goodly of speche, fulfilde of pite,
> Facundious, and þer-to riȝt tretable,
> And, as seiþ Guydo, in loue variable--
> Of tendre herte & vnstedfastnes
> He hir accuseth, and newfongilnes.
> (Tr. Bk. II. 4736-44, 4748-62;
> Tr. V. 806-26)

Lydgate deals mainly with the sorrowful dénouement of the love affair, and subsequent description of Cressid recalls Guido's dismal spectacle:

> And eke vntressid hir her abrod gan sprede,
> Like to gold wyr, for-rent & al to-torn,
> I-plukked of, & nat with sheris shorn.
> And ouer þis, hir freshe rosen hewe,
> Whilom y-meint with white lilies newe,
> With woful wepyng pitously disteyned . . . .
> (Tr. Bk. III. 4124-29)

But when he tells of Cryseide's "doubilnes" and by extension that of all women (III. 4264 ff.), his oblique fulminations against them--"þus techeþ Guydo, God wot, & not I!" (III. 4343)--are devoid of any ornament or ambiguity, and outdo Guido in animosity. Lydgate borrows Chaucer's technique of excusing Criseyde ("Men seyn--I not") but only to castigate her himself.

The ruined Criseyde is the subject of Scottish Chaucerian Robert Henryson's (c. 1430-1505) version of the love story. His Testament of Cresseid is the imaginative sequel to "ane quair . . ."

> Writtin be worthie Chaucer glorious,
> Of fair Creisseid and worthie Troylus.
>
> And thair I fand, efter that Diomeid
> Ressavit had that lady bricht of hew,
> How Troilus neir out of wit abraid,
> And weipit soir, with visage paill of hew. . . .[39]

He then takes "aneuther quair . . . / In quhilk I fand the fatall destenie / Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitlie" (61-63). Apart from conventional references to her as "fair" and the above "lady bricht of hew," Henryson's most detailed description occurs in negative terms when, following her desertion by Diomede and her subsequent bitter denunciation of Cupid and Venus, she is sentenced by Saturn and Cynthia for blasphemy and insolence. It is possible that Henryson reflects, consciously or unconsciously, Chaucer's ironic use of the topos of feminine brightness, for only as Criseyde's beauty is destroyed is it most radiantly imaged:

> 'Thy greit fairnes and all thy bewtie gay,
> Thy wantoun blude, and eik thy goldin hair,
> Heir I exclude fra the for evermair.
> . . . . . .
> 'Thy cristall ene minglit with blude I mak;
> Thy voice sa cleir, unplesand, hoir and hace;
> Thy lustie lyre ouirspred with spottis blak,
> And lumpis haw appeirand in thy face . . . .
> (313-15, 337-40)

[39] Robert Henryson: Poems, ed. Charles Elliott, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974), p. 91 (40-46). All citations from Henryson will be from this edition.

Condemned to leprosy and a beggar's life, "hir fair colour faidit and alterait" (396), the medieval Criseyde's radiance is finally extinguished. For Chaucer, however, the matter was more complex.

## CHAPTER II

## "LADY BRIGHT OF HEWE": THE COURTLY FRAME.

Visualized as in a medieval tapestry whose gleaming threads depict the world of amour courtois, at first glance Chaucer's Criseyde is an integral element of that rich pattern, a bright figure in a formal setting of palace, garden and chamber along with her knight, her ladies and other courtiers. However, upon closer inspection the lady appears to stand in relief, detached from her surroundings by virtue of contrasting threads which give her a more life-like dimension of depth. Although Troilus may be seen as "the ideal courtly lover,"[1] there is clearly irony beneath that ideality. And in Criseyde's case the irony is yet more complex. Muscatine contends that "[t]o see her only as the ideal heroine of romance would be to ignore the strength of her relationship to the phenomenal, realistic world created through Chaucer's naturalism. Criseyde is one of the most 'natural' figures in medieval literature. She cannot be understood purely through courtly convention."[2]

[1] Robinson, Works, p. 387.

[2] Muscatine, French Tradition, p. 164. Nor can

The present generally skeptical and questioning climate of critical opinion with regard to "courtly love" encourages fresh thinking in readers of Chaucer. Ida Gordon observes in her study of the ironies in the poem that its many verbal nuances have made variant interpretations possible, "since it is left to the reader to decide whether, or in what ways, the ambiguity is part of the total effect intended." And one's reaction depends, she reasons, on the assumptions which are brought to the reading of the poem.[3] A brief review of critical opinion will serve as the basis for my own conclusions on the conventions of courtly love as relevant to the Troilus.

However contradictory their conclusions, most critics agree that the idea of courtly love (as distinguished from a social or literary phenomenon) begins with an essay by Gaston Paris in 1883.[4] This has proved to be a seminal study, credited by subsequent scholarship with the original statement of amour courtois.

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naturalism and courtly convention exhaust her ambiguity; as my next chapter will argue, a Boethian thread of tragic failure runs through her portrayal.

[3] Gordon, pp. 2-3.

[4] Gaston Paris, "Etudes sur les romans de la Table Ronde. Lancelot du Lac. II. Le Conte de la Charrette," Romania, XII (1883), 459-534, esp. 516-34. All further references to this work appear in the text.

"Dans aucun ouvrage français, autant qu'il me semble, cet amour courtois n'apparait avant le Chevalier de la Charrette" (p. 519). The inception of this new ideal, "social, sentimental et poétique" (p. 523) Paris sees as first taking root and flowering at the court of Marie de Champagne, daughter of Henry II of England and Alienor of Poitiers, by a complex of circumstances, their climax being the fusion of the sens or esprit of the southern troubadour love lyric with the "matière de Bretagne." Chrétien, a poet familiar with Marie's court at Troyes, wrote his Chevalier de la Charrette at her behest. In this poem, Paris tells us, a new conception of love appears, with four principal characteristics: it is illicit; the lover feels inferior to his lady; to appear worthy he accomplishes great feats; above all, love is an art, a virtue, a science with its own rules (pp. 518-19). "Mais le témoignage le plus curieux et le plus sûr que nous ayons sur l'influence sociale et poétique de Marie ainsi que de sa mère Alienor est le fameux livre d'André le Chapelain, Flos amoris ou De arte honeste amandi" (pp. 523-24).

Paris dates Andreas's book not later than the first years of the thirteenth century[5] (p. 528), just after

[5] In "The Date of the Composition of Andreas Capellanus' De Amore," Speculum, 4 (1929), 92-95, Arpad Steiner refutes this dating and offers evidence for an earlier date, between 1174 and 1186.

the deaths of several noblewomen, Alienor of Poitiers in 1192, Emenjart of Narbonne and Marguerite of Flandres in 1194, Marie of Champagne in 1198, and Aeliz of France in 1206, at whose brilliant courts

> . . . circulaient les poètes, portant, comme les abeilles d'une fleur à l'autre, les semences de poésie et de courtoisie du Midi au Nord et de l'Ouest à l'Est. . . . Nul doute qu'un des amusements favoris des réunions que presidaient ces belles et peu sévères princesses n'ait été la solution de questions galantes et l'établissement d'un code et d'une jurisprudence d'amour. Que ce ne fussent pas des "cours d'amour" au sens où les modernes ont lourdement pris ce mot, il est, je pense, inutile de la démontrer aujourd'hui. (pp. 528-29)

"Inutile," indeed. It seems that in Paris's day, as ever since, Andreas's popular compendium of love, lovers' dilemmas and ladies' judgments thereon has had more literal interpretations than otherwise.

De arte honeste amandi begins, in true clerical fashion, with a definition: "Love is a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other and by common desire to carry out all of love's precepts in the other's embrace."[6] The treatise

[6] Andreas Capellanus, The Art of Courtly Love, trans. John Jay Parry (1941; rpt. New York: Norton, 1969), p. 28.

is divided into three sections and follows, in a general way, the scheme of Ovid's Art of Love, a work by a poet of Augustan Rome whose influence on medieval ideas of love was profound.[7] The first section concerns the origins and effects of love, what persons are eligible for love, how love may be acquired. The second Book tells how love once acquired may be increased, consummated, or decreased, "various decisions in love cases" handed down by great ladies such as the Countess of Champagne and Queen Eleanor, and thirty-one "rules of love." Lastly, in Book Three comes a volte-face combining anti-feminist polemic with urging to reject love of women in favour of love of God. Paris calls the De Amore's judgments and rules "de purs jeux d'esprit" (p. 529), a caveat which has been mainly ignored until comparatively recently.

Many critics, most notably C.S. Lewis, have taken for granted that there was such an upper class social code of amatory behaviour which arose at the end of the eleventh century and persisted through the fourteenth. However, Lewis's classic statement of the characteristics of courtly love as "Humility, Courtesy, Adultery, and the Religion of Love"[8] is now read with many

[7] From Parry's Introduction, p. 18.

[8] Lewis, Allegory, p. 2.

reservations.[9] F.N. Robinson's introductory remarks to the Troilus also emphasize the importance of the courtly code to an understanding of the poem. "According to the ethics of the system, neither Troilus nor Criseyde was blameworthy for their union. It was expected that love should be sought outside of marriage." Robinson concedes that "[h]ow far it was actually practiced in medieval society is a matter of dispute," but stresses its idealistic aspect and concludes that "[t]here is no better product or expression of the convention than the Troilus"[10] There are, however, other views on the subject.

The most famous attack on the theory of courtly love comes from D.W. Robertson, Jr. As he sees it, works supposedly illustrative of courtly love such as Andreas's De Amore, Chrétien's Chevalier de la Charrete and the Roman de la Rose are meant to be humorous and ironic, satirizing idolatrous passion. He hears the same ironic laughter in the ending of Chaucer's Troilus, "a laughter which he, [Chaucer] and Troilus from his celestial vantage point, would bestow on all those who take a sentimental attitude toward such love as that

[9] An account of the erosion of this theory constitutes the background of Henry Ansgar Kelly's Love and Marriage in the Age of Chaucer (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1975), pp. 19-26.

[10] Works, p. 388.

between Troilus and Criseyde."[11] Robertson bases his reading of the poem on his view of the supreme importance for the Middle Ages of Boethian philosophy and of Augustinian theology, particularly with regard to righteousness in love. St. Augustine's On Christian Doctrine gives two definitions of love, one charitable towards others for the sake of God, the other cupidinous towards others and directed away from God.[12] In this context, Troilus is "a slave to his cupidity" and guilty of the depths of idolatry.[13] Andreas, insists Robertson, was completely orthodox in his thinking, drawing his material from the Bible, doctrinal literature and the humorous mockery of Ovid. "The fact that modern scholars have failed to see his humor is nothing in his disfavor."[14]

[11] Robertson, Jr., Preface, p. 501. See also his view of Andreas as satirist in "The subject of the De Amore of Andreas Capellanus," Modern Philology, 50 (1952-53), 145-61, and more recently, "The Concept of Courtly Love as an Impediment to the Understanding of Medieval Texts," in The Meaning of Courtly Love, ed. F.X. Newman (Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1968), pp. 1-18. Even so, in his Preface Robertson finds it necessary to invent the term "courteous love" for "the commonly accepted basis of noble behaviour" towards others in feudal society (p. 453).

[12] Robertson, Jr., Preface, pp. 24-25.

[13] Robertson, Jr., Preface, p. 499.

[14] Robertson, Jr., Preface, p. 448.

Others have adopted modified versions of this position. E. Talbot Donaldson, for example, agrees with Robertson that Andreas is "not to be understood as seriously promulgating immoral doctrine."[15] Donaldson observes that in Middle English literature up to Malory adultery is a very minor theme, and that a doctrine which Lewis treats with much solemnity is more relevant to Chaucer's comic heroes.[16] But he is less moralistic than Robertson in his conclusion:

> Chaucer's Troilus is a poem about the failure of a love which seemed for a time, at least to its hero, sublime, and with this point the fact that Troilus and Criseide are not married has nothing to do, except insofar as it enhances the intensity of the erotic experience - a potentiality that has always been known, in all ages, to all poets.[17]

Peter Dronke like Robertson questions conventional wisdom, but from a very different point of view. He prefers the term "courtly experience" to amour courtois and holds that this sensibility is "essentially a man's conception of love," and is manifest in both popular and courtly love-poetry, going beyond manners and fashions

[15] E. Talbot Donaldson, Speaking of Chaucer (London: Athlone, 1970), pp. 160-61.

