REWRIITING WOMAN EVIL?: ANTIFEMINISM AND
ITS HERMENEUTIC PROBLEMS IN
FOUR CRISEIDA STORIES

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the University of North Texas in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Yoon-hee Park, B.A., M.A.
Denton, Texas
May, 1995
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Since Benoît de Sainte-Maure's creation of the Briseida story, Criseida has evolved as one of the most infamous heroines in European literature, an inconstant femme fatale. This study analyzes four different receptions of the Criseida story with a special emphasis on the antifeminist tradition. An interesting pattern arises from the ways in which four British writers render Criseida: Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is a response to the antifeminist tradition of the story (particularly to Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Pilostrato*); Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* is a direct response to Chaucer's poem; William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* aligns itself with the antifeminist tradition, but in a different way; and John Dryden's *Troilus and Cressida or Truth Found Too Late* is a straight rewriting of Shakespeare's play. These works themselves form an interesting canon within the whole tradition.

All four writers are not only readers of the continually evolving story of Criseida but also critics, writers, and literary historians in the Jaussian sense.
They critique their predecessors’ works, write what they have conceived from the tradition of the story, and re-interpret the old works in that historical context.

For many centuries, Criseida was viewed merely as a perfect antifeminist text. Some modern readers also simplify the evolving status of Criseida’s character in the chain of her stories, regarding her as a product of medieval and Renaissance misogyny. However, conceived as a stereotype of female inconstancy in the past, Criseida becomes a fascinating character in the present. Modern readers wonder at the mysterious attractiveness of Chaucer’s Criseyde and admire the final self-knowledge of Henryson’s Cresseid; we are charmed by the revolting vitality of Shakespeare’s Cressida but are disappointed in the colorlessness of Dryden’s Cressida.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Since Benoît de Sainte-Maure's love story between Briseida and Troilus, Criseida¹ has evolved as one of the most infamous heroines in European literature, a femme fatale full of inconstancy. The surveys of Hyder E. Rollins and Gretchen Mieszkowski on Criseida's reputation² reveal that even in her debut as a literary character, "Briseida was fully developed as an antifeminist lesson in woman's inconstancy" (Mieszkowski, "Reputation" 87). Hence, she is "a woman of loose morals" (Rollins 383) by Shakespeare's time. In fact, medieval and Renaissance poets, dramatists, pamphleteers, and balladmongers had portrayed Criseida "as a standard example of an unfaithful woman" (Mieszkowski, "Reputation" 73). For some, it might have been a carefree venture to rewrite Criseida's love and betrayal. For others, however, it might have been troublesome to simply indict Criseida for the aborted love affair between her and Troilus. My first concern here is to demonstrate how Criseida is treated by four English writers: Geoffrey Chaucer, Robert Henryson, William Shakespeare, and John Dryden. Second, I examine these authors' relationship with the antifeminist tradition of the Criseida story and respectively their works' relationship with one other--how
each writer reads Criseida from the works of his precursors and whether he simply rewrites the "woman" evil. Third, I examine each representation in light of modern critical judgments.

An interesting pattern arises from the ways in which these four English writers render Criseida: Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is a response to the antifeminist tradition of the Criseida story (particularly to Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*); Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* is a direct response to Chaucer's work; Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* aligns itself with the antifeminist tradition of the story, but in a different way; and Dryden's *Troilus and Cressida or Truth Found Too Late* is a straight rewriting of Shakespeare's play. These works, ranging from the fourteenth century to the seventeenth century, interweave one another, forming an interesting canon within the whole tradition.

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* seems to be a poem written in the traditional antifeminist mode established by Benoît, Guido dello Collone, and Giovanni Boccaccio. Chaucer, however, rewrites Criseida based on his own reading, reflecting the tradition and, at the same time, subduing it: he portrays the heroine, within the tradition, with different attitudes. Henryson further carries on Chaucer's rewriting. He departs from Chaucer only at the end of the story. Henryson renders a completely different
type of woman, a Criseida regenerated by the realization of her own moral sin.

Renaissance Criseida stories portray her from a different perspective than their medieval counterparts. Both Shakespeare and Dryden deal with the love affair of Troilus and Cressida in an enlarged setting. Shakespeare ridicules not only "false" Cressida but also "true" Troilus and the "great" male heroes, such as Hector, Achilles, Ulysses, and others. Thersites's shouting of "war and lechery" spells out the satirical treatment of the play and Cressida, the traditional stereotype of inconstancy, stands for its people. Dryden's play then takes an opposite view. He recreates order in the unheroic world of Shakespeare's play; he renders most characters wholesome. Like Henryson, Dryden presents a completely different picture of Cressida, a misunderstood Cressida, a symbol of feminine heroism and fidelity.

These four writers did not rewrite stories about Criseida by simply following the antifeminist tradition that the Continental authors had established. They portrayed different Criseidas from what they had read in their respective precursors' works. History, therefore, is indispensable for studying this chain of the Criseida stories. Hans Robert Jauss contends that art in the literary tradition requires a dialogue between the past and the present, "according to which the past work can answer
and 'say something' to us only when the present observer has posed the question that draws it back out of its seclusion" (32). Jauss then applies his notion of a reading public's "horizon of expectations" to the study of literary works. He claims that the horizon of expectations determines the aesthetic and historical values of a literary work: if a literary work merely confirms the reader's expectations, it is not a good work; if it deviates from those expectations, it may be an ideal work. A good literary work should destroy the readers' horizon of expectations and formulate a new kind of horizon, an important reason why Jauss regards the reader as "an energy formative of history" (19). This idea also explains why the objectification of the horizon (of each period or generation) is crucial in appreciating a literary work:

The coherence of literature as an event is primarily mediated in the horizon of expectations of the literary experience of contemporary and later readers, critics, and authors. Whether it is possible to comprehend and represent the history of literature in its unique historicity depends on whether this horizon of expectations can be objectified. (Jauss 22)³

Jaussian "literary history" is useful in studying Criseida stories. First, the recurrent rewriting of Criseida in literature has established itself as a literary
event. Second, the tradition has already entered "into the changing horizon-of-experience of a continuity in which the perpetual inversion occurs from simple reception to critical understanding, from passive to active reception, from recognized aesthetic norms to a new production that surpasses them" (19). Chaucer, Henryson, Shakespeare, and Dryden all formulated their own versions of the traditional story. They are critics, literary historians, or simply readers of the Criseida story, as Jauss observes:

... even the critic who judges a new work, the writer who conceives of his work in light of positive or negative norms of an earlier work, and the literary historian who classifies a work in its tradition and explains it historically are first simply readers before their reflexive relationship to literature can become productive again. (19)

In this diachronic development, I am not arguing that Henryson's work or Dryden's is better than Chaucer's or Shakespeare's. Rather, I am showing how those works are different from the Criseida stories of the past (the Continental tradition before Chaucer), and how the English reception of the story helps us see the continuously changing status of the Criseida story, sustained and enriched by different readers in different time periods.

Francis Lee Utley observes that an age cannot be judged
by its **Zeitgeist**: "Of the commonly accepted factors the most
general and probably the most baseless is that of **Zeitgeist**-
-the assumption that satire on women is a peculiar product
of Middle Ages" (3). He continues that documentary evidence
(sermons, treatises, literature, *etc.*) cannot judge the
whole era of a given period. According to Utley's
observation, the controversy over women is not a particular
phenomenon of an age: it is "timeless and universal" (5).
Applying Jauss's notion of the horizon of expectations to
the study of English Criseida stories can thus be polemic.
How can we objectify the reading public's horizons of
expectations brought to the four English Criseida stories?
Or, how can we reconstruct the original horizons of the
past? Or, how can we objectify our own horizon of
expectations in the present? We simply cannot reconstruct
the historical consciousness of one epoch as a set of
objectified propositions. We can only assume the dominant
ideology of a given period.

The notion of objectification, in a sense, is to return
to the historical objectivism that Jauss has critiqued.  
Jauss opposes the conventional assumption that literature is
representational.  

The starting point of Jauss's new
literary history is a revolt against the positivist-
objective historicism: "The historicity of literature rests
not on an organization of 'literary facts' that is
established *post festum*, but rather on the preceding
experience of the literary work by its readers" (20). Since there are no stated or recorded propositions of the reading public's horizon of expectations, we must rely on the very works produced by authors/readers of the given periods. The horizon of expectations changes from one generation of readers to another, for a literary work is not static like a monument, which "offers the same view to each reader in each period" (Jauss 21). In a chain of receptions over time, we can see the evolving status of the Criseida story through what Jauss calls "the specific achievement of literature in social existence" (45). In other words, in the chain of English Criseida stories, we can see the historical conditions of question and answer; as Jauss contends, "the new work can solve formal and moral problems left behind by the last work, and present new problems in turn" (32). The differential relation of the past work to the present reveals shifts which give insight into the historical process in general.

As far as Criseida is concerned, however, there seems to be little change in the antifeminist horizon of expectations of the reading public from Chaucer's time to Dryden's. Literature in those periods shows that many women were still ridiculed, Criseida being a typical laughing-stock. Even the four English Criseida stories have been regarded, for ages, as satires on a stereotype of female infidelity by later "readers." I do not agree with the
claim that these four rewritings about Criseida conform to the antifeminist horizon of expectations. For a fairer reading of these works, we must first turn to the meaning of Criseida in each work, contrasting each author's representation of his heroine with the antifeminist tradition of the story; then, we need to apply modern critical measures to them. That is, we must clarify how Criseida is conceived and represented in those works, how each writer accepts and resists "the moral casuistry of his lived praxis" (Jauss 45), and how some modern readers respond to each representation of Criseida. Since it is almost impossible to objectify one era and its horizon of expectations, and since this study is solely about the issue of "woman," I presuppose the antifeminist horizon of expectations for the representation of the traditional stereotype of female infidelity. Such presupposition becomes necessary when we pay attention to the history of women, or more specifically to the hostile social attitude toward women in the medieval and Renaissance periods, where "Criseida" was re-created continuously.

History tells us that "women themselves, even those who did write, were silent and silenced by their exclusion from the patriarchal institution of literacy" (Fisher and Halley 3) in the medieval and the Renaissance periods, in which Criseida had been "trafficking" from one male author to another. This historical observation becomes clear when we
hear from one of the few female voices in these periods. As a professional woman writer, Christine de Pizan endeavored to educate both men and women to recognize the importance of women in society, while attacking the misogyny that pervaded her society. In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, the narrator, de Pizan herself, complains of the general antipathy toward women:

[The general attitude] made me wonder how it happened that so many different men—and learned men among them—have been and are so inclined to express both in speaking and in their treatises and writings so many wicked insults about women and their behavior. Not only one or two . . . but, but more generally, judging from the treatises of all philosophers and poets and from all the orators—it would take too long to mention their names—it seems that they all speak from one and the same mouth. They all concur in one conclusion: that the behavior of women is inclined to and full of every vice. (I.1)

Christine de Pizan's general picture of women in her society strikingly reminds us of the remarks made by Chaucer's Wife of Bath, although she is a character of a male author. The Wife of Bath bitterly complains about such inferior situations of women in the Prologue to her story:

For trusteth wel, it is an impossible
That any clerk wol speke good of wyves,
But if it be of hooly seintes lyves.
Ne of noon oother womman never the mo.
Who peyntede the leon, tel me who?
By God, if wommen hadde written stories,
As clerkes han withinne hire oratories,
They wolde han written of men moore wikkednesse
Than al the mark of Adam may redresse. (688-96)³

The Wife of Bath points out precisely the woman's position in the male-dominant medieval society: how male authors help manipulate and maintain the bias against women. As the Aesopian allusion of "the man and the lion" implies, writing was largely a (male) clerical job in the Middle Ages. Most writings about woman, except "of hooly seintes lyves," by Church Fathers, theologians, and preachers, had one voice: woman as an instrument of the Devil, a thing both inferior and evil. Faced with this historical and social prejudice of the medieval and Renaissance periods, many modern critics, particularly feminist critics, are reluctant to accept male authors' characterization of women in their works. Rewritings of Criseida also raise similar questions of interpretation.

Critics often concur that special attention is needed in reading women, for writing has been men's job. Hélène Cixous proclaims that writing is "a locus where the repression of women has been perpetuated . . . and in a
manner that's frightening since it's often hidden or adorned with the mystifying charms of fiction" (879). This contemporary French feminist's remark echoes what the Wife of Bath complains about books on "wikked wyves" by (male) "clerkes." Thus, medieval and Renaissance feminist critics see the danger inherent in women of the past:

In the medieval and early modern period . . . , the production of literature was a fundamentally male "homotextual" activity: one in which male writings referred to, responded to, manipulated, and projected desire upon other men and other men's writings as much, if not more, than they claimed to represent the extraliterary world and the women in it. Thus these texts . . . cannot be read as simple reflections of women's historical or subjective experience, even and especially when they seem to exalt women and whatever power the texts ascribe them. (Fisher and Halley 4)

This remark underlines hermeneutic problems which arise from reading women in male-authored texts. We must therefore be cautious particularly in reading Criseida stories, for the four English stories, all written by male authors, deal with the traditional antifeminist stereotype. In fact, we see many apologies, often confessed by the narrators or the authors themselves, in most of the Criseida stories. Chaucer, for example, repeatedly makes excuse for
his rewriting of Criseida in *Troilus and Criseyde* as well as in *The Legend of Good Women*. In the last book of *Troilus and Criseyde*, promising to write about good women, Chaucer's narrator apologizes to "every lady" and "every gentil womman" for his rewriting of an antifeminist story:

```
Besechyng every lady bright of hewe,
And every gentil womman, what she be,
That al be that Criseyde was untrewe,
That for that gilt she be nat wroth with me.
Ye may hire gilt in other bokes se;
And gladlier I wol write, yif yow leste,
Penolopees trouthe and good Alceste. (V, 1772-78)
```

A similar scene occurs in the Prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*. Cupid, the god of Love, blames Chaucer for his writing on Crisseyde (264-72, G version); and Queen Alceste, a defense attorney, has pleaded for him (338-52, G version). Chaucer's narrator then defends himself:

```
But trewely I wende, as in this cas,
Naught have agilt, ne don to love trespas.
For-why a trewe man, withoute drede,
Hath nat to parte with a theves cede;
Ne a trewe loverre oghte me nat to blame
Thogh that I speke a fals loverre som shame.
They oughte rathere with me for to holde
For that I of Crisseyde wrot or tolde
Or of the Rose; what so myn auctour mente,
```
Algate, God wot, it was myn entente
To forther trouthe in love and it cheryce,
And to be war fro falsnesse and fro vice
By swich ensaumple; this was my menynge.

