

## 5

### *Books IV and V: Exchange and Inconstancy*

Following the consummation scene and close of Book III, the figure of Criseyde spirals downward to her fate as the exemplar of inconstancy and fickleness as she has come to be known. In Book IV the affair of Troilus and Criseyde moves beyond the private space and into the realm of public politics. Pandarus' "zone of private power," as Sarah Stanbury calls it, is shattered, and his control is severed. So, too, we witness the narrator's own unraveling under the weight of impending scenes which he seemingly wishes not to render. But Criseyde continues to be the hinge on which the story pivots, and it is on her actions, as always, the outcome seemingly depends.

Elizabeth Archibald ("Declarations of 'Entente' in *Troilus and Criseyde*") continues her study of 'entente' in Book IV, in which she argues "every use of the word is connected to Criseyde's intentions and decisions" (203). In fact, she states, "Criseyde's 'entente' is the focus of Book IV, and by the end of the book the narrator gives us clear indications that we are to take Criseyde's intentions as ephemeral and untrustworthy" (205). Troilus determines to accept Criseyde's desires in her trade to the Greeks:

For which he gan deliberen, for the beste,  
That though the lordes wolde that she wente,  
He wolde lat hem graunte what hem leste,  
And telle his lady first what that they mente;  
And whan that she hadde seyde hym hire entente,  
Therafter wolde he werken also blyve,

Theigh al the world ayeyn it wolde stryve. (4.169-75)

Archibald points out the interesting connection among “wente,” “mente,” and “entente,” which link the departure we know is apparent with both meaning and intention (203). Putting faith in Criseyde, Troilus rejects Pandarus’ suggestions of keeping her in Troy. Troilus’ determination, to pursue Criseyde until death, is expressed some lines later:

This Troilus gan with tho wordes quyken,  
And seyde, “Frend, graunt mercy, ich assente.  
But certeynly thow maist nat so me priken,  
Ne peyne non ne may so tormente,  
That, for no cas, it is nat myn entente,  
At shorte wordes, though I deyen sholde,  
To ravysse hire, but if herself it wolde.” (4.631-37)

Again, Archibald says, “the rhymes ‘assente-tormente-entente’ stress that Troilus’ resolve is firm even to the point of death” (203):

“For I shal shape it so, that sikerly  
Thow shalt this nyght som tyme, in som manere,  
Come speken with thi lady pryvely,  
And by hire wordes ek, and by hire cheere,  
Thow shalt ful sone aperceyve and wel here  
Al hire entente, and in this cas the beste.  
And far now wel, for in this point I reste.” (4.652-58)

Barry Windeatt points out Chaucer’s additions to this passage: if Troilus speaks directly with

Criseyde, her mind will be revealed. In Boccaccio, Pandaro merely promises to arrange a meeting of the two lovers (Archibald 204). As Archibald notes on this passage, “Criseyde’s ‘entente’ is not just a matter of what she says, but also of her ‘cheere,’ her face or behavior or friendliness, which Troilus will be able to interpret” (204). Later, the narrator discusses the ever-increasing expanse between Criseyde’s ‘entente’ and her actions:

And treweliche, as writen wel I fynde,  
That al this thyng was seyde of good entente;  
And that hire herte trewe was and kynde  
Towardes hym, and spak right as she mente,  
And that she starf for wo neigh whan she wente,  
And was in purpos evere to be trewe:

Thus writen they that of hire werkes knewe. (4.1415-21)

Archibald sees the narrator, in his apparent anxiety and use of indirect discourse, giving up in this passage. The same rhyme pattern—“entente-mente-wente”—occurs again, but only to remind us, as does the last couplet—“trewe-knewe”—of what is to come, and further, “a reminder of the discrepancy between ‘entencioun’ and ‘conclusioun’” (Archibald 204).