[16] Donaldson, pp. 156, 157.

[17] Donaldson, pp. 162-63.

to entail "a whole way of looking at life."[18] The belief that this was a completely new concept of love he considers erroneous, drawing evidence of precedents for the courtly experience in medieval popular poetry from such diverse sources as ancient Egypt, Byzantium, Georgia, Islam, Mozarabic Spain, France and Germany, Iceland, and Greek Italy. Dronke stresses the belief expressed in this and other courtly poetry of the accord between human and divine love, and cites Chaucer's Troilus as "conceived entirely against the background of this notion, love as coincidentia oppositorum . . . ."[19] In his examination of the rise of European love-lyric, Dronke finds another constant--the ever-present invariant images of light and radiance associated with the beloved.[20]

James I. Wimsatt also deplores the common misapprehensions of courtly love as an unvarying code of amatory conduct and the importance attached to Andreas's De Arte Honeste Amandi as "the Bible of medieval lovers":[21]

[18] Peter Dronke, Medieval Latin and the Rise of European Love-Lyric (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965), I, 3, 9.

[19] Dronke, p. 25.

[20] Dronke, pp. 195, 201, 286, 326, et passim.

[21] Wimsatt, pp. 62-63.

> Courtly love, then, if this modern term is to be retained as a convenient label, is best conceived of as a set of conventions which may be mixed in various ways. The end of a courtly-love affair may be premarital love, adulterous love, platonic love, or love in marriage, depending on the desires and disposition of the participants . . . . Though the movements are stereotyped, their arrangement may be varied somewhat so that very different stories may be told.[22]

Wimsatt terms the conventions which constitute courtly love "literary counters," and likens the patterning of these counters to a "Dance of Love," persisting through changes in narrative method from personification allegory, as in the Romance of the Rose, to the overt realism of the Troilus.[23]

"In America today one must be valiant to use the term courtly love without radical surgery," says Francis L. Utley in his re-examination of the subject.[24] Commenting on four works published since 1968, he concludes that there are twenty or thirty kinds of courtly love:

[22] Wimsatt, p. 64.

[23] Wimsatt, p. 87.

[24] Francis L. Utley, "Must We Abandon the Concept of Courtly Love?" Medievalia et Humanistica, NS 3 (1972), 299.

> Rejection of the term courtly love will not sweep the social phenomenon and the literary expression under the rug, and it is time for serious housecleaning, where we roll up our sleeves and go to work bringing together the multiple and variable evidence with all the skill we have for careful reading, including philology and linguistics, patristic exegesis, glosses literary and artistic, rhetoric, historical externals, the variety of medieval philosophies, a sense of the value the past has for the present, and plain common sense.[25]

Such extensive "housecleaning" will take time, but the movement is well under way. John Stevens's introduction to the romance tradition offers much plain common sense: "What, then, was the experience which is usually called 'courtly love,' and how can we know about it? We know about it in one sense, because, as romantic love, it still exists--the perennial theme of European literature, life, art, and our entertainment."[26]

There is, however, one particular development within courtly literature which must be taken into consideration, especially in connection with Chaucer. A number of critics have commented on the decline of the courtly tradition as it came increasingly under the attack of bourgeois realism. Writing in The Parliament of Fowls

[25] Utley, p. 322.

[26] Stevens, p. 33.

on the art of love, Chaucer himself indicates the presence of new modes:

> For out of olde feldes, as men seyth,
> Cometh al this newe corn from yer to yere,
> And out of olde bokes, in good feyth,
> Cometh al this newe science that men lere.
> (PF. 22-25)

Muscatine discusses the literary configuration of juxtaposed courtly and realistic views of love from its first overt appearance in Jean's Roman de la Rose "to be perpetuated in various forms through the declining Middle Ages and into the Renaissance," a juxtaposition which he traces in Chaucer's work and which he views as the structural basis of the Troilus.[27] With reference to the same idea of the erosion of courtly convention, the interesting point has been made that in the earlier lyric mode, the tension between ideal and actual can be maintained, for love's ennobling power can be abstracted in a lyric from its sensual elements. The narrative poet, on the other hand, deals with action and relationships in a social context. "Again and again, romance writers show that in the world of men and women, courtly love brings little glory to the knight, few benefits to society, and no grace to Christian

[27] Muscatine, French Tradition, pp. 74, 132, et passim.

souls."[28]

This point can be taken a step further, in my view, by identifying the psychology of much medieval romantic literature (when it is not ironic or satiric) as unconsciously adolescent in the naiveté of some of its sentiments and in its figuring of certain emotions which can occur at any age when "falling in love" and "courting" a lady, but which tend to be carried to excess in adolescence.[29] Being new to the pubescent sensibility, these emotions and experiences are imaged in the literature as more astonishing and difficult to deal with than when experienced in riper years.

In the "daunce" or "game" of youthful love, the players become stereotyped and their movements predictable, though not necessarily in any fixed order and with many variations in the different stages. It has been said that the cure for adolesence is five years, but the writer of the archetypal Tristan limits the effects of the traditional love-potion to three years, an interesting variation on the figure for love's ephemeral nature as

[28] Introduction, In Pursuit of Perfection: Courtly Love in Medieval Literature, eds. Joan M. Ferrante and George D. Economou (New York: Kennikat, 1975), pp. 6-8.

[29] See Andreas's remark about "excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex," p. 47 above.

a dance or game.[30] Other "literary counters" are the look, the complaint, the balcony interlude, the knight's proof of valour, the letter, the tryst, the aube, or dawn-song, and many other incidents and outbursts of feeling.

This immature stage of life is also reflected in literary images of emotional instability: the young man's trembling fear of non-acceptance; the need for the friend, whose intervention paves the way or minimizes the hurt of rejection; the very real love-sickness, with symptoms of loss of appetite, sleeplessness, fainting, blushing or pallor, stammering, and weeping; the sickening insecurity of jealousy; the girl's disdain, not to seem too easily won, and her concern for her "reputation"; the helpless misery of unrequited love; the mixed feelings at finding oneself in the grasp of overwhelming emotion, appropriately expressed by poets in oxymorons, as Troilus's "O quike deth, O swete harm so queynte" (I. 411) or Criseyde's "dredful joye" (II. 776). As for the transformation of the knight under the influence of love, most of us can recall feelings of unaccustomed benevolence towards everyone when this new "love life" was proceeding well:

[30] Denis de Rougement, Love in the Western World, trans. Montgomery Belgion (1940; rpt. New York: Harper, 1974), pp. 27-29, sheds much light on the psychology of medieval love, though he does not identify this three-year period as specifically adolescent.

> For he bicom the frendlieste wight,
> The gentilest, and ek the moost fre,
> The thriftiest and oon the beste knyght,
> That in his tyme was or myghte be.
> Dede were his japes and his cruelte,
> His heighe port and his manere estraunge,
> And ecch of tho gan for a vertu chaunge.
> (I. 1079-85)

The adolescent tendency to wallow in closeted and self-regarding fervour is also a recurrent image. This prolonging of secrecy intensifies excitement and stimulates the pursuit of passion for its own sake. Frequent references to death and a preference for night and darkness over day and sunlight also signify the limitations of a love which for all its astonishing sweetness and power undervalues that part of life which must be lived in daylight--the everyday world of cares and child-rearing and social responsibility.

By contrast, a more mature love welcomes day as well as night, wishing to declare itself before the community and to receive the social support inherent in the institution of marriage. Such a love is the theme of Spenser's Epithalamion, which celebrates "[t]he safety of our joy." That such a love was also Chaucer's ideal resolution of the proverbial sorrows of love is well attested to.

Sanford Meech notes Chaucer's handling of the characterizations and situations in the Troilus so as "to emphasize the miscarriage of their expectations

founded upon the amatory code."[31] Nevill Coghill holds that Troilus and Criseyde conform exactly to the character and rules for the behaviour of ideal lovers as laid down in the Roman de la Rose, and that Chaucer showed the system would not work,[32] while Saul Brody makes a case for Chaucer's ultimately comic rejection of courtly love.[33] We also have Kittredge's important argument for Chaucer's views of love as consistent with marriage.[34]

What happens when one applies the rules of the game of love or the steps of the dance to real (i.e. historical) situations? Had Chaucer wanted to demonstrate, first, the unripeness and unreality, for all its idealism, of courtly love in the face of life's inevitable dilemmas, and secondly, the disparity between stereotyped characterization and realistic portrayal, then the plot of Troilus and Criseyde would be most appropriate. These

[31] Meech, p. 20.

[32] Nevill Coghill, The Poet Chaucer (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967), pp. 52, 60.

[33] Saul N. Brody, "The Comic Rejection of Courtly Love," in Ferrante and Economon, pp. 221, 247, et passim. Brody traces this rejection through Chaucer's "To Rosemounde," The Parliament of Fowls and several of the Canterbury Tales, including the Knight's, Miller's, Merchant's, Squire's, and Franklin's.

[34] George Lyman Kittredge, "Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage," in Wagenknecht, pp. 188-215.

are not lovers whose passion seeks the fulfilment of marriage, rather theirs is a love based on the conventions of clandestine dalliance, and to the extent that their romance is bounded by these conventions it is doomed. Second, by combining two stereotypes, the courtly lady and the fickle woman, with a naturalistic figure and by offsetting her infidelity with the stress on her predicament, Chaucer sets Criseyde free, realizing a new creature of gleaming ambiguity and tragic depth. As a portrayal of one woman in love, Chaucer's Criseyde illuminates the truth that the human heart resists formulas, for beyond her gentle manners, radiant beauty and warm compassion Troilus encounters the difficult mystery of an alien existence.

When first we meet her, elegant in her widow's dress of brown silk, she is on her knees before Hector, alone and pleading for mercy "with pitous vois, and tendrely wepynge" (I. 111), the very essence of the courtly lady in distress; her narrator is conventionally uncertain as to her mortal or immortal origin:

> Criseyde was this lady name al right.
> As to my doom, in al Troies cite
> Nas non so fair, for passynge every wight
> So aungelik was hir natif beauté,
> That like a thing inmortal semed she,
> As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,
> That down were sent in scornynge of nature.
> (I. 99-105)

Hector is moved to noble rhetoric by the tears of "so fair

a creature" and promises her:

> . . . "Lat your fadres treson gon
> Forth with meschaunce, and ye yourself in joie
> Dwelleth with us, whil yow good list, in Troie.
>
> "And al th'onour that men may don yow have,
> As ferforth as youre fadre dwelled here,
> Ye shul have, and youre body shal men save,
> As fer as I may ought enquere or here."
> (I. 117-23)

Dramatic irony here favours Criseyde, since for all Hector's gallant assurances, as the audience knows, Criseyde's "body" will not be "saved" but traded to the Greeks, much against her "good list."

The setting for the lovers' meeting is typically romantic--in a temple in springtime:

> . . . whan comen was the tyme
> Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede
> With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme,
> And swote smellen floures white and rede,
> . . . . . .
> And to the temple, in al hir beste wise,
> In general ther wente many a wight,
> To herknen of Palladion the servyse;
> And namely, so many a lusty knight,
> So many a lady fressh and mayden bright,
> . . . . . .
> Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,
> In widewes habit blak
> (I. 155-58, 162-66, 169-70)

The description of Criseyde continues in a curious mixture of images, romantic and naturalistic, haughty and humble (italics mine, indicating the courtly style):[35]

[35] In Speaking of Chaucer, E.T. Donaldson also notices

> Hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees.
> Nas nevere yet seyn thyng to ben preysed derre,
> Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre
>
> As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichone
> That hir behelden in hir blake wede.
> And yet she stood ful lowe and stille allone,
> Byhynden other folk, in litel brede,
> And neigh the dore, ay undre shames drede,
> Simple of atir and debonaire of chere,
> With ful assured lokyng and manere.
> (I. 173-82)[36]

Troilus, who has been strolling about with his courtiers making cynical remarks about lovers, "O veray fooles, nyce and blynde be ye" (I. 202) is chastised for his impertinence by the God of Love, "For sodeynly he hitte him atte fulle" (I. 209). His eye falls on Criseyde:

> And sodeynly he wax therewith astoned,
> And gan hir bet biholde in thrifty wise.
> "O mercy, God," thoughte he, "wher hastow woned,
> That art so feyr and goodly to devise?"
> (I. 274-77)

And so the "dance" of love begins. Troilus cannot take his eyes off her, and Criseyde's demeanor suddenly

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the "unexpected juxtaposition" of the earthly and heavenly Criseyde, and comments that it is "at once charming and remotely disquieting" (p. 55).