(452-643. G version)

Chaucer's excuse echoes a conventional self-defense of medieval authors who were accused of writing immoral things or, here more specifically, treating women unfavorably. That is, they did so to warn against evil, as Alceste's stopping of him implies:

... Lat be thyn arguynge,
For Love ne wol nat counterpletyd be
In ryght ne wrong; and lerne this at me!

(465-68, G version)

Such apologies lead us to think in two ways. On the one hand, beyond the hermeneutic question of the author's sincerity, we strongly feel that Chaucer is very conscious, at least, of "every lady bright of hewe, / And every gentil womman." These repeated excuses also imply that the rewriting of Criseida raised many protests among contemporary reading circles (namely, the courtly ladies), even though antifeminism characterized the Middle Ages. In this regard, Arlyn Diamond's observation is remarkable: "... unwilling to abandon the values and hierarchies he inherits, unable to reconcile them with what he has observed of human emotion and social realities, [Chaucer] accepts
uneasily the medieval view of women as either better or worse than men, but never quite the same" (82).

On the other hand, these apologies sound hypocritical: Mieszkowski calls them "jokes" or "pseudo-defences of women" ("Reputation" 123). It is interesting to observe two women readers’ responses to what Chaucer has done in The Legend of Good Women. Eileen Power remarks that "Some of apologetic writings are so sensitive of the woman’s own feelings as to suggest an authorship not only pro-feminist but also female" (30-31). She acknowledges Chaucer’s sincerity and accepts his apology by praising The Legend of Good Women as "the clearest reaction against the prevailing misogyny" (30). Hope Phyllis Weissman, on the contrary, defines antifeminism in literary tradition as "not simply satirical caricatures of women but any presentation of a woman’s nature intended to conform her to male expectations of what she is or ought to be, not her own" (93). Weissman therefore regards Chaucer as "the heir and the most versatile manipulator of this literary tradition which, on his knees before Queen Alceste in the literary meadow of the Legend of Good Women, he comically--and disingenuously--disavowed" (30).

We can see another hermeneutic contention between male and female critics. Rollins believes that John Lydgate "was in thorough sympathy with his Criseyde, bitterly reproved Guido for his slanders of women in general, and tried to excuse Criseyde in particular because Nature had
made her variable" (387). Mieszkowski disagrees, however. She argues that "[Lydgate's] sympathetic excuses all finally turn against Criseyde, and she is left as fickle, deceitful, self-seeking, and promiscuous as she ever was . . . , ironically praising women for lechery or adultery while pretending to be aghast at Guido's antifeminism" ("Reputation" 123). Even in medieval clerical writings on women, we often find these "gaps of indeterminacy." An eleventh-century bishop of Rennes, Marbodi, condemns women in the chapter De Meretrice of Liber Decem Capitulorum: "Of the numberless snares that the crafty enemy [the Devil] spreads for us . . . , the worst . . . is woman, sad stem, evil root, vicious fount . . . honey and poison" (Gies 38). However, in another chapter, De Matrona, of the same book, Marbode presents a completely opposite view on women--"Of all the things that God has given for human use, nothing is more beautiful or better than the good woman" (Gies 39).9

The reader's dilemma then is how to obtain the "gestalt" of a literary text across these wide gaps of indeterminacy. Earlier, St. Augustine had already seen through the polysemantic nature of textuality:

For my part, indeed, and I say this with the greatest confidence and sincerity, if I were to write anything that was to become supremely authoritative, I would choose to write in such a way that my words would resound with whatever
truth anyone could grasp in them, rather than to put down one true meaning so clearly as to exclude other meanings, which, if they were not false, would not offend me. (Confessions XII, 31)

This remark echoes what a recent critic calls "the inexhaustibility of the text"--"no reading can ever exhaust the full potential" of a text (Iser 280). Recognizing not only the textual intentionality but also the diversity of individual reader response, Wolfgang Iser goes so far as to claim that every text has "gaps of indeterminacy." An important role of the reader then is to fill in those gaps by supplying meaning which is absent, though implied. Since each reader's realization of a text is based on his or her own disposition (such as one's own experience and perception), various interpretations are inevitable. This sort of interpretative anarchy, however, can be reduced significantly because the written part of the text guides the reader in the search for the implied meaning of the unwritten part.

One cannot pin down the true meaning of a text but can only single out one's own illusion from many possible illusions. The reader's response to a text is actually an "illusion-making," in the sense that "illusion is whatever fixed or definable, and reality is best understood as its negation: whatever reality is, it's not" (Prye 169-70). The reader's illusion-making is important because neither the
text nor the reader can give the gestalt of a literary text, which "arises from the meeting between the unwritten text and the individual mind of the reader with its own particular history of experience, its own consciousness, its own outlook" (Iser 284). An illusion-making is also a process to "reduce the polysemantic possibilities [of a literary text] to a single interpretation in keeping with the expectations aroused, thus extracting an individual, configurative meaning" (Iser 285). Reading activity is then a process of building and breaking of illusion to find "a consistent pattern" (Iser 284). This search finally leads the reader to grasp "the unfamiliar world of the text" (Iser 285): the "unwritten" part or the implied meaning of a text. My study thus may also be an illusion-making. The aim, however, is to disclose other illusion-makings done by medieval and Renaissance writers in the social and historical context, including contemporary illusion-makings by various schools of criticism.

Iser's making of a "consistent pattern" brings to mind Jauss's searching for a "coherence." However, the most distinct difference between these two notions is that Iser's methodology lacks historicity. Whereas Iser explores a consistent pattern through a process of continuous illusion-makings in a literary work, Jauss pursues a coherence of the meaning of a literary work in the context of history, presupposing a process of the reader's "mediation that the
work enters into the changing horizon-of-experience of a continuity" (19). For Iser, reading activity is synchronic and homotextual, while, for Jauss, it is diachronic and intertextual. Thus, when they define the notion of indeterminacy, this difference surfaces clearly. Iser claims that indeterminacy of meaning is a characteristic of every text because the potential meaning is embedded in the text. Jauss, however, sees it as a characteristic of the text’s history, not of the text, for its meaning changes according to the varying constitutions of that meaning in the course of history. If Iser "localizes" the openness of the text, Jauss "historicizes" it. These methodologies are not mutually exclusive, however: they are rather reciprocal and complementary, essential to studying the four English Criseida stories. On the one hand, we can use the microcosmic perspectives of Iser in picturing the unwritten part of Criseida, the very implied text, of an individual work. On the other, Jauss’s macrocosmic perspectives are useful to formulate the interrelationship of one story to the others and the correlationship with the past, the present, and the future.

In the following six chapters, I speculate on the four English Criseida stories, using Jauss’s and Iser’s theories. Chapter II introduces a survey of Continental Criseida stories that founded the story’s conventions and its "moral casuistry of [the] lived praxis," the story’s antifeminist
tradition that has been continued for a long time. The next four chapters unfold the individual receptions and responses to the tradition. The focus in each chapter is disclosing whether or not an individual author, both as a reader and a writer, simply accepted the given convention and his lived praxis of the antifeminist tradition. The last chapter concludes this study by dealing with the relationship of the literary history of English Criseida stories to us, that is, how the past Criseida stories have affected our current conditions and events, and how their coherent messages of antifeminism can be judged by our norms."
NOTES

1 Because the heroine's name varies from writer to writer, I use "Criseida" whenever I refer to her general name.


3 Jauss does not give a full explanation of his notion of "the horizon of expectations." On the one hand, he merely indicates that expectations arise "from a preunderstanding of the genre, from the form and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetic and practical language" (22). On the other hand, separating the horizon of expectations of literature from that of historical lived praxis, Jauss explains that the former "not only preserves actual experiences, but also anticipates unrealized possibility, broadens the limited space of social behavior for new desires, claims, and goals, and thereby opens paths of future experience" (41). We can presume, then, that the notion of the horizon of expectations covers not only the aesthetic but also historical and social qualities, with which the reading public can receive and appreciate a literary work.

According to Jauss, some works (such as Cervantes’s *Don
Quixote) by themselves make the literary horizons objects perceivable by the reader, for they "evoke the reader's horizon of expectations, formed by a convention of genre, style or form, only in order to destroy it step by step" (24). See Jauss, p. 24, for more about the objectification of the horizons.

According to Jauss, a literary event is not like a political event which has "unavoidable consequences substituting on their own that no succeeding generation can ever escape" (22). "A literary event," he explains, "can continue to have an effect only if those who come after it still or once again respond to it--if there are readers who again appropriate the past work or authors who want to imitate, outdo, or repute it" (22).

Jauss opposes to the traditional notion of history as the representation of the given periods: "the historicist historian seemed to be freed from the dilemma of the closure and continuation of history wherever he limited himself to periods that he could place before him up through the 'final scene,' and describe in their own completeness without regard for that which followed from them" (7). Jauss's concept of history embraces both synchronic and diachronic aspects.

"...the specific achievement of literature in social existence is to be sought exactly where literature is not absorbed into the function of a representational art. If
one looks at the moments in history when literary works toppled the taboos of the ruling morals or offered the reader new solutions for the moral casuistry of his lived praxis, which thereafter could be sanctioned by the consensus of all readers in the society, then a still-little-studied area of research opens itself up to the literary historian. The gap between literature and history, between aesthetic and historical knowledge, can be bridged if literary history does not simply describe the process of general history in the reflection of its works one more time, but rather when it discovers in the course of "literary evolution" that properly socially formative function that belongs to literature as it competes with other arts and social forces in the emancipation of mankind from its natural, religious, and social bonds" (Jauss 45).

Jauss contends that "the specific achievement of literature in social existence" is not identical with lived praxis: "The social function of literature manifests itself in its genuine possibility only where the literary experience of the reader enters into the horizon of expectations of his lived praxis, performs his understanding of the world, and thereby also has an effect on his social behavior" (39). See note 5.

All quotations from Chaucer are cited from The Riverside Chaucer, ed. Larry D. Benson, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
Recited from Gies 38-39.

According to Iser, the "gestalt" of a literary text "is not the true meaning of the text; at best it is a configurative meaning" (284), and one can form this "gestalt" of a work through "the process of anticipation and retrospection," and through "the process of grouping together all the different aspects of a text to form the consistency" (283).

Jauss explains that the literary history of the past work is meaningful to us "as the prehistory of its present experience": "The step from the history of reception of the individual work to the history of literature has to lead to seeing and representing the historical consequence of works as they determine and clarify the coherence of literature, to the extent that it is meaningful, for us, as the prehistory of its present experience" (20).
CHAPTER II
CRISEIDA AND THE TRADITION

The literary creation of Criseida in the Middle Ages might have resulted from the notorious misogyny of the age. History demonstrates that women were largely manipulated by the Church and the patriarchal social system of the period. In writings, women are usually portrayed merely as images rather than as "flesh and blood." Exegetical and literary writings exploit women singularly for their moral purposes: women are either good like the Virgin Mary or evil like Eve. As a result, it is not easy to see any "neutral" woman with these two qualities (that is, a woman as a human being). Under such conditions, it might have been very difficult to produce "literary works which toppled the taboos of the ruling morals or offered the reader new solutions for the moral casuistry of his lived praxis" (Jauss 45). The literary creation of Criseida might have met the antifeminist expectations in this male-centered society. This chapter shows how Criseida is conceived and represented by some earlier writers who established the antifeminist tradition of the Criseida story.

When Chaucer wrote his version of the Criseida story, she was already a popular heroine in European literature. Criseida first appears in Dares the Phrygian’s version of
the Trojan War:

Briseis was beautiful. She was small and blond, with soft yellow hair. Her eyebrows were joined above her lovely eyes. Her body was well-proportioned. She was charming, friendly, modest, ingenuous, and pious. (144-45)⁴

This brief sketch adumbrates the typical, traditional Criseida: her surpassing beauty, her "famous' joined eyebrows, and her modest, feminine virtues.