Jennifer Campbell’s article, “Figuring Criseyde’s ‘Entente’: Authority, Narrative, and Chaucer’s Use of History,” while interestingly not referencing Archibald’s earlier article, argues that close attention must be paid to Book IV because it stands between Book III’s consummation and Book V’s revelation of betrayal, as well as between two different characterizations of Criseyde (342). Book IV’s Proem reminds us of the impending betrayal of Troilus by Criseyde, a sharp departure from the end of Book III, which Campbell calls “an appropriate close for a

romance or comedy” (342). The tension established is, as many scholars note, one between public and private, between politics and love, and between fiction and history. Book IV also marks the “expansion” of Criseyde’s viewpoint, absent in Boccaccio (Campbell 343). Criseyde becomes a device of larger inquiries by Chaucer. As Campbell points out, “The narrator’s discomfort with the authority and adequacy of his sources often arises over questions of Criseyde’s moral integrity and intentions, revealing the complicated relationship between gender and textual authority being explored by Chaucer in this poem” (343). Criseyde, in fact, poses a threat to the narrator’s control of the story as she is publicly revealed. Campbell refers to Dinshaw’s “Reading Like A Man,” which argues to read like a man implies a necessity to impose order and unity on a text, which further involves suppressing, controlling, and even removing the feminine, but Campbell questions whether the ending of the poem, whether reading as man or woman, proves unified (344).

Our continued lack of knowledge of certain aspects of Criseyde’s life and intentions grows in importance as the narrative progresses. As she becomes morally questionable in our eyes, so too, the narrator’s relationship with his source, through which he is representing Criseyde, breaks down. In Book I, we are unsure “wheither that she children hadde or noon” (1.133), and further shades of her character add to her mystery, but her refusal to fit into narrative boundaries signals her threat to both Troilus and the narrator. But a mysterious Criseyde, as Campbell proposes, “will encourage at least some members of the audience to grant the narrator an authority to tell his version of Criseyde’s well-known story that is based in large part on his ability to flesh out and represent the heroine’s perspective” (345). Thus, the narrator, in treating Criseyde’s situations, often provides us her own point of view on these situations. However, we

know, from Books I-III, in which the narrator's text come into question, that he, as translator, can only provide so much information about Criseyde's viewpoint. Therefore, in order to rise above his role as translator, "he is clearly striving for something more" (Campbell 346), he must assert control over not only the story, but Criseyde herself:

For how Criseyde Troilus forsook—  
Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde—  
Moot hennesforth ben matere of my book,  
As writen folk thorough 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. (4.15-21)

Many scholars interpret the narrator as suffering himself in the throes of love with Criseyde, unwilling to acknowledge her impending treachery, but Campbell argues, with the dramatic narrative turn at the outset of Book IV, the narrator seizes this moment to "consolidate his own authority" (350). Campbell echoes, here, Susan Schibanoff, who says of the narrator, in her article, "The New Reader and Female Textuality in Two Early Commentaries on Chaucer," "he licenses himself to give us a new reading of Criseyde, to select and shape his own written sources as he will" (100). His protestations that he lacks authority actually mask his own stolen position as the new authority. With this new control, the narrator announces in these lines his readiness to proceed with the "matere" of condemning Criseyde.

Mysterious Criseyde, or as Campbell refers to her, "an unknown quantity," threatens Troy as the poem shifts into history in Book IV. Upon learning of the exchange, both Troilus and

Criseyde in public view remain stoic, yet both, in private, do physical harm to themselves. However, as Campbell brings to mind, her physical breakdown does not “return her to her own position of resignation and despair but shifts her to an altogether new one” (352). Pandarus intrudes on her mourning, does nothing to comfort her, and, even more, asks her to calm herself so as to alleviate Troilus’ suffering. As the narrator wrenches control of the story from his sources, so too, Pandarus controls Criseyde’s actions now, so that when she tells Troilus her intentions, she is not speaking her own words, a fact, Campbell argues, David Aers forgets, as he sees Criseyde nobly comforting Troilus “in the face of and against tremendous pressures,” but whose active gesture of solace actually becomes an act of submission to the forces of history imposed in Book IV.<sup>1</sup> Campbell, also, disagrees with Aers’ generalization of Criseyde’s action as “a product of her whole life,” and chooses rather to see it as a response to two specific moments of crisis (353).

