

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

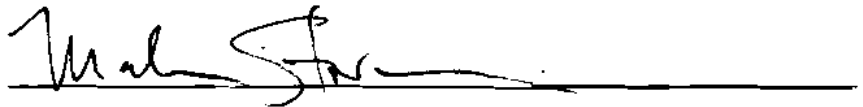
Charles Michael Sellers for the Master of Arts

in English presented on August 6, 1986

Title: From Classicism to Neo-classicism:

Criseyde Falsely Accused

Abstract approved:



The love story of Troilus and Criseyde was created in about 1160 by Benoit de Sainte-Maure, who included it as a part of his version of the story of the Trojan War. Benoit's version of the war story, Le Roman de Troie, was based on earlier Latin versions of the story, which, however, contained no reference to the love story. The works that have evolved from Benoit's love story include Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, and Dryden's Troilus and Cressida or The Truth Found Too Late, among others. The list spans more than five hundred years.

The love story deals with the series of events leading to the union of the lovers and their subsequent separation. Most critics of the story claim that Criseyde becomes false to Troilus because she is fickle, overly sensual, and indecisive. Few critics have considered how the societal requirements with which a woman in Criseyde's position had to conform or the traditionally established hierarchy to which she was subject affect her actions.

The story, ultimately, becomes a study of the exercise of authority. A recurring theme during the period of history when these stories were being written was a concern for maintaining the status quo in a society that was losing confidence in traditional hierarchy. The authority of the monarch, the authority of the head of a family, and the authority of the head of a household all join forces in the love story to control Criseyde and to make her false. The major culprit in this scheme may well be Troilus, who, because he fails to exercise his authority on her behalf, forces Criseyde into actions that cause her to be judged as a lewd and fickle woman.

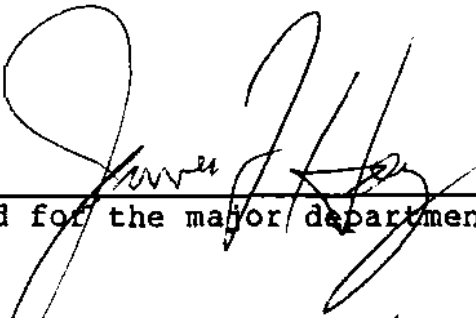
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CRISEYDE FALSELY ACCUSED

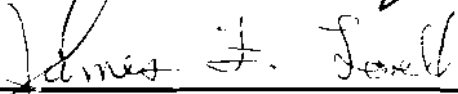
A Thesis
Presented to
The Division of English
and Foreign Languages
EMPORIA STATE UNIVERSITY

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
Charles Michael Sellers
August, 1986

Thompson
1956


Approved for the major department


Approved for the Graduate Council

To
my Mother
Mary I. Sellers
and
In memory of my Father
Kenneth A. Sellers

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Introduction

The love story of Troilus and Criseyde has captivated the imaginations of writers and audiences alike for centuries. The story originates in the twelfth century with Benoit de Sainte-Maure, although his account of the Trojan war itself is based on two older works attributed to Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis. Benoit's version, which is dated at about 1160, was the model for many later versions of the love story. Among the writers who adapted Benoit's story are Guido delle Colonne, Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lydgate, Robert Henryson, Robert Heywood, William Shakespeare, and John Dryden. Other writers have dealt with the story on a minor scale and still others, such as John Marston in his Histrio-Mastix, have been credited by literary historians with dealing with the story, although in these latter cases the writers do little more than allude to the characters. Among the major versions of the story, those that contain innovations or other changes in the characters, are Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Henryson's Testament of Cresseid, Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, and Dryden's Troilus and Cressida or The Truth Found Too Late. These versions are significant in that they in one way or another have an effect on the way the reader and the critic view Criseyde.

Introduction

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While the story of the love of Troilus and Criseyde has been considered by many critics to be the story of Troilus, there are elements in the story that, because they have such an adverse effect on her, make it more properly Criseyde's story. In this study I have chosen to discuss Criseyde's problems to the exclusion, wherever possible, of the problems that plague only Troilus. Also, because the name of the female character is not the same in all of the versions, in order to avoid confusion I have chosen to use Chaucer's spelling of the name in references to situations common to more than one version. However, in references to each each specific work, I have used the spelling employed in that work.

While most criticism of the stories centers on Troilus, much has been said about Criseyde as well, although most such criticism deals with Criseyde's infidelity to Troilus and the consequences of that infidelity for him rather than offering an explanation of her actions. Few critics feel that Criseyde's actions are in any way excusable. There are, however, many circumstances apparent in all versions of the story that provide Criseyde with justification or at best extenuation for her conduct.

Criseyde is portrayed as a woman who must respond to the demands of her society that she remain subservient to the established hierarchy. A major element implicit in the story is Criseyde's failure, because of mitigating circumstances, to maintain that position. In most of the

later versions, she is forced into a clandestine relationship with Troilus through the instigation of her kinsman, Pandarus. By relinquishing her tenuous position of personal autonomy, Criseyde becomes enmeshed in a love affair that is later dissolved by the more authoritative actions of Priam and her father, Calchas. This action on the part of her traditional superiors is the principal cause for Criseyde's desertion from Troilus and for her subsequent involvement in a relationship with the Greek, Diomedes, the two actions for which Criseyde's fictional contemporaries and the critics primarily judge her.

A proper defense of Criseyde requires that we examine the social and political situations in which she finds herself. Criseyde exists in a society where authority is being challenged by an armed aggressor. In order to survive in this society, Criseyde must align herself with someone in a position of power. In the following study we will explore how Criseyde responds to these problems and how her actions are interpreted by the critics.

Chapter One

The Creation and Subsequent Tradition of the Love Story of Troilus and Criseyde

The story of the Trojan war was popular with the peoples of Medieval and Renaissance Europe. The most influential version of the story of the war which was available to them came from the writings of Dares Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis, who were reputed to have been participants in the war. According to legends current in the Middle Ages, Dictys' story, Ephemeris Belli Troiani, was supposed to have been found in the fourth century, while Dares' story, De Excidio Troiae Historia, was said to have been discovered in the sixth century. Dares was believed to have fought on the side of the Trojans until the end of the war. Because he purportedly was in the city and was a part of the army, his version of the story was thought to be historically accurate. Dictys' version, on the other hand, was authoritative because he was said to be a member of the Greek army. Dictys supposedly supplemented what he witnessed in the battles with information garnered from interviews with the more notable participants in the battles, such as Ulysses. Dictys' version of the story includes the events which took place when the Greek leaders returned to their homelands.

Cornelius Nepos claimed to have found Dares' story, which he translated into Latin, while he was cleaning out a cabinet in a library in Athens. While there is evidence that both books were based on older Greek writings, Dares' work is probably an abridged version of a longer Latin work which has since been lost (Gordon xii). That the discoveries of Dares' and Dictys' works were found to be fraudulent by Jacob Perizonius in 1702, as indeed were the works themselves, had little effect on their influence, is obvious from their continued popularity (Exeter x).

Chaucer refers to Dares on several occasions in Troilus and Criseyde, but it is probable that the version to which he refers is that of Joseph of Exeter rather than that of Dares. The Iliad of Dares Phrygius by Joseph of Exeter is a Latin verse version of the Dares story written in the latter part of the twelfth century. This work contains six books, which relate the story of the Trojan war as told by Dares with some supplemental information about the homecoming of the Greeks taken from Dictys. Chaucer takes his descriptions of Diomedes, Criseyde, and Troilus from Joseph of Exeter (Gordon xii).

These three characters are not linked in any story by Dares which remains in existence. What we have as the love story of Troilus and Criseyde has its origins in Benoit de Sainte-Maure's Le Roman de Troie, written in 1160. The love story has also been told by Guido delle Colonne, Boccaccio, Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Dryden, among others,

a list which spans more than five hundred years. Each of these authors in his turn altered Benoit's original story in some way. In order to appreciate fully how Criseyde was changed and why critics of the character have had such varied opinions about her, it is necessary to look at the major variations in the plot. R. K. Gordon says that some critics of Benoit's version of the story contend that because his love story is interspersed with accounts of the battles, the Roman fails to emphasize the love story as much as do such later versions as Boccaccio's and Chaucer's (Gordon xvi). But Benoit's story is carefully outlined in a 570-line resume which prefaces the poem and which prepares the reader to read the tale. As Lumiansky suggests, it is unlikely that he treated the love story lightly considering that it was he who invented it (Lumiansky 728).

In the basic plot of the story of Troilus and Criseyde in Benoit, Troilus, a young son of Priam, king of Troy, falls in love with Briseida, the daughter of of the priest Calchas, who has deserted Troy and joined the forces of Greece just as they are beginning a ten-year siege of Troy. The complication in the story comes when Calchas, who had left his daughter behind when he fled from Troy, asks the Greek generals to allow him to use an exchange of prisoners to insure his daughter's release from the doomed city. The lovers vow eternal devotion to one another at the time of their separation, but, soon after the exchange

is made, Diomede, a Greek, begins to court Briseida. In time, Briseida is persuaded to abandon Troilus and to take Diomede as her new lover. Briseida knows that people in the future will think badly of her for this false action.

In his lengthy introduction to Le Roman de Troie, Benoit presents portraits of the major characters. The description which he provides of Briseida was the pattern by which she always would be imagined. According to Benoit,

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. (Benoit 5)

This description is copied or modified in some way by each author who deals with the story.

Benoit's love story begins with the discovery that Calchas, who has deserted his native Troy and become an advisor to the invading Greeks, petitions the leaders of the Greek army to help him retrieve his daughter, Briseida, whom he had abandoned in his haste to escape from Troy. The leaders agree to allow Calchas to exchange Antenor for Briseida. Benoit's revelation that the lovers are to be separated does not meet with the lengthy protestations by Troilus which we encounter in the versions which many of the later authors relate. Troilus seems to have concluded

that nothing he could do would alter the decision which Priam has made.

Priam, who hates Calchas because of the latter's treachery and treason against Troy, agrees to the exchange in order to rid Troy of anything belonging to the traitor. Priam says that if Briseida were not such a noble woman possessed of such great beauty, he would make her suffer the penalties which he gladly would inflict upon Calchas.

Priam's young son, Troilus, is deeply affected by Priam's decision because he is in love with Briseida. His thoughts are only of her because, Benoit says, "She had given herself to him both her body and her love. Most men knew of that" (8).

In addition to regret at being parted from Troilus, who she feels will not be able to find another love as true as she has been, Briseida is greatly distressed that she is to be sent away from her native city like some piece of chattel, because she is afraid that she will find no one among the Greeks who will provide her with the protection that she feels she needs.

The lovers are together for one final night before they are separated. On this night they lament the cruel fate which will part them. The following morning Briseida prepares to leave her native city. She gathers together all of her fine clothes and dresses herself in the finest. The women of Troy are sad to see Briseida leave. They all look on her with pity. Because Troilus is

saddened by her loss, all of the people lament her going. Briseida is given a fine saddle horse to ride out of Troy, the kind of courtesy that would be afforded to anyone of worth, and thus departs with full pomp and honor (8-9).

As the lovers are about to be parted, the author foretells that Briseida's tears will soon dry up and her love for Troilus be supplanted by a new love. The two lovers pledge their undying love for one another, each begging the other to be true. Troilus leads Briseida's horse by the rein to the spot where the exchange is to be made. Diomedes leads her away (10).

As Diomedes leads Briseida away from the rendezvous, he begins to contemplate her beauty. Diomedes quickly falls in love with her and immediately begins to profess love for her. The actions which he performs and the protestations which he makes are very much like those which will be made by Troilus in Boccaccio's Il Filostrato and in the later English tradition of the story which Chaucer initiates.

Benoit has Briseida answer Diomedes's proposition by saying that she cannot yet love him because she does not know him well enough to trust him and because she still sorrows for those loved ones from whom she has been separated. She is also concerned with the unseemliness of taking a lover in a military camp. She appeases Diomedes by saying, "Thus you may be very sure, if I were willing to give myself to love, I would hold none more dear than you" (12). When Troilus seriously injures Diomedes, Briseida

visits the stricken man many times in his tent. Because of his persistent protestations of love and the imminent danger of his death, Briseida finally accedes to his wishes and accepts him as her lover. She knows that what she does will be considered faithless, but she also knows that she can never have Troilus again (19-20).

Thus we have the genesis of the love story of Troilus and Cressida. All of the many writers who dealt with this story over the next several centuries followed the general plan which Benoit created in Le Roman de Troie. But, while they all followed his general plan, there were many changes in the characters and many alterations in the plot.

Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis troiae, published in 1287, was a Latin paraphrase of Benoit's Roman de Troie. This story, which its author claimed was based on Dictys and Dares, was thought to be a true historical account of the war. Guido's version was the chief means by which the story of Troy was transmitted to later times. Mary Meek says that "It is also the culmination of the development of that story" (introduction xi-xii). In true historical style Guido eliminates all of the colorful touches which Benoit used (xxi).

As was the case with Benoit, Guido does not write much about the love story. His treatment of Briseida is brief and harsh. After a brief description of her stature and hair color, Guido says of Briseida that she was an eloquent speaker, that she was compassionate to the point that she

was easily misled, and that "she attracted many lovers by her charm, and loved many, although she did not preserve constancy of heart toward her lovers" (8:198-199).