Although Benoît claims that he is rewriting Dares' accounts of the Trojan War, the love story of Briseida and Troilus is actually Benoît’s invention in his long poem Le Roman de Troie. The love story, however, does not appear as a continuous, unbroken episode. It consists of several passages amid the progressive war and is left half-told. The story breaks out when the lovers are about to be separated. Benoît never tells about Troilus’s pains before he wins Briseida’s heart. Instead, he shows Diomede’s relatively long agony for the love of Briseida: "I shall tell you the true love and the distress and grief that the son of Tydeus [Diomede] felt for Troilus’s lady" (4).⁵ In his story of Briseida, Benoît sets up the principal frame of the story: the rivalry between Troilus and Diomede for the love of Briseida; Calchas' plea for his daughter, Briseida, and the exchange of Antenor for Briseida; Briseida’s promise to return to Troy, and needless to say, her betrayal.
Benoît’s episode of Briseïda embodies an antifeminist view of women’s inconstancy. The highlight of such antifeminism is found in Troilus’s "beware of woman" speech to Diomede:

Go now and bide with the woman, with the daughter of old Calchas . . . , by you I send her word that now we two are parted. If you have been to her what I used to be, there will be plenty more accepted lovers before the siege is ended; you will have to keep good watch. You may have her wholly to yourself now, but she has not yet made an end, since she finds pleasure in the trade of love. For, if there are so many that somewhat please her, the very innkeepers will have her favours. It will be wise for her to take thought from whom she may draw profit. (18-9)

This warning is actually a public humiliation, for not only Diomede but also all the Greeks and the Trojans have heard about this misogynistic moral lesson: "These taunts were clearly heard. Neither Trojans nor Greeks forgot them; nor was there a day in all the month that they were not reported in a hundred places" (19). From then on, Briseïda becomes one of the favorite "jokes" among men, as she herself has dreaded: "Henceforth no good will be written of me, nor any good song sung" (19). In a similar vein, Mieszkowski remarks on the historical importance of Benoît’s story of
Briseida:

It is certainly possible that Benoît's version, widely read and repeatedly translated, established Briseida as the type of the fickle woman by itself. To a reader of the Roman she could hardly have had any other meaning. ("Reputation" 88)

Mieszkowski's reading of Benoît's story, however, appears too simple to detect the "unwritten" part of the text. For example, she interprets Briseida's flamboyant outfit and ornaments, shown in her departure for the Greek camp, as a proof of antifeminism: "Briseida weeps when she leaves Troy and Troilus, but she is already adorned to attract her next lover" (Mieszkowski 81). In that scene, however, Briseida is protesting against her forced deportation, using her only weapon, her beauty: "more beautiful and more fair and more white than a lily or than snow on the branch" (5). Her bitter lamentation, on the night before her departure, reflects her anger over the coerced exchange:

"Alas," she said, "what a fate is mine when the city where I was born forsakes me thus! Even to a servant of lowest rank it would have been a great shame. I know no king, or duke, or count who now honours or befriends me .... King Priam has done very ill to send me away from his city." (8-9)
Briseida is justified in blaming the city and its rulers since most Trojans know her love affair with Troilus (8). From this point of view, we realize how impressive she is in her departing scene. We cannot but think at this moment that Briseida is a victim of her society, indeed.

Another positive characterization of Briseida occurs in the reunion scene between the father and the daughter:

"My lord," she said, "tell me how this is. This is wondrous strange conduct I beheld in you, who have so acted as ever henceforth to bear a reproach, who help your foes that they may destroy your friends and the land where you were born . . . . A man should rather dread shame than flee from or avoid death . . . . He who forfeits honour in this world must think meanly of himself." (12-13)

This remark initially suggests that Calchas is a worse coward than a woman, often thought to have a weak heart. Therefore, it is ironic to see Briseida denounce another "traitor." In the later Criseida stories, this heroic yet ironical quality of Briseida becomes a convention, which fully blooms in Dryden's heroic Cressida.

Benoît's characterization of Briseida resembles Chaucer's Wife of Bath. Like the Wife of Bath, Briseida favors a uxorious lover. When Diomede was craving her mercy, "Well she knew by his sighs that he was wholly
subject to her" (16), and "she rejoiced much and was glad that he was in her power" (17). Briseida is also audacious like the Wife of Bath. As in her flamboyant departure from Troy to the Greek camp, Briseida, in her final lamentation for her forever disappeared fame, proudly thinks that "Though I have wrought folly, I have won the game" (20). Both women are also self-centered. In the "General Prologue" to The Canterbury Tales, the narrator tells us how the Wife of Bath acts in the church-going:

In al the parisshe wif ne was ther noon
That to the offrynge bificre hire sholde goon;
And if ther dide, certeyn so wrooth was she
That she was out of alle charitee. (449-52)

In the same manner, Briseida consoles herself that her act of betrayal was inevitable for her future well-being:

I had been dead ere now had I not taken mercy on myself. Though I have wrote folly, I have won the game. I shall have joy and gladness, even as my heart was in great sorrow. He will be able to speak ill of me who was slow to bring me comfort. One need not grieve or torment oneself because of the vulgar crowd. If all the world is happy and my heart sad and troubled, it profits me nothing.

(20)

While modern readers may admire her for some of these qualities, the same qualities might not have belonged to
womanly virtues necessitated by the medieval patriarchal social system. An English poem, anonymously written in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, lists womanly virtues which the speaker’s ideal lady represents:

[S]He is coral of godnesse,
He is rubye of rightfulnesse,
He is crystal of clannesse [cleanness],
And baner of bealte [beauty].
He is lylye of largesse [generosity],
He is parvenke of prowesse [excellency],
He is solscele of swetnesse,
And ledy of lealte [loyalty].

Benoît also portrays his heroine as beautiful, modest, submissive, kind, full of pity, and "very charming in speech . . . , very pleasant in manner and sober in bearing" (5). It is this ideal beauty that all male characters of Benoît’s poem might have conceived and expected from Briseida. King Priam thus saves Briseida, the daughter of a traitor, because "the maiden is noble, and worthy and wise and beautiful" (8). Such idealization, however, turns out to be an illusion because of her unfaithfulness. Thwarted by Briseida’s infidelity, Troilus accuses all women as if they were born to betray:

Afterwards he (Troilus) complained with great bitterness of his lady, who had left him and given her love to his enemy. He called ladies faithless
and maidens false. He said it was an evil thing to put your trust in them, for there were very few of them who were faithful in love and free from fickleness and disloyalty. (21)

This "curse" on all womankind (Briseida as their surrogate) mirrors Troilus' anger and frustration for his aborted affair. Briseida, after all, becomes "a figure whose significance was spelled out explicitly, both in the narrative itself and in the author's commentary on it" (Mieszkowski, "Reputation" 87), a second Eve, a symbol of female inconstancy.

In this very first stage of Briseida's appearance, she is, more or less, depicted with ambiguities and uncertainties. At times, Briseida acts resolutely (as in her reproaches of her country and Calchas); at others, ambiguously (as in her long final speech). We are thus quite unsure why Briseida deserts Troilus for Diomede. There are possibly several motives for her betrayal: she wants to get revenge on the country that abandoned her; it is purely for carnal love; it happens by chance; or it is because she is a fickle woman from the beginning. This kind of elusiveness becomes crucial for later writers: the openness of Briseida's meaning as a "text" continues, sometimes improved and sometimes deteriorated.

While Benoît's version hints at a somewhat complex and elusive characterization of Briseida, Guido delle Colonne
never gives such account of Briseida in his Historia Destructionis Troiae:

Guido made one substantial change in Benoît's characterization of Briseida. He subtracted the uncertainty about her motives that Benoît had sustained with such care. There are no longer many possible ways of judging Briseida, even early in the story. She is unambiguously self-seeking and lecherous, and she never worries about her infidelity in passages that might tempt a reader to sympathize with her. (Mieszkowski, "Reputation" 91)

Guido's reading of Benoît's Briseida thus represents the extreme view on women in the past. Guido's first description of Briseida, for example, tells about everything she represents in the antifeminist tradition—"she is beautiful but inconstant":

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

(VIII, 192-99)

Since Guido's work is almost a translation of Benoît's poem into Latin prose, Guido usually follows his source on Briseida. As Mieszkowski indicates, however, Guido pours out a straightforward antifeminist moral lesson on woman's inconstancy. For example, he drastically reduces Benoît's three days to less than a day, during which Briseida changes her mind:

That day [the day of exchange] had not 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 a short time, so suddenly, and so unexpectedly, she became inconstant and began to change in everything.

(XX, 253-59)

Guido, then, portrays the general view of the fickle woman from the exemple of Briseida's short-lived constancy:

Accordingly, what is to be said about the constancy of women, whose sex has as its property to dissolve its plans with sudden frailty and to change and be fickle in the shortest time? For it
does not fall to a man to be able to describe their fickleness and wiles, since their flighty intentions are more wicked than it is possible to say. (XX, 259-64)

Guido’s skepticism is virtually the same with the exegetical warning about female inconstancy and deception embodied in Eve.

In Benoît’s version, Briseida has at least a male accomplice, Diomede, who influences her to betray Troilus. According to Benoît, Diomede is portrayed as a man of negative image: he "made many a false promise" and "Nobody could control him; he was a very evil man to serve" (5). It is striking to observe that Diomede "took one of her gloves from her, without anybody knowing or perceiving" and "Much he rejoiced at that, and did not note at all that she was in any degree angered thereby" (12). Benoît does not describe Briseida’s response although her own words imply that she was seduced by Diomede:

I have not done as I should; my heart should have been so set and fixed on him that I should have listened to no other. I was false and inconstant and mad when I gave heed to words; he who wishes to keep himself loyal must never listen to words; by words the wise and the most cunning are deceived. (19; emphasis added)

A Biblical allusion to Eve and the Serpent echoes in
Briseida's excuse for her change of mind. In Guido's version, however, Briseida becomes both Eve and the Serpent. When Diomedes pleads for her "mercy," Briseida responds ambiguously: "At present I neither refuse nor accept the offer of your love, since my heart is not so disposed that I can reply to you in any other way" (XIX, 189-91). Further, we are stunned at Briseida's heinous hypocrisy when Diomedes, "without anyone realizing it, slyly took away one of the gloves which Briseida was wearing on her hand" (XIX, 195-97): "Although she alone perceived it plainly, she concealed the pleasing theft of the lover" (XIX, 197-98). Guido's remark of "the pleasing theft of the lover," in a sense, brings to mind the notion of "clandestine" love that Boccaccio's Criseida pursues in her love affair with Troilus. Throughout this scene, Guido makes us believe that Briseida is never a victim of a temptation or of a particular situation or event.

Guido's Historia plays a great role in propagating Briseida's tainted reputation all over Europe due to its enormous success and popularity as the authentic history of the Trojan War. It was so widely copied, printed, and translated that, according to Mary Elizabeth Meek, there were about one hundred and fifty manuscripts about it. In Guido's version, Briseida's plural meanings implied by Benoît are reduced to a single meaning that only transmits Guido's antifeminist messages. It is probable that she
appears in the story only as an image for "the moral casuistry of [Guido's] lived praxis." Thus, Guido's portrayal of Briseida might have fully satisfied the expectations of the antifeminist readers.

Giovanni Boccaccio greatly changes and develops Criseida's character and her love story. Boccaccio rewrote the love story of Criseida and Troilo in a full version, quite different from the episodic stories of Benoît and Guido. Il Filostrato does not begin in medias res but at Troilo's falling in love and his consequent agonies for Criseida. The youthful Pandaro appears for the first time as Troilo's friend and his go-between, and all major characters are developed in full details. Calchas, the traitor, is still a "wooing" father to his daughter; the "noble" Troilo bewails for his lost Criseida; and the "skillful" Diomede, with "words," arduously convinces Criseida about his true love. Criseida is at the very center of these activities by male characters. She, after all, changes her mind, and the narrator of the poem declares that the tragedy has arisen from "the ill-conceived love of Troilo for Criseida" (VIII, 28). Boccaccio establishes all the details of the story, creating some and inheriting others from the tradition.

As the title signifies ("a man vanquished and laid prostate by love"), Il Filostrato is about Troilo's love and sufferings. In the Introduction to their translation,
Robert P. apRoberts and Anna Bruni Seldis defend Boccaccio's anti-feminist portrayal, since "[Boccaccio] gives to Criseida's infidelity the most trite of anti-feminist motives":

Boccaccio does not retain the aggressive anti-feminism of Benoît and Guido, but merely makes lighthearted use of the most commonplace anti-feminist sentiment. His story is not basically concerned with Criseida. Her infidelity is merely the climax of Troilo's suffering and needs no particular explanation beyond the well known fickleness of women, no new revelation to either the reader or Troilo who, before he was smitten by Criseida, had learned from his previous experience of love that women's hearts change a thousand times a day . . . . The so-called "moral" of the poem is there to give this anti-feminist platitude as an explanation of the infidelity. Let us hope that the reader, if he cannot check his sexual desires, which we all know are wicked, does not love a fickle woman, hard though it is to find a faithful one. (xlvii-xlviii)

This view, somewhat strangely, argues that Boccaccio's Criseida is not rendered worse than her predecessors, for the story underlines Troilo's painful experience. Although the story may not focus on the heroine, however, Criseida
"is not protected from our scorn" (Meech 387) or from theirs [the original readers']. "Today," Stanford B. Meech says, "at least more believable as spirited wanton than the hero as languishing paladin, [Criseida] is given motives too simple to be psychologically intriguing" (386-87).

