

Geoffrey Chaucer's
Troilus and Criseyde:
Criseydan Conversations 1986-2002

A Narrative Bibliography

by

William Joseph Taylor

Thesis Submitted to faculty of the
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

English

Dr. Anthony Colaianne, Chair
Dr. Daniel Mosser
Dr. Ernest Sullivan
Dr. David Radcliffe, Graduate Chair

April 29, 2004
Blacksburg, VA

Keywords: Troilus and Criseyde, Troilus, Criseyde, Pandarus, Chaucer, feminism, bibliography, medieval, Middle Ages, Ricardian literature, Henryson, Testament of Cresseid, Briseis, Chryses, Criseida, Troilo, Pandaro, Benoit, Roman de Troie, Guido delle Collone, Boccaccio, Il Filostrato.

Geoffrey Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: Criseydan Conversations 1986-2002. A Narrative Bibliography by William Joseph Taylor
Abstract

This bibliography was begun for two purposes. First, as a bibliography, it was made to serve its users in a convenient and comprehensive manner. Second, it was made to illustrate the conversations of recent years, or lack thereof, among scholars concerned with the character and actions of Criseyde in the *Troilus*.

Criseyde is arguably the quintessential character in Chaucer's works. She is wonderfully enigmatic, and her role in the *Troilus* spawned six hundred years of debate. The chapters which follow testify to the complexity of Criseyde. As she caught the eye of multiple authors from classical antiquity to the Elizabethan age, she continues to entice scholars to read and re-read her in various articles, chapters, and books. This is supported by the fact that nearly one quarter of all scholarship published (over four hundred works) on *Troilus and Criseyde* since 1986 deals expressly with Criseyde, herself.

This bibliography is constructed as it is in the hope of providing a more convenient tool for scholars. *The Riverside Chaucer* serves as an adequate starting point because of its comprehensive compilation of notes and studies on Chaucer's works, including the *Troilus*. Since nothing of similar stature has appeared since, this bibliography will begin in 1986, the year in which the *Riverside's* compilation came to an end. Chapter 1 of this study looks at recent scholarship which examines the origins of Chaucer's Criseyde. While W.W. Skeat and R.K. Root provided us long ago with detailed lists and accounts of Chaucer's sources for the *Troilus*, today's scholars continue to make new additions to these, as well as new interpretations and readings which suggest further, new or different sources. The final chapter of this work examines the scholarship that reads Criseyde's role in the poem as a whole, not focusing on any one scene or act. Scholars such as David Aers and Jill Mann provide critiques on the nature of Criseyde from our initial sight of her in Book I to her final departure from the poem in Book V.

Interestingly, recent scholarship on Criseyde tends to focus on one or more specific scenes in a specific book within the poem. Scholars deconstruct Criseyde's entrance at the Palladium in Book I, her reaction to Pandarus' goading her to love Troilus in Book II, or descriptions of her dress in the Greek camp in Book IV. Therefore, in structuring this bibliography, rather than focusing on themes, I sought to frame the scholarship with the poem's own narrative structure. Thus, chapters two, three, four, and five are comprised of scholarship that examines Books I, II, III, and Books IV and V of the *Troilus*. Users who question certain scenes in one of the poem's books can then look to the corresponding chapter of this bibliography to find whether scholars have conversed about the scene or scenes in question. In a sense, this bibliography examines Criseyde's existence prior to Chaucer's poem, her activity within Chaucer's poem, and her reputation upon exiting Chaucer's poem.

Contents

Preface	1
1 The Birth of Criseyde	4
2 Book I: The Look of Criseyde and Looks At Criseyde	23
3 Book II: The Wooing of Criseyde	36
4 Book III: “Al that which chargeth nought to seye”	51
5 Books IV and V: Exchange and Inconstancy	70
6 Criseyde Wholly Read	91
Works Cited and Examined	122
Index of Citations From <i>Troilus and Criseyde</i>	128
Index of Scholars	131

Preface

Conversations among scholars in the study of Chaucer have been essential in constructing the foundations on which we now stand. However, in light of recent pressures in the very competitive and practical aspects of academic life, the scholarly conversation is often lost amidst the desire to find any obscure point on which to publish simply for the reason that no one has yet said anything about it. There is certainly a usefulness to exploring all facets of Chaucer's work, but there is also a need to slough off the cumbersome coat of "publish-or-perish" scholarship in favor of carrying on a more meaningful conversation which may contribute to new readings or interpretations, epiphanies, or canon-altering revelations. This bibliography was begun for two purposes. First, as a bibliography, it was made to serve its users in a convenient and comprehensive manner. Second, it was made to illustrate the conversations of recent years, or lack thereof, among scholars concerned with the character and actions of Criseyde in the *Troilus*.

Criseyde is arguably the quintessential character in Chaucer's works. She is wonderfully enigmatic, and her role in the *Troilus* spawned six hundred years of debate. The chapters which follow testify to the complexity of Criseyde. As she caught the eye of multiple authors from classical antiquity to the Elizabethan age, she continues to entice scholars to read and re-read her in various articles, chapters, and books. This is supported by the fact that nearly one quarter of all scholarship published (over four hundred works) on *Troilus and Criseyde* since 1986 deals expressly with Criseyde, herself.