When Troilus is upset by the impending departure of Briseida, Guido interjects an admonition not to waste grief on a woman because they deceive men with their caresses and tears. If no new lover comes seeking them, they will go looking for one. Guido points out derisively that Briseida prepares herself with great care for her journey in order to make a good impression on the Greeks.

Diomede, who is with the welcoming Greeks, immediately protests his love for Briseida, which she refuses. But Guido says that in the way of women she tells Diomede that she was not yet ready for love. Guido immediately tries to demonstrate how fickle Briseida is. He says,

That day had not yet declined toward the hours of evening when Briseida had already changed her recent intentions and the former plans of her heart, and already it accorded more with her wish to be with the Greeks than to have been with the Trojans up to this time. Already the love for the noble Troilus began to moderate in her heart, and in such short time, so suddenly, and so unexpectedly, she became inconstant and began to change in everything. (19: 253-259)

When Briseida finally relinquishes all hope of ever being reunited with Troilus and gives herself to Diomede, Guido describes her action as being inspired by her blazing hot desire.

The first major change from Benoit's love story was Giovanni Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, completed in 1335. Boccaccio based his poem primarily on Benoit's Roman de Troie and on Guido delle Colonne's Historia Destructionis Troiae, but took some material from the the works of Dares and Dictys (Gordon xiii-xiv). From the basic story which Benoit provided, Boccaccio creates a more elaborate love story. He also makes the dominant characters of his love story appear more realistic. Boccaccio makes Troilus into a character consumed with love. He creates the character of Pandarus, a young Trojan of Troilus' age, who becomes Troilus' agent in the prosecution of the quest for Criseida. Boccaccio transforms a relatively inactive Briseida into Criseida, who begins to have some control over her immediate destiny. For Boccaccio the love story becomes the heart of the story while the war receives little mention.

Boccaccio as narrator presents an elaborate address to his true love in which he dedicates his story to her. At the same time he admonishes her to heed what he says about love. In his introduction to the poem, Boccaccio tells us that he is writing the love story to convince his lady, Maria d'Aquino, to give him her love. He says that there is a parallel between the story of Troilus and Criseida and Boccaccio's relationship with Maria (25-30).

The love story in Il Filostrato begins with the desertion of the priest Calchas from Troy, where he leaves his widowed daughter Criseida at the mercy of the angry Trojans. Criseida is so frightened with the outcry brought on by Calchas' defection that she begs Hector for protection. Hector quickly grants her plea because he is easily moved to pity and because Criseida is so fair. Hector tells Criseida, " [D]o thou bide with us in Troy as long as it pleases thee, safe and happy, without harm" (32). And so she goes back to her house and lives a modest life in solitude. She is respected by all who know her.

Troilus sees Criseida for the first time in the Palladium during the annual celebration of the goddess Pallas. Criseida, who is dressed in black, is trying to remain inobtrusive. Troilus, who has often expressed his disdain for love and lovers, falls in love with Criseida at first sight. Immediately after the festival, Troilus returns to his room to pine over his new-found love.

All of his actions in the war and at home from that day forward are dedicated to impressing Criseida and winning her love, although Boccaccio says that it was not known for certain whether Criseida was aware of Troilus' motivations. Henceforth, Troilus pays homage to the god of love. One day, not long after Troilus' fall into love, Pandarus comes to visit Troilus in his rooms and finds his friend in a sorrowful mood. Pandarus tries to get Troilus to tell him what is causing his woe, but Troilus refuses to disclose

this information to Pandarus because Pandarus, as a cousin and the nearest of kin to Criseida, is in a position of responsibility for protecting her honor. When Troilus finally tells Pandarus who it is that has made him fall so miserably in love, Pandarus reassures Troilus that he will undertake the task of persuading Criseida to be kind to him. Boccaccio's invention, the use of an intermediary to advance Troilus' cause, becomes a convention of the story that will be used in some fashion by all of the writers who succeed him.

According to Boccaccio, Pandarus begins at once to plot how he might persuade his cousin. To begin his assault on her potential resistance, Pandarus appraises Criseida's virtues and ideals. Criseida is virtuous and scornful of love. However, she can be flattered. Because she is a widow and has therefore been initiated to love, she will naturally desire love. The affair, when it transpires, must be kept a secret because Criseida shuns the amorous out of fear that some shame might be attached to such action. With these considerations in mind, Pandarus is sure that he can win Criseida over to Troilus. He tells Troilus, "Mine shall be all this toil, and let the sweet fruit be thine" (43).

Pandarus leaves Troilus in a much better mood and goes to see Criseida. He begins to flatter her by saying that she is luckier and has more to be thankful for to God than all of the beautiful women of Troy. Criseida asks him why

he thinks that she has had this sudden increased good fortune. Pandarus says, "Because thy face is the luckiest that ever lady had in this world, if I am not mistaken. I have heard it pleases a goodly man so beyond measure that it is his undoing" (43). Pandarus continues to dwell on Criseida's good fortune in being pretty enough to have inspired the love of so great a person. He extols the virtues and accomplishments of the man whom she has captivated. She should be quick to grab at such fortune and should not let it get away.

Criseida asks, "Who should have his pleasure of me unless he first became my husband?" (44). Pandarus answers her, "Troilus is he who desires thee so greatly" (45). Criseida's response is somewhat more defensive than Pandarus had expected:

I thought, Pandarus, that, if I had ever fallen into such folly as to desire Troilus, thou wouldst not only have chided but also have beaten me. For thou art a man who shouldst seek my honour. O God, help me! What will others do when thou dost set thy wit to make me follow the way of love?
(45)

Criseida is particularly concerned with Troilus' reputation for inconstancy: "But as thou must plainly know, such desires as he now has are common things and last four days or six and then lightly pass. For as thought changes, so does love" (45).

Boccaccio has Pandarus maintain that Troilus' actions and intentions toward her are above reproach. He says that he would counsel daughters, sisters, or wives (if he had

them) to take advantage of the situation. Pandarus reminds Criseida that she runs the risk of becoming an old woman, unloved and no longer capable of attracting love. He gives an elaborate description of how he came to find out Troilus' feelings for Criseida. Pandarus finally elicits Criseida's sympathy for Troilus and convinces her that with due caution she can risk an alliance with Troilus.

After Pandarus leaves, Boccaccio has Criseida reconsider all of the reasons which they have discussed in order (presumably) that she might convince herself that she has a right to get involved with Troilus. She considers intermittently the favorable and unfavorable aspects of such an alliance. Now is not a good time to take a husband. It is much better to keep one's freedom. Secret love is more joyous. A lover might fall out of love. Jealousy can develop on both sides. Because Troilus is of a higher station than she is, if his love cools, he might leave her dishonored, sorrowful and perplexed. Even if the love lasts, it is difficult to keep such a thing hidden. If it is discovered, her good name is lost. Criseida considers all of the arguments but remains committed.

The initial agreement which Pandarus secures from Criseida is that she will allow Troilus to love her, but Pandarus and Troilus soon push this advantage toward a complete love affair because Troilus is no longer content with looking. Pandarus suggests a campaign of letter writing through which Criseida will become convinced that

Troilus is truly in love with her. She subsequently agrees to a consummation of the affair, but cautions that they must be very discreet.

Boccaccio says that Pandarus again cautions Troilus to secrecy because what Pandarus is doing for him as go-between reflects on his own and on his cousin's honor. Troilus promises that nothing on earth could tempt him to say anything which would compromise Criseida's honor and also promises that, if Pandarus wished, Troilus would serve as go-between with one of his own kinswomen.

Troilus goes alone on a dark night to his appointed meeting with Criseida. He waits with anticipation for Criseida to come for him. When she arrives, they exchange pleasantries for a few minutes and then they passionately embrace. Criseida leads him to a chamber where they disrobe and go to bed for a long night of lovemaking.

Shortly after their first night together, Troilus is present at the palace when the Greek emissary comes to bring Calchas' offer to exchange Antenor for Criseida. According to Boccaccio's account, Troilus heeds his promise to Pandarus that he will never disclose his love affair with Criseida, although he listens with increasing agitation as his father and brothers decide to accept the trade of Criseida for Antenor. When the decision is finally made, Troilus faints and is returned to his rooms, where Pandarus finds him in a state of frenzy.

Pandarus, who has come as soon as he has heard the news, tells Troilus that he should not mourn because he has had what he wanted. Pandarus assures his young friend that the city is full of beautiful women, so, "Therefore, if we lose this lady we shall find plenty of others" (76). Because Troilus responds that only death can remove his great love for Criseida, Pandarus tells him that, if he truly cares that much for Criseida, he should carry her off as Paris did Helen.

Troilus considers it a matter of honor and duty that he not desert the city in this time of great need and is concerned as well that Priam, for the good of the city, might not let him keep Criseida from her father. Besides, he continues, "I would not for my own pleasure do harm to that gentle lady, rather would I die first. Therefore I wish first to know her feelings" (79).

When the news of her fate is confirmed for her by the women of the city, Criseida becomes distraught. In her anguish she pulls at her hair as if she wanted to pull it out, and "a thousand times each day she begged for death" (80). In her laments she utters the cry, "Alas Troilus, wilt thou bear now to see me leave thee, without setting thyself by love or by might to keep me?" (81). Criseida feels pity for Troilus, but she also senses her own potential loss because she knows that she does not have the strength to endure the strain of being separated from Troy and safety. Criseida prays, "O heavenly truth, O kindly

light, how dost thou allow things to be thus ordered, that one should sin and another weep as I do, who have not sinned and who am undone by grief?" (81).

Pandarus comes into her room and finds her in this condition of sadness. He asks, "Dost thou think to resist the fates?" (82). He tells her to quit crying and to listen to his message from Troilus. Criseida asks, "What does my love desire? . . . Does he wish for sighs or tears, or what does he crave?" (82). After more mutual tears, Pandarus tells her that Troilus wants to come to her. Criseida, in spite of her own sorrow, gives more thought to Troilus' state of mind than to her own anguish: "Grievous to me, God knows, is the going hence; but more grievous is it to see Troilus sore afflicted and so much beyond my endurance that, by my faith, I shall straightaway die; and I shall die hopeless of aide when I see Troilus thus stricken" (83). Pandarus remonstrates with her to compose herself because Troilus might kill himself if he sees her in such a state. Criseida agrees to his demand.

When Troilus comes to her in the usual manner, they embrace with many bitter tears. After uttering the lament, "O my lord, who takes me from thee, and whither shall I go!" (84), Criseida falls into a faint which Troilus perceives as death. He makes a speech berating the heavens for treating him in such a manner and prepares to kill himself so that he can join Criseida. Criseida awakens just in time to prevent Troilus from committing suicide and the lovers go to bed to talk about their woes.

They discuss the various alternatives that might solve their problems. Criseida suggests that she could go to the Greek camp for a few days, just long enough to convince her father that he should allow her to return to Troy. In her argument she says that she might be able to get Calchas to return with her if she can convince him that she is able to secure a pardon for him from Priam. Because he has no better solution to offer, Troilus persuades himself to believe that her plan will work.

After an interlude of lovemaking, Troilus begins to doubt the wisdom of Criseida's plan. He thinks that Calchas can entertain no hope of regaining the property or prestige which he abandoned when he fled Troy. Because Calchas has such great esteem with the Greeks, Troilus suspects that her father will try to find a Greek husband for Criseida. If she does that, he tells her, it will kill him.

With no other solution at hand, Troilus resurrects his previously discarded plan to flee from Troy with Criseida. Criseida defeats that plan with many of the same arguments which Troilus had used. Criseida's primary concern is that running away would ruin her reputation forever. But her secondary reason is that Troilus would cease to love her if their love became too easy and too public. Troilus makes no comment that would refute her assertion.

At the end of their last night together, Troilus and Criseida make vows to each other of eternal love and fidelity. Criseida says to Troilus:

And I pray thee, while I am far away, let not thyself be caught by delight in any lady or by strange desire. For, if I heard that, thou must know for a truth that I would slay myself as one distraught, grieving for thee beyond reason. Wouldst thou forsake me for another, thou, who knowest I love thee more than ever woman loved man? (90)

Troilus answers that he has come to love her for her noble attributes that cast a scornful eye on vulgarity. He promises her that,

Such art thou to me, o sovereign lady mine. Nor can the years, nor fickle fortune, take these things away, and therefore with more anguish and with greater sorrows do I live in the desire of ever possessing thee. Ah, wretched being that I am, what can offset my loss if thou, my sweet love go away? In truth, nothing except eternal death. (90-91)

These vows of eternal devotion, originated by Benoit, are repeated to some length and in some fashion by all of the writers who deal with this story.

The following day Diomedes comes to make the exchange. Troilus accompanies the party to the point of exchange where he and Criseida have their final parting. Diomedes, who is attracted to Briseida, notes the couple's reaction to the separation.