Following Troilus’ expressive commitment to her, Criseyde answers, “with this selve swerd, which that here is,/ Myselfe I wolde han slawe” (4.1240). Campbell points out Criseyde’s fear of knives (4.771), so this statement seems to indicate Criseyde, already mysterious to us as readers and to Troilus, is an enigma to herself as well. Now Criseyde’s unraveling commences. As Campbell says,

...she seems to have lost all perspective not only on her situation, but on her city’s as well. Her expansive speeches in this book— about the possibility of peace, about Calkas’ material covetousness, about the “amphibologies” of the gods, and above all, about her plans to subvert the processes in which she has been placed— do her no good. The point of view we had hoped might work to her advantage has been

turned against her, and since, as a feudal subject and particularly as a woman, Criseyde is enmeshed in a network of social relationships, her self-delusion necessarily exerts pressure on her ability to maintain faithfully her relationships with others. (355)

Strangely though, the narrator comes to her rescue, confident in his source's ability to explain Criseyde: "And trewliche, as writen wel I fynde,/ That al this thyng was seyde of good entente;/ And that hire herte trewe was and kynde" (4.1415-1417). Campbell, opposing Archibald's view that the disappointed narrator gives up here, argues that since Criseyde's demise is already certain, the narrator here is hiding in his sources, so as not to implicate himself in Criseyde's delusions and subsequent fall (355-56).

Craig Berry ("The King's Business: Negotiating Chivalry in *Troilus and Criseyde*") points out Chaucer's seeming departure from Boccaccio in favor of Benoit and Guido when Chaucer makes the Greeks initiators in the trade of Antenor for Criseyde, which accentuates the already seeming star-crossed lovers' syndrome of Troilus and Criseyde (258). This trade leads to more desperate measures for Pandarus and Troilus in hopes of keeping Criseyde in Troy. Louise Fradenburg ("Our owen wo to drynke': Loss, Gender, and Chivalry in *Troilus and Criseyde*") alludes to possible rape in the consummation scene of Book III,<sup>2</sup> but Chaucer more directly employs rape in Book IV when Pandarus suggests to Troilus, "Go ravisshe hire ne kanstow not?" (4.530). William Quinn ("The Rapes of Chaucer") explores this scene and its implications. Quinn points to the question by Pandarus three lines later—"Artow in Troie" (4.533)—which seems to suggest ravishment is the Trojan thing to do (9). Pandarus further questions Troilus' manliness—"Kith now somewhat thi corage and thi myght" (4.619). These lines, as Quinn puts

them together, echo Fradenburg's similar statement about the consummation scene, suggesting ravishment would allow Troilus to assert his masculinity while maintaining honor. Troilus, however, protests Pandarus' suggestion, after which Pandarus asserts he meant nothing of the sort, though his objection hints that he finds rape "no vice" (4.596). Troilus then turns to Criseyde, who promises to escape and return to Troy, but Troilus does not believe such a scheme will work; and, as Quinn maintains, he worries about Criseyde's ability to resist the "rhetorical rape" by Calkas—"That ravysshyn he shal yow with his speche" (4.1474)—and by others in the Greek camp, which we know already will occur.

Laura Hodges' article ("Sartorial Signs in *Troilus and Criseyde*") continues its study of costumes and costume rhetoric, looking at Book IV. Criseyde, aware of her impending trade to the Greeks declares:

“And, Troilus, my clothes everychon  
Shul blake ben in tokenyng, herte swete,  
That I am as out of this world agon,  
That wont was you to setten in quiete;  
And of myn ordre, ay til deth me mete,  
The observance evere, in youre absence,  
Shal sorwe ben, compleynt, and abstinence.” (4.778-84)

Criseyde here, as Hodges says, “freshens the image of her appearance as it is first described” in Book I, when Criseyde is the celestial, “heavynisshe,” chaste widow (241). The celestial references of Book I are echoed in the narrator's statement, “Hire face, lik of Paradys the ymage” (4.864). Hodges further assumes, though without textual evidence, that Criseyde has worn her

widow's weeds throughout the affair as a device of protection and concealment, but her reassertion to Troilus of the implications of her wearing these garments, as the mourning wife of a dead husband, seem shallow and "shop-worn" in light of what has taken place (241).