This bibliography is constructed as it is in the hope of providing a more convenient tool for scholars. *The Riverside Chaucer* serves as an adequate starting point because of its comprehensive compilation of notes and studies on Chaucer's works, including the *Troilus*.

Since nothing of similar stature has appeared since, this bibliography will begin in 1986, the year in which the *Riverside's* compilation came to an end. Chapter 1 of this study looks at recent scholarship which examines the origins of Chaucer's Criseyde. While W.W. Skeat and R.K. Root provided us long ago with detailed lists and accounts of Chaucer's sources for the *Troilus*, today's scholars continue to make new additions to these, as well as new interpretations and readings which suggest further, new or different sources. The final chapter of this work examines the scholarship that reads Criseyde's role in the poem as a whole, not focusing on any one scene or act. Scholars such as David Aers and Jill Mann provide critiques on the nature of Criseyde from our initial sight of her in Book I to her final departure from the poem in Book V.

Interestingly, recent scholarship on Criseyde tends to focus on one or more specific scenes in a specific book within the poem. Scholars deconstruct Criseyde's entrance at the Palladium in Book I, her reaction to Pandarus' goading her to love Troilus in Book II, or descriptions of her dress in the Greek camp in Book IV. Therefore, in structuring this bibliography, rather than focusing on themes, I sought to frame the scholarship with the poem's own narrative structure. Thus, chapters two, three, four, and five are comprised of scholarship that examines Books I, II, III, and Books IV and V of the *Troilus*. Users who question certain scenes in one of the poem's books can then look to the corresponding chapter of this bibliography to find whether scholars have conversed about the scene or scenes in question. In a sense, this bibliography examines Criseyde's existence prior to Chaucer's poem, her activity within Chaucer's poem, and her reputation upon exiting Chaucer's poem.

This bibliography seeks to put scholarship together in such a way as to confirm whether or not scholars are continuing conversations about Chaucer's Criseyde. In many cases we find

that conversations do exist and are carried forward. New landmarks in scholarship, for example Piero Boitani's edited collection *The European Tragedy of the Troilus* or David Aers' *Community, Gender, and Individual Identity*, are made apparent by the number of other scholars conversing on arguments and suggestions made by the contributing authors of these two works. Scholars pick up where their predecessors leave off in continuing arguments, patterns of interpretation, and close readings of *Criseyde*. Further, scholars begin new conversations. In some instances, both old and new conversations fail to move forward, whether by mischance or "entente." It is essential that we continue these colloquial discussions of scholarship as the critical scope of Chaucer studies widens, rather than rocketing forward as it did with the work of Skeat, Root, Donaldson, and Robertson in the early and mid twentieth-century. Certainly, we can disagree, but let us remember the ease with which C.S. Lewis discusses Medieval literature in his *Discarded Image* and the warmth of a conference session at MLA, NCS, or Kalamazoo, in which Chaucerians gather to move forward as one body rather than a mix of warring clans, prima donnas, or renegade dissenters.

Scholarship aside, I offer this bibliography lastly to demonstrate the wonders of Chaucer's poetic arts and their chief exemplar, *Criseyde*.

1

The Birth of Criseyde

Through the centuries, readers have responded to Criseyde as calculating, pragmatic, fickle, treacherous, and even whorish. Only a wonderfully complex and enigmatic figure such as Chaucer's heroine can inspire such passionate responses. D.W. Robertson suggests, "She is beautiful and socially graceful, but fearful, susceptible to sentimental pity, and 'slydyng of corage'" (498). E. Talbot Donaldson describes her as "little more than a whore" (1137) but also considers her most clear characteristic "lovability" (1132). Criseyde, however, is neither a single rendering of Boccaccio's Criseida nor an entirely original Chaucerian creation. She is a figure dating to the earliest Trojan tales, from which many versions were spawned before Chaucer's.

I attempt in this chapter to illustrate recent scholarship which addresses the origins of Chaucer's Criseyde, and, while many articles also discuss specific scenes, especially those taken or altered from Boccaccio, most of which will be discussed later in this work, my purpose here is to highlight scholarly discussion on possible sources from which Chaucer may have drawn his Criseyde. Furthermore, sources for the authors who themselves became sources for Chaucer are quite relevant, for they are, at least, indirect sources for Chaucer's characterization of Criseyde.

W.W. Skeat's foundational scholarship on *Troilus* in his 1899, "Introduction," meticulously charts Chaucer's use of sources in an attempt to understand the way in which the poem is constructed, which is, of course, much more than a mere translation of Boccaccio. R.K. Root follows Skeat in furthering the detailed analysis of the *Troilus'* origins with the 1926 "Introduction" to his own edition of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Though Homer and Dares mention Briseida (or Briseis), the love affair between Troilus and Briseida does not appear until Benoit de

St. Maure's *Roman de Troie*, and even here, as Root points out,

the story is only of the heroine's faithlessness; for it begins at the point where Briseida is to be restored to her father. Troilus is her accepted lover, but there is no account whatever of the course of their love before the separation is decreed. What we have is the portion of the story which fills Books IV and V of Chaucer's poem. The episode of Briseida occupies 1349 lines. (xxv)¹

The origins of Criseyde are considerably sparse in this light. In Benoit, the episode does not occur in consecutive lines, and, more ironically, in consideration of the immense quantities of scholarship devoted to the love of Troilus and Criseyde and the various characters of Chaucer's poem, Benoit devotes nearly five-hundred lines alone to the death of Troilus at the hands of Achilles (Root xxv).