The balance of the poem deals with Troilus' lament over the extended separation from Criseida. When the ten days have passed and Criseida does not return, Troilus begins to write letters to Criseida asking why she has delayed her

return and pleading that she return soon. Troilus has a dream in which he sees Criseida being ravaged by a great white boar which is a symbol of Diomedes. Soon afterward Troilus discovers a brooch he had given to Criseida on a cloak which Diomedes has lost in battle. In his anguish over this proof of Criseida's infidelity, Troilus inadvertently lets Deiphobus overhear him talking to himself about his love for Criseida. Soon all of Troy knows of his love for Criseida. Finally Troilus in despair decides to exhaust his grief and seek death in battle.

While Boccaccio, in the prelude to his poem, tries to make a close connection between himself and Troilus, Chaucer, in his version of the story, does everything he can to distance himself from the characters. Although Chaucer, the author, removes himself from the story, he develops a distinct persona as narrator who comments on and judges the characters. The narrator is so sympathetic, in fact, that at the end of the poem he suggests that he would forgive her for her sins if his "authorities" would permit it (5.1093). Chaucer's authorities for Troilus and Criseyde are probably Joseph of Exeter, Benoit, and Boccaccio, although he might have borrowed material from any number of sources. He takes his descriptions of Diomedes, Troilus, and Criseyde from Joseph of Exeter. The name "Lollius" to which he refers several times in the poem may be his attempt to manufacture a more authoritative source for his story (Robinson 812).

Chaucer makes the character of Criseyde into a far more complex individual than was Boccaccio's Criseida. She is more slowly won to love by Pandarus and Troilus. Criseyde is more capable of weighing the advantages and disadvantages of an involvement with Troilus than was Criseida. Chaucer removes the eager sensuality of Boccaccio's heroine from his own Criseyde and gives us some insights into her psychological motivations. In the end, because it becomes difficult for him to justify Criseyde's sudden conversion to loving Diomedes, he puts the responsibility on his authorities: "Ye may hire giltes in other bokes se" (5.1776). Chaucer's Criseyde is such a sympathetic character that it is difficult for the reader to accept that she becomes false.

Chaucer changes Pandarus to make him Criseyde's uncle, who becomes Troilus' older friend and philosophical advisor. Chaucer's Pandarus is the primary agent in bringing Troilus' conquest of Criseyde to fruition. It is Chaucer's Pandarus who, much more than his counterpart in Boccaccio's Il Filostrato, leads Troilus through the processes of courting Criseyde. In doing this Chaucer makes Pandarus' actions in helping Troilus even more vile, because as Criseyde's uncle he is more obliged to protect and advise her than was Boccaccio's Pandarus.

The plot of Troilus and Criseyde is little changed from that of Il Filostrato. The two versions of the story, as do the treatments of the theme of the love story as well,

differ in how the writers deal with Criseyde. In Boccaccio, she was a simple character who was primarily motivated by a desire for companionship and security. She is perceived by future writers to possess the same characteristics, although, because of Chaucer's treatment of her, these writers do not judge her as harshly as did Guido.

In Troilus and Criseyde, Chaucer tries to show why Criseyde falls in love with Troilus as well as how she deals with the problems which plague that love. This more introspective look at Criseyde begins with our first introduction to her. Chaucer says of her:

Now hadde Calchas left in this meschaunce,
 Al unwist of this false and wikked dede,
 His doughter, which that was in gret penaunce,
 For of hire lif she was ful sore in drede,
 As she that nyste what was best to rede;
 For bothe a widwe was she and allone
 Of any frend to whom she dorst hire mone.
 (1.92-98)

The reader is quickly made aware that Criseyde is in serious jeopardy because of the actions of her father. In addition, it becomes evident that she has no one in whom she can confide. Criseyde, who fears for her life because, in the uproar which followed Calchas' departure, it was suggested that he and all of his kin should be burned, goes to Hector to plead for his protection. With Hector's assurance that she can stay in Troy as long as she wishes, Criseyde returns to her home to take up a life of quiet, pious solitude. It is because of her piety that she goes to the Palladium on feast day where Troilus sees her.

Troilus is at the festival of Pallas, where he continues his frequent habit of ridiculing lovers. As he is wandering around the temple, however, Troilus spies Criseyde standing self-confidently by the door and falls in love with her at first sight. He spends the rest of his time in the temple trying not to be too obvious in his furtive glances at this figure who, because of her beauty and noble bearing, has so completely captivated him. After the celebration of Pallas is over, Troilus slips quietly out of the temple before anyone can notice his sudden affliction by love. After the festival Troilus returns to his rooms, where he spends the next several days in great distress over his love for the lady.

Some days later Pandarus comes into Troilus' room unannounced and finds him in this condition. After long and arduous persuasion, Pandarus convinces Troilus that he can help with this situation if Troilus will put the management of the affair in Pandarus' hands. Pandarus assures Troilus that he will not do anything which will put Criseyde's honor in jeopardy and cautions Troilus that he should take the same precaution.

Pandarus goes to see Criseyde the next day. She is sitting in her garden with her nieces, listening to one of them reading the Roman de Thebes. Pandarus tells Criseyde to put down the book and to cast off her widow's veil; she should be joyous and dancing. Criseyde responds that while such activity is fitting for young girls and new brides,

it is more fitting for her as a widow to sit and read; she should be in a nunnery reading about the saints' lives. Pandarus tells her that she should be happy because he has good news for her. To Criseyde's remark that only the lifting of the siege could make her happy, Pandarus responds that his news is five times as good as the end of the war. Pandarus begins to flatter Criseyde. He tells her that in all of Troy there is no woman who could feel prouder than she should.

Criseyde wants to ask him what he is talking about, but she refrains. They talk of many things concerning the city and the siege. Finally Criseyde asks Pandarus how Hector is doing in the battles, giving Pandarus the opening to begin to compare Hector and Troilus. Pandarus says that Hector is the strongest, bravest, noblest man in Troy but Troilus nearly rivals his older brother's worth. Criseyde acknowledges that she has heard this comparison made, to which Pandarus adds that Troilus is also gentle and friendly. After a lengthy discussion of a number of subjects, Pandarus prepares to leave, whereupon Criseyde asks him for some advice of a personal nature. The rest of the people around them move away so that they can converse in private. As he is about to leave again, he chides Criseyde, telling her to give up her widow's dress and come and dance. By his hesitance to speak and by his innuendos, Pandarus effectively manoeuvres Criseyde into such a condition of trepidation that she demands that he tell her

what he has been concealing. She says that she would rather hear what he has to say than have to worry whether the news was good or bad. Pandarus finally gives in to her protests and tells her that the king's son, Troilus, is so much in love with her that Pandarus is afraid he will die if Criseyde does not take pity on him. Pandarus indicates that if she refuses to love Troilus she will cause the death of both Troilus and Pandarus. Because she hesitates to give in to Pandarus' suit for Troilus, he threatens to kill himself in her presence. This makes her even more afraid because such an action would surely hurt her reputation. She is forced to consent:

And with a sorrowful sik she sayde thrie,
 "Al Lord! what me is tid a sory chauncel
 For myn estat lith now in jupartie,
 And ek myn emes lif is in balaunce;
 But natheles, with Goddes gouvernaunce,
 I shal so doon, myn honour shal I kepe,
 And ek his lif."--and stynte for to wepe.
 (2.463-69)

Criseyde agrees that she will love Troilus to please her uncle, but she will not give up her independence. Criseyde makes the stipulation that she will not go into this arrangement any further than to love Troilus and let him love her even if it should cause both of their deaths, no matter what the world thinks of her.

Before he leaves, Pandarus reminds Criseyde that she should take care not to do anything that would compromise her arrangement. He tells her to be true to Troilus and that he means only good for her in this affair.

Soon after Pandarus leaves, Troilus comes past Criseyde's house fresh from battle. She watches him ride by from a window:

Criseyde gan al his chere asprien,
 And leet it so softe in hire herte synke,
 That to hirself she seyde, "Who yaf me drynke?"
 (2.649-651)

When she realizes that this is Troilus, she blushes and pulls back from the window. Criseyde begins to consider the rightness of her actions and evaluates the situation carefully. Criseyde realizes that, because of his position, Troilus can take her, if he wishes, without her consent. To his credit, she knows of no occasion when he has done such a thing. Men might learn of his love for her, in which case if he ever grew tired of her love, that men often do, her reputation would be lost. It is obvious to her that Troilus could have any woman in Troy merely by asking, so it is somewhat flattering that he should want her, even though Criseyde is aware that she is one of the loveliest women in Troy. It is only natural that Troilus should be attracted to her. But her primary concern is that this relationship could have adverse effects on her freedom:

"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. (2.750-756)

In the end Criseyde makes her decision when she dreams of the eagle that painlessly takes away her heart and replaces it with his own.

Pandarus directs a series of letters between Troilus and Criseyde which gradually convince Criseyde of Troilus' good intentions. The next step which Pandarus engineers is to convince Criseyde that there has been talk that Poliphete is once again bringing suit against her. He convinces Criseyde that she should go to Deiphobus' house where she can elicit the support of the royal family. This ruse is to bring Troilus and Criseyde together so that Pandarus and Troilus can play on her sympathies to advance Troilus' cause. After they gain a commitment from Criseyde that she will accept Troilus, Pandarus sets up the next step, a meeting between the lovers. When Pandarus has Criseyde safely installed in his house on a rainy night, he tells her that Troilus has heard that she has been unfaithful to him. Criseyde denies the charge, saying that if Troilus were present she would deny his charges more emphatically, whereupon Pandarus brings Troilus out of a closet. After the resolution of such complications as Troilus' fainting, the affair is consummated. As the night wanes, the lovers vow that their love will endure forever and that they will always be true to one another. The lovers enjoy many months of romance before their bliss is interrupted by Calchas' demand for his daughter's release from Troy. When Calchas offers to trade Antenor for

Criseyde, Troilus does nothing to prevent the trade, claiming that he is bound not to say anything about his love. Hector on the other hand is very vocal in resisting the trade, but because no one supports his effort, he is soon quieted by the opposition.

Troilus returns to his rooms, where Pandarus finds him in a state of anguish. Pandarus tells him not to give up hope. He will arrange a meeting with Criseyde so that they can discuss what must be done. Pandarus then goes to see Criseyde, finding her in an equal state of grief. He warns Criseyde that if Troilus sees her in such a state, he will do injury to himself. Pandarus advises Criseyde to tell Troilus that she will go to her father and convince him to let her return to Troy. Because her concern is greater for Troilus than for herself, Criseyde agrees to Pandarus' plan.

When Troilus comes to see her that night, Criseyde is so distraught that she faints. Troilus, thinking that she has died, prepares to kill himself, but Criseyde awakens from her faint just in time to prevent Troilus' suicide. Criseyde realizes that they must decide immediately on a plan of action in order to dispel Troilus' depression about the separation, especially in view of his reaction to her fainting spell. Because she can think of no other course of action, she suggests Pandarus' plan, negating all of Troilus' objections in the process. Troilus' final objection, that it would still be best to steal away,

causes Criseyde to feel that Troilus does not trust her to remain true to him. Criseyde quickly chastises him on this point:

"O mercy, God, what lif is this?" quod she.
 "Allas, ye sle me thus for verray tene!
 I se wel now that ye mystrusten me,
 For by youre wordes it is wel yseene.
 Now, for the love of Cinthia the sheene,
 Mistrust me nought thus causeles, for rouhte,
 Syn to be trewe I have yow plight my trouthe."
 (4.1604-10).

Troilus assures Criseyde that he has never thought that she was false.

The outcome of the story in Chaucer, of course, is the same as it has been in the other versions of the story. But there are more indications of Criseyde's motivation in Chaucer's poem than in any of the other treatments of the story. Chaucer shows us the indecision which plagues her life and how she deals with this indecision. We see the problems that are set against her and why she fails to overcome them. It is, as many critics have said, very difficult to believe that a character, such as Criseyde, who has been in all cases kind and gentle could, without provocation, become false to her vows of undying love.

In the fifteenth century there were two significant treatments of the story which had an effect on the subsequent interpretation of the character of Criseyde. The first was the translation by John Lydgate in 1420 of Guido's version of the story. This translation made Guido's work more accessible to English readers and thus

helped to tarnish further Criseyde's reputation. It seems evident that the reputation of Guido as an historian made his interpretation of the character of Criseyde appear to be a more reliable model than was Chaucer's less severe rendering of her. The more frequent use of Guido's model might account for the increasingly severe treatment of the character. The other fifteenth-century treatment of the story is Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid, which deals with Criseyde after she is abandoned by Diomedes. Henryson makes Cresseid into a leper before he allows her to repent her sins and take responsibility for her own actions. Henryson's poem was included in a 1532 edition of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde and was thought by most readers to be the sixth book of that work (Gordon xvii).

In the latter part of the sixteenth century the story of Troilus and Criseyde was still very popular. Criseyde had by this time suffered several additional attacks on her character in the works of some of the lesser playwrights and pamphleteers, and was considered to be "a mere wanton." Shakespeare did little to dispel that impression (Gordon xviii).

Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida, unlike Boccaccio's and Chaucer's versions of the love story, once more includes as much about the war as did Benoit. The characters of Pandarus and Cressida are not as prominent in Shakespeare's version as they were in the earlier works. Pandarus becomes a comic character who bungles through his

role as go-between on his crude wit. Cressida's role seems to be much reduced as well. She has important speeches, but Shakespeare does not give as much psychological justification to her actions as did Chaucer.

The play begins with a dialogue between Troilus and Pandarus in which Pandarus makes a comparison between the courting ritual and baking bread. Pandarus' speeches are so chaotic and rambling that it is difficult to get the reader or the audience to take him seriously. He appears as a semi-witty clown who can barely perform his function as go-between for the lovers.

In scene two of act one there is a lengthy dialogue between Pandarus and Cressida in which it is Pandarus' purpose to point out the most favorable aspects of Troilus' personality, character, and fidelity. It is his hope in doing this to convince Cressida to accept Troilus as her lover. Cressida counters everything that Pandarus says. It would seem at first reading that Cressida has little or no concern for Troilus, for she demeans every flattering thing which Pandarus says about him. When Pandarus speaks of Troilus' beauty, Cressida makes his remarks seem foolish. Pandarus says that Troilus has a wondrous cleft chin. Cressida asks what sort of grievous injury the poor man has had inflicted upon him. Pandarus suggests that Troilus has greater color than does Paris. Cressida counters that since she has seen Paris and considers that he has color enough, then Troilus must be red in the face in order to have more color.

Cressida continues to poke fun at Pandarus as he describes the various soldiers who pass by, but when he goes on at such length about the virtues of Troilus while Troilus is nearby, she tries to quiet him. It becomes apparent that she is making light of Pandarus' comments for a reason, a reason which, after Pandarus leaves her, she reveals to the audience:

Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full
sacrifice,
He offers in another's enterprise:
But more in Troilus thousand fold I see
Than in the glass of Pandar's praise may be;
Yet hold I off. Women are angels wooing:
Things won are done: joy's soul lies in the doing.
That she beloved knows nought that knows not this:
Men prize the thing ungained more than it is:
That she was never yet that ever knew
Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.
Therefore this maxim out of love I teach:
Achievement is command; ungained, beseech:
Then though my heart's content firm love doth
bear,
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.
(1.2.308-321)

To be won to love is to surrender self-control, or control of her destiny. Cressida resists Pandarus' entreaties out of fear of giving in to the combined entreaties of Pandarus and Troilus. She is not just being capricious.

Troilus does not resist the decision when the news is brought that Cressida is to be traded for Antenor. He responds to Aeneas' statement that Priam and the council have accepted the Greek offer with the comment that his accomplishments have come to no good end. When Cressida asks him if this must be, he casually affirms it. There is of course a last meeting of the two lovers in which they

exchange vows of eternal devotion. There is not in Shakespeare's version the lengthy lament by Troilus that his love is being taken away.

One innovation in Shakespeare's play is in scene two of act five when Troilus watches as Diomedes and Cressida carry on a conversation. It is apparent to Troilus that some agreement is being made between the two, but Troilus is unable to overhear all that is said. Troilus all too readily assumes that what he does hear means that Cressida is giving him up for Diomedes. There is no justification up to that point of the play for such an assumption, but such an interpretation is consistent with literary precedent.

This scene includes Cressida's lament at the contemplation of having to give up her love for Troilus:

Troilus, farewell! One eye yet looks on thee;
But with my heart the other eye doth see.
Ah, poor our sex! This fault in us I find,
The error of our eyes directs our mind:
What error leads must err; O, then conclude
Minds sway'd by eyes are full of turpitude.
(5.2.107-112)

This speech, which is reminiscent of Crisseyde's speech in Chaucer foretelling her loss of honor, is the last speech Cressida has in the play. The last allusion to Cressida in the play is Troilus' reaction to a letter from her:

Words, words, mere words, no matter from the
heart;
The effect doth operate another way.
Go, wind, to wind, there turn and change together.
My love with words and errors still she feeds;
But edifies another with her deeds. (5.3.108-112)

Cressida is still operating as one who is concerned that Troilus not think her false. But Troilus, with no evidence other than what his eyes have shown him, condemns her as a wanton whore.

In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, John Dryden wrote Troilus and Cressida or The Truth Found Too Late. This play is primarily an adaptation of Shakespeare's play, but Dryden does make a different interpretation of the character of Cressida. Dryden makes the character consistent throughout the play in that she remains loyal to Troilus. Because of this change in the character, Dryden's Cressida is more palatable to modern readers who have been troubled by her usual falsity. With the further exception of some shifted scene changes, the rest of Dryden's play remains the same as Shakespeare's.

In scene two of act one, Dryden describes a conversation between Troilus and Pandarus in which the two men discuss the process of wooing Cressida in terms of the preparing of roast beef, rather than, as in Shakespeare, the making of bread. Troilus and Pandarus exchange trite comments which set the terms and degree of Troilus' love for Cressida. Troilus bewails the fact that he must use Pandarus as a conduit to Cressida.

In the latter part of the scene, Pandarus makes a case with Cressida for Troilus' worth by comparing him favorably with Hector. Cressida resists his obvious purpose by pointing out that Hector is superior in all of those attributes for which Pandarus praises Troilus. Pandarus

suggests that it would be honorable and just to acquiesce to Troilus' protestations. There is a subtle exchange between Pandarus and Cressida which alludes to something which has been discussed by the two of them on a previous occasion. It would seem to refer to the conversation in the first part of the scene between Troilus and Pandarus.

Pandarus becomes so effusive in his praise of Troilus that he embarrasses Cressida. She responds, "Peace, for shame peace" (1.2.214). Before he leaves, Pandarus cautions Cressida that she must not tarry in making her decision. He says that Helen might decide that Troilus is the better match. This seems to be designed as good salesmanship. As he is leaving, there is a final brief conversation between them which seems to imply that they have come to some agreement. After Pandarus has gone Cressida reveals what her thoughts are:

A strange dissembling Sex we Women are;
Well may we men, when we our selves decieve.
Long has my secret Soul lov'd Troilus.
I drunk his praises from my Uncles mouth,
As if my ears cou'd nere be satisfi'd;
Why then, why said I not, I love this Prince?
(1.2.242-247)

This is a more direct and positive statement of love and faithfulness than Shakespeare's Cressida was allowed to make.

Because Troilus and Cressida both are reluctant to take the initial step, it takes a great deal of effort on Pandarus' part to get them together. He predicts that he will get a bad name out of such activity. But he says, "If

a man be damned for doing good, as you say, / It may go hard with me" (2.2.44-45). Pandarus cautions Cressida that she may deny a little, but that it is bad to be obstinate. After he sends Cressida into the house, Pandarus meets with Troilus and regales him with an account of a meeting with Paris and Helen earlier in the day. This scene seems to be intended to titillate Troilus, thereby enhancing his anticipation. They finally go into the house to join Cressida.

The second scene of act three contains the vows of eternal fidelity and the notice that the lovers are to be parted. The scene is almost identical to Shakespeare's account. The variance in Dryden's version is to be found in Troilus' reluctance to agree to the exchange. In this version, Hector must convince Troilus that duty requires that he give up Cressida.

In the next act, when Troilus tells Cressida that they must be separated, he intimates that he doubts that Cressida will remain true to him. Cressida thinks that Troilus does not love her because he so quickly accuses her of falsity. Troilus manages to dismiss these ideas and they repeat their vows of fidelity and eternal love before they are separated.

Soon after their reunion, Calchas convinces Cressida that by dissembling love for Diomedes she can make it possible for them to return to Troy. But to succeed in this venture, she must not hold back, because Diomedes, who

is as wily as Ulysses, cannot be fooled by insincerity. While Cressida is in the process of convincing Diomedes of her faithfulness to him, Troilus observes from a distance. At this point Dryden deviates radically from Shakespeare's version. Troilus' reaction to what he thinks he sees is the same in both plays, but Dryden intensifies his fury by having Pandarus in the following scene tell him how well Cressida was received by the Greeks. Troilus is in such a rage that he challenges Diomedes to personal combat. Jealousy on both sides inflames the situation.

In the final scene of the play, Cressida comes looking for Troilus to tell him that she has been misjudged, and that she remains true to him. Troilus does not believe her and Diomedes slanders her with a lie about her chastity. In desperation, Cressida stabs herself to prove her fidelity. Troilus discovers the truth about her too late.

We have seen how the major writers from Benoit to Dryden have dealt with the love story of Troilus and Criseyde. But it is not just the writers of the love story who seem to have a low opinion of the character of Criseyde. Although some seek to prove that her actions are justified in the context of the times in which the various writers were working, many critics of the twentieth century consider her to be a woman deserving of the penalty which Robert Henryson visited upon her. As a result of this variety of criticism the modern reader has difficulty knowing how to react to Criseyde.

Chapter Two

The Critics of Criseyde

Henryson was certainly not the only person who had something derogatory to say about Criseyde. Almost continually for the seven hundred years since the introduction of the character by Benoit, Criseyde has been the subject of a wide variety of criticism in addition to the treatment her character received from the writers who re-interpreted what Benoit had begun. This criticism generally takes one of two forms: either the critics consider Criseyde, by whatever name she is called, to be a wanton whore, or they find some redeeming quality in her which is deserving of sympathy. The critics of the twentieth century comprise a number of the former and almost all of the latter. Those critics who damn her consider that Criseyde is acting entirely for self-serving reasons. They feel that Criseyde consciously manipulates Troilus and Diomedes because of her inordinate sensuality and desire for power. Those who would pardon her suggest that she is acting as the expectations of each author's particular culture necessitates or that she is motivated by fear.

Gretchen Meizkowski says that Benoit's version of the story is an anti-feminist lesson in woman's fickleness and unchastity. She says that as soon as the lovers are

separated, Benoit has Briseida, through her tears, begin to listen to Diomedes's protestations of courtly love and reply to his protests in a "charmingly non-committal way" ("The Reputation" 82-83). Benoit specifically points out that, while one might expect her to capitulate immediately, she plays Diomedes along for a considerable length of time before she finally gives in to him. Troilus denounces her to Diomedes for her fickleness, which has become well known in both camps (83-85). Meizkowski asserts that Benoit intended Calchas to be perceived as a power among the Greeks, thereby making his daughter's action in so quickly abandoning her love for Troilus less necessary and hence more reprehensible ("Troilus story" 130-132). According to Meizkowski, Guido, like Benoit, makes no allowances for Briseida; he at once damns her for what she is, a conniving hypocrite ("The Reputation" 92). Thomas Bergin says that Boccaccio's Criseida, since she is a widow, has no absolute reason for concealing the love affair. The two could easily marry because Troilus is a good catch for Criseida and she, in turn, is a suitable princely consort for Troilus. They do not marry because Criseida simply does not want to be obligated (108-09).

A great deal of criticism has been directed explicitly at Chaucer's Criseyde. One of the critical assumptions that has plagued Criseyde's reputation is that she is false, although Chaucer by creating an ambiguous picture of Criseyde, tries to cloud the issue. Many readers are

inclined to become infatuated with her, and therefore trust her to be the soul of truth and chastity. But, at the same time, Chaucer makes the reader wonder if such a character could ever be real or, if such a character were possible, whether that character could be truthful. According to E. Talbot Donaldson, "It is her passivity which assures that she will behave in such a way as to please the onlooker, and desire most what most desires her" ("Progress" 53-59). Donaldson suggests that most readers would rather not know her than to accept that a fickle heart is the key to her mystery (59). It is gradually and grudgingly that Chaucer's narrator begins to come to terms with having to relate how Criseyde becomes false to Troilus (73). Donaldson says that at the beginning of the poem the narrator indicates to the reader through his indecisive comments about Criseyde that he is trying to excuse what he perceives to be her false nature. But, at the same time, the narrator causes the reader, through this indecision, to sympathize with the character, who has no one else to depend upon. Donaldson contends that the indecision of the narrator makes us know at the beginning that Criseyde will be false, but it is this same indecision which makes us, the readers, love her and want to protect her. Donaldson feels that the only thing we know for certain is that we do not know Criseyde (82-83).

Other critics conclude that Chaucer's Criseyde acts always for her own comfort in deciding what she will do. Myra Stokes thinks that Criseyde uses innuendo to convey

meaning to Pandarus without having outwardly to consent to the arrangement which Pandarus is planning (Stokes 26). William Corrigan contends that Chaucer is unwilling to make Criseyde more than what his sources have created. He does not allow her to be a dramatic figure; we never see what she is thinking. Corrigan says that when Pandarus tells her that Troilus is in love with her, the author does not pause to show her reaction, but has Pandarus go on talking (116). She is, according to Joseph S. Salemi, a woman who acts on whims and who controls the destiny of her lover in spite of her shallow actions (213). Criseyde decides through argumentative monologue, free of moral or religious consideration, to love Troilus. Salemi says further that before she concedes to him, she has to decide if he will keep up appearances, if he can be discreet, and if the affair is worth enough to her for her to risk the dangers which could be attached to it (215-216).