Sally Slocum examines Criseyde's character in the final two books of the *Troilus*, in her article, "Criseyde Among the Greeks." Slocum, with Campbell and other scholars, points out Criseyde's lack of comfort after the decision to trade her for Antenor, and the further demands by Pandarus that she comfort Troilus. Pandarus vests responsibility for Criseyde's escape from the Greeks solely on Criseyde herself: "So shapeth how to destourbe youre goynge,/ Or com ayeyn soon after ye be went,/ Wommen ben wise in short avyusement" (4.934-36). Slocum describes Criseyde as an "exile," who is "sent from her country by her government" (367) despite Pandarus' assertions to Troilus "if she wilneth fro the for to passe,/ Thanne is she fals" (4.615-16). Furthermore, she is a brave woman who nobly answers the orders of her rulers.

Book V begins with Criseyde's exchange, and, again, Chaucer departs from his sources. Slocum points out, Benoit's Briseida is "angry and ashamed," she has "all of her possessions bundled to take with her and, in scorn, she dons her most precious raiment" (367). Hodges echoes this discrepancy between Benoit and Chaucer. Chaucer allows no new full description of Criseyde other than a "reprise" of previously-seen images of Criseyde. This selective and random naming of pieces of Criseyde's garments—"her brooch (5.1040); her glove (5.1013); and her sleeve (5.1040-41, 1043)—underlines, as Hodges says, "the fragmenting of her bond with Troilus" (242). Further, Hodges explains,

Once inside the pavilions of the Greek camp, however, Chaucer's treatment of Criseyde's costume signifies the disintegration of her relationship with Troilus.

The progression of confiscated glove to succorating gifts from Criseyde to Diomedes highlights her progressive betrayal of Troilus” (242-43).

Her shift to Diomedes is also pronounced, Hodges asserts, in Chaucer’s final descriptions of Criseyde’s appearance:

And ofte tymes this was hire manere:  
To gon yressed with hire heres clere  
Doun by hire coler at hire bak behynde,  
Which with a thred of gold she wolde bynde. (5.809-12)

This passage, following her apparent declaration of new love with Diomedes but before we actually learn of it in the poem, is significant because Criseyde has lost her widow’s “barbe” and now wears her hair down, tied “with a thred of gold,” which only accentuates her appearance in contrast to the humbling duty of her former widow’s weeds.

Slocum continues her discussion of Criseyde in Book V, pointing out that, as said before, Criseyde is, unlike Briseis and Creseida who are both angry at their situations, dutiful as “Ful sorwfully she sighte and seyde ‘Allas!’” (5.58). It is indeterminable whether Criseyde’s manner is influenced by her confidence in being able to escape the Greeks, or whether she is simply, as Craig Berry says, “rolling with the punches” (245). Slocum notes Criseyde’s cold response to her father—“She seyde ek she was fayn with hym to mete,/ And stood forth muwet, milde, and mansuete” (5.193-4)—after which Criseyde is generally lost to us in the story (368-369).

The narrator provides one final scene with Criseyde:

Upon that other syde ek was Criseyde,  
With wommen fewe, among the Grekis stronge,

For which ful ofte a day 'Allas,' she seyde

'That I was born!' (5.687-90)

Slocum considers Criseyde as completely despairing, aware of the "reality of her situation" (369), and, further, suggests a similar passage in the *Romance of the Rose*, in which Hope, bearing three gifts, comes to those suffering the pains of love. "Sweet Thought" (2.44-61), "Sweet Speech" (2.62-94), and "Sweet Sight" (2.95-116)<sup>3</sup> relieve the lovers, but Criseyde, because of the hopelessness of her situation, which she now realizes, has only Sweet Thought. Criseyde, then, again as a dutiful heroine, blames herself for the separation:

Allas, I ne hadde trowed on youre loore

And went with yow, as ye me redde er this!