Mieszkowski, thus, observes that Boccaccio's work cannot escape from the antifeminist tradition:

... no matter what else Boccaccio did to the story, he in no way changed Criseida's significance. Although he reduced her to secondary importance and reshaped her story, he left her, just as she had always been, a warning for men against loving a fickle woman. Moreover, near the close of his poem, he even moralized it in generalizations that echo the antifeminism of Guido and Benoît. ("Reputation" 93)

Making Criseida secondary does not necessarily change her significance in the antifeminist tradition. A question comes out of these different views: has Boccaccio followed the antifeminist tradition or not, that is, does Il Filostrato satisfy the expectations of the antifeminist readers? These gaps of interpretations arise mainly from Boccaccio's unprecedented portrayal of his heroine: "sensual" Criseida who pursues the secret joy of the clandestine love affair. Criseida's soliloquy in Part II convinces us of this particular aspect of her character.
After Pandaro has disclosed Troilo's love to her, Criseida considers whether to accept his love. Her soliloquy exposes what she thinks of love, and with what motives she accepts Troilo's love.

A Carpe diem motif dominates her thought (69-71): she is young, beautiful, and "free" and does not have any reason "not to be in love" (69); she is losing her chance to love each hour and, since every woman in her country has a lover, it is not a sin "to do as others" (70); who will love an old woman?--it is of no use crying over spilt milk (71). Then her thought pursues the joy of the clandestine affair (73-4): "Stolen water is a far sweeter thing than wine had in abundance; so the joy of love which is hidden surpasses greatly that of a husband always held in one's arms" (74).

In the long run, however, Criseida fears the negative effects of loving: "... a cruel life languishing love ... exists in plaints, in sighs, and in suffering, and then it has, in addition, jealousy, which is much worse than a miserable death" (75). Yet, she also worries about being deserted by Troilo, of much higher rank than her: "... this amorous desire will pass from him and he will hold you in scorn, and will leave you wretched, full of infamy and shame" (76). Finally, she is troubled over the durability of the clandestine affair:

"But even suppose that this love should endure a long time, how can you know that it is destined to
remain concealed? It is very vain to trust to Fortune, and human counsel cannot see well what is advantageous to do; and if it is disclosed openly, you can consider your reputation, which up to now has been so good, lost eternally." (77)

Her soliloquy suggests that she is neither a romantic lover nor a passive victim of the situation as the daughter of a traitor. She is a calculating, self-centered lady as cautious as any female lover. At the same time, she is as egoistic and self-confident as Briseida and the Wife of Bath, and as sensual as a woman from the fabliaux.14

Most critics agree that sensuality characterizes Criseida in Il Filostrato.15 This characterization brings forth contentions among critics as to how one should interpret her sensuality. Chauncey Wood believes that sensuality appears in the poem "as the vehicle for all the misfortunes that transpire" (30). According to him, Boccaccio emphasizes the sensuality to reveal how it has caused "all the unhappiness, betrayal, and corruption upon which the poem insists" (30). Thus, for Wood, Criseida is a paragon of ria donna ("the evil woman"), "whose fickleness led Troilo to death" (29). apRoberts and Seldis, on the contrary, contend that in Il Filostrato "Boccaccio . . . presents what he regards as a perfect affair, and its salient feature is that very sensuousness which love paramours affords and marriage cannot" (xxiv). According to
them, *Il Filostrato* actually depicts love "as being opposed by society, condemned by society as immoral, and as gaining in value because it is so opposed and condemned" (xxiv).

In light of Jauss's theory of new literary history, Wood's view implies that Boccaccio's poem has satisfied the horizon of antifeminist expectations, while the view of apRoberts and Seldis suggests that *Il Filostrato* could have changed the horizon of expectations by "[toppling] the taboos of the ruling morals or [offering] the reader new solutions for the moral casuistry of his lived praxis." Boccaccio's poem failed to do so, however, because its new meaning was not "thereafter . . . sanctioned by the consensus of all readers in the society" (Jauss 45). The four English receptions of the Criseida story, except for Shakespeare's, prove the failure of Boccaccio's work. Rather, they, particularly Chaucer's, try to eliminate the love that Boccaccio has rendered in his heroine. Boccaccio's concealed meaning, then, has been dormant. The reading of apRoberts and Seldis is understandable for us, living in a society where frank talks of sex and love by a female character are no longer regarded as "sin." It is questionable, however, that the readers from Boccaccio's period to Dryden's had judged Boccaccio's veiled meaning from a twentieth-century perspective.

Boccaccio's version of the Criseida story, after all, follows the steps of Benoît and Guido. Briseida/Criseida is
beautiful, modest, but unfaithful:

Briseida was graceful . . . . She was more beautiful and more fair and more white than a lily or than snow on the branch; but her brows were joined . . . . 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. (Roman 5; emphasis added)

Briseida . . . was graced with great loveliness . . . endowed with milky whiteness, with rosy cheeks, blond hair, and joined eye-brows . . . . She was famous for great eloquence in talking; she was pliable because of great compassion. She attracted many lovers by her charm, and loved many although she did not preserve constancy of heart toward her lovers. (Historia 8.192-99; emphasis added)

. . . a widow, who was so beautiful and so angelic to see that she did not seem a mortal: Criseida she was named, and in my judgment she was as prudent, noble, wise, and well-mannered as any other lady who had ever been born in Troy. (Il
Such an end had the ill-conceived love of Troilo for Criseida, and such an end had his wretched sorrow, to which none other was ever equal. Such an end had the bright splendor which he would have brought to the royale throne; such was the end of Troilo's vain hope in the base Criseida. (Il Filostrato 8.28)

The "angelic" Criseida at the beginning foreshadows an antifeminist moral lesson in the end. The story about true Troilus and false Criseida serves as a mirror for young men. It is, after all, the conventional "beware of women" moralization, as the "author" of Il Filostrato warns young lovers:

O youths in whom amorous desire comes surging with age, I pray you for the sake of God that you restrain your ready steps to the evil appetite and that you mirror yourselves in Troilo's love which my verses have displayed above because, if you will read them in the right spirit, you will not lightly have trust in all women.

A young woman is both fickle and desirous of many lovers, and she esteems her beauty greater than the mirror shows, and puffed up she has the vainglory of her youth, which is more pleasing and
attractive the more she appraises it to herself. She does not feel virtue or reason, unsteady always as a leaf in the wind. (8.29-30)

Boccaccio’s intention seems to portray a different kind of heroine from the two Briseidas in the past. The “author’s” “perfect lady” has a stronger desire to be loved and takes delight in loving; she discerns and sees what is to be avoided, she picks and chooses prudently, and she fulfills her promises. These are to be followed, but one ought not, however, to choose in haste, for all are not sensible even though they may be older, and those are worthless. (8.32)

Boccaccio’s characterization of Criseida is based on Benoît’s portrayal of Briseida—“Greatly was she loved, and greatly did she love.” Underscoring Criseida’s sensuality in great detail, however, Boccaccio shows a different courtly lady from the old one: Criseida’s liberal and aggressive attitude toward love and sex becomes a prerequisite for his “perfect lady.” These new qualities of an ideal courtly lady, however, do not seem to work as hoped by the “author.” Rather, they become the very qualities to tarnish Criseida’s name as a lecherous heroine. What Chaucer does to Boccaccio’s representation of the infamous heroine in Troilus and Criseyde is to reduce the sensuality characterized in Boccaccio’s work.
Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio have established the anti-feminist tradition of the Criseida story by satirizing her inconsistent behaviors: they first eulogize Criseida as an ideal lady only to satirize her later. An anonymous English poem, written in the late fifteenth century, represents this kind of "tongue-in-cheek" attitude toward women:

Of all creatures women be best,

_Cuius contrarium verum est._

In every place ye may well see
That women be trewe as tirtill on tree,
Not liberal in langage but ever in secrete,
And gret joye amonge them is for to be.

The stedfastnes of women will never be don,
So gentil, so curtes, they be everichon,
Meke as a lambe, still as a stone,
Croked nor crabbed find ye none.

Men be more cumbers a thousandfold,
And I mervail how they dare be so bold
Against women for to hold,
Seeing them so pascient, softe and cold.

For tell a woman all your counsaile
And she can kepe it wonderly well:
She had lever go quik to hell
Than to her neighbour she wold it tell.

Now say well by women or elles be still,
For they never displesed man by ther will:
To be angry or wroth they can no skill,
For I dare say they think non ill.

Trow ye that women list to smarter,
Or against ther husbondes for to clater?
Nay! they had lever fast, bred and water,
Than for to dele in suche a matter. (1-26)\textsuperscript{17}

As the Latin *Cuius contrarium verum est* ("of which the contrary is the truth") indicates, the poem is an ironic satire on women: what the poem says about women actually means "what women are not." In a similar pattern, what Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio speak of Criseida at the beginning of the story becomes what she is not at the end. Their final moralization on Criseida’s one-time change of mind, whatever their initial attempts may be, proves that they are clever manipulators of an antifeminist trend in the Middle Ages. The next four chapters deal specifically with the four English writers’ rewriting of Criseida: how they answer the questions raised by their predecessors.
1 Joan M. Ferrante observes that women characters of the twelfth-century European literature "are not portrayed as 'real people' with human problems; they are symbols, aspects of philosophical and psychological problems that trouble the male world" (1).

2 Most historians agree that two contradicting views of woman dominated the whole body of medieval exegesis and that this notion led to established the lived praxis of the Middle Ages. "With an astonishing consistency," as Ferrante puts it, "biblical women, if they are good or potentially redeemable, are said to represent the church; if bad, they stand for the lower or weaker parts of man, for carnal desire, or inconstancy of mind. Woman, as the most obvious object of male concupiscence, is made to represent lust and thus is held responsible for it; the object of temptation becomes the cause" (1-2).

3 Historical records show that many exceptional women and writings on women were actually existed in the Middle Ages against "the moral casuistry of [their] lived praxis." However, the problem is that they failed to change the reading public's horizon of expectations. In other words, the "socially formative function of literature" (Jauss 40) did not have its full strength to bring forth a new horizon of expectations.

4 R. M. Frazer, Jr., trans., The Trojan War: The
Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian


7 Benoît's Briseida implicates the possibilities of various characterizations by later writers. C. David Benson illustrates the openness of Briseida in her final speech. Here, "Benoît has her [Briseida] utter a series of contradictory statements, which he makes no attempt to resolve.... The speech in Benoît does not characterize a single person; rather it sketches an anthology of diverse attitudes to what has happened (fearful, hopeful, repentant, triumphant, opportunistic, satisfied, deceived, conflicted, nostalgic, scheming and proud), each one of which has the potential to be developed into the portrait of a different kind of woman" (Chaucer's 111-12). See also Mieszkowski, "Reputation", p. 80.

8 All quotations of Guido are from Historia Destructionis Troiae, trans. Mary Elizabeth Meek (Bloomington; London: Indiana UP, 1974).
In the Introduction of her translation of Historia, Meek suggests that the number indicates the work's popularity all over Europe: "...and one of them, in the Saltykov-Shchedrin Library in Leningrad, bears the signatures of the English Kings Richard III, James I, and Charles I, as well as the signature of Oliver Cromwell. Eight printed editions appeared in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. During the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries it was translated several times into French, German, and English. There are also versions in Spanish, Flemish, and Bohemian; one German version appeared as early as 1392, and an Italian one as late as 1665. A French translation of it was made by Raoul le Fèvre for his Recueil des Histoires de Troie, an English version of which was the first English book printed by Caxton and served as a source for Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. Boccaccio's Filostrato, while derived principally from the Roman de Troie, also shows use of the Historia; Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, adapted from the Filostrato, is indebted to both the Roman and the Historia, and Lydgate's Troy Book is a metrical paraphrase of the Historia with occasional use of the Roman" (xi).

Boccaccio had virtually set up the love story of Troilus and Criseida, as Stanford B. Meech observes: "Despite its limitations and because of the disciplined artistry which imposed them, the Filostrato is a masterpiece
of construction tightly unified and well proportioned. The credit is mainly Boccaccio's. For, if Benoît de Sainte-Maure invented the story of the fickle Trojan as seems to be the case, it was the Florentine who gave it form and made it one of the immortal legends of our culture" (4).


12 Back of the title page.

13 Most critics agree that Troilo is the focus of Il Filostrato, as Mieszkowski observes: "[Boccaccio] took for his subject Troilus' experience of loving and being betrayed, rather than Criseida's unfaithfulness, and he created new episodes to work out his new conception of the tale" ("Reputation" 93).

14 These rhymed anecdotes, invented in France in the thirteenth century, was very popular as the courtly love was. Peasants' wives usually appear in the fabliaux as lustful and treacherous mistresses, continually deceiving their husbands with corrupt priests, clerks, and apprentices, often without any punishment for their moral sins. Thus, in the fabliaux, all the ages of women are jeered and satirized: "The old are evil-minded hags, the wives all betray their husbands, the girls are either minxes or fools" (Power 28). According to Henry A. Kelly's survey of Boccaccio's Decameron, almost seventy of hundred tales
have bearing on the theme of love between men and women. Thirty-six of the seventy tales treat love more seriously, while the other thirty-four, which can be referred as fabliaux, treat love lightly with emphasis usually placed upon the trickery. Of these thirty-four tales, only three are matters of simple fornification and five are of grave fornification involving priests and nuns. The remaining twenty-six deal with adultery; in all but one it is husband who is cuckolded (Kelly 51-2).