Some critics have said that Criseyde is ruled by willful sensuality. Donaldson says that Chaucer's Criseyde is motivated by her high sexuality, but that she is also driven by fear which is generated by lack of security ("Progress" 110). Hyder Rollins continues this line of thinking when he says that Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida is an unattractive play because Cressida is a wanton who blushes with anticipation at the potential consummation with Troilus. She is not shocked by Pandarus' remarks before and after the consummation. The morning

after their lovemaking, her actions, according to Rollins, make one think of pure animal lust (383). J. S. P. Tatlock suggests that Shakespeare had no alternative but to portray his Cressida in this manner because she had become known as a "light woman" through the treatment she received from those writers who wrote about her during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (139). Hazelton Spencer refers to Cressida as a charming coquette who was more wanton than charming. Spencer says that Cressida is not innocent in her dealings with Troilus and Diomedes; her actions are ruled by a sensuous passion (289). According to Stephen Lynch, Shakespeare's Cressida analyzes the love chase from a self-serving point of view; men want sexual satisfaction and women want prolonged adoration (358). Hamill Kenny thinks she was selfish in the sense that she withheld the prize of herself from her suitors because she wanted Troilus, and later Diomedes, to pursue her (169). Albert Cook says that, in Shakespeare, she holds Troilus and Diomedes at bay just because she wants to be courted (540). Robert Kimbrough suggests that Ulysses' description of Cressida as a wanton "daughter of the game" must be taken as accurate because he always tells the truth. He merely relates the impression which she makes on the assembled Greek generals (79). Kimbrough says that to Cressida love meant conquest and triumph (107).

Some critics consider that Criseyde is devious as well as designing. Albert Cook believes that Chaucer's Criseyde is scornful of her father because she knows that she has the wit to deceive him. She can also deceive her agonizing lover by pretending that she has no idea what he seeks of her and afterward be ready to deal with Diomedes in the same way. Cook says that her farewells to the royal family in book three after her visit to Deiphobus' house, "were not marked by any assumptions of equality, but by deference, humble cordiality, and obsequious gratitude". Criseyde chiefly dreads her loss of reputation (542-45). Denzell Smith says that Shakespeare's Cressida is deceitful, sure of her charms, knows the art of court language, and is primarily concerned with her reputation in terms of society (51). Kenny says that Shakespeare thought of Cressida as a sophisticated woman not easily duped whose actions are ruled by her desires (169).

As mentioned above, much of the adverse treatment of the character of Criseyde by sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writers was due to Robert Henryson's Testament of Cresseid. Henryson's influence on the story for sixteenth-century readers was immense because these readers believed that his Testament was Chaucer's sixth book of Troilus and Criseyde. Consequently, according to Rollins, it is remarkable that Shakespeare dealt so mildly with what was considered to be such a despicable character (400,427). Henryson in his Testament accepts the traditional

interpretation of Criseyde which emanates from Guido, Lydgate, and Chaucer. He assumes her fickleness and designs her downfall and leprosy to provide a judgment for her sins. M. C. Bradbrook says that Henryson did not doubt the beauty of the love which Chaucer wrote about, but he did exact full punishment from Cresseid for the betrayal (313). E. M. W. Tillyard suggests that, if Henryson were truly hostile toward Cresseid, he would have damned her soul to hell (Five Poems 18). However, while he knows that Cresseid is no saint, he also feels that she is no villain. According to Tillyard, her weakness and vanity were the causes of her ruin (6). Tillyard says that when Cresseid commits a blasphemy against the pagan gods in the temple, she is actually blaspheming the Christian God in a symbolic Christian church. Tillyard says that she is guilty of sins of pride and anger. The rest of the poem deals with the consequences of these sins. Her consequences are that she is punished, brought to penitence, and ends by taking the blame for her actions. But Tillyard feels that just making her a leper is not enough to break her pride; she finally does away with her pride when she recognizes the genuine good of Troilus and her sinful treatment of him. Tillyard suggests that the resolution of the poem is her repentance and the saving of her soul (16-17). As the poem progresses, Cresseid begins to realize on a personal level that beauty is not eternal and that her past life has been shallow. She sees in

herself a flower which bloomed in spring, but is faded and rotten in autumn (Testament 469). Tillyard feels that Henryson treated Cresseid's fickleness too harshly. She has a great many problems placed in her way which overshadow her good qualities (18).

Robert Kindrick suggests that Cresseid becomes a pathetic and even noble character because her illness forces her to re-examine herself. Cresseid, who has had all of the luxuries of life and some very influential men as lovers, must now look at life from a different perspective. Kindrick feels that in order for this re-examination to be successful, she must give up pride and sexual excess. Therefore, leprosy becomes her salvation because the disease so disfigures her that pride and sexual encounters are rendered unattainable (121). Cresseid is forced to live the life of a leper. The only escape she might seek would be suicide, but Kindrick says that such an action would be a further statement of pride in that she would be attempting to put her will and actions above the will of God (140). At the climactic meeting of the lovers Cresseid finally realizes why she has been stricken with leprosy. Cresseid's vision is so obscured by her disease that she does not recognize Troilus and her face is so disfigured that he cannot recognize her. In spite of this, Henryson has Troilus act as a virtuous, generous person. The sight of the poor beggar beside the road causes Troilus to remember his lost love. He responds to that memory with

a generous gift of a purse of gold. John McQueen suggests that in the final meeting of the lovers, Troilus, who represents virtue, cannot recognize Cresseid because of the visual manifestation (leprosy) of her invisible sin of sexual excess. Virtue cannot recognize the appetite deformed by sin (91).

C. David Benson says that Cresseid is at the bottom of Fortune's wheel and Troilus is unknowingly teetering at the apex about to descend when the two former lovers have their last encounter. The meeting serves to convince Cresseid of the errors of her ways, giving her, in Christian terms, a chance for salvation (264-265). It is through Troilus' final act of charity that Cresseid achieves self-knowledge and moral salvation and is able to achieve "true contrition". Kindrick believes that her redemption is through Troilus' love, fidelity, and charity, which bring her to moral redemption when she finally sees that her problems are of her own making (141). John McNamara contends that the treatment which Cresseid received at the hands of fortune, while it seems at first to be harsh, is actually just because it brings her to an honest realization of her sin and to a moral regeneration (105-106).

These critical opinions about Henryson's Testament indicate that among many critics Criseyde's reputation is being given increasingly favorable interpretations. The critics are beginning to examine extenuating circumstances

which have a bearing on how the authors deal with the character. Among the excuses which have been made for Chaucer's Criseyde, Robert apRoberts suggests that she loses her honor and her desire to return to Troy, and that she cannot trick her father. This overpowering combination of occurrences, a tragedy beyond any human being's ability to withstand, takes the shame away from Criseyde's infidelity (392). Monica McAlpine says that Criseyde might have remained faithful to Troilus if all the cards had not been stacked against her (202). According to Constance Saintonge, Criseyde, brings about her own undoing because she attempts to be compliant and well-liked by everyone. She tries to do her duty in a sweet and ladylike manner, with her own defamation as the result. Saintonge says that at the end Criseyde is able to predict what will become of her reputation as a result of her compliance (320). McAlpine feels that the heroine is perceived as an unfaithful woman, subject to moral judgment, who is a responsible agent dwelling in a world where people have freedom (148). McAlpine thinks that Criseyde could have chosen to refuse Diomedes's advances, but to do so would have made her susceptible to the same treatment from Diomedes that Helen had received from Paris. Instead, she chose to be unfaithful to Troilus (188). But, apRoberts points out, Criseyde is not brave enough to choose death over infidelity, even though she says that she would rather die than be parted from Troilus. If she did not have a

gentle heart, then she would not have given herself to Troilus in the first place (397-398).

Hamill Kenny says of Shakespeare's Cressida that ". . . the learned world takes Cressida's baseness so much for granted that no one so far appears to have thought that her character has any other attributes" (163). Stephen Lynch feels that Shakespeare's Cressida is judged for her infidelity because it is obvious and sexual, but all of the major characters in the play fail to keep true to the philosophies which they advocate. Cressida knows that she has erred; they do not (366-67). Tucker Brooke says that Shakespeare could not have held Cressida in the same contempt which most Elizabethans did, or that most modern critics do, because he makes her even more helpless than Chaucer did Criseyde. According to Brooke, Cressida is, "a flower growing in Trojan slime, a little soiled from the first, and shrinkingly conscious of her predestined pollution" (572-573).

Many critics contend that the trading of Criseyde for Antenor suggests that the two warring factions perceive her as a commodity of exchange, having no human right of choice or security. Donaldson suggests that, while Chaucer's Criseyde is remembered primarily for her inconstancies, she is also remembered and gains sympathy as a woman who is unwillingly transferred from one man to another. In Benoit she blames her infidelity on the fact that Troilus makes no effort to prevent her exchange ("Progress" 3-6). Kenny

says that Chaucer's Criseyde was completely devoted to her uncle, Pandarus, who tricked her into the love affair primarily for his own advantage (166). Carolyn Asp suggests that Shakespeare's Cressida, within the action of the play, reacts to the cultural and social expectations which are forced upon her by Troilus and by a world which is dominated by fickleness and changeability. Asp says Cressida is a pawn who is used to advance the war effort. She is stripped of a secure place in Trojan society, a place of social hierarchy, by the treachery of her father and her uncle. Asp feels that Criseyde acquiesces to their demands because the culture gives her no other choice (410). Greene says that Shakespeare uses a mercantile metaphor to reinforce how Cressida is valued in both camps. This metaphor is reinforced in Cressida's speech in scene two of act one where she indicates that she is aware of her position in a scheme of supply and demand. She plays on this position to sell herself at a high price. Although she is critical of herself for refusing to acknowledge that she is in love with Troilus, she conforms to the way the game is played (139). When she is told that she is to be exchanged as a commodity, according to Greene, Shakespeare's Cressida contemplates physical self-disfigurement as a response to her metaphorical disfigurement (142). Although she is loyal to Troilus as long as he is near at hand and can make her feel that she has some value, Carolyn Asp feels that when she is

transferred to the Greeks, Cressida will accept their appraisal of her worth (412). Asp thinks that the relationship which Cressida has with Troilus is not all that different from the one she has with Diomedes; the difference lies only in the surface image of the two men. Troilus has an image of courtly, romantic love which is absent in Diomedes (416-417). Stephen Lynch suggests that Trojans and Greeks use women for the same purpose, although Trojans do so poetically, while Greeks act like animals. Calling Cressida a "daughter of the game" is a crass spiteful response to her on the part of Ulysses (364).

Criseyde's primary disadvantage is that she is powerless to defend herself against the opinions of the men in her society. According to McKay Sundwall, in Chaucer, the taking of her rein by Diomedes is symbolic of Diomedes's assumption of control over Criseyde from Troilus (158). David Aers says that Chaucer would have us put down such one-dimensional reactions as Pandarus' outrage at Criseyde's infidelity to Troilus. Aers thinks Pandarus treats her as piece of merchandise but then puts all of the blame on her (196). Greene contends that in Shakespeare, Cressida's character and fate reflect the values of Trojan and Greek societies. Troilus indicates that she is valued by the prizers; she has no value in herself. While all of the characters in the play are subject to this same relativistic appraisal, Greene feels that Cressida, as a woman, is more susceptible because she lacks the privilege

of speaking first; women are more dependent on external supports (134). Lynch says that Shakespeare's Cressida is more vulnerable to opinion when she goes to the Greek camp because she is placed more apparently in a subordinate position where she is made to remain mute until someone speaks to her. According to Lynch, she is counterpoint to the sexual innuendo of the Greeks as she was to Troilus and Pandarus (363).

Gayle Greene says that Shakespeare's Cressida "lives down" to the image that the Greeks have of her; she allows herself to be kissed by all of the Greeks. Diomedes, who seems not to consider her worth the exercise of his supposed powers of speech, treats her as an object of trade (143-144). Carolyn Asp feels that the Greeks further shake her self-confidence through their bawdy dialogue with her. In addition she is harshly judged by Ulysses, an experience which quickly convinces her that she must form a new alliance in order to restore her self-esteem; accordingly, Diomedes is the only one who has expressed a willingness to become her protector (413-414). Robert Lynch contends that Cressida, realizing that she is eventually to be made the Greeks' whore and passed around among them, responds to their bawdiness with wit, for which she incurs the wrath of Ulysses for being as witty as he (363). Because she is worth only what others see in her, Asp says, Cressida is damned for her actions in her last scene. Troilus rejects her letter as empty words, containing no feeling from the

heart, because he neither can see nor wants to see her true worth (417).

Gayle Greene suggests that Shakespeare has Cressida act in such a way that she becomes a stereotype of the designing woman, but his purpose in having her do this is actually a critique of arbitrary stereotyping. Greene says that, "Obliging expectations that require the worst of her, she has made herself an object whose worth depends on appearance, varies with supply and demand, and is enhanced by the excitement of the chase." Even though she keeps a part of herself for Troilus, that part is based on Troilus' view of her (145).