Boccaccio did not know Homer, but he knew Ovid and understood Briseis to be associated with Troilus. Briseis addresses Achilles in the third epistle of the *Heroides*. Boccaccio may have known Chryseis from Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* (lines 467-84), the passage perhaps misread, citing Chryseis as daughter of Calchas (Root xxvii-xxviii). Boccaccio's Cresseida is, as Root describes her, "simple and direct, a creature of sensuous instinct with a minimum of reflection" (xxx). Chaucer significantly complicates his Criseyde, but she never surmounts her chief weaknesses, her pragmatism and lack of deliberateness. Root even considers her to take the easiest paths in the final two books, becoming the "type of instability and treachery" in love lamented and scorned in Benoit and Guido del Collonne.²

Despite the treacherous nature of Criseyde, emphasized arguably in Benoit and obviously in Guido, E. Talbot Donaldson suggests Criseyde's reputation might not have been utterly

destroyed in Chaucer's period as it was when Shakespeare wrote her, though this does not change Chaucer's own depiction of her in his *Troilus*.

We begin with Roberto Antonelli, who focuses on the French Romance tradition, and specifically the political and social motivations behind Plantagenet literature including the *Roman de Thebes*, the *Eneas*, and, of course, Benoit's *Roman de Troie*.³ In his chapter, "The Birth of Criseyde," Antonelli declares, "the figure of Troilus as a modern character, capable of surviving to the present, was born together with Briseis: without Briseis, Troilus would not exist" (21). As many scholars have asserted, the character of Briseis attracts numerous authors because of the many contradictions within her story. Antonelli sees *Criseyde* as autonomous, a distinction many critics overlook in equating Briseis to the suffering of Troilus. Benoit's female, however, is not the "mere projection of schematic reduction of the male imagination" (Antonelli 22), and is, furthermore, a counter example to the anti-feminist sentiment of most twelfth-century scholarship.

In this sequence of romances, Antonelli looks at similarities within tales preceding Benoit, perhaps in order to find influences for Benoit's, and what is generally accepted as the first, account of the love affair between Troilus and Criseyde. Two episodes in the *Roman de Thebes*, the first being the arrival of Jocasta and her daughters, Antigone and Ysmaine, and the second, the gift of Ytier's horse by Parthenopaeus to the object of his love, Antigone, "anticipate," as Antonelli says, the story of Troilus and Briseis. Resembling the exchange between Diomedes and Briseis, Antigone provides Parthenopaeus with no definitive answer and later rebukes him for his hastily enacted demands (Antonelli 26). In the *Brut*, Ygerne, like Antigone, provides no clear response to the aggressive advances of Uther, who is wooed by

Ygerne's reputation. Antonelli suggests, "Ygerne is the vertex of a true love triangle, which is based on the simultaneous competition between two men, both of whom are present: her husband, the Count of Cornwall, and King Uther" (28). The *Brut's* complicated love story involves another triumvirate of two men and a woman: Arthur, Mordred, and Guinevere.

The *Eneas*, more specifically than its predecessors, addresses the ideas of love and furthers the love triangle in two instances: first, between Aeneas, the widow Dido, and Dido's dead husband Sichaeus, and then between Aeneas, Turnus, and Lavinia.

Benoit's contemporaries frequently complained of the "complex, contradictory, and dynamic nature" of the Plantagenet court of Henry II and Queen Eleanor (Antonelli 34). Antonelli refers to their court as a "melting pot in which elements of an extremely wide range of traditions," including Old French Literature, "were analyzed, discussed, and composed" (34), and further asserts that, "the character of Briseis would not be conceivable outside of the great and complex culture of knighthood and love of the Anglo-Norman court" (34). Benoit's complex and pragmatic Briseis bothered readers in his time with her immoral behavior and her continued self-assurance, in much the same way as Chaucer's Criseyde upset his audience over two centuries later. Benoit's Briseis is pitiable until she is passed to the Greeks, from which point Benoit's tone, in contradiction to the story before, begins to indicate the anti-feminist rhetoric of Guido del Collone, who constructed his own version of Benoit's *Roman*. Briseis' great folly is her disbelief in her own guilt, but Benoit, friend of Eleanor, must have trod lightly in indicting Briseis for what he saw as the nature of all women (37-38).

In the *Roman de Troie*, Troilus and Diomedes are nemeses even before the two become linked by Briseis. However, once Briseis pledges her love to Diomedes, thus assuming an

expected role for the woman, the mystery of her character is betrayed, and she virtually disappears from the story. Briseis is granted one last monologue which Antonelli analyzes:

Briseis presents an extraordinary picture of herself as a woman who, against social conventions and judgements (including those of other women), explores in almost secular manner the reasons behind her inner conflicts, her needs, the inevitability of her solitude, and the necessity of her 'change.' (44)

Whether Benoit experimented with *fin amore* in creating the complex Briseis, or whether he pushed the limits of feminine characterization with Briseis to further amplify the tragic position of Troilus before bringing her back in line with more traditional expectations for a woman, two hundred years passed before another author, and a major one at that, Giovanni Boccaccio, would, as Antonelli says, "notice the incongruity of this situation, and set about filling in the gaps and the unanswered questions in the plot" (37). Guido's version, notably anti-Criseydan as seen in the constant reminder of her inconstancy, and the quickening of her change as compared to Benoit, is far more straightforward than the *Roman de Troie*, employing only that which is essential. With time, Guido, in "drastically abandoning amplificatio" (Antonelli 46), reduces the female, with such examples as the elimination of Briseis' departing speech in Benoit. As Antonelli says, this is what "we would expect from a Sicilian, the crux of the story of Troilus and Briseus is the betrayal, the natural inclination of every woman to be inconstant" (46).