Than hadde I now nat siked half so soore.

Who myghte have seyde that I hadde don amys

To stele away with swich oon as he ys?

But al to late comth the letuarie,

Whan men the cors unto the grave carie. (5.736-42)

Slocum points out, interestingly, that Criseyde's self blame is furthered by her own scorn that she does not have her father's soothsaying powers: "But futur tyme, er I was in the snare,/ Koude I nat sen; that causeth now my care" (5.748-749). However, she does see the future because she realizes she will remain with the Greeks. This future is further destroyed by Diomedes, who makes Criseyde aware of Troy's impending doom, the reason her father pushed for her trade.

This dark future leads Criseyde to see Diomedes as another Troilus, the son of a king, who might provide her protection, as did Hector briefly and perhaps Troilus also (Slocum 371).

Arguments in favor of Criseyde are damaged though when she lies to Diomedes about her alleged lover in Troy, and makes further assertion of her widowhood (5.953-980). Slocum alludes to comments by David Aers and others, who argue that widowhood afforded some protection and even sympathy, both a necessity for lonely Criseyde at this point.<sup>4</sup> Slocum continues defending Criseyde by looking at Troilus' letter, arguably the first word she receives from Troy since the trade. But this letter, two months later than Criseyde's no less, concerns itself with Troilus' suffering, and, further, demands that Criseyde remember her promise. Her response, however ambivalent, could indeed be sincere, but we only witness it through Troilus' reactions and the narrator's allusions.

Slocum finds Criseyde's second letter (5.1590-1631) more troubling, especially her claim "that I tarie is al for wikked speche" (5.1610). Slocum points to lines before Criseyde's letter which may explain this assertion. After Troilus' dream is interpreted by Cassandra, "...day by day he gan to enquire and seche/ A sooth of this with al his fulle cure/ And thus he drieth forth his aventure (5.1538-40). Slocum questions whether "wicked speche" is a creation by Criseyde in response to these possible inquiries made by Troilus of her activities in the Greek camp, a violation of the secrecy of their affair, certainly in light of Criseyde's concerns throughout the poem for her reputation. Ultimately, Slocum concludes, "I don't pity her because she is a faithless woman, whose type deserves pity. But I have real pity for a woman who was abandoned by her father, manipulated by her uncle, exiled without justification by her country. Pity for a homesick lady who fell into despair, without hope, without even a friend" (374).

Rather than providing a close reading of the narrative structure of Book V, as do most scholars attempting to wrestle with Criseyde's inner demons, David Williams, in his "Distentio,

Intentio, Attentio: Intentionality and Chaucer's Third Eye," instead looks at one interesting stanza in which he finds an intriguing reference to Dame Prudence:

Prudence, alas, oon of thyne eyen thre  
Me lakked alwey, er that I come here!  
On tyme ypassed wel remembred me,  
And present tyme ek koude ich wel ise,  
But future tyme, er I was in the snare,  
Koude I nat sen; that causeth now my care. (5.744-49)

The significance of Criseyde's reference to Prudence carries with it more meaningful insight into the nature of time, which Williams finds explanation for in Augustine's *Confessions* and the philosophy of William of Ockham. Williams notes the repetition of 'entente,' already discussed by both Archibald and Campbell, in Chaucer's works as a whole.

William of Ockham asserts that first intentions are the business of metaphysics, having to do with the way things really are, with being. Meanwhile, second intentions are the business of logic, having to do with the way things exist in the mind, with concepts and words.<sup>5</sup> Before Ockham, Augustine used intention to understand time. Time is experienced through three operations of the mind: matched with praeter-itis is memory of the past, matched with at-tentio is experience of the present, and matched with in-tentio is anticipation of the future (Williams 38).