But Criseyde is not only concerned with how she is viewed by others. Initially, she is hesitant to allow herself to be drawn into a relationship with Troilus. According to Maureen Fries, Chaucer shows that in terms of the society in which she was living, Criseyde's desire for freedom is sensible in that she must completely surrender her autonomy if she becomes involved in a relationship with a man. Fries says that Chaucer makes it clear early in the poem that Criseyde needs some form of male protection when he refers to her precarious position in Troy after the defection of Calchas (48). Isolation and fear are recurrent themes in the poem. Chaucer's Criseyde immediately appeals to Hector for protection; she relies on Pandarus for guidance and support; she subjects herself to the protection of Troilus; and she finally surrenders to

Diomede. Fries says that all of these dependencies are necessitated by society, but all of Criseyde's protectors fail in their duties (49).

Peter Christmas says that Chaucer's Criseyde submits to Troilus through her fear of his power rather than because, as she claims, of his virtue and courage; she submits in turn to Diomede for the same reason and with the same delusions (287-288). Stephen Lynch says that in Shakespeare, because she realizes that her position in a war oriented society is a precarious one, Cressida proceeds in her involvement with Troilus as slowly and as cautiously as she can. Even after she surrenders, Lynch continues, she knows that she will not win (359). Asp feels that by giving in to Troilus, Cressida puts herself into a more dangerous and tenuous position because she has given up power over her own destiny. Now that her newly formed alliance is to be broken, according to Asp, her self-image is weakened because Troilus essentially dismisses her (412). Lynch says that Shakespeare's Cressida quickly realizes when she goes to the Greek camp that she needs a guardian who will protect her. Diomede will make her his whore which is better than her immediately becoming the camp's whore (365).

Maureen Fries contends that Chaucer's Criseyde must be considered both a feminist and a victim of her society. Fries says that to call her a feminist is not merely to place a modern interpretation on the poem for feminism is

as old as anti-feminism. Criseyde's first indication of a feminist attitude is in her speech of liberation (2.750-756), where she fluctuates between independence and subjugation to the protestations of Troilus (45-46). According to Fries, the reality of the medieval romantic notion that a knight should protect a woman alone was that these knights were more inclined to take advantage of the women under their protection, even to the point of rape, than to protect them (51). But Fries feels that Chaucer's Criseyde is a feminist of the word rather than of the deed. She is defeated by the society which created her and by the nurturing she received from that society; she did not learn self-determination because it was not to be learned (56-58). Fries concludes that it is only with Troilus that Chaucer's Criseyde manages to demonstrate any degree of self-determination; this self-determination is construed by Pandarus and by the narrator to be a reversal of sex roles for which she is not permitted to succeed. Criseyde seems to sense from the beginning of her involvement with Troilus that such an attitude is doomed; she is too much a creature of her society to carry such a scheme to success (55).

According to Monica McAlpine, critics have too often judged Criseyde on the basis of her infidelity towards Troilus, as does Chaucer's narrator as well. McAlpine says that these views ignore the complex psychology of the character with which Chaucer presents us (230-231).

Sanford Meech asserts that Criseyde is ruled by pity for anyone who is sorrowful or in pain as well as by a need for safety and protection. According to Meech, these are the motives for her relationship with Troilus and with Diomedes even though she knows that Diomedes is not as good a person as Troilus (121). But Kenny feels that Chaucer's Criseyde was not so easily made to love Troilus; her initial interest is in saving her uncle's life and in pitying Troilus (170). Kenny says that she resists the culmination of the affair for many months even though she has realized for a long time that she is in love with Troilus (169). According to McAlpine, Criseyde has retained a degree of her integrity in spite of all of the forces which have been unified against her (216). McAlpine infers that the brooch which Troilus gives to Criseyde, and which she later gives to Diomedes, might symbolize that Criseyde gives her body to Diomedes but reserves her heart for Troilus. McAlpine feels that this would imply some kind of inward fidelity (206).

Robert apRoberts points out that Chaucer's Criseyde does not possess any fatal personal flaw. If she did, the moral of the story would simply have been that Troilus was foolish for choosing such a lover (398). Dorothy Cook says the sole purpose of Cressida's action in the last two acts of Dryden's version of the play is to prove her loyalty, virtue and fidelity to Troilus. She is actively planning a means of returning to Troilus (69). W. W. Bernhardt believes that by keeping Cressida faithful to Troilus

throughout the play, Dryden has a pathetic tragedy ready made for him in Troilus' misinterpretation of Cressida's actions toward Diomedes, actions which bring the play to a natural tragic ending (134).

It is apparent from the preceding criticism that the critics have explored the possible motivations which cause Criseyde to be unfaithful to Troilus. They have suggested that she was driven by lust, by indecision, or by lack of self-determination to capitulate to the events of the moment. The one facet of Criseyde's character on which there is almost total agreement among the critics is that Criseyde is false.

There is, however, no one among these critics who pursues the possibility that Criseyde's actions might be a direct result of Troilus' inaction. Hamill Kenny contends that in Shakespeare the oaths which Troilus and Cressida swear at the beginning of their love affair represent a contract of common-law marriage known as a pre-contract or sponsalia de praesentia, which was familiar to Elizabethan audiences (170-171). Such an interpretation makes Cressida's commitment to Troilus seem much more innocent than some more prudish critics have implied. Kenny says that after the consummation and until she leaves Troy, Shakespeare's Cressida does nothing which is at variance with the actions of Chaucer's Criseyde (172-173). Kenny says that the tradition of infidelity which was created by Benoit and reinforced by Guido, Lydgate, and the

sixteenth-century pamphleteers made it necessary that Shakespeare change Cressida from the loyal wife which he had made her in Troy to an untrue lover, easily swayed by Diomede, the arch seducer (174). But Kenny does not suggest the possibility that Troilus, by not enforcing his prerogative as Criseyde's husband, is responsible for her defection to Diomede.

While the trend in criticism is toward a more favorable judgment of Criseyde, there is one consideration about her which few critics have explored. Kenny mentions sponsalia de praesentia but does not develop the concept to any extent, and Henry Kelly has written a book-length study of that concept, but in terms only of Chaucer's female characters. No one has as yet considered the concept in terms of all of the versions of the character of Criseyde. To understand the character fully, I think it is necessary to consider how women were treated between the twelfth and seventeenth centuries and how the way they were treated affects how the various writers treat Criseyde. To accomplish this, one must look at what influence the convention of sponsalia played in women's lives.

Chapter Three

Women in the Society

Criseyde has been misjudged by many modern readers who are not aware of the conditions under which she and all women were forced to live throughout the period between the twelfth and the seventeenth centuries. There were during this period certain common social conditions which are reflected in the character of Criseyde. Although these social conditions may be misunderstood by modern audiences, they probably were readily apparent to contemporary audiences. These conditions need to be explored if we are to understand properly why the authors dealt with Criseyde as they did. The attitudes toward and about women, which include those of the gentry and the clergy, were already apparent in the tenth century and extended well into the seventeenth century. These two groups thought that women were socially and intellectually subordinate to men. They felt that a woman, whose purpose in the chain of being was to propagate the species, should be restricted to that purpose. These groups thought that women were excessively ardent in sexual relations and potentially could disrupt the established hierarchy because of that ardor. One aspect of these attitudes toward women can be seen in the tradition of betrothal and marriage which was in practise during this same time period. In a thorough consideration

of the motivations of Criseyde's actions it is necessary to consider the concepts of sponsalia per verba de praesentia and de futuro. The workings of these customs of marriage and betrothal were outside of the official structure of society and thus, in a sense, subverted that system. To understand Criseyde we must first see how women were treated during the medieval and Renaissance periods and then consider to what extent and in what context Hamill Kenny's suggestion, that Sponsalia de Praesentia excuses at least part of Criseyde's actions, might be applied to the characterizations.

Because they were considered to be inferior to men, women did not enjoy the same property rights or rights of inheritance. Inheritance, for women in the period from Benoit to Dryden, was severely restricted. Georges Duby says of twelfth-century France that, if a daughter did inherit anything, it was from her father and was frequently a lesser share of the estate than that received by her brothers. It was also, generally, that which had come into her father's possession as dowry from the mother, although it was never the choicest portions of those holdings. A daughter received nothing from her father's estate after she was married (Chivalrous 71-73). If no male blood heirs could be found, then a female could inherit the entire estate. Such a woman, or in many cases a young child, was greatly sought after as a desirable marriage partner. Once she was suitably married, the husband took charge of the estate (109-110).

In The Knight the Lady and the Priest, Duby points out that women were not in a good position to hold on to property after they were widowed. The husband's family would resort to force, if necessary, to insure that none of their property was removed from the family (90). But a widow was sometimes difficult to be rid of. If she were of a higher social position than her husband's family, she could exercise a certain degree of control over how his family dealt with her. If she were still of marriagable age, she could make demands which would make it difficult for her dead husband's family to force her into an unwanted marriage. However, her options were few. If she remained unmarried, she was bound to fast, to support the works of the church, and to be generous in the giving of alms. Her other option was to marry herself to the church (142-145). Primarily in the wealthy classes, a widow who remarried soon after her husband's death often was suspected of killing her husband. When she considered remarriage, she frequently was accused of already having had illicit relations with her future consort (73). Such ideas persisted for centuries. Linda Woodbridge says that during the Renaissance, the re-marriage of widows was sometimes considered to be a posthumous cuckolding of the first husband. Widows were of course considered to be lecherous, possibly because of their relative freedom from the normal restrictions placed on women (177-178).

The preceding conditions give us the basic position of Criseyde at the beginning of the story. In Boccaccio and Chaucer she is a young widow who is comfortably and quietly enjoying her position in the society. If she chooses to do so, she can remain in this position indefinitely, as long as no one such as Pandarus or her father tries to disrupt her position. In Shakespeare and Dryden her position is not so secure. Because she is still the subject of her male family members, Cressida is required, in the absence of her father, to follow the directions of Pandarus. She is reluctant, in both circumstances, to do anything which will disrupt her present position, but in both situations she yields to Pandarus as a superior male relative.

One of the reasons why Criseyde hesitates to become involved in a relationship with Troilus is that, if it becomes public knowledge, then her reputation will be ruined. Excess of any kind in sex was thought to be sinful, but women were more susceptible to censure for their excesses than were men. Because women were thought to be more aggressive in lovemaking than men, it was difficult for a lady to keep her reputation unstained (Salzman 249). Criseyde is clearly aware in Boccaccio and Chaucer that her reputation is in danger. She seems to a modern reader almost compulsive in her insistence on secrecy. In addition, she carefully considers what Troilus' reputation is in relations with women. She apparently does not want to become involved with a man who

might force himself upon her. A woman who was raped was more likely to be found guilty of misconduct for enjoying sexual pleasure outside of marriage than was the man who assaulted her; rape was considered to be merely a sign of aggressive male virility (Knights 220-221). But joy in sex was thought to belong outside of marriage, which was reserved solely for procreation. Georges Duby suggests that "Courtly love and prostitution both performed a useful function by siphoning excessive ardor from marriage, thus helping to preserve its proper state of moderation" (218).

There was a common mistrust of women by the clergy and the gentry which gave them a good excuse to keep women under tight control. Men had the unquestioned right and in fact were expected to correct wives in the same way they did children, animals, and slaves (46). Duby says that Bishop Bouchard of Worms, who collected a series of didactic texts called the Decretum in the eleventh century, believed that women were weak and easily led. A woman was naturally deceitful and should be kept in tight control. A woman was frivolous and fickle. Bouchard believed that women were always ready to sell their bodies or those of their nieces or other women (65-66). This sort of attitude is evident in Shakespeare's play in the characters of Ulysses and Diomedes, who consider Cressida to be a "daughter of the game" (4.5.63). In all of the versions, Pandarus' attitude toward Cressida is that, because she is

a woman, it will be easy for him to win her affections for Troilus; he only has to appeal to her sensual nature.

The priests preached from the pulpit against male subservience to women because they believed that women were wicked, inquisitive, indiscrete, and cantankerous. Daughters should be watched closely so that they did not learn the sins of their mothers (212). The clergy argued that men were afraid of women; it was felt that women's sexual appetites were so voracious that some men sought sanctuary from women in monasteries in order to avoid total exhaustion (47). Men who were not in religious orders were urged to marry to avoid the sins of fornication, homosexuality and bestiality (212). DUBY paints a comic picture of the age when he says:

We can imagine a knight of the eleventh century lying trembling and suspicious in his bed every night, beside an Eve whose insatiable desire he may not be able to satisfy, who is certainly deceiving him, and who may be plotting to smother him under the bed covers while he sleeps. (106)

But, while this description may seem comical to the modern reader, it was a very real concern for the knight and had an equally real and devastating effect on the well-being of the lady.

According to Linda Woodbridge, the attitudes which men had about women in the twelfth century in France remain fairly constant until the English Renaissance. In the Renaissance, women were still being criticized for their supposed lust (27). Because women were gaining more

freedom of action during the period when Elizabeth was on the throne, they were increasingly accused by men of sexual immorality (177). Men wanted women to subsist on the money provided to them by their ruling males, although women who did not work were castigated for their laziness while those who did work in their husbands' shops were called "cuckolders". Almost the only source of income available to a woman, independent of working for her husband, was as a servant or as a prostitute. Prostitution was of course severely criticized (132-133). Popular drama of the period characterized the woman who went out in public or even who sat at her window as a "loose woman." The only safe place for a woman was in the inner parts of the house in the midst of her children (174-176).