L.M. Findlay cites Robert Antonelli's article in his own, "Reading and Teaching Troilus Otherwise: St. Maure, Chaucer, Henryson," where he asserts that Troilus acquires "a new lease on life via his coupling with that Briseis-Cressida who springs— as if in parthogenesis— from the freshly-fantasizing cranium of Benoit" (65). Findlay responds to the changeful nature of

Benoit's *Roman*, such as the "incongruities" mentioned in Antonelli's chapter, suggesting that "the libidinal economy described by Benoit will strain for fixity and perfect equivalence but be obtained to accommodate change" (65).

Sally Mapstone's article, "The Birth of Criseyde," filling in gaps left by Roberto Antonelli, conveys Criseyde's literary history in arguing that medieval readers "could meaningfully connect later Criseydes with their two originally Homeric predecessors" (132), found in the *Illiad's* Chryseis, daughter of the Trojan priest Chryses, who, at the outset of the *Illiad*, is made concubine to Agamemnon, and the figure of Briseis, widow from the city Lyrnessos, and prisoner of Achilles. Mapstone's article is significant because few scholars have looked closely at what are arguably pre-Ovidian characterizations of Criseyde. Mapstone finds, in fact, a consistent refusal by scholars to recognize these significant connections. Most interestingly, Calchas, in the *Illiad* portrayed as a Greek soothsayer, urges Agamemnon to return Chryseis to appease the god, Apollo. Agamemnon in turn demands Briseis as a replacement from Achilles, which initiates a rift between the two Greek warlords while also inadvertently attesting to the beauty of Briseis.

Homer provides Briseis a few emotional scenes in book XIX, in which she weeps over the body of Petroklus, who earlier provides her with the hope of becoming wife to Achilles, but this hope dies with him. Petroklus' death provokes a somewhat accusatory stance by Achilles towards Briseis, eerily resembling the catalysts of fear—the people of Troy angered at her father's traitorous actions as well as Criseyde's dangerous position after Calchas' departure— in which Chaucer's heroine is later consumed. Briseis protests her evident dismal future, but does so in the midst of a meeting between Achilles and other Greek warriors. As with Chaucer's Criseyde and

Cassandra, Briseis is not heard. Although Benoit is credited with initiating the love story we see in Chaucer, Mapstone asserts links between both Homer's Chryseis and Briseis– "Chryseis through her ransom, her priestly Trojan father, and the connection with Calchas; Briseis through her ransom, her widowhood, her beauty, and her role as the disputed love-object of two men" (134)– in speculating that Benoit and Boccaccio blended elements from each character to create the medieval Briseida, rather than using only Achilles' Briseis as a source, as has been asserted in most past scholarship.⁴

Briseis captured the gaze of post-Homeric writers due mostly to Ovid's *Heroides*.⁵ Her letter to Achilles, third in this epistolary work, complains of her then-captivity to Agamemnon and her desired return to Achilles. She, uniquely, has access to the work of the *Illiad*, and attempts to urge Achilles back to battle, illustrating the story of Meleager, found, as told by Phoenix to Achilles, in book IX of the *Illiad*.⁶ However, Briseis, unlike Phoenix, emphasizes the role of Meleager's wife in encouraging her husband back to battle, underlain by Briseis' own desires to both be heard by men and, more simply, to be the supportive wife of the male, Achilles.⁷ We find ambiguities in the classical figure of Briseis, which continue to plague her character throughout the Middle Ages. Although her letter in the *Heroides* stresses her fidelity while in the control of Agamemnon, in the *Remedia Amoris*, Ovid finds it incomprehensible that Briseis did not give herself to Agamemnon,⁸ and later, in the *Ars Amatoria*, he offers that Briseis enjoyed the touch of Achille's bloody battle-hands.⁹ These inconsistent depictions from the same author foreshadow the variety of interpretations of Criseyde's character in the centuries to come.

Such a view contrasts with those scholars like Donaldson, who asserts that Benoit's close rendering of his Briseida with the Homeric duo was simply chance,¹⁰ and Windeatt's similar

assertion that Benoit's Briseida is in no way connected other than through misunderstanding.¹¹ Certainly, these accounts become more recognizable in Ovid, whose influence on Benoit is indisputable. Chaucer's heroine is primarily derived from Benoit, though Chaucer might also have looked at Ovid, whose Briseis displays the fear often attributed in Chaucer's version (Mapstone 143).