[36] "Shame" and "Daunger" are allegorical figures in the Roman de la Rose, standing for the lady's modesty and hauteur, guardians of her virtue (Rom. 3018 ff.), but in this case the line can at the same time be read as a realistic description of Criseyde's anxious state of mind.

changes to "somdel deignous" as she

> . . . let falle
> Hire look a lite aside in swich manere,
> Ascaunces, "What, may I nat stonden here?"
> And after that hir lokyng gan she lighte,
> That nevere thoughte hym seen so good a syghte.
> (I. 290-94)

This is the lady's "Daunger," a provocative aloofness and self-assertion which is depicted in Boccaccio's and Beauvau's versions as a much more aggressive posture:

> . . . charming Criseida stood, clad in black, under a white veil, apart from other ladies at this most solemn festival. She was tall, and all her limbs were in keeping with her height; her face was adorned with heavenly beauty, and in her look there showed forth womanly pride. And with her arm she had taken the mantle from before her face; and she had made room for herself by moving the crowd a little aside. And as she drew again unto herself, that act of hers, somewhat disdainful as if she said, 'None may stand here,' gave pleasure to Troilus . . . .
> (Fil. p. 34)

Beauvau does not place her apart, but among the others, at least at the outset:

> . . . la plaisante Brisaïda entre pluseurs autres dames et damoiselles qui estoient à celle feste, vestue de noir, avecques ung couvrechef cler et delié sur la teste. Elle estoit grant femme; selon sa grandesse touz membres bien lui respondoient. Elle avoit son visage aourné de droite manière; en ses façons de faire et en ses semblans se demonstroit chose celestielle; sa manière avoit doulce, entre meslée de fierté. Elle haulsa

> les braz et descouvrit ung pou le beau visage en ouvrant son manteau de deul que elle avoit au d'avant, et fist une façon de faire comme de dire: "Las! je suis trop empressée." Celle manière que elle fist, en soy tournant comme si elle fyst ennoyée, pleut fort à Troylus, car il sembloit que elle vouloit dire: "Je ne peus plus durer."
>
> (Roman, pp. 126-27)

In all three versions, Troilus is captivated by the momentary "lighte" in the lady's look, a hallmark of the courtly lady. However, in comparing the three passages it is noticeable that Chaucer's heroine is at once both more romantic and natural. C.S. Lewis maintains that Chaucer "medievalized" Boccaccio's Filostrato by "groping back, unknowingly, through the very slightly medieval work of Boccaccio, to the genuinely medieval formula of Chrestien," the majority of his changes being "corrections of errors which Boccaccio had committed against the code of courtly love."[37] With some misgivings about judgments regarding Chaucer's "unknowing" or Boccaccio's "errors" I would agree that Chaucer was restoring to Criseyde the charm of a courtly heroine, though I would suggest that his naturalistic style was an equally significant element in the portrayal of this most unforgettable Criseyde of all. Her question,

[37] C.S. Lewis, "What Chaucer Really Did to Il Filostrato," in Schoeck and Taylor, p. 19.

"What, may I nat stonden here?" (I. 292) is more subtle than the mettlesome gesture of the Italian and French ladies; it recalls for us Criseyde's vulnerable position in the world as a widow and the daughter of a traitor and enlists our sympathy. The lovers' first encounter, then, introduces Chaucer's complex of Criseydes: the gentle and elusive "lady bright" of romance and the realistic "this in blak" (I. 309). Yet another aspect, the tragic heroine, "under cloude blak so bright a sterre," (I. 175) is discussed in the next chapter.

Book I is devoted mainly to the story of how Troilus came to fall in love and of his mental and physical state in the process. His reactions are conventionally extreme--weeping, prostration, exaltation, acute anxiety, and extravagant gratitude for the offer of Pandarus to become his go-between. He becomes the very paradigm of the courtly lover, sensitive and tender in his feelings of love, gracious and courageous in public life:

> And in the feld he playd the leoun;
> Wo was that Grek that with hym mette a-day!
> And in the town his manere tho forth ay
> Soo goodly was, and gat hym so in grace,
> That ecch hym loved that loked on his face.
> (I. 1074-78)

Book II belongs to Criseyde, depicting her in the glittering frame of <u>amour courtois</u> yet realizing her as a fully individualized and fascinating woman. Juxtaposed with

situations and conventions characteristic of romance are scenes of realistic dialogue which make us privy to the heroine's own thoughts.[38]

The courting of Criseyde begins with the "bisynesse" of Pandarus, without whose help it appears that Troilus's hopes would wither on the branch. On the fourth of May, Pandarus is awakened by "the swalowe Proigne, with a sorrowful lay . . . cheteryng / How Tereus gan forth hire suster take" (II. 64, 68-69), reminding him of his errand on Troilus's behalf. Reference here to the ancient myth of ravishment, an image which recurs more than once, raises questions at the very outset as to the morality of the plotters' intentions.[39] Pandarus finds Criseyde reading with her ladies "withinne a paved parlour" (II. 82), a background of romantic elegance against which she and her visitor engage in the subtle thrust and parry which signify the gamesmanship of courtly ritual.

First Pandarus jolts her decorous widow's demeanour and receives an appropriately skittish reply:

[38] In this process, Chaucer departs considerably from Boccaccio's representation. As Meech has shown in detail, Chaucer purges her of voluptuousness, elevates her to high social status, and extends the time intervals of both courtship and subsequent betrayal. See Design, pp. 395-402.

[39] See also II. 918-24; III. 1233-39. Donald W. Rowe (p. 76) believes that "Chaucer makes ravishing the original sin of the poem's world . . . the poem's archetypal image of cupiditas."

"Do wey youre barbe, and shewe youre face bare;
Do wey youre book, rys up, and lat us daunce,
And lat us fon to May som observaunce."

"I? God forbede!" quod she, "be ye mad?
Is that a widewes lif, so God yow save?
By God, ye maken me ryght soore adrad!"
. . . . . .
"As evere thrive I," quod this Pandarus,
Yet koude I telle a thyng to doon yow pleye."
(II. 110-15, 120-21)

Alternately cajoling and intimidating he promises her "good aventure" (II. 288). Curious yet apprehensive, Criseyde, with downcast eyes, tells herself, "I shal felen what he meneth, ywis," and "It nedeth me ful sleighly for to pleie" (II. 387, 462). But she is no match for the guile of Pandarus, "that wel koude ech a deel / The olde daunce, and every point therinne" (III. 694-95).

Notwithstanding its lighthearted tone, this scene reinforces the vulnerability of Criseyde "which that wel neigh starf for feere, / So as she was the ferfulleste wight / That myghte be" (II. 449-51) and dramatizes what she tearfully refers to as "this paynted proces" (II. 424) of courtly pursuit. Pressed further by Pandarus she decides "Of harmes two, the lesse is for to chese" (II. 470), her choices being to undermine the prestige of Pandarus or to encourage Troilus; so she chooses, "Myn honour sauf," (II. 480) to play the game of love.

Then follows her lengthy inner debate on the merits and drawbacks of the courtly game, described by the

narrator as her "brighte" and "cloudy" thoughts. Here is one of Chaucer's major modifications in characterization, giving Criseyde less cynicism than either of her counterparts through a very different handling of her statements with regard to marriage. Boccaccio's heroine is explicit in her consideration of Pandaro's proposition: "Who should have his pleasure of me unless he first become my husband?" (Fil. p. 44). She rejects the initial overture with the reply that "It befits me to remain virtuous" (p. 45). Then Pandaro reminds her of the threat of age to her beauty, at which point she capitulates:

> ". . . why should I not give myself to love? If perhaps virtue forbids this to me, yet I shall be careful and shall keep my desire so secret that it will not be known that I have ever had love in my heart. Each day my youth slips from me; must I lose it miserably? I know no lady in this land without a lover . . . ."
> (Fil. pp. 47-48)

In contrast, by her reticence Chaucer's heroine allows us to conclude "that [her] objections to loving Troilus are only temporary and that when she overcomes her arguments against accepting him as her lover she also disposes of her reasons against having him as her husband":[40]

[40] Kelly, pp. 63-67, esp. 67.

I am myn owene womman, wel at ese,
I thank it God, as after myn estat,
Right yong, and stonde unteyd in lusty leese,
Withouten jalousie or swich debat:
Shal noon housbonde seyn to me "chek mat!"
For either they ben ful of jalousie,
Or maisterfull, or loven novelrie.
(II. 750-56)

'And now is not a time to take a husband; and even were it, to keep one's freedom is by far the wiser choice. Love that comes from such a friendship is always more welcome to lovers; and let beauty be as great as thou wilt, it is soon stale to husbands, for they are ever lusting after some new thing. Water got by stealth is a far sweeter thing than wine possessed in abundance: so the hidden joy of love quite surpasses that of holding a husband ever in one's arms.
(Fil. p. 48)

"Et à present n'est pas temps à prendre mary; et si bien il estoit, si est ce beaucop plus sage party à garder sa liberté. Car l'amours qui vient de telle amistié est tousjours entre les autres doulce et agreable; mais quelque grant beauté qu'il y ait en femme, si ennuye elle tantost à son mary, desirant avoir tousjours chose nouvelle. L'eau emblée est assez plus doulce que n'est le vin que on a à son bandon; ainsi d'amour le plaisir mussé trespasse assez celui du mary c'on tient tousjours ès bras.
(Roman, p. 154)

Criseyde's thoughts then become clouded, "For love is yet the mooste stormy lyf" (II. 778), then clear. "Now hoot, now cold; but thus, bitwixen tweye, / She rist hire up, and wente here for to pleye" (II. 811-12).

Chaucer's use of romance conventions consistently

complicates Criseyde's portrayal. She is given an inwardness, a quality of introspection not found in the Boccaccio and Beauvau analogues. First, the spectacle of Troilus riding past "so fressh, so yong, so weldy" (II. 636) astride his bleeding horse, his armour all gashed, elicits her gasp, "Who yaf me drynke?" (II. 651). In somewhat analogous passages Boccaccio's and Beauvau's heroines are suddenly smitten, but without any reference to the device of the love potion. In Filostrato we hear that "so suddenly was she taken that she desired him beyond any other good" (p. 49), and Beauvau's version reads "[e]t si soudainement fut prise que sur touz autres l'ama de tout son cueur" (p. 157). Chaucer's narrator, on the other hand, takes two stanzas to assure us that Criseyde's was "no sodeyn love" (II. 666-79).

In other romantic episodes, Criseyde goes downstairs into her garden with her three nieces, followed by "a gret route" of attendants. There Antigone sings a song in praise of Love (II. 827-75), prompting Criseyde to question and be reassured about "the blisse of love" (II. 889). As twilight falls they go inside and when at last she is alone in bed, Criseyde hears a nightingale singing in the moonlight under her window and she dreams of a white eagle who tears out her heart and substitutes his own.