Thus, Williams claims:

When Chaucer has Criseyde address Prudence and lament her lack of one of the Virtue's dimensions, he sets in motion a series of associations that deepen the resonance of the image and widen the thematic concerns of the narrative. The

philosophical concept of intention, the Augustinian theory of time, and the metaphor of three-eyed Prudence combine in *Troilus and Criseyde*, it is argued here, to reveal the poem's ultimate meaning as one deeply anchored in the philosophical realism of its author's Christian Neoplatonism. (38)

Chaucer might have known Prudence, in her Medieval body, through Albertanus Brixiensis'

*Liber Consolationis et Consilii*, itself consisting of Martinus Dumiensis' *Pseudo-Seneca*:

So that you may carefully examine and prudently conduct matters "intend your gaze to the future and, thus your spirit reaching out, the whole will be displayed before it." And not only future time, but toward the past as well you must intend. For as Seneca has said in his *De Formula Honestae Vitae*, "if you are truly prudent, your spirit will be stretched out to embrace the three modes of time: order the present, foresee the future, and remember the past, for whoever knows nothing of the past will perish, while he who cannot reflect upon the future into all kinds of traps will be ensnared. Display before your spirit, therefore, both the good and evil that the future holds so that you may endure and be in control."<sup>6</sup>

Chaucer combines this medieval view of Prudence, composed of parts which as a whole become both the psychological and intellectual experiences of time, with the Augustinian philosophy of time in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer probably witnessed such a pairing first in Dante.

However, Dante's representation of Prudence in *Purgatory* is quite literal, with her three eyes, leading other representatives of the four cardinal virtues. Chaucer's employment is more metaphoric. Williams says, "Criseyde employs the figure to express her understanding of time in its material, particular, fragmented manifestations, mistakenly attributing her woes to an inability

to understand one of these fragments” (50). Criseyde reads her past when she reads the siege of Thebes in Book II, but this reading is interrupted; and, as Catherine Sanok’s article studies in greater detail,<sup>7</sup> Criseyde never finishes her past, and is therefore unable to obey the Senecan order of knowing one’s past. Irony exists in this ignorance of a past as it does in her protestations in Book V of a blindness to the future, even more so, as pointed out in Slocum’s article, because her father is a soothsayer.

The greatest irony, Williams argues in castigating Criseyde, is her misreading of time and intention as fragmented entities, past, present, and future, subordinating the pieces of time to particulars, lesser elements of the universal, God’s eternal time. More interestingly, Williams suggests Criseyde has no inner self. Augustine purposes that the intention of the human spirit directs the self outward toward an understanding of time’s three elements, but Criseyde lacks this outwardness, and, further, this translates into no inner substance. As Williams says, her response to Pandarus’ erotic suggestions “does not arise from moral principle firmly established within, but from crude considerations of banal external exigencies: her reputation (2.738), her material welfare (2.706), her social position (2.707), and a fear of gossip so great as to suggest the schizophrenic” (52). Thus, lacking outwardness herself, having her attempt to understand the past interrupted by Pandarus, and, like her uncle, firmly relying on human discourse, Criseyde lives completely in the present, in the particular, unable to move outwardly into the universal realm.

Continuing a theme of incompleteness, Helen Andretta, in her article “Spirit, Psyche, and Self in *Troilus and Criseyde*,” equates Criseyde to an “anachronistic figure, medievalized by a fourteenth-century Christian writer to express better the problems of existence, of love, and of loss that each individual encounters in the span between the cradle and the grave” (1). While