Following Benoit, the Briseida figure is restricted through the anti-feminist text of Guido dell Colonne, but Boccaccio allows her a voice, and is credited with first introducing her as a widow. Further connections between Boccaccio and the *Heroides* exist in Troilio's boar dream, in which a great boar painlessly, and perhaps even pleurably, tears out Criseida's heart, and after which the boar is determined to be Diomede, descendent of Meleager. In Chaucer's *Troilus*, but absent in Boccaccio, Cassandra interprets a different boar dream, one in which Criseyde embraces and kisses the animal. Cassandra then renders a tale of Meleager, taken in large part from *Metamorphoses VIII* (Mapstone 145). Mapstone finally questions Chaucer's addition of this dream because it alters readers' reactions towards Criseyde, who, if kissing the boar, appears to be the "active partner" in a, perhaps, "post-coital" embrace (146). Thus, Chaucer expands upon Boccaccio's seeming reference to Meleager's story and Ovid's Briseis, but this expansion, as with so many other elements, only blurs any apparent interpretations of Criseyde.

So, too, Statius' *Thebaid* must not be overlooked in reference to the dream of the boar. Catherine Sanok's article, "Criseyde, Cassandra, and the *Thebaid*: Women and the Theban Subtext of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," examines this dream and the significance of Chaucer's use of the *Thebaid* as a source text and framework for the *Troilus*: "Criseyde reads Statius' poem in Book II and Cassandra recounts its arguments in her interpretation of Troilus'

dream in Book V. The story is bracketed by the *Thebaid*. Criseyde's reading begins the love affair, and Cassandra's recounting of Troilus' dream ends it" (Sanok 41). References to Statius in *Troilus and Criseyde* are expressly Chaucer's addition and are not found in Boccaccio. Chaucer's employment of Statius is meaningful to the characterization of Criseyde in various ways. This Theban history, an epic, was not likely common reading for women, but, as Sanok suggests,

the *Thebaid* departs from traditional epic in addressing a specifically female perspective, both in Hypsipyle's long narrative of the anger of the Lemnian women being abandoned by their warring husbands, as well as the grief of the Argive women who have been prevented from burying their dead by the tyrant Creon. (43)

Criseyde, widowed and abandoned by her father, is certainly to be identified with these women, which is why her introducing the *Thebaid* into her own story is so significant. Chaucer continues to frame his story with what Criseyde has and has not read from the tale of Thebes. Amphiaraus dies and goes to the underworld. He, like Calchas for Criseyde in Book IV, returns to haunt a woman, but Criseyde's reading is interrupted at the very chapter of Amphiaraus' death (Sanok 50). Criseyde promises Troilus that she will, like Amphiaraus, "with body and soule synke in helle!" (4.1554).¹² Furthermore, because of the story she misses, she cannot know Diomedes' dangerous origins. Cassandra summarizes the *Thebaid* in interpreting Troilus' Ovidian dream, but Criseyde ultimately finishes the narrative, and her own story, by leaving Troy (Sanok 57). Criseyde is, in some ways, exculpated by Chaucer's use of the *Thebaid* as a source and narrative frame in the *Troilus*.

Gale Sigal finds a small, but important, use by Chaucer of Ovid's *Amores*, a fourth Ovid

text not mentioned in Mapstone's article. Sigal suggests that Criseyde's Book III *alba*¹³ speech, following the night of consummation, is inspired by *Amores I.xiii* (194). First, Criseyde looks on the myth of Jove and Alcmena, also seen in *Amores I.xiii*—"O nyght, allas, why nyltow over us hove/ As longe as whan Almena lay by Jove?" (3.1427-28). Then, Criseyde presents a longer lament:

‘O blake nyght, as folk in bokes rede,
That shapen art by God this world to hide
At certeyn tymes wyth thi derke wede,
That under that men myghte in reste abide,
Wel oughten bestes pleyne, and folk the chide,
That there as day wyth labour wolde us breste
That thow thus fleest, and deynest us nought reste.’ (3.1429-35)

With this speech, Chaucer's Criseyde ascribes herself to an ensemble of "bestes" and "folk," all of whom despise the coming of day. As Sigal says, "Criseyde does not regard her plight as isolated, solitary, or incidental, but rather as universal," which moves her further beyond the realm of individual sinner and, even, inconstant woman. With this speech, Criseyde defends herself as one who, like many others, seeks love in the "refuge" of God's night (Sigal 195), unaware of the impending danger and distress of her future.

Craig Berry views Criseyde, as well as the entirety of the poem, as a response to the history surrounding Chaucer when he composed the poem. His article, "King's Business: Negotiating Chivalry in *Troilus and Criseyde*," describes Criseyde as the perfect damsel in distress, "custom-designed to be defended" (Berry 249), a task which falls to Hector rather than

Troilus. But Chaucer's Criseyde is different from Boccaccio's in her ability to "roll with the punches" (Berry 245), a characterization suggested in part because Chaucer himself wrote the *Troilus* amidst the Peasant's Revolt, an impending French invasion, tensions between Chaucer's friend John of Gaunt and his king, and other personally terrifying and uncontrollable situations. Further, Chaucer omits the practical descriptions ascribed to Criseida by Boccaccio--that she was "as prudent, wise, modest, and well-bred as any lady born in Troy" (1.11)--leaving only the seeming metaphysical aspects, though she is subordinated later by the need for Hector's protection, in representing a religion of love (Berry 250). Criseyde echoes Andreas Capellanus's *Art of Courty Love* when she ponders her situation and whether or not to engage in a love affair with Troilus. Criseyde displays skillful negotiation strategies in dealing with her uncle when he comes to her about Troilus' love. These skills, as Berry hints, were indicative of Chaucer's own experience as Clerk of the Customs and court ambassador to France and Italy. Berry asserts that the stakes for Criseyde "are real ones" (257).