Meanwhile the "eagle" is assured by Pandarus, "Lo, hold the at thi triste cloos, and I / Shal wel the deer unto thi bowe dryve" (II. 1534-35). The questionable nature of this courtly game is again evident in Pandarus's equivocation to Criseyde:

> And also think wel that this is no gaude;
> For me were levere thow and I and he
> Were hanged, than I sholde ben his baude,
> As heigh as men myghte on us alle ysee!
> I am thyn em; the shame were to me,
> As wel as the, if that I sholde assente,
> Thorugh myn abet, that he thyn honour shente.
> (II. 351-57)

and in a later exchange between the scheming Pandarus and Troilus:

> . . . for shame it is to seye:
> For the I have bigonne a gamen pleye,
> Which that I nevere do shal eft for other,
> Although he were a thousand fold my brother.
>
> That is to seye, for the am I bicomen,
> Bitwixen game and ernest, swich a meene
> As maken wommen unto men to comen;
> Al sey I nought, thow woost wel what I meene.
> (III. 249-56)

This stanza's dramatic irony sharpens the focus on misdoing as it prefigures the poem's outcome and much besides:

> And were it wist that I, thorugh myn engyn,
> Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie,
> To doon thi lust and holly to ben thyn,
> Whi al the world upon it wolde crie,
> And seyn that I the werste trecherie
> Dide in this cas, that evere was bigonne,
> And she forlost, and thow right nought ywonne.
> (III. 274-80)

We also see in this plotting further stylistic evidence of Chaucer's reservations regarding conventional gamesmanship: Pandarus uses the courtly tag for Criseyde in warning Troilus about the grave consequences for her of loose talk:

> "O tonge, allas! so often here-byforn
> Hath mad ful many a lady bright of hewe
> Seyd 'Weilaway, the day that I was born!'"
> (III. 302-4)

Troilus's nine-stanza rejoiner (in which Criseyde is not once mentioned) is the very configuration of irony as Chaucer points to the discrepancy between what is said and what is actually taking place. The paragon of courtly virtue insists that, all appearances to the contrary, since no money is changing hands, this is not "bauderye" but "gentilesse, / Compassioun, and felawship, and trist" (III. 360-420, esp. 400-6). This assertion is immediately confounded by his crass offer to reward Pandarus with "my faire suster Polixene, / Cassandre, Eleyne [sic], or any of the frape" (III. 409-10).

Such disreputable intrigue is further complicated by the double figure of Venus/Criseyde as "lady bright" which presides over Book III. In medieval thought Venus, like Fortune, had two aspects, one benign and one wanton. "[The] context is earthly love and the two Venuses represent two different dispositions within

it: the one legitimate, sacramental, natural, and in harmony with cosmic law; the other illegitimate, perverted, selfish, and sinful."[41] Economou tells us that most European poets from the middle of the twelfth century on, including Chaucer, associated the wanton Venus with courtly love.[42] In the Troilus, and particularly in Book III, both aspects are discernible.

This central Book, marking the climax of the lovers' hopes and happiness, begins with the narrator's invocation of Venus as his muse:[43]

> O blisful light, of which the bemes clere
> Adorneth al the thridde heven faire!
> . . . . . .
> Now, lady bryght, for thi benignite,
> At reverence of hem that serven the,
> Whos clerc I am, so techeth me devyse
> Som joye of that is felt in thi servyse.
> (III. 1-2, 39-42)

and closes with his grateful praise and a latent warning:

> Thow lady bryght, the doughter to Dyone,
> . . . . . .
> That ye thus fer han deyned me to gyde,

[41] George Economou, "The Two Venuses and Courtly Love," in Ferrante and Economou, p. 20.

[42] Economou, p. 20.

[43] The marked increase of references to Venus by Troilus, Pandarus and narrator in Book III is significant: I. 1014; II. 234, 680, 972, 1524; III. 1, 39, 48, 187, 705, 712, 715, 951, 1255-7, 1807; IV. 1661; V. 1016.

> I kan namore, but syn that ye wol wende,
> Ye heried ben for ay withouten ende!
> (III. 1807, 1811-13)

When at last Troilus has Criseyde in his arms, he too pays homage to Venus and to Love:

> "O Love, O Charite!
> Thi moder ek, Citherea the swete,
> After thiself next heried be,
> Venus mene I, the wel-willy planete!"
> (III. 1254-57)

His praise has religious echoes as he credits the power which has brought about "this hevene," and the Love he praises is not the courtly God of Love but the "God, that auctor is of kynde" (III. 1765):

> "Benigne Love, thow holy bond of thynges,
> . . . . . .
> Yet were al lost, that dar I wel seyn certes,
> But if thi grace passed oure desertes."[44]
> (III. 1261, 1266-67)

During the erotic splendour of their night of love, in two moments of passionate intensity, Troilus speaks to Criseyde in similar terms. The stanzas are both in courtly high style:

> Here may men seen that mercy passeth right,
> Th'experience of that is felt in me,

[44] Robinson's note on this passage draws a parallel with Dante's Par., xxxiii, 14 ff. See Works, p. 826.

That am unworthy to you, lady bright."
(III. 1282-84)[45]

Later as he sadly takes his leave, with some foreboding he longs for reassurance of her love:

"But natheles, myn owen lady bright,
Yet were it so that I wist outrely
That I, youre humble servant and youre knyght,
Were in youre herte iset as fermely
As ye in myn,
. . . . . .
Yet sholde I bet enduren al my peyne."
(III. 1485-89, 1491)

That foreboding is not unwarranted when we recall the reference to Troilus in Chaucer's Parliament of Fowls, a poem which subtly criticizes the traditions of courtly love. On a golden bed in perfumed gloom Venus lies half naked. The walls of her temple are painted with stories of tragic lovers, including Troilus, and "Ful many a bowe ibroke heng on the wal / Of maydenes swiche as gonne here tymes waste / In hyre servyse" (PF. 282-84). Thus in the Troilus the indirect association of Criseyde with Venus serves to place the heroine in two antithetical contexts--one natural and legitimate, the other courtly and questionable.

In the frame of licit love, we have first of all Chaucer's sustained elevation of the status of Criseyde above that of Boccaccio's heroine, making her a great

[45] Variant reading. See below, Appendix A, n. 1, p. 119.

lady with a substantial household, a widow of blameless reputation on a social level with the royal court; we also know that Troilus is unmarried. In Book III we also have the many implications of an honourable consummation secured by a nuptial bond. Many years ago C.S. Lewis described the third book as "in effect a long epithalamium" in "a great poem in praise of love."[46] D.S. Brewer claims that "Chaucer retained the plot about illicit love and built on it a poem about honourable love."[47] More recently Henry Ansgar Kelly and John Maguire have presented arguments for interpreting the central event as a clandestine marriage.[48] Among much textual evidence and historical background cited by these two critics are Troilus's greeting to Imeneus, the divinity of marriage (III. 1258) and the lovers' ritualistic vows of fidelity and exchange of rings.[49]

Maguire's article is a dubious attempt to elevate

[46] Lewis, Allegory, pp. 196, 197.

[47] D.S. Brewer, "Love and Marriage in Chaucer's Poetry," Modern Language Review, 49 (1954), 463.

[48] See Kelly, pp. 59-67, and John Maguire, "The Clandestine Marriage of Troilus and Criseyde," Chaucer Review, 8, No. 4 (1974), 262-77.

[49] See III. 1109-11, 1142-48, 1368.

the status of the love affair in order to describe Troilus as unwise rather than sinful. The implications of this suggestion for the characterization of Criseyde are simply ignored.[50] Kelly's study focuses on the Troilus as a prime example of a much-misunderstood medieval phenomenon. In his view, Chaucer revealed his own "absolute" preferences in the matter of sexual morality "by maneuvering the lovers into a clandestine marriage."[51] This reasoning leads Kelly to a curious conclusion:

> It is clear that Troilus and his lady strove to practice the "love that makes couples dwell in virtue," and that this, in Chaucer's book, meant marriage. But since an overt marriage would betray a weakness in the plot, he decided to make it clandestine in a double sense: it was hidden not only from the world of Troy, but also, to a certain degree, from the eyes of his own audience.[52]

From this Kelly derives the idea that "when Criseyde goes to the Greek camp and gradually falls away from her resolve, the ambiguity of her status makes her crime, bad as it is, somewhat less heinous."[53]

[50] Maguire, p. 276.

[51] Kelly, p. 61.

[52] Kelly, p. 240.

[53] Kelly, p. 241.

On the contrary--to my mind it makes her weakness the more deplorable, and this would be counter to Chaucer's consistently refined and enhanced portrayal over both the stereotype and her immediate prototypes. Far from compounding her failure Chaucer makes every possible excuse for her infidelity. Furthermore, had there been a secret marriage, the fact could hardly have been forgotten by Troilus in conversation with Pandarus after the plot takes its downward turn:

> "I have ek thought, so it were hire assent,
> To axe hire at my fader, of his grace;
> Than thynke I, this were hire accusement,
> Syn wel I woot I may hire nought purchace.
> For syn my fader, in so heigh a place
> As parlement, hath hire eschaunge enseled,
> He nyl for me his lettre be repeled."
> (IV. 554-60)

As the lovers struggle with their dilemma the idea of marriage looms the larger for being all but ignored. Obviously, had this love been consummated by a nuptial bond instead of conducted furtively, the exchange would never have been accepted; now we have Troilus's adherence to courtly concern for Criseyde's "honour" should their liaison be exposed and his assumption, correct or not, than in any case it is too late, his father would not break the agreement. The question of marriage is never put to Criseyde, only the proposal that they run away, which she rejects partly for its scandalous nature and mainly with unfounded optimism

that she will be able to outwit her father and return: "And thynketh wel, that somtyme it is wit / To spenden tyme, a tyme to wynne" (IV. 1611-12).

The imagery associated with Criseyde in Book IV is related to this falling action. Now the theme of mutability predominates as we are warned at the outset:

> For how Criseyde Troilus forsook,
> Or at the leeste, how that she was unkinde,
> Moot hennesforth ben matere of my book,
> As writen folk thorugh which it is in mynde.
> Allas! that they sholde evere cause fynde
> To speke hire harm, and if they on hire lye,
> Iwis, hemself sholde han the vilanye.
> (IV. 15-21)

As the beloved "lady bright" is traded away we have images of light fading or being extinguished, along with naturalistic description of a woman used as a negotiable object in a warrior's world. Once again, as in Book I, the dramatic irony of Hector's well-intentioned assertion favours the hapless Criseyde: "We usen here no wommen for to selle" (IV. 182), and a pun linking the lady's changing fortune with her failure is reiterated throughout this Book as "she is chaunged for the townes goode" (IV. 553).[54]

The reaction of the three main characters to the unhappy news also serves as a contrast which favours

[54] See IV. 158, 160, 231, 553, 559, 665, 793, 865.

Criseyde. Troilus retires to bed and his protracted lamentations (eleven stanzas) are characterized by a significant use of first person pronouns--forty-eight in all, not to mention many references to himself in other terms. We also hear an unheroic wish that Fortune chasten him by killing his father or brothers or even himself rather than impose this suffering on <u>him</u> (IV. 274-80). The overall impression is of grief centred on the self, with no thought for the lady's position; moreover, the pun on "queynt" draws attention to one cause of Troilus's unease by linking Criseyde's radiance with her sexual appeal:

> "O woful eyen two, syn youre disport
> Was al to sen Criseydes eyen brighte,
> What shal ye don but, for my discomfort,
> Standen for naught, and wepen out youre sighte,
> Syn she is queynt, that wont was yow to lighte?"
> (IV. 309-13)

Pandarus tries to comfort his friend, first with breathtaking sang-froid: "If she be lost, we shal recovere an other. . . . Absence of hire shal dryve hire out of herte" (IV. 406, 427) which is roundly rebuked by Troilus. "Go ravisshe here" (IV. 530) is Pandarus's next suggestion, also rejected by Troilus after careful argument. "Deveyne not in resoun ay so depe / Ne corteisly, but help thiself anon" (IV. 589-90) replies Pandarus as he leaves to arrange a night meeting for the lovers.

Meanwhile "Calkas doughter, with hire brighte hewe" (IV. 663), surrounded by gossiping women, manages to conceal her agitation from "Thilke fooles sittynge hire about" (IV. 715). Alone in her room at last, "Hire hewe, whilom bright, that tho was pale, / Bar witnesse of hire wo and hire constreynte" (IV. 740-41), as she sobs her "compleynte." Mainly absorbed by her own woe she nevertheless has some concern for Troilus:

> "O deere herte eke, that I love so,
> Who shal that sorwe slen that ye ben inne?
> . . . . . .
> But how shul ye don in this sorwful cas,
> How shal youre tendre herte this sustene?
> (IV. 759-60, 794-95)

This is not to question Troilus's devotion to Criseyde, for time proves his to be the faithful love, only to note once again Chaucer's use of courtly sensibility to expose its essential futility and impotence.