Some writers during the Renaissance made it their mission to insure that women were instructed in proper conduct. The literature of these writers dealt with the ideal women of the sonnets and love poems. Few if any of these poems, however, dealt with men talking about their own wives; the women who populated these poems were highly stylized and virtuous, perfect daughters, wives, mothers, and lovers who served as models for both men and women (Latt 40-41). Woodbridge says that the primary reason why Renaissance writers who contended that women were equal to men never reached any true conclusions about the conditions under which women lived lies in the fact that the defense by male authors was merely a literary game. Those authors

who had any serious intent never adequately supported their arguments for sexual equality (139). Woodbridge says that the greatest obstacle to reforms which might have brought about equality lay in Christianity. The preacher used the Bible to refute the growing contention by women that they were equal to men. Those few women who hated these assumptions and were capable of doing anything about them as yet were unwilling to go against the word of God (130). The continued adherence to the traditionally established hierarchy served to keep women subservient to men because men held the position of God in the household. The idea of a shared authority was as foreign to the family as it was to the state (130-131). Shakespeare's interpretation of Cressida must have been influenced by such considerations, but, while he depicts a woman who is subject to these social attitudes, he does not necessarily endorse them as correct. Cressida, in her speech in scene two of act one, is allowed to consider what she will be giving up in order to become Troilus' lover.

Gamaliel Bradford suggests that the Renaissance was marked by an increased fervor and desire for knowledge which was enthusiastically shared by women, who received their education from tutors in the home. Romance literature, which was popular at the time, was written primarily for women, but there were also women during the period who took great pleasure in reading Greek and Latin. Some women of the period had a broad education and many

more had an enthusiasm for such cultivation. Queen Elizabeth was a well-educated woman and had a great influence on the intellectual development of the period. Unfortunately, Elizabeth was also jealous of her own accomplishments; as a result she surrounded herself at the end of her reign with women of inferior minds to the exclusion of intelligent women (Bradford 34-44). Because of this, intelligent women, who were not able to establish themselves under Elizabeth, were not in a position to prevent James I from reinstating more traditional attitudes toward women.

Although women under Elizabeth's reign enjoyed an increasing freedom from oppression, when James I came to the throne there was a radical reversal. James was a traditional and conservative ruler who expected women to stay out of his court and in their spinning rooms (Latt 40). Women were kept out of public life to insure their continued subordination to men, and were thus isolated from one another (43).

As the seventeenth century progressed, the plight of women was not greatly improved. After the English Civil War, husbands and fathers took their authority in the home more seriously because of political theory and Puritan theology, which said that such authority was necessary for an efficiently run society. A decline in extended families made it easier for the head of the household to exercise his authority (H. Smith 28). Hilda Smith points out that

substantial changes in economic and social practises during the latter part of the seventeenth century began to have an effect on the living conditions of women. Changes from local to national markets, and an increasing emphasis on social and cultural accomplishments among the genteel classes which took them away from their estates were significant in that they reduced the ability of the ladies of the manor to manage the business of the estates (H. Smith xi). This effectively reduced the economic importance of these women in the society and therefore tended to make them more subservient to men. On the other hand, while women's legal rights were less than enviable at any time in the seventeenth century, there was some agitation in the latter part of the century for a correction of the inequities under which women were suffering (29). Feminists of the seventeenth century, such as Mary Astell and Sarah Egerton, according to Smith, began to press for recognition of women as a social group with common problems and aspirations. They began to push for equality in sharing such rewards of society as intellectual pursuit, education, and freedom from almost virtual slavery. Women began to recognize their own worth (8). But while women were granted equality before God, they were still subordinate to their husbands in all other respects (55-56). Susan Staves says that the normal analogy between state and family began to be negated as civil authority moved further from an absolute center. Men, who refused to

acknowledge their king as divine, still wanted their wives to think of them as such (Staves 116-117). Protestantism and politics, which cannot be separated in any consideration of the late seventeenth century, played an important part in the liberation of women and children. There was a movement to make these traditional subjects more free, much as there was a movement to make the subjects of the king more independent. One of the benefits of these movements, according to Staves, was that marriage was becoming thought of as a contract which should benefit both parties (184-186).

Although the historical traditions of marriage began to be supplanted in the seventeenth century, the inequities of marriage which had existed for centuries, continued to be a problem. Hilda Smith points out that, while women were marrying later than in previous centuries, men still chose to marry because of family pressure to produce an heir, because of the prospect of a large dowry, or because the woman was beautiful. If a man were to choose a wife in a more rational way and if a woman were more protective of her option, weak as it was, to refuse a marriage, some of the worst inequities of marriage could have been avoided (136-137). Restoration law, while undergoing some modification, still considered a woman to be the subject of her father or husband. A wife's disagreement with her husband continued to be likened to a subject's revolt against his king (Staves 112). Dryden was caught up in

this seeming contradiction. While he acknowledges that Cressida is deserving of a better treatment than she has previously enjoyed, his true concern is with an orderly society. His resolution of the problem in his version of Troilus and Cressida is to make the couple's actions openly conform to the existing tradition of spousal.

The tradition of spousal persisted from the tenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century. This form of marriage was not particularly beneficial to women because of its informality (191). Gellert Alleman says that canon law, before 1754, placed the greater emphasis on the ceremony of spousals or betrothal, rather than on the marriage ceremony. Essentially, a spousal was an agreement to marry at a future date or a "present acceptance of the marriage relation." The spousal, delivered by both parties in front of a witness, expressed in words "of the present tense," constituted a marriage. This spousal was far more significant than the later church ceremony where the marriage was blessed by a priest (Alleman 5-7). There were frequent attempts throughout the Middle Ages to do away with these spousals because such tenuous marriage practises had a destabilizing effect on an already unstable society. Bishop Hubert Walter, in 1200, ordered that public marriages be performed in a church in front of a priest. In 1215 the Lateran Council ordered that banns be posted prior to a marriage. These rulings, which affected all of western Europe, still did not preclude the validity of

informal marriages. The Church of England retained well into the seventeenth century the medieval doctrine that consent made a marriage, although it increasingly stipulated where and how formal marriages should be performed (8).

There were two types of spousals, sponsalia per verba de futuro, and sponsalia per verba de praesentia.

Sponsalia de futuro was a promise to marry at some time in the future. However, consummation of such a relationship immediately altered the relationship, making it an actual marriage. Sponsalia de praesentia constituted a marriage by itself. As early as Boccaccio and Chaucer, such a promise did not require consummation to be considered valid. A contract of marriage was a mutual promise made between two people who had no impediments which would make such an arrangement unlawful. A contract de futuro could be voided by either party for just cause, but, if the parties were of age and there were no impediment, a contract de praesentia was irrevocable (9).

Clandestine marriage, according to Gratian's Concordance, is against the canon law, but such marriages when contracted, cannot be dissolved. When a man formally swears to a woman that she is his wife then she is, in spite of any lack of dowry. A secretly contracted marriage is not negated as long as both parties acknowledge it, but, if one party changes his mind, then the other party cannot affirm the marriage in the ecclesiastical courts. The

courts and the clergy were not happy with this type of marriage; such marriages often led to adultery or bigamy because a dissenting party to the marriage could marry someone else with relative impunity (Kelly 165). However, when the church, under Pope Alexander III, (1159-1189), acknowledged the validity of a marriage created by present consent of the two partners, it said in effect that no institution or individual could block a marriage (Herlihy 81). Because the practise of clandestine marriage was widely prosecuted by the ecclesiastical courts, it is apparent that canon law as it applied to marriage was important to religious people from the Middle Ages, but the frequent abuse of these dictates shows how little the canon law was regarded by the general public (Kelly 333-334).

While Dryden clearly depicts the relationship between Troilus and Cressida as a sponsalia de praesentia, he does not allow the marriage to be known by the other principals in the story. To do so would be to condone a tradition which contributed to a disorderly society. To justify his spousal and still support order, Dryden invents the misunderstanding between Troilus and Cressida that causes her to commit suicide. He thereby delivers the lesson that Cressida and Troilus perish because they have helped to disrupt the order in society.

Thus we have an overview of the conditions under which women had to live and a basis from which to interpret the characterizations of Criseyde by the several authors whom

we have been discussing. The political, legal, and social conditions of the period of each of these writers must have had an effect on how each writer chose to depict his Criseyde.

Chapter Four

In Defense of Criseyde

The charges which have been brought against Criseyde are that she is a sensuous, designing, fickle woman who deserves to suffer what she suffers because of her sinful activities. Some critics have suggested that the authors who dealt with the story knew that what she was doing was evil and, by their rendering of the story, irrefutably have established her sin. There are of course apologists for her who would have us believe that Criseyde was in part a victim of her circumstances who was either too weak or too afraid to act on her own. However, none of her detractors or apologists, I think, have found the true explanation of her actions in relation to historical precepts or in terms of how the authors felt about her. There is evidence implicit in the works to support the contention that Criseyde is not an overly sensuous woman; there is also evidence that she does not deserve to be called capricious. Criseyde is rather a character who must react within the constraints of the societies of the authors who wrote about her. She succumbs to a relationship with Troilus because she loves him and because, in light of his position in society and because of the manipulations of her kinsman, she has no alternative but to give in. She allows herself to be traded to the Greeks because to do otherwise

would be in opposition to established authority. She enters a relationship with Diomedes because of that same order of authority which dictates that she establish herself in some position in the new society. While it would appear that such an action proves her infidelity toward Troilus, actually, her relationship with Troilus has been rendered moot by his inaction in failing to confirm that he and Criseyde have established a contract much like a sponsalia de praesentia. These are the points of the story which the critics generally have overlooked and which must be addressed if we are properly to understand the character of Criseyde.

Criseyde is forced by the demands of her society to conform to a prescribed role. In the works of Benoit, Boccaccio, and Chaucer, she is a widow. As such she is expected to behave in a specific way. In Shakespeare and Dryden, she is a maiden who must do what her family head tells her to do. In all of the versions, when she is traded, she is expected to comply with the wishes of those in authority.

Because widows who wished not to remarry were expected to remain pious and dedicated to the betterment of the society, Criseyde has to stay in her house and away from any form of scandal. As long as she does so she remains relatively free of any kind of outside influence. When she goes to the temple, which is a pious and expected action, she makes it possible for Troilus to notice her and to fall

in love with her. As a widow, she could choose to remain single and devote herself to good works or she could accept Troilus' proposal. She becomes vulnerable to manipulation by her kinsman, Pandarus, as a result of her choice.

Pandarus wants Criseyde to give in to Troilus. Since Calchas abandons her when he deserts Troy, thus giving up his right of authority over her, Pandarus becomes the head of Criseyde's family. Therefore she is obliged to accept his instruction and to obey his authority. While she is obliged to accept his instructions and obey his authority, because she is a widow, his power over her is limited. A widow who chose not to resist re-marriage became vulnerable to the wishes of her kinsmen. Criseyde abandons her option to remain single and becomes subject to Pandarus' direct authority by deciding to enter a relationship with Troilus. There is evidence of Criseyde's awareness of this problem in the versions of the story by Boccaccio and Chaucer. In these two works, her hesitance to enter into a relationship with Troilus is based on her acute awareness of the freedoms which she is surrendering. Boccaccio has Criseida consider all of the favorable and unfavorable aspects of such a relationship such as the loss of personal freedom and the possibility of a jealous partner or of a lover who soon falls out of love. In spite of these potential problems, Criseida decides to go ahead with the affair. In Chaucer's version, Criseyde considers that Troilus can force her into submission if he wishes. In

addition, men might learn of their love, which, if he tired of her love, would leave her reputation ruined. Chaucer's Criseyde also decides that the affair is worth the risks involved. Until she agrees to Pandarus' proposal, Criseyde is limited only by the constraints of the society.

By accepting Pandarus' advice, Criseyde becomes subservient to him and eventually to Troilus. She no longer has the right to choose what her actions will be. However, this change only removes a freedom from her; it does not absolve her of all responsibility for her actions. Her later choice to abandon Troilus in favor of Diomede is no less culpable in the eyes of the society because Troilus is unable or unwilling to make a decision in her behalf. She is expected to conduct herself by the standards of the society in spite of the hardships she faces.

In the versions of the story written by Shakespeare and Dryden, Cressida is a maiden rather than a widow. As such, she has no option. She is obliged to accept the course of action which Pandarus, as head of the family, dictates to her. We can see in Shakespeare that she does so as slowly as possible, but that she does not deny the inevitability of the situation. She still recognizes the additional constraints which such a relationship will place on her: "Achievement is command; ungained, beseech" (1.2.319). Again, when she accepts Troilus as her lover, Shakespeare's Cressida becomes answerable to him. She complains that she

would like to refuse to go to the Greek camp, but Troilus tells her that she must go. She cannot deny his authority over her.

The vows which Troilus and Criseyde make to one another in the versions from Boccaccio to Dryden correspond to the conditions required in sponsalia per verba de praesentia and sponsalia per verba de futuro. The contract to which they agree establishes a system or order which becomes on a smaller scale a replica of the greater society. Because Troilus does not honor that contract, Criseyde is forced into defensive actions that cause her to be called false.