15 "In the act of love," as Meech puts it, "she was as overtly sensual as Troiolo" (389). Similarly, C. David Benson observes, "sexual consummation and the pleasure of the body are central in Filostrato" (Chaucer's 24), and "the young widow Criseida is as sensual as her lover" (Chaucer's 25). Wood, apRoberts and Seldis agree with this view, though they drastically disagree each other's view on how to interpret the sensuality that has characterized the poem. See Benson, Chaucer's, pp. 24-33, for more of this critical contention.

16 The "author" seems to indicate the narrator of Boccaccio's poem, "Filostrato."

17 The poem is titled (by the editor) as "What women are not" in R. T. Davies' edition of medieval English lyrics.
CHAPTER III

CRISEYDE: THE WOMAN LOVED AND HATED

Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* is the first English version of the traditional story. Most critics agree that Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato* is the direct source although Chaucer claims "Lollius" to be his "auctour." His poem retains most of the elements of Boccaccio’s version, including the structure, characters, and similar characterizations.¹ *Troilus*, however, is not a mere copy of Boccaccio’s poem; Derek Brewer observes, "Medieval writers did not consciously alter the main outline of the plot . . . they considered themselves perfectly free to alter its significance, to interpret it, in any way they desired" (24). While Chaucer maintains most of the details from Boccaccio’s plot, he drastically departs from what Boccaccio had read in his sources, especially from the antifeminist tradition of the past. In this chapter, I examine how he modifies the story’s antifeministic thrust and how he creates a new heroine.

Criseyde is quite a complex heroine in English literature and, according to E. Talbot Donaldson, "perhaps the most critically tortured of Chaucer’s characters" ("Chaucer" 9). Although the traditional Criseida is significantly altered in Chaucer’s poem, she had long been
conceived as a symbol of female infidelity. Worse than old Criseidas, she becomes a "wanton" by Shakespeare's day (Tatlock, "The Siege" 764). The mainstream of Criseyde criticism has been very negative in the past. But, as C. David Benson notes, in this century, Criseyde becomes an "open text" which invites our responses: "Chaucer's Criseyde is not the conventional emblem of female instability that she is elsewhere; instead she is an opaque but generative figure who must be created by each reader" (Chaucer's 88). Though Robertsonian exegetical reading denies any complexity of Criseyde's character (defining her as the "feminine Everyman"), many believe that Chaucer's characterization of Criseyde goes far beyond that simplification. Charles Muscatine, for instance, asserts that "her [Criseyde's] ambiguity is her meaning" (164) in Troilus. Donaldson, a prominent defender of the heroine, further points out that Criseyde is "a perpetual mystery . . . whom we are encouraged to solve . . . to our own satisfaction and to precisely that point where we refuse to think about her any more" ("Chaucer" 12).

Critics thus show mixed reactions to Chaucer's representation of the traditional heroine, though most concur that Chaucer portrays Criseyde with compassion. William W. Lawrence, for example, points out that "Chaucer treats Criseyde sympathetically throughout; even after she has proved faithless he does not condemn her, he only pities
her weakness" (146). As Lawrence notes, "weakness" once has been the key word that characterizes Criseyde early in this century. E. De Selincourt, too, sees her as "a woman pitifully weak . . . , and in her sore straits using what seemed to her her only weapon of defence, her 'uncertain sickly appetite to please.'" (73) Nevill Coghill regards Troilus as "a compassionate study of the faint-hearted fickleness of a girl, or perhaps of girls in general" (67).

One problem with these early readings is that Criseyde's "fear" or "weakness" is, by and large, gender-oriented and thus often sexually biased. As I shall discuss later, Criseyde is the "ferfullest" creature in Troy, not because she is a woman but because she is the daughter of a traitor. Although the narrator explains that Criseyde's betrayal of Troilus is due to her weakness--"slydyng of corage"--such weakness results directly from the circumstances surrounding her during a time of war. Recently, many critics have related Criseyde's status as a woman to the socio-political system. Constance Saintonge, for instance, indicates that Criseyde is hated and scorned for the very qualities she possesses, the ones "approved whole-heartedly by her society" (320). For H. R. Hays, "Criseyde is the pawn of male authority in both camps," who "conforms to a submissive pattern" (128). David Aers also reads that, through Criseyde, Chaucer is "exploring the position of women" and its contradictions in medieval
society (179): "Her fear is fully justified, her weakness is a genuine aspect of a social reality not of her own making, and her isolation is an essential part of her vulnerability" (181).

Many feminist critics adopt this view of Criseyde as victim. Monica E. McAlpine recognizes Criseyde as a woman "divested, by virtue of other peoples' choices, of all her worldly securities" (186). She claims that Troilus shows Criseyde's dilemma between fate and freedom: she is "both a human being fated to betray and a human being free to choose [her final] act of betrayal and not another" (188). Thus, Criseyde's final infidelity should be understood in relation to "her rejection of an even graver form of betrayal, for on that last night with Troilus, Criseyde chooses not to be another Helen" (188). However, ironically, what she has earned in the end is her eternal damnation. Relying on "a medieval sexual poetics," Carolyn Dinshaw discusses this concept of passivity and victimization of the heroine:

My discussion of a medieval sexual poetics provides a fuller cultural context for the idea, current in feminist literary criticism, of the text as woman's body, inscribed, read, and interpreted by men; it writes, that is, a history of feminist critical theory (17).

Dinshaw notes that not only male characters (Troilus, Pandarus, and the narrator) but also male critics (Robertson
and Donaldson) "all read like men": "they invoke structures of authority in order to order the disorder, to stop the restless desire represented in and enacted by their texts, to find rest" (51). Thus, she continues, men try to "achieve their vision of wholeness by unacknowledged exclusion, elimination, constraint" (51). Dinshaw goes so far to argue that "the problem with . . . this masculine ideology, activating 'reading like a man,' is that it achieves its harmonious rest by constituting the feminine as disruptive Other, constraining, and finally turning away from it" (51). For Dinshaw and other feminist critics, Criseyde the woman eventually becomes a victim to the order and stability in patriarchal power structures.

Recent feminist criticism repudiates the old, male-centered characterization of the heroine, justifying her final act of betrayal as the work of a human being, not necessarily as that of a woman. Although I do not wholly agree with these readings, their basic ideas are very useful in reading Criseyde. I do not see, as Robertson does, Criseyde as a mere symbol of female infidelity. Nor do I agree with the old view, however favorable it is to Criseyde, that fear or weakness, the seed of her infidelity, is a particular nature of Criseyde the woman. She is just another fallible human being who sometimes does the right thing and other times makes mistakes.

Difficulties in characterizing Criseyde arise from two
main factors: the ways in which she is represented and the distancing of the poet himself from the narrator. What is new in Chaucer's version is his ambiguous portrayal of the heroine. Although he never admits it, the narrator often intrudes to deflate the existing antifeminist tradition: Criseyde as a woman of seductive beauty with notorious infidelity. Muscatine asserts that ambiguity defines Criseyde as a symbol of "earthly instability" (154), who plays in the middle between "the pure, gentle, spiritual, courtly Troilus" (138) and Pandarus, the clownish yet "practical realist" (138). Conscious of the poem's seemingly didactic ending, Muscatine concludes that the poem emphasizes the ambiguity of Criseyde only to show the meaning of the poem:

The meaning of the poem does not hinge on so fortuitous a fact as Troilus' placing his faith in the wrong woman or in a bad woman, but in the fact that he places his faith in a thing which can reflect back to him the image of that faith and yet be incapable of sustaining it. (164)

While Muscatine relates the ambiguous representation of Criseyde to the story's theme of "earthly instability," I would argue that the ambiguity reflects the poet's burden to modify the traditional antifeminist sentiment against the heroine. His undertaking of such "mission" begins with the creation of the narrator who eagerly defends Criseyde, the
very antifeminist text of the tradition.

For this purpose Chaucer develops a remarkable narrative strategy in Troilus. He creates two "special" characters: the narrator, Chaucer's "reading" character within the poem, and Lollius, Chaucer's bogus source. Throughout the poem, the narrator claims that he "faithfully" translates, word for word, the ancient love story written in Latin by a certain "Lollius." He insists that some errors are thus inevitable because of linguistic, cultural, and historical gaps. Dinshaw observes that the narrator's claim of "Fidelity to the authorial sentence" not only sounds like a literary cliche, common in medieval translations, but also covers "[the narrator's] deeper involvement, his deeper substitution: it masks his identification with the lover of the woman, Criseyde" (43). In other words, she regards "the narrator's act of translation" proper as "an expression of his carnal love" (43). I believe rather that the narrator's translating act represents one reading of the author; that is, the act of translation is a process through which the poet reads the traditional story of Criseida. Through the narrator's act of translation, the author can distance himself from any controversy. Chaucer also creates Lollius, rather than naming Boccaccio, as his textual authority, for he seems to believe that it will give him or the narrator more autonomy in rewriting the heroine quite differently.
Although many critics speculate on the narrator’s role in relation to the author’s intention, my interest here lies in the narrator’s act of rewriting the infamous "woman." The comparison between Troilus and Filostrato reveals that the major difference between the two comes from the narrators’ attitudes toward their heroines. Chaucer’s narrator, unlike Boccaccio’s, is not a lover but one who serves "God of loves servantz" (1.15). It is one thing to tell what one has experienced, and quite another, to report what one has read. Boccaccio’s narrator, Filostrato ("a man vanquished and laid prostrate by love"), proclaims that his bitter experience in love is quite similar to that of Troilo (1.6). He identifies himself with Troilo’s happiness and sorrow in his own painful love life. When he retells Criseida’s love and betrayal, his intention thus becomes transparent. Chaucer’s narrator, however, assumes a neutral tone. Unlike Filostrato, Chaucer’s narrator has no experience in love and, thus, he cannot recollect the former days of happiness or bitterness, both of which are reproduced in Troilus’ love life. Furthermore, taking a pledge to textual fidelity, he declares himself a faithful translator although his pledge sounds insincere.

The history of the Criseida story indicates that Chaucer’s narrator is the first male who genuinely tries to defend the heroine although ultimately he fails to fill in what we now call the "gender gaps." As a surrogate reader
of Chaucer the poet, he retells the old love story differently from his precursors: he has to defend his heroine while keeping his fidelity to Lollius, his self-claimed textual authority. He is, in fact, not a faithful translator because he significantly departs from the tradition in his portrayal of the heroine. The narrator's infidelity (to Lollius) corresponds to Criseyde's fidelity (to Troilus) and her infidelity to the narrator's fidelity. This creates a dilemma for the narrator and the reader.

_Troilus_ is a response of Chaucer the reader to _Filostrato_, especially its antifeminist thrust. Since a literary work does not give "the same view to each reader in each period" (Jauss 21), it is worthwhile to see what Chaucer has conceived in his poem "in light of positive or negative norms of an earlier work" (Jauss 19). C. S. Lewis asserts that _Troilus_ is a "medievalization" of Boccaccio's Renaissance poem: in _Troilus_, Chaucer corrects the "errors which Boccaccio had committed against the code of courtly love" (59). As far as Criseyde is concerned, however, what Chaucer did to _Filostrato_ was to modify and correct the very errors Boccaccio had made in portraying his sensual heroine. Muscatine observes that Criseida is largely the same woman as the traditional Briseida:

Criseida is rather known than invented at all. She is beautiful, but also instinctive and calculating, faithful only in her own fashion; she
submits to practical events in a purely creatural way. The ambiguity of her feminine responses to her suitors is designedly transparent. (125)

What, then, became of this traditional heroine in *Troilus*? Some critics believe there is virtually no change at all in Chaucer's rendition of Criseyde, while others see a major change.

One thing Chaucer did to the old representation of Criseida was to water down her seductive power of feminine beauty. Medieval writings overtly stress that man should be aware of the evil power of woman, for she is believed to be "an evil temptress bent upon man's destruction" (Gist 13). In Benoît and Guido, Briseida symbolizes this very power. Both writers portray Briseida as having great beauty, loveliness, and charming behavior, in spite of her joined eyebrows. However, they focuses not on these feminine attributes but on the luring power of her "great" beauty. Attractiveness and infidelity virtually define Briseida in their works: she represents only the old image of Eve, never the new image of Mary, an allusion later writers sometimes employ.

*Il Filostrato* modifies the old antifeminist story about Briseida, focusing on a more serious discussion of love. It adds a new element to the traditional Criseida story: Troilo's worship of Criseida. However, ironically, this new attempt further tarnishes her name: the heroine becomes the
seductress and the disrupter of the devoted worshiper. In *Filostrato* Criseida’s seductive power comes primarily from her *bellig occhi* ("beautiful eyes"). R. Howard Bloch explains that the eyes ("the gaze") are at the center of "what the church fathers conceive to be the fatal attraction of women. For desire enters through the eyes, and love is always love at first sight" (113). The emphasis is on the foolishness of the beholder, for, through his own eyes, a man becomes charmed at the sight of a comely woman. In literature, a male persona often laments his foolishness and blames his eyes for not seeing the ephemerality of a worldly beauty. In Jehan Le Fèver’s fourteenth-century poem (*Lamentations de Matheolus*), for example, the narrator regrets what he has not seen in his love affair:

I would have done better to shield my eyes the day
I first saw her and so esteemed her beauty and her
sweet angelic face covering sophisticated woman.
(1,vv.626-30)

I complain, for by vision was my knowledge
deceived. Beauty wounded my heart through my eye,
and because of which I will never be at peace.
(1, vv. 647-50)

Bloch’s observation is, however, insufficient to explain the eye-formula working in *Il Filostrato*, where the seductive power of Criseida’s beauty goes far beyond this
passive function of the eyes—it is no longer a man's lament for his perceptual trouble. Troilo is troubled not by his own eyes but by Criseida's beautiful eyes. Ruth H. Cline and Lance K. Donaldson-Evans indicate another "specific tradition,"\textsuperscript{11} "the Aggressive Eye Topos" (Donaldson-Evans 202). As Troilo gets hypnotized by Criseida's staring, this topos presupposes, "the active participation of the Beloved's own glance" starts working (Donaldson-Evans 202)\textsuperscript{12}.