The Fifth Book offsets Criseyde's apostasy with an aura of radiant images more numerous than in all the other Books combined, and three times more than in any single book.[55] The "sterre" image with its Boethian connotation contributes to this aura and is discussed in the next chapter. What concerns us here are other image

[55] See Tatlock's Concordance, "bright," p. 103: Book I --two; Book II --one; Book III --four; Book IV --three; Book V --twelve. See also Appendix A below, pp. 119-22, for a summary of the pattern of Criseyde's radiance.

clusters--a more frequent use of the courtly "lady bright" along with several luminous figures.[56]

A familiar medieval metaphor associated with the lady's appeal is the lighted lamp. In these lines from a well-known Harley lyric the lantern's light symbolizes the lady's goodness and beauty:

> Hire lure lumes light
> Ase a launterne anight,
> Hire ble blikieth so bright,
> So fair he is and fine.[57]

A similar device occurs in Chaucer's Book of the Duchess, where the knight laments the loss of a lady who remained both chaste and charitable to all:

> . . . she was lyk to torche bryght
> That every man may take of lyght
> Ynogh, and hyt hath never the lesse.
> (BD. 963-65)

Not so Criseyde, whose radiance and virtue become disjoined. In the final Book of the Troilus, Chaucer uses the same metaphor to create an ambiguous complex of images centred around the idea of a disjunction. In Troilus's apostrophe to Criseyde's deserted house,

[56] One reason is immediately obvious: Criseyde is now being addressed as "lady bright" by Diomede, too. See V. 162, 922.

[57] Medieval English Lyrics, p. 89, 21-24.

we find a lantern without light, an absent guide, a dark and disused palace, a shrine without saint:

> Than seide he thus: "O paleys desolat,
> O hous of houses whilom best ihight,
> O paleys empty and disconsolat,
> O how lanterne of which queynt is the light,
> O paleys, whilom day, that now art nyght,
> Wel oughtestow to falle, and I to dye,
> Syn she is went that wont was us to gye.
>
> "O paleis, whilom crowne of houses alle,
> Enlumyned with sonne of alle blisse!
> O ryng, fro which the ruby is out falle,
> O cause of wo, that cause hast ben of lisse!
> Yet, syn I may no bet, fayn wolde I kisse
> Thy colde dores, dorste I for this route;
> And farwel shryne, of which the seynt is out!"
> (V. 540-553)

There is structural irony, too, in the reverberating sense and form of these lines from the above lament, augmented by an echo from Book IV, all further emphasizing the image of a light that failed:

> Syn she is queynte that wont was yow to lighte?
> (IV. 313)
>
> O thow lanterne of which queynt is the light,
> O paleys, whilom day, that now art nyght . . . .
> (V. 543-44)
>
> Syn she is went that wont was us to gye!
> (V. 546)
>
> And farwel shryne, of which the seynte is oute!
> (V. 553)

From her courtly background of palace, temple, garden, parlour and chamber, supported by lover, relations and friends, Criseyde is now removed to the hazards of the

Greek encampment with an obdurate father, "sodeyn" Diomede, and "no wight to whom she dorste hire pleyne" (V. 728). Along with sympathy for her plight Chaucer creates confusion in the reader's mind regarding the exact chronology of her capitulation. It has long been recognized that the sequence is obscured by the narrator, although critical opinion is divided as to the author's probable intent.[58] In my view, the vagueness created reflects her tragic temporization and is consistent with Chaucer's total ironic design. We have known from the outset that she will fall, yet the effect of the protracted narration, interspersed with sympathetic detail and comment, is anticlimactic.[59] Thread by thread the dark pattern of betrayal emerges, but so interwoven with brightness that we cannot help recalling the charm of earlier scenes.

In the days after her arrival among the Greeks

[58] For example, Arthur Mizener ("Character and Action in the Case of Criseyde," Wagenknecht, pp. 359-60) argues that by concealing chronological references Chaucer gives the impression of Criseyde's very rapid fall. John Norton-Smith (Geoffrey Chaucer, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974, p. 210) suggests that "[t]he overlapping of the time scale, so that we have to go back in time to reach Troilus, emphasizes his hopeless passivity"; yet another view is taken by Donaldson (pp. 80-83), who regards the narrator's prolonging of her surrender as Chaucer's method of presenting her complexity.

[59] Donaldson (pp. 79-80) traces the narration from "anticlimax to anticlimax."

Criseyde speaks of her father's refusal to permit her to leave (V. 694-95); of her fear of stealing away by night lest she fall into the hands of "som wrecche" (V. 705), a lively possibility, one would imagine; and of her renewed intention to rejoin Troilus, "bityde what bityde" (V. 750-53). But after two months, the narrator continues, she was still there (V. 766-67) and then the time shifts to an indefinite future when "she wol take a purpos for t'abyde" (V. 770). On the tenth day we hear Criseyde's "strange" reply to Diomede's threats and blandishments:

> "Herafter, whan ye wonnen han the town,
> Peraunter, thanne so it happen may,
> That whan I se that nevere yet I say,
> Than wol I werke that I nevere wroughte!"
> (V. 990-93)

As night falls on this crucial tenth day, after Diomede has withdrawn taking with him her glove, Criseyde is framed in an image of romantic incandesence which also symbolizes the state of her mind:

> The brighte Venus folwede and ay taughte
> The wey ther brode Phebus down alighte;
> And Cynthea hire char-hors overraughte,
> To whirle out of the Leoun, if she myghte;
> And Signifer his candels sheweth brighte,
> Whan that Criseyde unto hire bedde wente
> Inwith hire fadres faire brighte tente,
> (V. 1016-22)

As Robert O. Payne observes, "the love's star following the sunset before pale moonrise in effect expresses

Criseyde's decision before she has consciously made it."[60] Immediately following this description the narrator reluctantly reports further details from "the stories": how finally Diomede "rette hire of the grete of al hire peyne" (V. 1036); how she gave Diomede Troilus's bay steed "and ek a broche - and that was litel nede - / That Troilus was" (V. 1040-41); then equivocates on her behalf, "Men seyn - I not - that she yaf hym hire herte" (V. 1050), an assertion which he ultimately contradicts: "Criseyde loveth the sone of Tideüs, / And Troilus mot wepe in cares colde" (V. 1746-47).

In reporting Criseyde's confession of wrongdoing, not found in Boccaccio, Chaucer returns to Benoit's portrayal and condenses Briseida's long and apologetic self-analysis[61] into thirty-two lines of self-accusation and remorse. Assuring us of her genuine contrition the narrator uses a non-courtly term for her:

> Ne me list this sely womman chyde
> Forther than the storye wol devyse.
> Hire name, allas! is punysshed so wide,
> That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.
> And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,
> For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,
> Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe.
> (V. 1093-99)

[60] Payne, p. 201

[61] Benoit, IV. 20238-20330; Gordon trans., pp. 19-20.

The time sequence then shifts back to Troilus on the ninth night (V. 1100 ff.) and follows him through the tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth days of fruitless waiting, then through his nightmare of Criseyde lying in the arms of a boar (Diomede). In this latter episode, significantly, Criseyde is termed "lady bright" three times in rapid succession, at V. 1241, 1247, and 1264. Criseyde's letters, the first unconvincing in its promises, the second clearly dishonest, hasten the day of Troilus's final disillusion: "How trewe is now thi nece, bright Criseyde!" (V. 1712).

As the story draws to a close, the ambiguity of Criseyde as courtly lady and naturalistic heroine gleams in a last double image, an affectionate backward glance at a woman fallen yet somehow forgivable. The narrator addresses two kinds of ladies as audience, but the syntax evokes his heroine:

> Bysechyng every lady bright of hewe,
> And every gentil womman, what she be,
> That al be that Criseyde was untrewe,
> That for that gilt she be nat wroth with me.
> (V. 1772-75)

A "lady bright" she was and as such, inimical to the hopes of Troilus, but a "gentil womman" too, and not malignant. Her lack of integrity is not denied, but courtly convention as a contributing factor to her

downfall is implicated. Had Criseyde's roles as sovereign lady in the world of love and widow in the world of Troy not conflicted, there might have been another tale to tell. And we would be the poorer for lack of one of literature's most dazzling and disconcerting creations.

# CHAPTER III

## "SO BRIGHT A STERRE": THE TRAGIC FRAME.

Scholarship has frequently demonstrated the pervasive influence of Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy on medieval thought in general and on the Troilus in particular. Thus the work is often viewed as a Boethian de casibus tragedy of Troilus[1]

> That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,
> In lovynge, how his aventures fellen
> Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie.
> (I. 2-4)

The Consolation also offers a way of viewing Criseyde. Many studies consider her as symbolic of the mutability of Fortune's favours, of all that is fair and unstable in earthly love.[2] Boethius teaches that mortals by nature seek the true good, but are misled by folly and error into thinking that partial goods, the gifts of

[1] See Coghill, pp. 49-50; Gill, Ch. 2; Kean, I, pp. 27, 120; Howard R. Patch, The Goddess Fortuna In Medieval Literature (1927; rpt. New York: Octagon, 1967), pp. 31-32; Robertson, Jr., Preface, pp. 472-74; Theodore A. Stroud, "Boethius' Influence on Chaucer's Troilus," in Schoeck and Taylor, pp. 122-35.

[2] See especially Gordon, pp. 22, 42, 97; Muscatine, French Tradition, pp. 153-54; Rowe, pp. 95-96; Boatner, pp. 102-3; and Alice S. Miskimin, The Renaissance Chaucer (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1975), p. 167.

Fortune, will bring them lasting happiness: "rychesses, honours, power, glorie, and delitz."[3] True happiness ("verray blisfulnesse") can only be found with God (Bo. III. pr. 10, 59-62), though there are possibilities of earthly felicity, however fragile: "But forsothe freendes schulde nat ben rekned among the goodes of fortune, but of vertu, for it is a ful hoply maner thyng" (Bo. III pr. 2, 55-57), and "the gladnesse of wyf and children were an honest thyng" (Bo. III. pr. 7, 16-17). But Criseyde, being neither friend nor wife to Troilus, exemplifies the instability of Fortune's dispensation. Lady Philosophy speaks for the fickle goddess: "I envyrounde the with al the habundaunce and schynynge of alle goodes that ben in my ryght. Now it liketh me to withdrawe myn hand" (Bo. II. pr. 2, 20-24).[4]

At the height of Troilus's happiness and then in the depths of his loss, we hear Boethian echoes associating Criseyde with the workings of Fortune:

[3] Boece, III. pr. 2, 17-25, 74-77, Chaucer's translation of the Consolation of Philosophy, in Works.

[4] See also the words of warning by the excellent Prudence in The Tale of Melibee (1449-51): "Senec seith, 'The moore cleer and the moore shynyng that Fortune is, the moore brotil and the sonner broken she is.' / Trusteth nat in hire, for she nys nat stidefast ne stable; / for whan thow trowest to be moost seur or siker of hire help, she wol faille thee and deceyve thee."

> Soon after this, for that Fortune it wolde,
> Icomen was the blisful tyme swete
> That Troilus was warned that he sholde,
> There he was erst, Criseyde his lady mete . . . .
> (III. 1667-70)

In Book IV, as the plot takes its downward turn, Criseyde is linked in her "brightness" with Fortune's disfavour:

> But al to litel weylaway the whyle,
> Lasteth swich joie, ythonked be Fortune,
> That semeth trewest whan she wol bygyle . . . .
> . . . . . .
> From Troilus she gan hire bryghte face
> Awey to writhe, and tok of hym non heede,
> But caste hym clene out of his lady grace,
> And on her whiel she sette up Diomede . . . .
> (IV. 1-3, 8-11)

And the same implicit connection occurs as the narrator concludes his story:

> Gret was the sorwe and pleynte of Troilus;
> But forth hire cours Fortune ay gan to holde.
> Criseyde loveth the sone of Tideus,
> And Troilus moot wepe in cares colde.
> (V. 1744-47)

The quality of radiance that we have identified in Criseyde's characterization also has a source in Boethian images of mutability; in particular, Lady Philosophy's admonition is appropriate to Criseyde:

> But the schynynge of thi forme, (that is to seyn, the beute of thi body), how swyftly passynge is it, and how transitorie! Certes it es more flyttynge than the mutabilite of floures of the somer sesoun.
> (Bo. III. pr. 8, 35-39)

In Book II, Pandarus voices this same thought, but cynically, to pressure Criseyde into capitulation to Troilus, reminding her of the ravages of time ("crowes feet") and urging her, "Go love; for old, ther wol no wight of the" (II. 403, 396). Weeping, she responds with unconscious irony: "This false world, allas! who may it leve?" (II. 420).