Rebecca Haywood, like Antonelli, discusses Criseyde along with the *Roman de Thebes'* Jocasta in examining the role of the widow in medieval literature, and further suggests the significance of Criseyde's widowhood. Haywood looks at Boccaccio's characterization of Criseida as a widow, uncommon in a romance heroine, by examining a passage from the *Filocolo*, written around the same time as the *Filostrato*.¹⁴ In this passage, a debate questions from whom can a lover obtain more satisfaction: a fresh maiden and her virgin qualities; a married woman who provides sexual experience and excitement in the need for secrecy; or a widow, who provides sexual experience without the threat or danger of a husband.¹⁵ Boccaccio's, and later Chaucer's, failure to discuss, or even really mention Criseida's husband, and the fact

that in *Filostrato* she has no children, which is ambiguous but at least hinted at in Chaucer, distances Criseyde from all who surround her, and even more, breaks a similar narrative line which initially exists between Criseyde and Jocasta. This, in fact, further enhances her erotic qualities because she is both experienced in love and sex, but seemingly shielded by barriers which challenge a worthy knight to break them down. Boccaccio's invented widowhood is of utmost significance for Chaucer, but, as Haywood points out, "the context of these images (of widowhood) has been changed by the development of the characterization of Criseyde herself and of the narrative persona" (234). Haywood continues,

It is much more difficult to associate Criseyde with the facile misogyny applied to Criseida's behavior, when she is portrayed as a person who considers her roles carefully and performs them to the best of her ability, according to the circumstances she finds herself in. The narrator is aware of this and does not include two blatant instances of misogyny in the *Filostrato*, Pandaro's comment on the nature of visual sexuality and the narrator's conclusion that a young woman is likely to be fickle. He acknowledges that Criseyde's choice of roles is constrained by social conventions and does his best to represent her in a way that does not depend on the polarized images of the chaste widow and the lustful one.¹⁶

Furthermore, unlike Criseida, Chaucer's Criseyde, after the consummation of the affair, still has doubts which passion cannot remove. Chaucer "interiorizes" Criseyde's change with added scenes such as Antigone's Song and the dream of the Eagle (Haywood 237).

Haywood cites Giulia Natali's chapter, "Boccaccio's *Filosrato*," in discussing

Boccaccio's motivations for characterizing Criseida. Natali's in-depth analysis begins with clear recognition of the influence of Dante, especially in the *Filostrato*, *Filocolo*, and *Teseida*. For example, Troiolo's prophetic dream, also mentioned by Mapstone, hints at Dante's *Vita Nuovo*. So, too, Troiolo's words, in his mourning the impending departure of Criseida, to Pandaro are adapted from Francesca's proverb in Canto V of the *Inferno*.¹⁷ Further, Boccaccio's significant amendments to the Troilus/ Briseis story create confusion and ambiguity which seemingly provide foundations for Chaucer's even more complex work. While Benoit and Guido detail the events leading to the war,¹⁸ Boccaccio briefly passes over them in one stanza (*Filostrato* I.vii) before illustrating Calchas' departure (Natali 59). Boccaccio claims, in the Proem, to add "what was not part of his love" in order, as Natali claims, to heighten Troiolo's suffering by showing his previous happiness (60).

Nikki Stiller, whose book, *The Figure of Cressida in British and American Literature*, studies mainly the character of Criseyde post-Chaucer, says "Boccaccio's Criseida is the direct antecedent of Chaucer's complex, desirable, and elusive heroine" (4). Chaucer maintains a long tradition of Criseyde's beauty, first mentioned in Dares, but varies from any previous tellings in affording Criseyde a choice before her exchange to the Greeks, in which Troilus asks her to steal away with him. In the midst of reviewing the various origins and traits ascribed to Criseyde by Skeat, Stiller looks to the Scriptures to find possible further influence in the formation of her character: "The development of the Cressida figure, and the complex nature of reactions to her, may stem initially from the same emotional configuration that produced in the Old Testament and in the Talmud the imagining of woman as independent of the male or not" (9). Eve is dependent of Adam, born of his rib, mother of his children, while Lilith exists before Adam, "a

sexual being in the way that Eve is not” (Stiller 9).¹⁹ Creseida/Briseis is an outside figure, like Lilith, ostracized for her independence and her choices, but she is also constituted of many of Eve’s qualities, as lover and companion of Adam. Thus, the figure of Creseida combines both contrasting characterizations in forming a larger paradox. Even more, the structure of the *Troilus* is entirely based upon the “Oedipal dilemma.”²⁰ Stiller asserts that Chaucer sees in the figure of Creseida the mother-nurturer (his Criseyde unlike Creseida is not seen as inferior), as well as the betrayer. The realization of this dilemma is met in Criseyde’s return to the father, Calchas, leaving the lover-son, Troilus, in an act of treachery that Stiller deems “the most difficult part of the syndrome” (23). This further explains why the issues of marriage and adultery do not exist in the poem (Stiller 23).