Criseyde herself suffers, more importantly in Chaucer's theme, as Andretta describes it, Criseyde is to Troilus a representation of otherworldly bliss, bringing to mind the many references to her as celestial object in Book I. This view is encouraged by Pandarus' nominalist philosophy. Sounding very much like David Williams' article, Andretta argues that Pandarus, "like a nominalist, views qualities as devoid of real universals," and further, that Pandarus "makes the desires of the Self as ends worthy of fulfillment by any means" (4). Pandarus "misreads" Troilus' desires for love by seeing love only as a particular, but, for Troilus, it is a universal, which dictates an even more disastrous emotional experience for the prince after Criseyde's betrayal, emotions which Pandarus cannot comprehend in order to console and council. Criseyde is Spirit in the poem, a signified universal, while Pandarus is Self, confidant in his positions as both uncle and confidant, but unaware that these positions are particular, unified, and therefore limited by a lack of perception. Troilus is Psyche, "driven by the love experience to seek attaining Criseyde and holding on to her through Pandarus" (5).

Elizabeth Archibald's article on 'entente' concludes with a discussion of Book V and the implications of Criseyde's true intentions. She sees the narrator surrendering hope in Criseyde and finally acknowledging her deviation from stated intentions:

'For which, withouten any wordes mo  
To Troie I wole, as for conclusioun.'  
But God it wot, er fully monthes two,  
She was ful fer fro that entencioun!  
For bothe Troilus and Troie town  
Shal knotteles thoroughout hire slide;

For she wol take a purpose for t'abide. (5.764-70)

Archibald points out the clever reference to Pandarus' declaration in Book II of "entencioun-conclusioun" (2.258-59), which is interesting in light of what we know Pandarus would have Criseyde's intentions be. Criseyde appears to accept Diomedes' advances, and, in speaking with him, relates her challenges in conveying her feelings with words:

'I say nat therfore that I wol yow love,  
N'y say nat nay; but in conclusioun,  
I mene wel, by God that sit above!' (5.1002-04)

While her language is, as she indicates, difficult and elusive, she follows this with clear actions by giving Diomedes her glove and her brooch.

Criseyde "divorces," as Hodges says, the word 'entente' from the written word and "space which words cover" in her letter to Troilus—"Th'entente is al, and nat the lettres space" (5.1630)—which Hodges glosses as "it's the thought that counts" (208). Hodges suggests of Criseyde, "By her pathetic attempt to cling to intention as the most important criterion she damns herself, for we have long since ceased to believe in the stability of her intentions, or in her ability to communicate them" (208).

Melvin Storm sees the narrator in Book V as attempting to find justification for excusing Criseyde:

Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde  
Forther than the storye wol devyse.  
Hire name, allas, is publysshed 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. (5.1093-99)

Criseyde, herself, however, acknowledges her compromised state only a few lines earlier, and, where she looks to a future which, as Storm argues, “is neither realized nor even suggested in the remainder of the work” (110):

She seyde, ‘Allas, for now is clene ago  
My name of trouthe in love, for every mo!  
For I have falsed oon the gentileste  
That evere was, and oon the worthieste!

‘Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,  
Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge  
No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.  
O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!

Thoroughout the world my belle shal be ronge!’ (5.1054-62)

She does not focus on the nature of her alleged sin, and, also, she seems to hint at the unjustness of her condemnation as she says, “Al be I nat the first that dide amys” (5.1067). Nevertheless, Criseyde introduces here what Storm refers to as “the theme of retribution” (111).

Carolyn Dinshaw’s “Reading Like A Man,” as with Stanbury’s discussion in chapter 3 of this study, looks at the masculine figure reading the feminine. Troilus, in attempting to read Criseyde, says to her, “Though ther be mercy writen in youre cheere,/ God woot, the text ful hard

is, soth, to fynde!/ How koude ye withouten bond me bynde” (3.1356-58). But in Book V, Troilus’ text is taken away and Criseyde’s letter becomes, as Dinshaw says, “a substitute for Criseyde’s body” (66), but ultimately Troilus sees only that which he wants to see. Criseyde is, herself, a reader though. Criseyde shows in the lines highlighted above by Storm (5.1054-62), her awareness of her future victimization by masculine readings:

‘Thei wol seyn, in as muche as in me is,  
I have hem don deshonour, weylaway!  
Al be I nat the first that didde amys,  
What helpeth that to don my blame away?’ 5.1065-68)

Ultimately, reading like a man imposes a “totality” to the poem, in which all elements must fit. As Dinshaw says, it not only insists on a unified reading but construes as feminine and consequently excludes whatever does not accord with that whole” (70). This is disastrous for Criseyde, the poem’s “slydyng” heroine, whose changing nature cannot accommodate such a fixity.