But we must be careful when we link Boethian philosophy with the design of Chaucer's poem. Since the Consolation (524 AD) preceded the medieval European efflorescence of love poetry by several hundred years, there is a conspicuous lack of regard for romantic love on the part of Boethius, who dismisses "delyces of body" as on the same level "of whiche beeates al the entencioun hasteth to fulfille here bodily jolyte" (Bo. III. pr. 7, 1, 15-16). Theodore Stroud argues that Chaucer may have decided to "supplement the conclusions of Boethius in an area of human activity which he had neglected." Although the Boethian lesson was ultimately confirmed, the possession of the beloved conferred earthly bliss hardly commensurable with other gifts of Fortune.[5]

But is Criseyde's role only important as an element in Troilus's tragedy? Indeed, is Troilus's narrative

[5] Stroud, pp. 126-27.

properly to be read as tragedy at all? For one thing, Criseyde's portrayal is too problematic and sympathetic to represent only "the beaute of false goodes" (Bo. II. pr. 8, 20). As a "lady bright" she is associated with Fortune's capricious influence, but she is also presented as the "gentil womman" who becomes a genuinely tragic figure in her own right. In this regard I am much indebted to Monica McAlpine's study of The Genre of Troilus and Criseyde, in which, to use her own words, she "departs significantly from the current critical consensus" by concluding that "Troilus' career is a Boethian comedy while Criseyde's career is the authentic Boethian and Chaucerian tragedy."[6]

The essence of McAlpine's theory is that

> Boethius does not lend his authority to the old definition of tragedy; that the plot of the Consolation . . . is in fact antitragic; that Chaucer found in the Consolation the basis for alternative definitions of tragedy and comedy centred not on the "dedes of Fortune" but on the deeds of human beings . . . .[7]

As McAlpine correctly observes, the familiar definition of tragedy in Boece,

[6] McAlpine, pp. 31, 33.

[7] McAlpine, p. 30.

> What other thyng bywaylen the cryinges of tragedyes but oonly the dedes of Fortune, that with unwar strook overturneth the realmes of greet nobleye?
>
> (Bo. II. pr. 2, 67-70)

is not voiced by Lady Philosophy, much less approved by her. "Rather she places the definition in the mouth of a putative Fortune."[8] In the Monk's Tale and the Troilus Chaucer demonstrates a critique of de casibus theories of tragedy and works out his own conceptions of tragedy and comedy, an argument with which I concur.

The basis for McAlpine's view of Criseyde's career as constituting a distinctly Chaucerian tragedy (and Troilus's, a comedy) derives from her analysis of the poet's manipulation of his fallible narrator: "Thus a growing tension develops, climaxing in Book 5, between the heroine's conventional role, which the narrator in large measure theoretically adheres to, and Criseyde's actual felt presence, which the narrator's practice has helped to create."[9] As a tragedian, the narrator follows the conventional de casibus concept of Criseyde as a worldly good to be won then lost. But at the same time the narrator engages our sympathies for a woman who is herself the subject of love and loss, and equal

[8] McAlpine, pp. 51, 112.

[9] McAlpine, pp. 34-5, 90-91.

in this respect to the hero. Both are fated by the choices of others to be parted, yet free to make choices within those constraints. It is Troilus's commitment to Criseyde which raises him to the eighth sphere of heaven, a comic conclusion, and it is Criseyde's choice of Diomede which constitutes her tragedy.

McAlpine's analysis emphasizes genre, mine, language and image. Both approaches intersect nicely, for I arrived at many of McAlpine's conclusions by observing how the pattern of imagery reaches a climax of radiance in Book V and thus heightens the tension between what the heroine seems and what she does.

From the first mention of her name, Criseyde occupies a place both in Troilus's narrative and in her own:

> Now herkneth with a good entencioun,
> For now wil I gon streght to me matere,
> In which ye may the double sorwes here
> Of Troilus in lovynge of Criseyde,
> And how that she forsook him er she deyde.
> (I. 52-56)

There are two subjects of the poet's "matere": first Troilus, who loved Criseyde, and second, Criseyde, who forsook him "er she deyde."[10] Had the line read

[10] On this passage, Bernard Jefferson comments in Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of

"er he deyde," the subject would have remained Troilus; but the change of pronoun places Criseyde's actions and fate on an equal footing with those of the hero. The change of subject also suggests that the "double sorwes" could be attributed to both Troilus as lover and to Criseyde who failed, tragically, to love unto death.

At other crucial points in the narrative Chaucer lays an equally significant stress on Criseyde as a tragic figure in her own right. In the Book III climax, we are told,

> And many a nyght they wroughte in this manere,
> And thus Fortune a tyme ledde in joie
> Criseyde, and ek this kynges sone of Troie.
> (III. 1713-15)

"Criseyde, and ek" the hero--a conspicuous reversal of conventional priorities. Again, in the Book IV proem which signals the falling action, we find the narrator's reluctant but explicit identification of Criseyde as the subject of irreconcilable misdoing:

> And now my penne, allas! with which I write,
> Quaketh for drede of that I moste endite.
>
> For how Criseyde Troilus forsook,
> Or at the leste, how that she was unkynde,

---

Boethius (New York: Haskell, 1917), p. 129: "In her tragic downfall Chaucer's promise of the outset has its fulfilment. Criseyde is to have her tragedy as well as Troilus."

> Moot hennesforth ben matere of my book,
> As writen folk thorugh which it is in mynde.
> Allas! that they sholde evere cause fynde
> To speke hire harm, and if they on hire lye,
> Iwis, hemself sholde han the vilanye.
> (IV. 15-21)

In his presentation of Criseyde as a tragic heroine, Chaucer also introduces an unprecedented Boethian association for her radiance. As the narrator sets the scene for Troilus's first sight of her, Criseyde is imaged as a star:

> Hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees.
> Nas nevere yet seyn thyng to ben preysed derre,
> Nor under cloude blak so bright a sterre
>
> As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichone
> That hir behelden in hir blake wede.
> (I. 173-77)

The image of a star under a black cloud occurs in a passage in Boece, in which Lady Philosophy warns that passion can cloud and bind the mind:

> The sterres, covred with blake cloudes, ne mowen yeten adoun no lyght. . . . and forthy, yif thou wolt loken and demen soth with clear lyght, and holden the weye with a ryght path, weyve thow joie, dryf fro the drede, fleme thow hope, ne lat no sorwe aproche (that is to seyn, lat non of thise foure passiouns overcomen the or blenden the). For cloudy and derk is thilke thoght, and bownde with bridelis, where as thise thynges reignen.
> (Bo. I. m. 7, 1-21)

In the lovely image of Criseyde as a "sterre" menaced by

black clouds, then, the poet is not only exalting her beauty but ironically prefiguring her tragedy, since she is, finally, blinded and overcome by the "passiouns" of "drede" and "sorwe." She fails to "holden the weye with a ryght path," choosing to abandon her pledged "trouthe" to Troilus (III. 1111, 1512), and misplacing her hopes on an unworthy "joie": "To Diomede algate I wol be trewe" (V. 1071).

Of course, one could also say (as many have) that Troilus, too, is overcome by passions of sorrow and dread of fate, enthralled by what he perceives as destinal forces:

> "For al that comth, comth by necessitee:
> Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee.
>
> For certeynly, this wot I wel," he seyde,
> "That forsight of divine purveyaunce
> Hath seyn alway me to forgon Criseyde . . . ."
> (IV. 958-62)

Nevertheless, his faithful love of Criseyde unto death and his celestial laughter at the poem's end point to a comic rather than a tragic resolution.

In Criseyde's characterization the genres of both tragedy and romance converge. Arguing for Chaucer's originality, McAlpine makes the point that "[t]he 'matere' of Troilus and Criseyde is not the rise and fall of a great prince, but love. It is an essential part of Chaucer's accomplishment to have brought love

and tragedy together. . . . His decision, it seems to me, must also have been based on an intuitive grasp of the tragic potential of the story itself, an original insight not found in Boccaccio's version or in earlier treatments by Benoit de Sainte-Maure and Guido delle Colonne."[11] In this regard, I have found Beauvau, Chaucer's other main source, no different. In fact, both in Il Filostrato and in Beauvau's version, far from being a tragic figure, Criseyde is presented as simply the object of Troilus's desire, beautiful, impressionable, and quite lacking in moral depth, incapable of either virtue or sin. Janet Boatner makes the point that "Boccaccio's tone is never ambiguous; his meanings are never multiple . . . neither cursed by contradiction nor blessed by complexity."[12] Focused on stylistic analysis, my own reading will I hope bear out the depth and ambiguity of Criseyde's portrayal.

Consistent with their different generic concepts of

[11] McAlpine, pp. 116, 117. Meech too (Design, p. 211) comments that "the Filostrato is not a tragedy even by the norms that Boccaccio was later to establish in his De casibus virorum illustrium." See also Norton-Smith, pp. 193, 212, arguing for the influence on Chaucer of Seneca's plays and philosophy, and finding within the narrative structure of the Troilus "the immediacy of tragic drama."

[12] Diss., p. 50. Boatner also notes that Boccaccio ignored the remorseful soliloquoy in Benoit's version.

Criseyde, Chaucer, Boccaccio and Beauvau make use of star imagery in different ways and at different points in their narratives.[13] In the temple scene, Chaucer's first reference to Criseyde as "under cloude blak so bright a sterre" has no parallel in the Italian or French versions:

> And among them was the daughter of Calchas, Criseida, arrayed in black . . . and she alone more than any other gladdened the great festival. (Fil. p. 33)

> Entre lesquelles y estoit la fille de Calchas, Brisaïda, belle en habit de noir . . . et elle seule embellissoit la feste plus que toute les autres. (Roman, p. 124)

In fact, the Italian and French Criseidas are associated with at least as much heat as light. As Meech has well documented, Boccaccio resorts to more fire metaphors than Chaucer, and his "hot wanton" is more incendiary in her charm.[14] An example is Pandarus's opening gambit in Canto II, in which he teases Criseida in sexual terms about the identity of her new admirer:

[13] Because only the Filostrato opens and ends with the author's invocation of his mistress as muse and guiding star, it contains three more star images than Beauvau's Roman de Troïlus. Apart from this, their stellar mataphors for Criseida coincide. However, as will be shown, Chaucer's use of the metaphor differs from that of both his major sources. See Appendix B, p. 123.

[14] Meech, p. 353.

> "Well is the gem set in the ring, if thou art wise as thou art fair. If thou become his, as he has become thine, well will the star be joined with the sun; nor was ever youth so well joined to maid as thou wilt be to him, if thou wilt be wise."
>
> (Fil. p. 4)

Beauvau translates:

> "Bien est la pierre precieuse assise en l'or si vous estes sage comme vous estes belle; et si vous devenez sien ainsi comme il est voustre, bien se porra dire que l'estoille est joincte avecques le soulеil. Ne oncques anée ne fut apparagée avecques amy que vous serez, si en vous ne tient.
>
> (Roman, p. 147)

In Chaucer's scene, with the same sexual connotation, there is no starry metaphor:

> And, be ye wis as ye be fair to see,
> Wel in the ryng than is the ruby set.
> Ther were nevere two so wel ymet,
> Whan ye ben his al hool, as he is youre . . . .
>
> (II. 584-87)

Annoyed at the innuendo, and unlike her counterparts, Criseyde reproves Pandarus.