Though deceit exists, and is at the heart of Criseyde’s doomed character in literary history, Jharna Sanyal, in her article, “Criseyde Through the Boethian Glass,” suggests that the beauty of Troilus and Criseyde’s love affair is not denigrated by the tragedy of her forsaking Troilus. Chaucer, aware of his audience’s knowledge of Criseyde, must remain honest to Boccaccio’s unfaithful Creseida; however Chaucer offers multiple portraits of Criseyde, acknowledging, with her first description in Book I, the old and also creating a new Criseyde (Sanyal 76). Sanyal studies how each description debases Criseyde more than the previous one until the final description in Book V indicates a narrator who has lost control and is frantically reverting to prior descriptions and texts (82). Chaucer is, in fact, “following the Boethian cue” in lionizing the perfect, found in the love of God, with the imperfections of Criseyde’s earthly love.²¹

J. J. Anderson adds a small note to the reading of Criseyde at the festival to Pallas Athene

in the *Troilus* (The lines are expanded from Boccaccio):

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. (1.178-82)

Anderson notes that Windeatt, in his edition of the *Troilus*, citing the famous article of Robert Pratt, comments on the word “assured” in these lines as indicating Chaucer’s use of Beauvau’s prose translation of *Il Filostrato*.²² But, as Anderson suggests, “Criseyde’s assurance, and in particular her combination of assurance and modesty, may be thought to suggest Guillaume de Machaut rather than Boccaccio or Beauvau” (160). Both Chaucer and Machaut use “an assured manner,” a characteristic both poets see in the courtly woman. Chaucer uses the phrase in his short poem, “The Complaint Unto Pity”:

Aboute hir herse there stoden lustely,
Withouten any woo as thoughte me,
Bounte parfyt, wel armed and richely,
And fresshe Beaute, Lust, and Jolyte,
Assured Maner, Youthe, and Honeste,
Wisdom, Estaat, Drede, and Governauce,
Confedred both by bonde and alliaunce. (36-42)

Machaut similarly, in “Le Jugement du Roy de Behaigne,” describes the knight’s lady in physical details of beauty before moving to her character:

Mais de maniere humble et asseuree

Et de tres beau maintieng estoit paree. (394-5)

Further, the poet describes his lady in “Remede de Fortune”:

Et sa maniere asseuree,

De tous et de toutes loee,

Son biau port, son gentil mainteien

Qui pareil n’ont, si com je tien...(197-200)

Chaucer knew Machaut. As Anderson notes, Chaucer uses Machaut passages in depicting “the good faire white” in the *Book of the Duchess*. Other passages from the *Troilus* have been noticed by scholars as being connected to Machaut.²³ Most important for Criseyde’s description in this passage is Chaucer’s narrative construction, which considers Criseyde’s modesty for four lines before “suddenly springing her assurance on the reader in the last line,” which Anderson argues is another example of “Chaucer’s creative adaptation of descriptive detail from Machaut” (161).

Chaucer’s originality in characterizing his Criseyde is not simply the creative reworking of a literary blueprint. In fact, Chaucer’s genius lies in his complex construction of Criseyde, as mysterious and complicated as her own character within the tradition. Chaucer, of course, relies on Boccaccio’s rendering, but, as these many articles demonstrate, he also seems both directly and indirectly to draw upon a multitude of sources traced all the way back to Homer’s *Illiad*. With his own Criseyde conceived, Chaucer proceeds to write his poem around her. In Book I, we witness Criseyde’s rather difficult entrance into the poem, and our Crisedyan readings begin.

Notes

1. Benoit de Sainte Maure, *Roman de Troie*, ed. Leopold Constans (Paris, 1904-12). *Daretis Phrygii De Excidio Troiae Historia*, ed. Ferdinand Meister (Leipzig: Teubner, 1973). Dictys Cretensis, *Ephemeridos Belli Troiani Libri*, ed. W. Eisenhut (Leipzig: Teubner, 1973).
2. Root xxxii. Guido delle Collone, *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, eds. George A. Panton and David Donaldson (London: Oxford University Press, 1968).
3. Each of these tales is linked to Wace's *Brut*. Benoit succeeded Wace as official court historian. As Antonelli points out, the generally accepted historical order of these books begins with the *Roman de Thebes*, followed by Wace's *Brut*, the *Eneas*, and finally Benoit's *Troie* (24). Wace, *Le roman de Brut*, ed. I. Arnold, 2 vols. (Paris, 1928-30). *Eneas: Roman du XII^e siecle*, ed. J.J. Salverda de Grave, 2 vols. (Paris, 1925-9).
4. Boccaccio's Chryseida, based on Briseida may have been caused by his own misreading of lines 469-75 of Ovid's *Remedia Amoris* which speaks of Calchas' daughter, Chryseida. Ovid, *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, ed. G.P. Goold, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985).
5. Ovid, *Heroides and Amores*, 2nd ed., ed. E.P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).
6. In book IX of the *Illiad*, Achilles is delivered the story by his former tutor, Phoenix, who is part of an embassy sent by Agamemnon to persuade Achilles back into the war. *The Illiad of Homer*, trans. by Richmond Lattimore (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1969).
7. Phoenix's rendering in the *Illiad* highlights Meleager's refusal to return to battle from which family gifts elude him, his mother Althaea curses him, and he must still return to defend the falling city of Calydon. Meleager draws his mother's wrath due to his murder of two uncles, who desire the head of the boar who had previously wreaked havoc upon the city, and whom Meleager had killed. Meleager instead gives the boar's head to Atalanta, with whom he falls in love. His mother finally condemns him and he dies. The role of women in this rendering is far more incriminating than Briseis' subtle tale. Both Briseis' and Phoenix's versions are indicative of the biased discrimination and misinterpretation of texts prevalent in Chaucer's works.
8. *Remedia Amoris* ll. 783-84
9. *Ars Amatoria* ll. 713-16
10. E.Talbot Donaldson, "Briseis, Briseida, Criseyde, Cresseid, Cressid: Progress of a Heroine," *Chaucerian Problems and Perspectives*, ed. Edwards Vasta and Zacharias P. Thundy (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979) 3-12.
11. Mapstone 139. Barry Windeatt, "*Troilus and Criseyde*," *Oxford Guides to Chaucer* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