In the narrator's invocation of \textit{Pilostrato}, beautiful eyes of a lady take on a special meaning—"O lovely light of those beautiful eyes in which love has placed all my delight" (1.4). When Troilo falls in love at the mere sight of Criseida, it is through "the rays of those beautiful eyes" (1.29). As he admits later, he is charmed by Criseida's "high and noble acts,"\textsuperscript{13} but it is her eyes that first evoke his sudden love. The narrator and Troilo, in fact, cite Criseida's powerfully charming eyes eleven times in the poem.\textsuperscript{14} Her \textit{belli occhi} are so powerful that Troilo cannot escape from their charm, as he confesses on the night of consummation: "You [Criseida's eyes] thrust into my heart the fiery darts of love by which I am all inflamed" (3.36). Criseida thus becomes not an object ill-perceived by Troilo's eyes but an aggressive agent.

In \textit{Troilus} the situation is quite different. Like Boccaccio and his precursors, Chaucer's narrator also notes
the attractive eyes of Criseyde: "Paradis stood formed in
hire yen" (5.817). But Chaucer’s poem does not stress their
enticing power as much. Cupid’s arrow does not come through
Criseyde’s eyes. Prior to seeing Criseyde, Troilus is
already shot by the arrow for his blasphemous remarks on
love (1.208-10). Then, he sees Criseida and falls in love,
as if by chance, "thorugh a route / His eye percede, and so
depe it wente, / Til on Criseyde it smot, and ther it
stente" (1.271-73). Criseyde appears not as an active agent
of seduction but rather a passive feminine beauty.

The rest of the poem then curiously follows Boccaccio’s
accounts of Criseida’s eyes. The narrator warns that
Troilus

Was ful unwar that Love hadde his dwellynge
Withinne the subtile stremes of hir yen;
That sodeynly hym thoughte he felte dyen,
Right with hire look, the spirit in his herte.

(1.304-307)\textsuperscript{15}

In Book II Pandarus reports to Criseyde his own version of
Troilus’ agony in love:

"For certes, lord, so soore hath she me wounded,
That stood in blak, with lokyng of hire eyen,
That to myn hertes botme it is ysounded,
Thorugh which I woot that I moot nedes deyen."

(2.533-36)\textsuperscript{16}

This, of course, is one of the several forgeries Pandarus
commits to entice Criseyde. Thus, this reference to powerful eyes is a mere literary convention that denotes the suffering mind of a lover, suddenly falling in love. The reference to enticing eyes appears again in the consummation scene:

. . . O eyen clere,
It weren ye that wroughte me swich wo,
Ye humble nettes of my lady deere.

(3.1353-55)

Troilus did not know what had happened to his heart before he saw Criseyde’s eyes. Finally, when he laments for the upcoming departure of Criseyde to the Greek camp, Troilus vows his constancy, referring to the dart of Criseyde’s eyes:

But fro my soule shal Criseydes darte
Out nevere mo; but down with Proserpyne,
Whan I am ded, I wol go wone in pyne.

(4.472-74)

Except for the initial intervention of Cupid (1.206-10), Troilus closely follows Boccaccio’s accounts on Criseida’s attractive eyes. But Boccaccio’s "aggressive eye topos" is notably reduced in Troilus, since Troilus is shot by love’s arrow even before he sees Criseyde.

Chaucer might know well the two traditions of the eye seduction motif because he himself employed them many times in his other works. In The Knight’s Tale, Palamon becomes a
victim of his own eyes: "But I was hurt right now thurghout my ye / Into myn herte" (1096-97). Arcite, too, becomes the victim of the "Beloved's eyes" in a manner similar to Troilus' falling in love:

. . . to sleen me outrely
Love hath his fiery dart so brennyngly
Ystiked thurgh my trewe careful herte
That shapen was my deeth erst than my sherte.
Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye! (1563-67)

Like Troilus, Arcite is shot by love's dart, and then, suffers by Emily's eyes. The eye-motif is also seen in "Complaynt D'Amours" and "Merciles Beaute." In the former, the disheartened lover complains about his "two enemies" that make him suffer (41-42). In the latter, the male lover grumbles against the beautiful but merciless eyes of his beloved (1-3). Both employ the traditional eye-seduction motif. Had he not employed the Ovidian imagery of Cupid's arrows before he adopted the "aggressive eye topos," Criseyde could have been regarded as a seductress, like Boccaccio's heroine. Through the portrayal of a feminine Criseyde, however, the narrator prevents us from seeing her as a "female quagmire in which the noble hero may muddy his honor and drown" (Knight 31). A passive Criseyde is probably the most important modification that Chaucer makes to the tradition, for passivity may denote innocence and victimization rather than active temptation.
Arthur Mizener points out that Criseyde’s character does not evolve throughout the poem: "from the beginning to the end of the poem Criseyde, whenever described or shown in action, 'sobre was, ek symple, and wys withal'" (69). He contends that certain characteristics are given to Criseyde and they appear through the various events and circumstances in the poem (68). However, Mizener overlooks the traditional characterization of Criseyde. In Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio, we see the aggressive and negative qualities of beauty. In *Troilus* Chaucer minimizes such negative attributes except for her "slydynge of corage" (5.825):

> She sobre was, ek symple, and wys withal,
> The best ynorisshed ek that myghte be,
> And goodly of hire speche in general,
> Charitable, estatlich, lusty, fre;
> Ne nevere mo ne lakked hire pite;
> Tendre-herted, slydynge of corage. (5.820-25)

These positive feminine attributes are also given to Criseyde’s predecessors. The traditional heroine attracts Troilus (and the audience) with these qualities at first, but she is eventually turned into a *femme fatale* at the end. In *Troilus* both aspects of the heroine exist. Unable to depart completely from the tradition, as Morton Bloomfield points out, Chaucer embraces all the attributes of the heroine. But, unlike his precursors, Chaucer puts his emphasis on positive yet passive qualities over aggressive
yet negative ones. As a result, Criseyde becomes a passive, feminine heroine.

Kittredge argues that Criseyde is not "an innocent girl, being tricked by a perfidious go-between" but a "mistress of her own actions" (132) or a "scheming adventuress" (133). However, in the poem, there is no evidence that she is a "scheming adventuress." Rather, the poem depicts a continuous victimization of the passive heroine through manipulations carried out by male characters. Priscilla Martin observes that "Criseyde is the victim of one of the most elaborate seduction plots in English literature" (176). In *Troilus*, we thus find the traditional text of Criseyde, hated and abused by males.

Some critics contend that Criseyde is unjustly abused. Saintonge believes that Criseyde is mistreated "with the monstrous pile of charges" for her very womanly qualities:

[Criseyde] is reminiscent of the eternally lovable heroines rather than the eternally damned . . . .
She brings to mind Botticelli's picture of Venus; of Love itself--passive and soft, harking back to the ancient purity that went before, looking forward with submissive apprehension to the monstrous pile of charges that will be laid before her. (320)

Although Saintonge here clarifies what Chaucer did to the traditional portrayal of Criseida, she ignores the negative
qualities of Criseyde resulting from the antifeminist tradition of the story. The audience and readers have long been anticipating such representation. They do not believe Chaucer’s portrayal of passive Criseyde as an attempt to nullify the negativity associated with her. Readers, critics, and even characters themselves are well aware of the traditional picture of the heroine. Derek Pearsall, thus, comments that "Feminine weakness, compliancy, acquiescence in the inevitable, is the theme that Criseyde develops, as much because it is what she requires of herself as because it is required of her by others" (25). She is a passive "text," imagined and expected by the patriarchal ideology.

Two scenes highlight the difference between Chaucer’s Criseyde and the traditional Criseida: the departure scene of Criseida to the Greek camp and the reunion scene of Criseida and Calkas. Benoît’s flamboyant Briseida dresses up provocatively when departing for the Greek camp: she, in fact, protests against her deportation. In the process, however, she does not seem to provoke compassion from the audience because, I believe, "good" medieval women are obliged to comply with the patriarchal authority like Chaucer’s Grisilda. The "patriotic" Briseida sounds righteous, denouncing the cowardice of her father. Her final infidelity, however, contradicts her seeming, momentary righteousness, a reason those two scenes are
altered in *Troilus*. Boccaccio’s Criseida also remains provocative. When she leaves Troy for the Greek camp, Criseida is enraged, cynical, and scornful:

> Here she turned herself disdainfully to Diomede and said, "Let us go from here now; we have shown ourselves long enough to these people who can now hope for a remedy for their woes if they consider carefully the honorable exchange which you have made, who have given up for a woman so great and so feared a king."

> And this said, she gave spurs to her horse without saying anything except farewell to her servants. And the king and his barons clearly recognized the lady’s scorn. Porth she went without listening to leave-taking or speeches or looking at anyone. (5.8-9)

Boccaccio’s Criseida, however, "remained silent and shy" (5.14) when she was greeted by her father. The two scenes expose an inconsistency in Boccaccio’s portrayal of Criseida. It is not clear why she is shy and silent in the Greek camp, for Criseida has never behaved thus, except for the moments when she confronts "practical" matters.²⁵ The narrator explains that she keeps her silence because she is "wholly consuming herself with heavy sorrow and in a wretched state, still having her heart fixed on Troilo"
Taking such explanation at its face value, we suspect that her attitude may be "designedly transparent" (Muscatine 125), being apprehensive of the Greek spectators. 

**Troilus**, however, greatly modifies these two scenes. Like Criseyde was at the beginning of the story, she now "nyste what was best to rede" (5.18) in the departure scene. Since she knows that "Ther is non other remedie in this cas" (5.60), she grieves without words ("Alas" is her only response) so that "Men wiste nevere womman han the care" (5.20). Unlike her predecessors, Criseyde is submissive and modest, much consumed by sorrow. When she sees her father, Criseyde’s reaction is simple and dry:

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She seyde ek she was fayn with hym to mete,
And stood forth muwet, milde, and mansuete.
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(5.193-94)

Such passivity is consistent in Chaucer’s rendition, which may not be approved by all readers, for it is strongly aligned with the dominant male view in the Middle Ages, a view about what a "good" woman should be. For this rendering, however, we cannot blame Chaucer as "the heir and the most versatile manipulator" (Weissman 93) of the antifeministic literary tradition: because such characterization, at least, evokes the audience’s compassion.

The ambiguous portrayal of Criseyde is further enhanced by the wide gaps of indeterminacy from the "feminine
Everyman" who is "faithful only to her own selfish desires of the moment" (Robertson 498) to "Chaucer’s supreme achievement in the creation of human character" (Donaldson, Speaking 67). This ambiguity partly results from Chaucer’s creation of "unnecessary difficulties . . . by stressing at the same time the sincerity and beauty of her love and the suddenness and meanness of her betrayal" (Mehl 181). He could have precluded the "unnecessary difficulties" by presenting Criseyde either as a symbol of female infidelity or as an innocent victim of circumstance. In Troilus Chaucer forges a totally new Criseyde whose "meaning and function are shaped in part by the deployment of her character against a well-developed literary tradition that offers sharply contrasting images of women" (Hansen 157).

Ambiguous characterization of Criseyde in Troilus heightens the sense of openness or indeterminacy. The narrator thus tries to justify the action of his "beloved" heroine (Donaldson, Speaking 68), which, in turn, creates more ambiguity in Criseyde’s character. As far as Criseyde and antifeminism are concerned, there have appeared more places of indeterminacy in Chaucer’s poem than before, the very reason many critics try to figure out the meaning of it. The obvious antifeministic, traditional characterization of Criseida has evolved itself into a new phase in Troilus, the ambiguous Criseyde. Since her ambiguity invites many "illusion-makings," we need to
speculate on how and why she is carefully portrayed in such a way.

At the beginning of *Troilus*, the narrator declares that his "purpos" is to tell "The double sorwe of Troilus" (1.1-5). He calls the Fury Tisiphone for help, instead of the Muse, because the love story has a tragic ending. The poem is for lovers who undergo "Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie" (1.4). Curiously, the narrator also addresses the audience of lovers "that falsly ben apeired / Thorugh wikked tonges, be it he or she" (1.38-39). Such remark reveals the narrator's willingness to defend Criseyde from the beginning. He, in fact, goes so far as to suggest that Criseyde may have been injured by "wikked tonges."

Criseyde appears in the poem as a loner, without any confidant, isolated from the outside world. She is a widow and the daughter of a traitor:

As she that nyste what was best to rede;  
For bothe a widewe was she and allone  
Of any frend to whom she dorste hir mone.