Again, in their description of the first night of love, both Boccaccio and Beauvau link their heroine as star with burning desire. Criseida, torch in hand, fetches Troilus from the foot of a staircase where he has been hiding and apologizes for keeping him waiting. He replies:

> "Fair lady, sole hope and bliss of my mind, ever before me has been the star of thy lovely face in its splendour and brightness, and this little place has been more dear to me in sooth than my palace; it needs not to ask pardon for this."
> (Fil. p. 61)

Beauvau tells how "La belle tenoit ung flambeau ardent en sa main," and her apology receives this reply:

> "Ma seulle dame . . . tousjours ay eu d'avant mes yeulx l'estoille de voustre beau visage resplendissant qui m'a esclairé, et ay plus de plaisir et de joye en cest petit lieu que je n'eu oncques en la meilleur chambre que j'aye au palais; ne n'est besoin d'en demander pardon.
> (Roman, p. 181)

Another instance of Boccaccio's and Beauvau's more mundane use of star imagery occurs in the bedroom farewell scene as Criseida is about to be traded to the Greeks for Antenor. After many tears, "they began again the sport of love" (p. 87), then Troilus returns to the subject of her departure and tells her: "thou alone hast in thy hands the key of my life and death, and canst at will make my life wretched or blissful, O thou bright star, by whom I steer my course to the happy haven" (p. 88). In Beauvau's version there is also a bedroom context for this appeal: "O clère lumière par qui je puis aller au port gracieux, si vous me laissez, pensez que je suis mort" (p. 236). By contrast, in

Chaucer's farewell scene (IV. 1440 ff.) the star--"happy haven" image is not used at all.

On the contrary, just as Chaucer's heroine is more refined and restrained by nature, so, as Troilus's "lode-sterre," is she more abstracted and distanced from her lover. This also has the effect of heightening the drama of her portrayal and of accentuating the fact of her mystery and autonomy as a tragic figure. Not until Book V, when "Approchen gan the fatal destyne" (V.1) of the lovers, do we find all three remaining direct references to Criseyde as star, all spoken by Troilus after her departure.

Following his return from handing her over to Diomede, Troilus retires to bed and cries out his grief:

> Who seth yow now, my righte lode-sterre?
> Who sit right now or stant in youre presence?
> Who kan conforten now youre hertes werre?
> Now I am gon, whom yeve ye audience?
> (V. 232-35)

Who, indeed, but Diomede? As a guiding star, Criseyde's ambiguity was never more exquisite, for in the scene immediately preceding this speech, as they leave Troilus and ride towards the Greek camp, Diomede has made his first bid for her affections and has not been repulsed (V. 183-89).

Following his above apostrophe to Criseyde, which does not appear in either source, Troilus spends a

mainly sleepless night "And dremen of the dredfulleste thynges" (V. 248) until the dawn. In a radiant after-image,

> On hevene yet the sterres weren seene
> Although ful pale ywoxen was the moone;
> And whiten gan the orisonte shene
> Al estward, as it wont is for to doone;
> And Phebus with his rosy carte soone
> Gan after that to dresse hym up to fare
> Whan Troilus hath sent after Pandare.
> (V. 274-80)

we find a further link with Boece:

> Whan Phebus, the sonne, bygynneth to spreden his clernesse with rosene chariettes, thanne the sterre, ydymmed, paleth hir white cheeres . . . . Yif the forme of this world is so seeld stable . . . wiltow thanne trusten in the tumblynge fortunes of men? Wiltow trowen on flytynge goodes? It is certeyn . . . that nothyng that is engendered nys stedfast ne stable.
> (Bo. II. m. 3, 1-23)

As Troilus awaits the promised return of Criseyde, the star metaphor is repeated in his song of foreboding and longing:

> "O sterre, of which I lost have al the light,
> With herte soor wel oughte I to biwaille,
> That evere derk in torment, nyght by nyght,
> Toward my deth with wynd in steere, I saille;
> For which the tenth nyght, if that I faille
> The gydyng of thi bemes bright an houre,
> My ship and me Caribidis wol devoure."
> (V. 638-44)

Interestingly, Boccaccio's and Beauvau's songs have no

reference to a star, concentrating instead on the lady's physical charms: her "fairest eyes" (plus beaulx yeulx") and "fair arms" ("beaulx braz").[15] However, not only is Chaucer's waning star to prove "slydynge" and unreliable, but we have a doubly ironic image as Troilus also addresses the "brighte moone" and comforts himself, "whan thyne hornes newe gynnen sprynge, / Than shal she come that may my blisse brynge" (V. 657-58), joining Criseyde and the moon in a naive projection of the cuckold. The scene then shifts to the other side, as Chaucer links the hard-pressed heroine to both moon and star: "Ful pale ywoxen was hire brighte face" (V. 708).

Celestial imagery on the tenth night after her departure from Troy underlines, as before, the sense of impending tragedy associated with Criseyde. Diomede "Gan pressen on, and faste hire mercy preye" (V. 1011), and then:

> The brighte Venus folwede and ay taughte
> The way ther brode Phebus down alighte;
> And Cynthea hire char-hors overraughte
> To whirle out of the Leoun; if she myghte;
> And Signifer his candels sheweth brighte,
> Whan that Criseyde unto hire bedde wente
> Inwith hire fadres brighte tente.
> (V. 1016-22)

[15] Fil., p. 100; Roman, pp. 257-58.

In the sources, this passage appears as a naturalistic description of the night sky, without cosmic excitement. But as noted above (pp. 85-86), there is irony in this image of the setting of love's star even as the moon goddess strives to hasten the promised reunion.[16]

A final appeal to Criseyde as his "sterre" illuminates the pathos of Troilus's letter to her after "thise monthes tweyne" (V. 1348) have elapsed, and he begins to suspect the worst:

> "And if so be my gilt hath deth deserved,
> Or if yow list namore upon me se,
> In guerdon yet of that I have yow served,
> Byseche I yow, myn hertes lady free,
> That heredpon ye wolden write me,
> For love of God, my righte lode-sterre,
> That deth may make an ende of al my werre."
> (V. 1387-93)

This star image is absent in the sources, although in all three versions of his letter, Troilus tells of his imminent death from unrequited love.

Although to Troilus Criseyde, as object, represents the fairest prize that earth affords, the height of bliss or the ruin of his hopes, as subject, one who also experiences sorrow and joy, she becomes a problematic character, one of the most intriguing in English literature. "As a person," says Ida Gordon, she "steals the picture from Troilus, partly because of the teasing

[16] Criseyde had promised to return ere the moon pass Leo out of Aries (IV. 1590-92, V. 1189-90).

enigma her behaviour seems to present, and partly because she is depicted more realistically."[17] Centred around her own deeds, her character as "this in blak" is consistently presented as "the ferfulleste wight / That myghte be."[18] Her finer qualities of tenderness, intelligence, refinement, sense of humour, not to mention her luminous beauty, are delicately balanced with her weaknesses. Thus Chaucer's continuously ambiguous portrait is well supported by her image as a star, symbol of the reality and mystery of her person. The narrator's refusal to condemn her, his many excuses for her, can be counterpoised with his candour in reporting her failure.

Criseyde's final soliloquy confirms her stature as a tragic figure, for she alone, not Troilus and not Pandarus (though neither is blameless) admits error:

> "Allas! for now is clene ago
> My name of trouthe in love, for everemo!
> For I have falsed oon the gentileste
> That evere was, and oon the worthieste!
> . . . . . .
> Al be I nat the first that dide amys,
> What helpeth that to don my blame awey?
> But syn I se ther is no bettre way,
> And that to late is now for me to rewe,
> To Diomede algate I wol be trewe.

[17] Gordon, p. 113.

[18] II. 450-51. See also I. 108, 180; II. 124, 303, 449; IV. 672; V. 794, 825.

> But, Troilus, syn I no bettre may,
> And syn that thus departen ye and I,
> Yet prey I God, so yeve yow right good day
> . . . . . .
> And gilteles, I woot wel, I yow leve.
> But al shall passe; and thus I take my leve."
> (V. 1054-57, 1067-74, 1084-85)[19]

By contrast, Troilus has twice absolved himself of any blame, both times unconvincingly. On the first occasion, covered with confusion when his and Pandarus's false accusation of Criseyde over "Horaste" (III. 796-98) results in her tearful reproaches, he excuses himself: "God woot that of this game, / Whan al is wist, than am I nought to blame" (III. 1084-85). On the contrary, he knew all about this "game." And in his final speech, once again he sees no shortcoming of his own:

> "Allas! I nevere wolde han wend, er this,
> That ye, Criseyde, koude han chaunged so;
> Ne, but I hadde agilt and don amys
> . . . . . .
> But trewely, Criseyde, swete may,
> Whom I have ay with al my myght yserved,
> That ye thus doon, I have it nat deserved."
> (V. 1682-84, 1720-22)

The truth is that Troilus sensed Criseyde's weakness long

[19] As previously noted, this speech, which was conceived by Benoît, is not reported by Boccaccio or Beauvau. And far from refusing to condemn her, their stories end in vituperative blame of the heroine by Troilus, Pandarus, and the narrator, along with a warning to all men to beware of the weaknesses in women.

before he tamely and tearfully let her be traded to the Greeks; and on the strength of a dream he finds her faithless before the fact and is rebuked by Pandarus: "How darstow seyn that fals thy lady ys, / For any drem, right for thyn owene drede?" (V. 1279-80)

It has sometimes been argued that the dominant characteristic of both hero and heroine, at least with respect to their relationship, is one of passivity.[20] Assuming that one of Chaucer's purposes in augmenting his major sources with Boethian insights was to study the mysterious relationship between "destinee" and "fre chois," then both Troilus and Criseyde fail each other in their weakness. Nevertheless, whatever his shortcomings as her "wal of stiel," Troilus's comic (and courtly) failure to act is redeemed by his constancy. Even after he has discovered the full extent of her duplicity he "ne kan nor may . . . unloven [her] a quarter of a day!" (V. 1696-98).

In Criseyde's case, the relation between fate and freedom is more complex because she is, of all the major characters, the least free. "Th'entente is al," she says in her second letter to Troilus,[21] and if that were

[20] Norton-Smith, p. 192; Boatner, pp. 103-4; Rowe, p. 72; Kean. I. p. 118; Stroud, pp. 128-133.

[21] V. 1590-1631. This second letter is Chaucer's invention. In Filostrato, only the first letter appears, briefly summarized. (Fil. p. 120).

so, she would have remained as one-dimensional a figure as the Rose of the Roman. Like the Rose she is the object of the desires, schemes, and struggles of others: the passionate suit of Troilus, the busy solicitations of Pandarus, the untimely intervention of Calchas, the importunities of Diomede; and constant in the background is the pre-emptive image of the Trojan war, with its impending catastrophe. But the intent is not all. The lady has choices to make, choices which, once translated into action, have irrevocable consequences. Whether or not she could have escaped is not the issue, but what she did with whatever freedom she had, and lest our sympathies make us forgetful, Chaucer reminds us of two heroines who were faithful under severe stress, Penelope and Alceste (V. 1778). Like these two, Criseyde might have endured, if only by maintaining her widowhood as she had said she would (IV. 778-84).

Criseyde's tragic decision, "To Diomede algate I wol be trewe" is a degraded echo of her earlier commitment to Troilus (IV. 1534-54). Mutable she was, this radiant symbol of Fortune's providence. Fated she was, to be traded like a horse.[22] If only symbolic or

[22] Troilus, watching for her return, even mistakes a "fare-carte" (V. 1162) in the distance for his lady.

manipulated, however, she would not be tragic, only unfortunate. Criseyde was also free to choose, and her final choice was, paradoxically, to love again.

# CONCLUSION

The first task of this thesis has been to account stylistically for some problematic aspects of Chaucer's Criseyde. In an age when there existed a lively tradition of misogyny, Chaucer took this character who was the epitome of inconstancy and transformed her into a creature no less fallen yet extraordinarily appealing, an endeavour unparalleled before or since. Considering the probability that previous and subsequent poets had no intention of presenting so enigmatic a figure, the question arises as to why Chaucer chose to do otherwise. What is he saying, in the Troilus, about the human condition, about love, and about Criseyde's love in particular?

In my reading of the work, there are a number of possible answers. The first is that as many have argued, the literary tradition of courtly love had run its course and was under attack from bourgeois realism. Chaucer's much-discussed naturalism and regard for the "commun profit" took his sympathies in the direction of marriage and away from the intrigues and adolescent histrionics of amour courtois. He retained the idealism of courtly love but showed that it needed to be rooted in reality. Whether Chaucer's audience would have

received his poem as satiric comment on their literature or on their society, or both, has yet to be determined. One thing is certain. By presenting Criseyde as imbued with both courtly and realistic features, a new creature is born, a lady who has to be taken as seriously as the knight hero.