Jeremy Downes (‘Streight to My Matere’: Rereading Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde*’) takes issue with Dinshaw’s reading accusing Dinshaw, herself, of “reading like a man” in continuing to see Chaucer’s ending of the poem as “markedly gendered.” Downes examines the final stanzas of the poem, specifically the reference to “sothefast Crist, that starf on rode,/ With al myn herte of mercy evere I preye” (5.1860-61). A parallel is drawn to Criseyde by the mention of “mercy” for we remember Troilus’ acknowledgment of his inability to read Criseyde—“Though ther be mercy writen in youre cheere,/ God woot, the text ful hard is, soth, to fynde!” (3.1356-57). The implications here, as Downes explains them, are that Christ is “legible” while Criseyde

is not (175). While Christ's humility and mercy lead to salvation, Criseyde's humility leads to her damnation, at least according to old books. Downes argues,

What "men seyn" and what "the storie telleth" are throughout the poem exposed to question as possible lies, and occasionally to outright disagreement: "Men seyn— I not—that she yaf hym heire herte" (5.1050). The question is actually left open: Does one believe what "men seyn" about a woman? Does one believe what the narrator says? ...My point, is not, of course, that Criseyde is actually "true" to Troilus. My point, rather is that, aware that his own perspective—like those of the *auctorites* he cites—is faulty, the narrator chooses not to condemn her. (175)

Thus, the celestial figure of Criseyde, initially equated with Christ, is not completely misaligned with the poem's conclusion. While Christian revelation allows a totality of vision—"Uncircumscrip, and al maist circumscribe" (5.1865)—Chaucerian revelation "attempts to "uncircumscribe" the woman most subject to the limited human circumscription of 'wicked speche' and what 'men seyn'" (Downes 175). Criseyde escapes any attempt at masculine reading because of her "unknowability" and ultimately escapes condemnation by what is "carefully unwritten" in the *Troilus* (Downes 176).

Readers are left with an indeterminable opinion of Criseyde. While she is seemingly fickle and inconstant, she is also a victim of circumstance. The exterior world ultimately intrudes on the inner sanctum of Criseyde's Troy, forcing her to the Greek camp were she betrays Troilus. Judging Criseyde's actions by looking only at specific scenes becomes difficult in light of her ever-changing character throughout the poem. Therefore, many recent scholars have attempted to analyze Criseyde's actions and character wholly throughout the poem in hopes of unlocking the

mysteries of Chaucer's most puzzling character.

### *Notes*

1. Qtd. in Campbell 353. For further discussion of Aers' chapter see Chapter 2 pp. 27-28, 30, 32, of this work.
2. See Chapter 4 pp. 55-57, 67-68, of this study for further discussion of Fradenburg's article.
3. Slocum's citations for the *Romance of the Rose* refer to trans. H.W. Robbins and ed. C.W. Dunn (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1962) 11,1-10.
4. 371. In citing Aers and other scholars, Slocum notes David Aers, *Chaucer, Langland and the Creative Imagination* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980) 124, and also Eileen Power, *Medieval Women* (Cambridge University Press, 1975) 38.
5. Williams 38. Williams' summary of Okham's principle refers to *Philosophical Writings*, ed. Philoteus Boehner, Rev. Stephen F. Brown, O.F.M. (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1990) 58.
6. Qtd. in Williams 46-47. Williams quotes from Albertus Brixiensis, *Liber consolationis et consilii*, ed. Thor Sunby for the Chaucer Society (1873) xxvi, 24.
7. See the discussion of Sanok's article in Chapter 1 pp.11-12 of this study.