(1.96-98)

The stress, at the beginning of the poem, is on "her essential lack of security in Troy" (Nolan 235). As Aers notes, the narrator's emphasis on Criseyde's isolation and vulnerability in Troy implies her lack of male protection. Thus, in this situation, Aers goes on to suggest, Criseyde's "sexuality" is "her only asset, her only leverage on the
powerful":

Before critics venture any remarks about her "weakness" or her being "slydyng of corage" they need to immerse their imaginations in this situation—as Chaucer did. Her fear is fully justified, her weakness is a genuine aspect of a social reality not of her own making, and her isolation is an essential part of her vulnerability. (181)

Although Aers astutely observes that Criseyde's fear, weakness, and isolation are products of the circumstances, he unconvincingly relates Criseyde's sexuality to her survival: "To survive in this society the isolated woman needs to make use of her sexuality and whatever courtly sexual conventions or fictions as may serve her" (181). According to this view, then, Criseyde becomes the very traditional heroine—selfish, instinctive, calculating—for she, after all, uses Troilus and Diomede for her own survival.

In fact, Criseyde is not totally isolated from the City of Troy because she has an uncle and three nephews, a coincidence of setting that raises readers' compassion toward her. Criseyde in fact goes alone to the court for mercy (where are Pandarus and her nephews!), "Wel neigh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere" (1.108):

In widewes habit large of samyt broun,
On knees she fil biforn Ector adown
With pitous vois, and tendrely wepynge,
His mercy bad, hirselyn excusynge. (1.109-12)

This scene underlines "the 'aungelik' female's totally
subordinate position and her urgent need for protection in
order to survive" (Aers 181-82). The "angelic" beauty wins
the heart of the most powerful man in Troy, Hector.

Criseyde, however, evokes our compassion not with her beauty
but rather with her innocent suffering. Chaucer, who knew
well the seductive power of Boccaccio's Criseida, carefully
emphasizes Criseyde's beauty here.27 Though the emphasis is
more or less on her "aungelik" (1.102) beauty and
"hevenyssh" (1.104) figure, what the poem really wants to
stress is Criseyde's "sorwe and fere" (1.108).

The scene of "Palladiones feste" (1.161) similarly
presents the same Criseyde, cautious and fearful, in
"widewes habit blak" (1.170):

And yet she stood ful lowe and stille allone,
Byhynden other folk, in litel brede
And neigh the dore, ay undre shames drede,
Simple of atir and debonaire of chere,
With ful assured lokyng and manere. (1.178-82)

An innocent girl deserted by her father, Criseyde is still
conscious of her father's treason.28 Though she attends the
Palladion feast as a Trojan, Criseyde seems much isolated
from her society: she is alone without friends (again, where
are Pandarus and her three nephews?); in simple "widow’s weed," she keeps herself quietly from the sight of other Trojans albeit she is still gracious and confident in manner.

Now Troilus, already shot by Love’s dart, finds her. At this moment, when love-charmed Troilus is watching her "in thrifty wise" (1.275), Criseyde is aware of someone eyeing her:

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

(1.290-94)

She frowns at the man as if to say, "why are you beholding me in such manner? May I not be here?" It is a quiet protestation of a woman apprehensive of her predicament in Troy (as the daughter of a traitor) and sensitive to other Trojans. It is a proper reaction of a woman against the "male gaze," and of Criseyde against the hostile circumstances in Troy. In fact, she is at odds with other Trojans in this feast. Her clothes bespeak this point: at "the tyme / Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede / With newe grene" (1.155-57), other Trojans are "in al hir beste wise" (1.162), "Ful wel arayed" (1.167). Nature is covered with new greenness and sweet flowers, and other Trojans are happy
except for Criseyde wearing black widow's garments.

Some may ask if, as a widow and a traitor's daughter, Criseyde should not participate in the feast. The feast is a joyous event, not a solemn religious ceremony, in which each young man "Gan for to syke, or lete his eighen baint / On any womman that he koude espye" (1.192-93). Troilus is one of such young men, whose interest is only in "Byholding ay the ladies of the town" (1.186). However, this is not so with Criseyde. If she has any non-religious purpose, like the Wife of Bath, she needs not be in black widow's weed, elusive, cautious, and fearful. Her attitude here is clearly contrasted with that of Boccaccio's Criseida: "the charming Criseida, under a white veil in a black habit, was standing among the other ladies at this solemn festival" (Filostrato, 1.26). Criseida is a bold, arrogant lady with "a womanly dignity"; she waives her mantle from her face, "making room in front of her by pushing back the crowd" (1.27): "And as she turned herself again, that act--somewhat disdainful as if to say, 'No one may stand here'--was pleasing Troilo" (Filostrato, 1.28). Criseyde, unlike Boccaccio's heroine, is here rendered as submissive and passive rather than haughty and aggressive. Her nervous reaction to Troilus' "sexually greedy" male gaze29 is thus justifiable. Nonetheless, soon after this initial reaction, she regains her normal mood (1.293)--the traitor's daughter should be congenial to other Trojans. For her, he is either
a silly young man, merely peeping at her face or a Trojan, mindful of the presence of the traitor's daughter at the feast.

In the prologue to Book II, the narrator expects that any of his audience "thenketh, 'So nold I nat love purchace,' / Or wondreth on his speche or his doynge" (2.33-34). This remark signifies the strange love life in the ancient world, which denotes Troilus' strange wooing of Criseyde. Although the narrator excuses himself by saying "as myn auctour seyde, so sey I" (2.18), his remark on the curious courtship highlights Criseyde's position as a victim in the whole affair. The metaphor of Procne the swallow (2.64-70) also hints that Pandarus is going to do what Tereus did to Philomela, the "verbal" ravishment of her (2.69). Although he is Criseyde's "borugh" (2.134), whom she loves "moost and triste" (2.247), Pandarus cunningly encourages her to accept Troilus' love. In this process of baiting and compelling, Criseyde's reactions (2.409-27) negate any "paynted proces" (2.424) underlined in Criseida's responses to Pandaro (Filostrato, 2.47-51, 55). Robertson's accusation of Pandarus as "a priest of Satan" (479) is not entirely unreasonable. It is Pandarus who leads his niece to the uncontrolled, carnal love by manipulating and forcing her to accept Troilus.

After Pandarus' revelation of Troilus' love for her, Criseyde contemplates the new development all by herself:
And wex somdel astoned in hire thought
Right for the newe cas; but whan that she
Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought
Of peril why she ought afered be.
For man may love, of possibilite,
A womman so, his herte may tobreste,
And she naught love ayein, but if hire leste.

(2.603-609)

She does not consider, here, her aging youth, her fading beauty, or the secret joy of the clandestine love affair—main concerns for Boccaccio's Criseida. Rather, Criseyde dwells on the basic question: can a woman love without any fear of scandal? She for now concludes that she has no reason to fear love. She then glances at "a knightly sighte" of Troilus (2.628-29) and "It was an heven upon hym for to see" (2.637). Until this moment, Criseyde does not seem to know Troilus: she is "taught" by her uncle about "The wise, worthi Ector the secounde" (2.158); she hears people hail him as the "holder up of Troye" (2.644); and she herself then sees the victorious knight. She seems immediately charmed by the mysterious love potion ("Who yaf me drynke?"; 2.651), the knightly Troilus. It is, in fact, no sudden love as we see in Boccaccio's Criseida:

And that trepidation which held Criseida between two courses of action fled away as she praised to herself his manners, his pleasing
actions, and his courtesy. And so suddenly was she taken that she desired him above every other good, and she strongly grieved at the time lost when she had not known his love. (Filostrato, 2.83)

Criseyde’s inclination toward Troilus is, at least, the result of Pandarus’ incessant manipulation. Criseyde now sees, with her own eyes, what she has heard and has been recommended by others:

... "Lo, this is he
Which that myn uncle swerith he moot be deed,
But I on hym have mercy and pitee." (2.653-55)

Although carnal love is not involved here, for the moment, Criseyde resolves to have "mercy" on Troilus. According to the narrator, it is not her carnal desire but "routhe" (2.664) toward "poor" Troilus that moves Criseyde to "enclyne / To like hym" (2.674-75). Thus, the narrator summarizes her initial inclination as follows, expecting some unfounded accusations on Criseyde for her "supposed" sudden love:

Now myghte som envious jangle thus:
"This was a sodeyn love; how myght it be That she so lightly loved Troilus Right for the firste syghte, ye, parde?"
Now whoso seith so, mote he nevere ythe!

(2.666-70)
This remark contradicts what Boccaccio says of his Criseida. It also reminds us of Troilus’ sudden love; he falls in love with Criseyde “Right for the firste syghte.” The narrator is eager to show that Criseyde is unique:

For I sey nought that she so sodeynly
Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan enclyne
To like hym first, and I have told yow whi;
And after that, his manhod and his pyne
Made love withinne hire for to myne,
For which by proces and by good servyse
He gat hire love, and in no sodeyn wyse.

(2.673-79)

The narrator asserts that Criseyde never suddenly responds to Troilus’ calling for love; instead, she is first moved by Troilus’ "manhod" and "pyne," and then "by proces and by good servyse." Pandarus’ manipulations ("by proces") and Troilus’ "good servyse" make Criseyde accept Troilus’ love—ultimately.

Then follows Criseyde’s long contemplation on love and freedom (as a woman and a widow). She is concerned about how she should respond to the proposed love by a prince. As a widow, with the title of the traitor’s daughter, she first welcomes the security in hostile Troy:

Ek wel woot I my kynges sone is he,
And sith he hath to se me swich delit,
If I wolde outreliche his sighte flee,
Peraunter he myghte have me in dispit
Thorugh whicch I myghte stonde in worse plit.
Now were I wis, me hate to purchace,
Withouten need, ther I may stonde in grace?

\[(2.708-14)\]

Such response is befitting for a woman in her predicament. Even Boccaccio's Criseida considers her future love life in a similar way.\(^{32}\) Like Boccaccio's heroine,\(^{32}\) Criseyde continues to ponder the danger of love on the part of woman:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Now sette a caas: the hardest is, ywys,} \\
\text{Men myghten demen that he loveth me.} \\
\text{What dishonour were it unto me, this?} \\
\text{May ich hym lette of that? Why, nay, parde!} \\
\text{I knowe also, and alday heere and se,} \\
\text{Men loven wommen al biside hire leve,} \\
\text{And whan hem leste namore, lat hem byleve!} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[(2.729-35)\]

Criseyde knows too well that it is impossible for a woman to prevent rumors and dishonor in the affair, for she is supposed to be passive, especially since man determines her lot.

Nevertheless, she is proud that a man, "the worthieste,
/ Save only Ector" (2.739-40), loves her and "his lif al lith now in my cure" (2.741). This kind of deliberation is very private and sincere;\(^{34}\) therefore, we need not read it negatively. It rather shows that she is not an abstract
character: she is a woman in charge of her own destiny:

"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.

"What shal I doon? To what fyn lyve I thus?
Shal I nat love, in cas if that me leste?
What, pardieux! I am naught religious.
And though that I myn herte sette at reste
Upon this knyght, that is the worthieste,
And kepe alwey myn honour and my name,
By alle right, it may do me no shame." (2.750-63)

This practical remark may imply the very characteristics of the traditional Criseida. However, these passages do not question Criseyde’s character but rather the oppressive male dominance over women in domestic life. Many historians point to this irony: medieval women could be freed from various restrictions that the social system exclusively imposed on them--when they were widowed:

[Wives] had a certain right to their husbands' land during wifehood, and actual possession of a portion of it, as dower, when they were widows.
The endowment of women with property gave them social standing and an importance which they would not otherwise have had. (Abram 33)

Assuming that these historical observations are correct, we clearly see Criseyde's speech on her situation is genuine. After painful deliberation, she determines to accept the worthiest knight, for she is "naught religious."

Nonetheless, she still hesitates, possibly because she has no courage to carry out her resolution.

Criseyde's indecision is not without reason--she hesitates to exchange her freedom for the thraldom of love:

. . . "Alas! Syn I am free,  
Sholde I now love, and put in jupartie  
My sikernesse, and thrallen libertee?  
Alas, how dorst I thenken that folie?  
May I naught wel in other folk aspie  
Hire dredfull joye, hire constreinte, and hire peyne?  
Ther loveth noon, that she nath why to pleyne."

(2.771-77)

This love agony indicates that, unlike Boccaccio's heroine, Criseyde does not pursue the "dredfull joye" of the clandestine love affair. She vacillates because of her liberty that is quite fortunately given to her and yet for fear of the agony of being in love: "For love is yet the mooste stormy lyf" (2.778). She, then, reaches the
conclusion: "He which that nothing undertaketh, / Nothyng n'acheveth, be hym looth or deere" (2.807-808). After this resolution, Criseyde reflects upon Antigone's song:

"And whoso seith that for to love is vice,
Or thraldom, though he feele in it destresse,
He outh'er is envyous, or right nyce,
Or is unmyghty, for his shrewednesse,
To loven; for swich manere folk, I gesse,
Defamen Love, as nothing of hym knowe.
Thel speken, but thei benten nevere his bowe!
(2.855-61)

The Aesopian fable of the fox and the sour grapes encourages Criseyde (2.899-903). Even at this last moment, it is not clear whether Criseyde has determined to give her heart to Troilus. The narrator, too, mumbles that she became "somwhat able to converte." The whole episode shows how serious it is for Criseyde the woman, to participate in the "game" of love. Criseyde's soliloquy does not necessarily reveal the self-centered, hypocritic character of the traditional heroine. Love is too serious for her to conclude easily. The dream of an eagle (2.925-31) symbolizes Criseyde's role in the whole affair--she is a passive object, forced to accept Troilus.