A second possibility concerns Chaucer's preoccupation with the philosophy of Boethius and the relationship of human fatedness and freedom. The familiar medieval configuration of de casibus tragedy did not correspond with the profound self-discoveries of Boethian thought. The plot of Troilus and Criseyde, with its background structure of destinal forces, evokes questions associated with individual choice crucial to the characterization of Criseyde. Although Troilus is the central character, because of her status as a widow and an unwilling hostage, it is Criseyde who is the least free; and yet without her free but corrupt choice of Diomede and subsequent regret there would be no tragedy, only the woeful tale of lovers separated by the fortunes of war.

A third answer revolves about the conventionality of characterization in Chaucer's day. As already noted, Chaucer's realism is part of a current moving in that direction, but in Criseyde's portrayal he anticipates developments still far in the future. Boccaccio's

Italian and Beauvau's French prototypes are beautiful, desirable, and one-dimensional. It is Chaucer's lovely English Criseyde who astonishes and mystifies.

All this Chaucer achieves by a strategy of delicately balanced figural ambiguity and of three interacting frames: courtly romance, Boethian tragedy, and naturalism. The narrator, who is also a character in the poem, functions as a stimulus for audience response and a source of the poet's pervasive and genial irony. It is the narrator's shifts from amusement to sadness, from love poet to tragedian, from praise of Criseyde to blame, which expose the reader to the perplexities of the work.

And difficulties abound. No single reading can comprehend the extent of its complexity or the generosity of its vision. Carl Jung's comment might well be applied to the Troilus: "A great work of art is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it does not explain itself and is never unequivocal. A dream never says: 'You ought,' or: 'This is the truth.' It presents an image in much the same way as nature allows a plant to grow, and we must draw our own conclusions."[1]

[1] C.G. Jung, Modern Man in Search of a Soul, trans. W.S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1933), pp. 171-72.

My analysis has focused on one stylistic feature in particular--the topos of feminine corporeal radiance--which appears to be used by Chaucer with a subtlety not found in the sources and analogues consulted. In the Troilus, for example, the topos is used in two ways. For one, it identifies Criseyde's courtly image and, paradoxically, is repeated with increasing frequency as her "trouthe" is compromised, both by herself and by others. This suggests a new way of using the tired adjectives of courtly convention to comment ironically on the real behaviour of human beings. As the "lady bright of hewe" Criseyde is perceived as the object of pursuit, the sum of all earthly bliss. The courtly frame, however, cannot wholly contain her, for in terms of fourteenth century realism she is a "gentil womman" with needs, emotions, and her own unique attributes of anxiety, humour, candour, and warmth.

This naturalistic aspect lends a further dimension of depth to her Boethian setting in which, once again, she figures as both object and subject. As the transient gift of Fortune she is a glittering token of the world's mutability, remote and inaccessible as a "sterre." But she also appears as a person in her own right, a tragic subject of love, loss, and failure.

The view of Criseyde as a tragic figure (and of

Troilus as a comic hero) is not generally held, but it does throw new light on the poem. There is well-substantiated argument to support the idea that Chaucer deviated from traditional concepts of tragedy, as I have indicated. The fact that Troilus's career begins and ends in laughter seems to deflect any kind of tragic conclusion, de casibus or otherwise. This places the crux of the "litel tragedye" on the actions of Criseyde, on the betrayer rather than the betrayed.

There have been innumerable studies of Criseyde which link her fearfulness with her infidelity, but if the question as to the nature of her love for Troilus is so easily answered, it is curious that no consensus exists. To be "tendre-herted" may dispose a person to be "slydynge of corage" but there is no necessary and fatal connection. In the paradox of her attractiveness alongside her apostasy lies her problematic image, and it is for us, the readers, as Chaucer insists, to make whatever connections we will. The two sides of the paradox remain balanced to the end; or does Troilus's laughter from the eighth sphere of the firmament have a somewhat hollow ring?

There is also laughter in the courtly world which Criseyde adorns, but not at her expense. Chaucer's irony creates a disparity between realistically drawn woman and her stereotype, whether idealized or vilified,

and between real emotions and conventions about real emotions. The allegorical commonplaces of the Roman de la Rose, so familiar to the medieval audience, are used as one pole of tension, the other being naturalistically drawn situations. The result is often comic, as in the courtship and consummation scenes, and implicitly critical of love so conceived. As Criseyde's "beste frende" and analogue of the "olde vekke," Pandarus must counsel against the risks of a liaison; but this duty conflicts with his other courtly role as the "Ami" of Troilus, and the issue is never in doubt. Needless to say, this is an aspect of courtly love which does not favour the lady. There are many others, and the weight of the poet's sympathies in this regard are focused on Criseyde when seen as a means to a questionable end.

This figural tension recalls a comment by Erich Auerbach in connection with Dante's Commedia, a comment which illuminates, it seems to me, a similar process in Chaucer's Troilus: "Dante's work made man's Christian-figural being a reality, and destroyed it in the very process of realizing it." One could say that Chaucer's work made woman's stereotype a reality, and destroyed it in the very process of realizing it. "The tremendous pattern was broken by the overwhelming power

of the images it had to contain."[2] From the love poet's perspective we see the old romantic image of the beautiful damsel, radiant and apparently unattainable. The anti-feminist tradition (and judging from some critical opinion surveyed it is by no means dead) reasserts its view of woman as no better than she should be. But from Chaucer's own perspective we see the stuff of life itself--woman who steps out of her time-worn mold and shatters it.

All this is not to imply that Chaucer was a twentieth century poet who somehow wandered into the fourteenth, taking with him our concerns with regard to woman's integrity. Rather, I would say that for his age, or any other, he was an artist of rare perception. In this marvelously complex work with its background of ancient Troy and its interwoven patterns of courtly romance, Boethian tragedy and realism, the figure of Criseyde gleams with undiminished charm. Her creator through her characterization affirms the bliss of earthly love, for all its passing, the uniqueness of personality, and the ultimate mystery of human choice.

[2] Auerbach, p. 202.

# APPENDIX A

## PATTERN OF RADIANCE

In Book I, light images are applied to Criseyde only twice, once to set the scene for her appearance in the temple as one of "many a lady fressh and mayden bright" (I. 166), and then as "under cloude blak so bright a sterre" (I. 175).

In Book II, much of which is presented from the point of view of her own consciousness, Criseyde's vacillating meditation on Troilus's courtship is described as "her brighte thoughtes alle" (II. 769). Book III, the climax of the poem, opens and closes with the narrator's invocation, "O blisful light . . ." (III.1), of Venus as his muse. He addresses her twice as "lady bryght" (III. 39, 1807), thus associating the love star with Criseyde. In courtly context, Pandarus warns Troilus of the ruin of "many a lady bright of hewe" due to gossip (III. 302-4). In the course of their tryst, upset at Troilus's feigned jealousy, Criseyde weeps "a few brighte tears newe" (III. 1051), and Troilus addresses her twice as "lady bright," first as the lovers' bliss is consummated (III. 1284)[1] and

[1] See textual notes, pp. 906, 909; with regard to line 1284, although Robinson reads "That am unworthy to so swete a wight," a variant reading, "That am unworthy to you, lady bright," is more consistent, I believe,

then in his passionate aube when dawn ends their seclusion (III. 1485).

As Book IV opens, Criseyde is indirectly linked with Fortune, whose "brighte face" turns away from Troilus (IV. 8). The topos is then applied three times to Criseyde, in each case with some sense of mutability. First, Troilus refers to Criseyde's "eyen brighte" and wonders how his own eyes will fare "Syn she is queynt, that wont was yow to lighte?" (IV. 310, 313). Then the narrator refers to "Calkas doughter, with her brighte hewe," who "Ygraunted was in chaunge of Antenor" (IV. 663, 665). And lastly, "Hire hewe, whilom bright, that tho was pale, / Bar witnesse of hire wo and hire constreynte" (IV. 740-41).

But it is in Book V, ironically, that the radiant images of Criseyde reach their greatest intensity. In this final section, the single previous reference to Criseyde as a "sterre" (I. 175) is developed, along with a greatly increased use of "lady bright." Criseyde is addressed on first encounter by Diomede as "myn owne lady bright" (V. 162), then from afar by Troilus: "Who seth yow now my righte lode-sterre?" (V. 232), and

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with the courtly style and substance of the stanza. See also Robert Kilburn Root, The Textual Tradition of Chaucer's Troilus (1916; rpt. New York: Johnson Reprint, 1967) p. 167, with the notation that the variant reading of line 1284 is due to authentic revision.

again with yearning, "O lufsom lady bright, / How have ye faren syn that ye were here?" (V. 465-66). Troilus and Pandarus "spaken of Criseyde the brighte" (V. 516). In his apostrophe to her house, Troilus uses metaphors suggestive of incongruity and loss: "O thou lanterne of which queynt is the light / O paleys, whilom day, that now art nyght" (V. 543-44) and "O paleis, whilom crowne of houses alle, / Enlumyned with sonne of alle blisse." (V. 547-48). In Troilus's song of forboding, she is addressed as "O sterre, of which I lost have al the light" without whose "bemes bright" he will perish (V. 138, 643). Ominously, then, "Ful pale ywoxen was hire brighte face" (V. 708), as Diomede renews his pleas to "my lady bright" (V. 922).

There follows a coruscating image of Criseyde, framed in cosmic portents of change:

> The brighte Venus folwede and ay taughte
> The wey ther brode Phebus down alighte;
> And Cynthea hire char-hors overraughte
> To whirle out of the Leoun, if she myghte;
> And Signifer his candels sheweth bright,
> Whan that Criseyde unto hire bedde wente
> Inwith hire fadres faire brighte tente
> (V. 1016-22)

Yet another omen of misfortune, Troilus's nightmare of "his lady bright, Criseyde" (V. 1241) lying in the arms of a boar (Diomede) is followed by his cry of fear that "my lady bryght, Criseyde, hath me bytrayed" (V. 1247), and then his reproach, "God wot, I wend, O lady

bright, Criseyde, / That every word was gospel that ye seyde!" (V. 1264-65). After two months he beseeches her in a letter to send him cause for hope or death, "For love of God, my righte lode-sterre" (V. 1392). The narrator tells us that Troilus makes excuses for "Criseyde, bright of hewe" (V. 1573). Finally, her infidelity obvious, Troilus bitterly voices the topos as he derides Pandarus: "How trewe is now thi nece, bright Criseyde!" (V. 1712).

APPENDIX B

STAR IMAGERY RELATED TO CRISEYDE/CRISEIDA/BRISAIDA

| CHAUCER | BOCCACCIO | BEAUVAU |
|---|---|---|
| No parallel passage | p. 31 Invocation of mistress as muse: "Thou art the north star which I follow . . . to port" | No parallel passage |
| I. 175 "Undre cloude blak so bright a sterre" | p. 33 No star image | p. 124 No star image |
| II, 585 "Well in the ring than is the ruby set" | p. 44 "Well will the star be joined with the sun" | p. 147 ". . . que l'estoille est jointe avecques le soulail" |
| No parallel passage | p. 58 To muse: "O shining light" | No parallel passage |
| No parallel passage | p. 61 On stairs with torch: "The star of thy lovely face" | p. 181 On stairs with torch: "l'estoille de voustre beau visage" |
| IV. 1443 ff. Bedroom farewell scene. No star image | p. 88 Bedroom farewell scene. "O thou bright star by whom I steer my course to the happy haven" | p. 236 Bedroom farewell. "O clère lumière par qui je puis aller au port gracieux" |
| V. 232 "Who seth yow now, my righte lode-sterre?" | p. 95 No star image | p. 248 No star image |
| V. 465 At Sarpedoun's: "O lufsom lady bright" | p. 97 At Sarpedon's: "O morning star!" | p. 253 A Sarpedonne: "O lumière et belle estoile journal" |
| V. 638 Troilus's song: "O sterre, of which I lost have al the light" | p. 100 Troilus's song: No star image | p. 257 Troilus's song No star image |
| V. 1016 ff. "The brighte Venus folweth . . ." | p. 108 Natural description of stars in the sky | p. 270 Natural description of night sky |
| V. 1392 Troilus's letter: "For love of God, my righte lode-sterre" | p. 116 Troilus's letter No star image | p. 286 Troilus's letter No star image |
| No parallel passage | p. 126 To mistress as muse: "Guided by the gleam . . . of that star" | No parallel passage. |

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