12. The authors in this work choose to use various editions of Chaucer's *Troilus*. However, for the purpose of congruity all Chaucer references in this work are to *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3d ed., ed. L.D. Benson et al. (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1987).

13. Sigal defines *alba* as the Occitan word for "white," used often by medieval poets to designate the white brightness of dawn, or dawn itself. Many Old Provençal lyrics, themselves collectively called the *alba*, address the theme of lovers parting at dawn. This genre is referred to, in its English version as the *aubade*, a term derived from the Old French *aube*, which carries an identical meaning to the Old Provençal *alba*. The dawn song focuses on a passionate, adulterous affair. The danger of discovery by the lady's husband—known as *gilos*, the jealous one—circumscribes the sin, since he may, in apprehending the lovers, legally do them violence. The reluctant lovers utter an expressive plaint, their *alba*, as they prepare to part (Sigal 202 note 1).

14. Giulia Natali points out the generally accepted dating of the *Filostrato* as before the *Filocolo* which might render Haywood's suggestion less effective. This passage from *Filocolo* then becomes a response to the *Filostrato* and a credentializing of the Criseida character rather than, if *Filocolo* came first, a preview of Boccaccio's view on widows and his later exploration of those views with his *Creseida*. Natali's note (p.51) shows the dating of *Filostrato* established around 1335 by Branca and P.G. Ricci. see Branca's Introduction to A. Limentani edn. *Tutte le opere di Giovanni Boccaccio*, ii (Milan, 1964) 5, and Ricci, 'Per la dedica e la datazione del *Filostrato*', *Studi sul Boccaccio*, I (1963) 333-47. C. Muscetta dates it around 1340, later than the *Teseida* and *Filocolo*. see Muscetta, *Giovanni Boccaccio*, in *Il Trecento* (Bari, 1972) 98 (vol. ii of *La letteratura Italiana: Storia e testi*).

15. Haywood cites Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il Filocolo*, ed. Salvatore Battaglia (Bari: Laterza, 1938) 4.

16. 234; Haywood acknowledges here Margaret Hallissy, *Clean Maids, True Wives, Steadfast Widows* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1993) 145-153, which discusses the characterization of Criseyde compared with the stereotypes of the lusty and the chaste widow, but does not address Boccaccio's *Creseida* as a widow, nor the role of the narrator.

17. *Filostrato*, IV.lvi. 6-7. For further comparison of Canto V of the *Inferno* and the *Troilus*, see Piero Boitani, "'In Gentil Hertes Ay Redy to Repaire': Dante's Francesca and Chaucer's *Troilus*" in *Literary Aspects of Courtly Culture*, eds. Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (New York: D.S. Brewer, 1994).

18. As noted by Natali (p.59 n.37), 6000 lines precede the *Troilus* and *Briseda* episode in Benoit, and 100 pages in Guido.

19. 9. See also Robertson's similar discussion in his *Preface to Chaucer*:

Troilus is 'al steereles within a boot,' an image which derives ultimately from Prov. 23.33-34: 'Thy eyes shall behold strange women, and thy heart shall utter perverse things. And thou shalt be as one sleeping in the midst of the sea, and as a

pilot fast asleep when the stern is lost.’ (478)

20. Stiller 23; Stiller cites Helen Storm Corsa, “Dreams in *Troilus and Criseyde*,” *American Imago* 17 (1970): 52-65, but argues that Corsa’ postulation on the Oedipal dilemma in the *Troilus* is not taken far enough.

21. Sanyal 86. Sanyal cites Chaucer’s own *Boece* in support of her argument. See *Boece* Bk III Pr. 10 ll.16-35. Sanyal echoes Robertson’s discussion on Chaucer’s use of Boethius in the *Troilus*. See Robertson 472-474:

The Boethian elements in *Troilus* and their implications were thus easily recognizable to the members of Chaucer’s audience. And no one reminded of the doctrines of Fortune and Providence, fate and free will, the love of God and the love of worldly goods, or the Herculean nobility and heroism of virtue, could possibly regard passionate love for a fickle woman with anything but disfavor. (472)

22. *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. B.A. Windeatt (London, 1984): 97. See R.A. Pratt, “Chaucer and Le Roman de Troyle et de Criseida,” *Studies in Philology* liii (1956): 514. For detailed commentary on Chaucer alleged use of Beauvau, see Michael Hanly, *Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Beauvau* (Norman, Okla.:Pilgrim Books, 1990).

23. J.I. Wimsatt, “Guillaume de Machaut and Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*,” *Medium Aveum* xlv (1976): 277-93.