The agreement is accomplished in Boccaccio's version through the exchange of letters between Troilus and Criseida. Troilus, in his letter to Criseida, expresses a desire to establish a permanent relationship with her:

". . . I pray Love, the sweet lord, that, as he has made thee the source of my delight, so he may be equally pleased to set thy desire upon me, so that as I am thine, thou shalt some day become mine and never be taken from me." (2.52)

While this might be construed merely as a proposition to a potential mistress, it can also qualify as a de facto commitment. Criseida's initial response to this is to reject the offer; however, after she has had time to reflect upon it and after Pandarus has applied further pressure to her, she finally accepts the offer (2.51-57). The agreement of de praesentia is fulfilled when the lovers are united at Criseida's house (3.60).

In Chaucer, the lovers meet for the first time in Deiphobus' house where they agree to what appears to be a de futuro arrangement which will allow Troilus to consider Criseyde to be his exclusive love. This conversation clearly defines the conditions under which Criseyde will accept Troilus. Criseyde asks that Troilus explain exactly what his intentions are, to which he answers that he wants her to look kindly upon him and then "agreen that I may ben he, / Withouten braunche of vice or any wise, / In trouthe alwey to don yow my servise" (3.131-133). He further gives her the authority to censure him if he does not perform properly. Criseyde is satisfied by his comments that he will love her sufficiently. Criseyde promises, "And if I may don hym gladnesse, from hennesforth, iwys, I nyl not feyne. / Now beth al hool, no lenger ye ne pleyne" (3.166-168). He satisfies her that he is willing to agree to her conditions. They end the conversation by agreeing to allow Pandarus to set up a meeting. Pandarus advises them: " But I conjure the, Criseyde, and oon, / And two, thow Troilus, whan thow mayst goon, / That at myn hous ye ben at myn warnynge / For I ful well shal shape youre comynge" (3.193-196). This resembles a contract de futuro in that they have agreed to a future meeting, at which time, Pandarus implies, they will consummate a present contract.

The de futuro relationship between Troilus and Criseyde is elevated to what seems to be a de praesentia relationship when Pandarus brings them together in his house and they make pledges of fidelity to one another. Troilus vows to Criseyde:

For certes, freshe wommanliche wif,
 This dar I seye, that trouthe and diligence,
 That shal ye fynden in me al my lif,
 Ny wol nat, certein, breken youre defence;
 And if I do, present or in absence,
 For love of God, lat sle me with the dede,
 If that it like unto youre wommanhede.
 (3.1296-1302).

Criseyde seems to be in accord with Troilus. She says,
 ". . . For it suffiseth, this that seydis heere, / And at
 o word, withouten repentance, / Welcome, my knight, my
 pees, my suffisaunce!" (3.1307-1310). The lovers then
 spend the night in celebration of their union.

There is not an obvious scene in Shakespeare or in Dryden to which one can point as an example of a de facto agreement. Any such agreement which might have been made was not made apparent to the audience. Instead, Shakespeare and Dryden depict scenes between Troilus and Cressida in which they agree to vows presented by Pandarus. In Shakespeare's version Pandarus administers a semblance of a wedding vow:

Here I hold your hand, here my cousin's. If ever
 you prove false one to another, since I have taken
 such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful
 goers between be called to the world's end after
 my name; call them all Pandars; let all constant
 men be Troiluses, all false women Cessids, and all
 brokers-between Pandars! Say, amen. (3.2.205-211)

After this speech, Pandarus shows the lovers to a bed where they can consummate their spousal. In Dryden, Cressida asks, "And will you promise that the holy Priest shall make us one forever?" (3.2.84-85) to which Pandarus responds, "Priest! marry hang 'em! They make you one! go in; go in, and make yourselves one without a Priest: I'll have no Priests work in my house" (86-87). Troilus completes the vows by saying, "Heaven prosper me as I devoutly swear, never to be but yours" (95-96). Pandarus then leads them into the house to consummate their vows.

The primary complication of the story is that the relationship between Troilus and Criseyde is kept secret, although this is not the case in Benoit's version, in which it is a foregone conclusion of which the whole town of Troy is aware. In Boccaccio, the lovers try to keep the arrangement a secret, causing the same disruption of established society which had prompted the church to forbid such marriages; because the marriage was not public knowledge, Priam separates the lovers, thus allowing Criseida to become involved in a similar relationship with Diomede. In Chaucer, they also strive to keep the affair secret, with much the same result. In Shakespeare and Dryden, the trading of Cressida comes so quickly after the consummation scene that it is less obvious that the lovers intend for the affair to remain secret, but Cressida tells Diomede that she has had no lover since the death of her husband.

In all of the versions, Troilus becomes the center of authority for Criseyde when she succumbs to his protests of love. The balance of the story is influenced by his actions in the exercising of that authority. When he is pursuing her, Troilus promises Criseyde that he will love her always, preserve her honor, and defend her position in the society. He fails to keep any of these promises.

At the consummation of their relationship, Troilus vows to Criseyde that he will love her forever, but, when they are about to be separated, he questions whether she will remain true to him in her absence. In Boccaccio and Chaucer, he later fluctuates between trusting her and doubting her. In Shakespeare and Dryden he leaps to the conclusion, based on a partially overheard conversation, that Cressida is being false. His response to this is to denounce Cressida and to declare a personal vendetta against Diomedes. In none of the versions does he recognize his own complicity in causing the desertion or in violating his obligations of authority.

Troilus again fails to exercise his authority by not making an effort to prevent the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor. Priam would never have allowed the trade to take place if Troilus had acknowledged the relationship. Henry Kelly suggests that Boccaccio and Chaucer purposely obscured the fact in order to make the trade acceptable to their audiences (55 and 249). Troilus is much too quick to allow the trade to take place in all of the versions

with the exception of Dryden's. He makes an effort to prevent the trade in this later work, but Hector quickly squelches that effort before Troilus can admit that a contract exists.

The validity of such contracts of marriage was difficult to prove because validation required that both parties agree that a marriage had in fact taken place before the ecclesiastical courts would uphold the contract. When Troilus does not exercise his authority over her by claiming Criseyde as his wife, she has no recourse by which to make him do so. If he were to go so far as to deny any possible contention by her that such a contract existed, her honor would have been destroyed.

Ultimately, Troilus' error is that he attempts to abdicate his authority. In addition to his failure to acknowledge the relationship to Priam and his distrust of Criseyde's fealty, in Boccaccio and Chaucer, Troilus, through his vacillation, forces Criseyde to decide what course of action they should take in response to the proposed trade. In so doing he artificially reverses the order of authority. Such an action is in direct conflict with the necessary structure of society. Troilus rationalizes this action by claiming that he is uncertain whether Criseyde would want him to reveal the relationship, but his subsequent actions render such a rationalization void. In Shakespeare and Dryden, Troilus abdicates his authority by allowing Aeneas and Hector,

respectively, to convince him not to resist Priam's decision. While this would appear to be a proper reaction in terms of obedience to a superior authority, Troilus is subverting the chain of authority through his failure to respond to his responsibilities within the chain.

Authority is a very important part of the story of Troilus and Criseyde. From the beginnings of the story, the authors are concerned with the transfer and balancing of authority. In Benoit, Briseida is under the authority of Troilus until she is traded; she moves directly from his control to that, at least temporarily, of Diomedes. On a larger scale, she is under the authority of Priam until Calchas gains her release, after which she comes under the control of the Greeks. In Boccaccio, Criseida is under the governance of Pandarus, even though he is young and idealistic. In Chaucer, with the absence of Calchas, Criseyde finds it necessary to subordinate herself to Hector in addition to her dependence on Pandarus. In order to function in society, she must have some link with a recognized authority. The eventual conclusion of the story evolves from the processes of control over Criseyde.

In addition, beginning with Boccaccio, Criseyde must honor the advice of family members. In Boccaccio, when her cousin, Pandarus, suggests a liaison with Troilus, as a widow, Criseida does not have to accept his suggestion, but she does have to listen to his idea. That she decides to go along with his suggestion in spite of the obvious risk

to her honor shows the degree to which she will accept his authority and advice. Chaucer's Pandarus is a much older and therefore a more influential authority figure for Criseyde. In this version, Criseyde is more willing to accept his advice because she has more confidence in his authority. In Shakespeare and in Dryden, Cressida acknowledges Pandarus' authority even though she recognizes that he is a bawd and an obvious fool.

When Calchas secures her exchange in the trade for Antenor, Criseyde once again comes under his control. While it is only in Dryden's version that this has an obvious effect on the outcome of the story, Calchas' authority is felt in all of the versions when he convinces her that to return to Troy would be dangerous for her. Now that she is under the command of her father, Criseyde cannot follow Pandarus' advice even if she wants to do so. In Shakespeare's version, it is her father's advice that makes Cressida decide not to return to Troy, but in Dryden's version of the story, it is Calchas' suggestion that she pretend an affection for Diomedes that causes the misunderstanding and subsequent misjudgment of Cressida. While Shakespeare implies that Cressida's actions show that she is freely abandoning her love for Troilus, Dryden makes it clear in a similar scene that Calchas is manipulating her actions in order to secure his return to Troy.

In all versions of the story, it is the authority of the state which dictates finally what will happen to Criseyde. No other force, including Criseyde's wish not to go, can intercede with the decisions of Priam or of the Greek council. In Boccaccio and Chaucer, Hector tries to honor his pledge of protection to Criseyde, but is overruled by the council of the city and finally by Priam. In Dryden, Troilus tries to resist Priam's orders but is dissuaded from that course of action by Hector. Even though she strongly objects to the decision, Criseyde at no time makes a serious effort to thwart Priam's order. In fact, in Boccaccio and Chaucer, when Troilus suggests a half-hearted plan to take Criseyde and run away from Troy and from his responsibility to that city, Criseyde rejects the idea completely. Although it is often assumed that Criseyde acts out of fear for the loss of her honor, she is obviously aware that such an action as Troilus recommends would be against all authority.

Diomedes becomes Criseyde's most immediate figure of authority from the moment he takes her rein from Troilus. In this situation, because she has been stripped of all previous traditional authority figures, she is vulnerable to Diomedes, who represents that tradition of authority. Criseyde is obliged to rely on him. Criseyde's later surrender to him in most of the versions might be in response to an ill-founded conception of his worth. In Benoit, Diomedes is a courteous knight who wants to become

Briseida's lover; in Boccaccio, while he is not quite so courteous, he still has honorable intentions; in Chaucer's version, he has become somewhat more sinister; and when he is interpreted by Shakespeare, Diomedes becomes a true cad who wants to possess Cressida as he would any other of the spoils of war. In order to re-establish herself in society, Cressida must accept a liaison with Diomedes under whatever terms he dictates. Dryden offers the only respite for Cressida when he has her try to deceive Diomedes with feigned love. Diomedes later contributes to the causes of her suicide when he falsely says that she has had an affair with him.

All in all, it becomes evident that authoritative control over Criseyde is a major theme throughout the history of the transmission of the story. The traditionally established hierarchy, the traditional authority of the monarch, the authority of the head of a family, and the authority of the head of a household all join forces to control Criseyde and to make her false. The major culprit in this scheme may well be Troilus, who, because he does not exercise his authority as Criseyde's contractual husband, forces her into actions that cause her to be judged as a lewd, fickle woman.

Criseyde is judged to be false because she gives in to authority and allows herself to be convinced that she must realign herself with Diomedes. From her first act of submission to Pandarus, she is involved in a cycle of

increasingly broad influence which brings about her downfall. Her exchange for Antenor would have caused no disruption of ordered authority if she had remained a pious widow in the early versions of the story. She simply would have been traded from Hector's princely protection to the fatherly protection of Calchas. But, by becoming secretly involved with Troilus, she is placed in a sphere of influence which is disrupted by the exercise of superior authority. Criseyde forms a new relationship with Diomedes because Troilus has not acknowledged their relationship and because she is convinced by Calchas and Diomedes that Troy and Troilus are doomed to destruction. She needs such a relationship in order to maintain her position in the society. Criseyde is removed from her natural society and placed in a foreign environment under the authority of her father and of the Greek command, both of which can force her into an undesirable relationship.

Criseyde is judged on the basis of the demands of a society created for her out of the reactions of the various authors to what they perceived to be a frightening disintegration of societal control. Criseyde's story is a symbol of that loss of control. We have seen that, on a personal level, Criseyde is almost completely devoid of the ability to control her own destiny. She is given opportunities to express a choice, but those choices are limited by how a superior authority wants her to react. After her initial choice to follow Pandarus' directions,

Criseyde is increasingly restricted in her choices. In the end she is able to do little more than react to the stimuli of the authority of others. The common concern of these authors was authority. Benoit and his society were largely concerned with the maintenance of the monarchy and the control of women. Boccaccio and his society were concerned with maintaining order, just as Chaucer's society was concerned with maintaining the established order. Shakespeare's times were concerned with the changes in society. Dryden's society was in the process of radical change. All of these men were dealing with a social condition in which it was desirable to keep the status quo in whatever areas possible. The most accessible area of control was at the level of the family unit. Therefore, Criseyde becomes an example for the process of the exercise of control.

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