The next scene shows Pandarus advising Troilus to write a letter to Criseyde. Though she refuses to take the letter at first (2.1130-41), she does not really want to turn down
it (2.1141-62), an act sufficient enough to make some readers, those who expect a more traditional Criseida, believe the hypocrisy. However, she is not a religious woman; it is a natural response for her to see what is in the letter. The problem is that the society she lives in does not tolerate an overt expression of love or sexuality by a woman. In medieval literature, when a woman frankly expresses a point of view, contradictory to the dominant male view, she becomes an object of ridicule and condemnation. As Griselda and May demonstrate in Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, "woman" in medieval literature represents either good or evil, and no other alternative. Criseyde breaks this old concept of woman—she becomes, at times, a fabliau figure and at others, a romantic heroine.

Criseyde is not a flat character, manipulated by the conventions of male authors. As a lady, Criseyde is entitled to express whatever she thinks about love and life—whether it is romantic or practical. Even if Criseyde were insincere, we cannot blame her because she is determined by her society: she must follow the patriarchal decorum for a "good" woman.

Pandarus, an accurate reader of Criseyde, knows well the love convention in his society, and thus manipulates Criseyde accordingly to the "rules." This explains why the poem’s emphasis is so much on Criseyde’s passivity and her victimization. Pandarus schemes "That thou [Troilus] shalt
come into a certeyn place, / There as thow mayst thiself hire preye of grace" (2.1364-65). Although the Poliphete episode is concocted, it is convincing enough for Criseyde to be fooled. In light of Criseyde’s insecurity in Troy (1.85-108), we can easily expect what will ensue. Led to the room where Troilus is lying, she plainly tells him her motives for coming:

"Sire, comen am I to yow for causes tweye:
First, yow to thonke, and of youre lordshipe eke
Continuance I wolde yow biseke." (3.75-77)

As an insecure widow, she desperately needs the status of the Trojan prince to help prevent Poliphete’s alleged lawsuit. Thus, Criseyde is puzzled at her uncle’s urge to say something:

"I, what?" quod she, "by God and by my trouthe,
I not nat what ye wilne that I seye." (3.120-21)

It is an embarrassing moment to Criseyde who does not know what is going on. The scene just proves her innocence and her pitiful situation in Troy. She panics at the fabricated news of a lawsuit and is embarrassed by the overt begging and crying over her mercy by Troilus and Pandarus. Thus, she asks, "To telle me the fyn of his entente" (3.125), another proof of Criseyde’s victimization by male "schemers."

Pandarus, the author of dishonorable manipulations, feels a great shame for his role as a go-between (3.253-59),
acknowledging the innocence of Criseyde in the affair. Pandarus, therefore, asks Troilus to "keep hire out of blame" (3.265), for this love affair can shape the future public esteem of his own name:

"But wo is me, that I, that cause al this,
May thinken that she is my nece deere,
And I hire em, and traitour eke yfeere!

"And were it wist that I, thorough myn engyn,
Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie,
To doon thi lust and holly to ben thyn,
Whi, al the world upon it wolde crie,
And seyn that I the werste trecherie
Did in this cas, that evere was bigonne,
And she forlost, and thou right nought ywonne!"

(3.271-80)

This self-accusation also heightens Criseyde's innocence as well as the wrongdoings of Pandarus. For this very reason, he urges Troilus to keep this affair secret in his long "sermon" (3.239-343). Pandarus' fear for his downfall is realized in Shakespeare's representation: "pandar" becomes a general term for a go-between. Criseyde's innocence is further proved by Troilus' indecent proposal for a "service" (3.407-13): friends are going to "trade" women! Pandarus actually arranges his niece for his friend, and in return, for his "service," Troilus offers one of his sisters,
including Helen. Some may regard this proposal lightly as something like soldiers' campfire talk, but it seriously challenges Troilus' "noble" character.

Pandarus finally devises a plan "for to bryngen to his hows som nyght / His faire nece and Troilus yfere" (3.514-15). Some readers may argue that Criseyde knew of Troilus' coming. The narrator carefully refuses to speculate, however:

Nought list myn auctour fully to declare
What that she thoughte when he seyde so,
That Troilus was out of towne yfare,
As if he seyde therof soth or no;
But that, withowten await, with hym to go,
She graunted hym, sith he hire that bisoughte,
And, as his nece, obeyed as hire oughte.

Refusing to give his own view, the narrator simply declares that Criseyde, as Pandarus' niece, gave her permission to her uncle "withowten await." Although such ambiguous remark invites various readings on Criseyde's character, it does not change her character. Never a "religious" woman, Criseyde simply wants to see her "man" face to face. The potential problem comes out of the confrontation between the narrator's unprecedented characterizing an infamous heroine and the antithetical horizon of expectations regarding women. The indictment of Criseyde's hypocrisy here goes
back to the old antifeminist notion that women were either good or evil.

Criseyde, after all, is prevented from going home after dinner because of a storm, anticipated by Pandarus' "calculation." She appears in the scene as an innocent victim "fooled" by her uncle and her would-be lover. When Pandarus enters silently into the room where his niece is asleep, he intimidates her not to make a noise—"Lat no wight risen and heren of oure speche" (3.756). He knows well that rumor and gossip are the worst enemies of Criseyde, "the ferfullest wight." He, then, fabricates the episode of Horaste, urging her to meet with "jealous" Troilus (3.771-98). Three times she refuses to see Troilus on that night (3.809-11, 3.848-49, 3.888-89), a proof that Criseyde observes the decorum forced on women by the society. She must show that she is not a loose woman. It is thus ironic that readers see her act as hypocritical (and the poet's writing satirical), while believing in Troilus' nobility despite his shameful, unmanly behavior in this long process of manipulations.  

Finally Criseyde gives in: "she did al for goode" (3.924) as the narrator reiterates his view on her motive in this affair. No wonder then the narrator accepts Criseyde's action, unlike prejudiced readers who consider her resolution as hypocritical. Her real concern in this series of requests and refusals is only to uphold her
"honor," not to enjoy the "pleasure" of love:

And for the love of God, syn al my trist
Is on yow two, and ye ben bothe wise,
So werketh now in so discret a wise
That I honour may have, and he plesaunce:
For I am here al in youre governaunce."

(3.941-45)

She now realizes her powerlessness: she must rely on truthfulness and "governaunce" of the two men. The simile of "larke" and "sperhauk" further intensifies her helplessness in this situation (3.1191-92). She is finally "kaught" (3.1027) in this game of love and she yields, "for other bote is non" (3.1208).

The following remark of Criseyde, however, evokes, among some readers, a serious suspicion of her character:

"Ne hadde I er now, my swete herte deere,
Ben yolde, ywis, I were now nought heere!"

(3.1210-11)

Some may infer from this remark Criseyde's foreknowledge about Pandarus' intended invitation. That is, she has expected Troilus at her uncle’s place, no new revelation because Criseyde had already resolved to give her heart to Troilus in Book II. At the same time, she declares that if she had been indifferent toward Troilus’ love, she would not have been here with him: Troilus could not be with Criseyde, had she not loved him or wanted to be with him. It is a
confession of a woman who has thoroughly weighed the affair and scrutinized her future lover: \(^{42}\) she is never hypocritical. The narrator also points out that this is the right manner required of women in his days:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And now swetnesse semeth more swete,} \\
\text{That bitternesse assaied was byforn;} \\
\text{For out of wo in blisse now they flete;} \\
\text{Non swich they felten sithen they were born.} \\
\text{Now is this bet than bothe two be lorn.} \\
\text{For love of God, take every womman heede} \\
\text{To werken thus, if it comth to the neede.}
\end{align*}
\]

(3.1219-25)

Never a representative of the evil woman, Criseyde is here commended ("take every womman heede / To werken thus") by the narrator as a model of a proper lover.

An unusual scene between uncle and niece follows after consummation (3.1555-82), a scene that raises a question of Criseyde's integrity, for she appears a new woman after the night. Like a character in a fabliau, she laughs and jokes about the whole affair with her uncle, even though she was fooled by him. Some critics go so far as to argue that this scene discloses the possibility of Pandarus' rape of Criseyde. Haldeen Braddy, for example, claims that the uncle-niece relationship is based on "a type of incest":

Chaucer unmistakably communicates the idea of their unwholesome alliance, but he does so, not by
coarse vulgarisms that match their unnatural 'dede,' but by inoffensive verses that conform to both the social status of his characters and the tastes of his courtly audience. (131)43

This kind of negative observation, however, is groundless. Such critics are too engrossed in the antifeminist view: they see a woman as either good or evil. Criseyde is neither good nor evil. She is just another human being, sometimes good or sometimes evil.44

The scene actually confirms Criseyde’s love for Troilus; she is not sorry for the affair with Troilus so far. She protests only against Pandarus’ "wordes white" (3.1567). The mood of her protestation is not sharp but amiable and gay, for Pandarus matched her with the man she loves.45 Although her act seems somewhat disguised, we must note that a medieval woman could hardly express herself publicly and that such suppression might be the way woman acted, in her joyful yet embarrassing moment, at that time:

With that she gan hire face for to wrye
With the shete, and wax for shame al reed.

(3.1569-70)

Unlike Troilus the man, Criseyde the woman cannot express herself frankly. Pandarus' "suspicious" act, then, follows Criseyde’s "suspicious" protestation:

And Pandarus gan under for to prie,

And seyde, "Nece, if that I shal be ded,
Have here a swerd and smyteth of myn hed!"
With that his arm al sodeynly he thriste
Under hire nekke, and at the laste hire kyste.

(3.1569-75)

Pandarus' "suspicious" gestures are in fact to excuse himself and to console his niece. It is meaningless to decode hidden sexual implications in this scene, for such alleged "suspicious" gestures have nothing to do with Chaucer's rewriting of the traditional heroine. Thus, the narrator passes "al that which chargeth nought [does not matter] to seye" (3.1576). After all, Criseyde forgives Pandarus and he "hath fully his entente" (3.1582) without causing his life:

What! God foryaf his deth, and she al so
Foryaf, and with here uncle gan to pleye,
For other cause was ther noon than so. (3.1577-79)

Pandarus' mission of liaison is thus accomplished, satisfying both his friend and his niece, a small happy ending for all, including the narrator.46

Until the beginning of Book IV, the narrator sounds cheerful in "translating" the love story. In the last two books, however, his gay mood changes: he sounds gloomy and serious. He must report "how Criseyde Troilus forsook-- / Or at the leeste, how that she was unkynde--" (4.15-18) although he continuously defends Criseyde from "the vilanye": 
Allas, that they sholde evere cause fynde
To speke hire harm! And if they on hire lye,
Iwis, hemself sholde han the vilanye. (4.19-21)

In Book I, the narrator turns to Tisiphone for help in retelling of "The double sorwe of Troilus." In Book IV, he mentions her again because he "moste endite" Criseyde's betrayal of Troilus. He changes his attitude toward his subject. He now agonizes over Criseyde's "unkindness to Troilus."

Book IV describes the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor. Many critics agree with Aers' "commodity" view in this scene. Aers argues that although "Criseyde is not officially a prisoner," she is handled "as a commodity in a social market organised by and for male possessing groups," and it is "realistic enough in symbolising the social situation of women in Chaucer's world" (190). But the poem also shows that man's obligatory participation in the war or, as in Calkas' case, desertion from it is "realistic" in portraying men at that time. During the war, men and women are both victims. Criseyde is "traded" for Antenor and Antenor, for Criseyde. The poem does not stress the gender issue only because both politics and humanitarian purposes are intermixed in the exchange. The offer is initially made not by Trojans but by Greeks who have granted Calkas' petition (4.71-126). No political motive or calculation, except his parental affection, is shown in Calkas' appeal to
Aers claims that the "sudden intervention of Calkas" shows a dominant social ideology of that time--"woman is seen as a passive object to be disposed of by a male-dominated ruling group" (189). This view implies that Calkas' effort to save his daughter is the very tyranny of the father who has deserted his only daughter. In Chaucer's poem, Calkas' desertion is so briefly mentioned that we cannot know about the details of his sudden departure. Benoît's poem explains that Calkas had no time to go with his daughter (Le Roman, 6). What we see, from Benoît's characterization of Calchas (13-14), is a compassionate father who cannot sleep for his lonely daughter, left in a hostile situation. If we consider this positive father-daughter relationship, we cannot regard Calkas only as a tyrant-father. In this regard, Henryson's portrayal of the compassionate fatherhood in his Testament of Cresseid is significant.

Aers also points out that the Trojan parliament "showed a total contempt for Criseyde's identity as a mere woman, and no hesitation in selling her for their own (supposed) immediate advantage" (193). Trojans, however, argue that Criseyde should be sent not because she is "a mere woman" but because she is the traitor's daughter. Furthermore, they do not know about her secret love affair with Troilus. Hector is the only man in the parliament who publicly
opposes the exchange (4.179-82). His protestation is adequate to his name, the flower of knighthood; and his action supports the commodity argument—"We usen here no wommen for to selle" (4.182). This remark, however, shows Hector's idealism, "tho fantasies" (4.193), a patriarchal notion of knights as the protectors of ladies. In fact, neither Hector nor other Trojans knew whether Criseyde is happy or not in Troy without her father. Hector's opposition to the exchange results from his own chivalric ideal; and other Trojans' proposition, merely from their political considerations.

Three women visitors to Criseyde provide meaningful clues to the context of the exchange. They come to Criseyde "For pitous joie" (4.683). It is a pity to be parted with Criseyde, as the second woman says (4.689-690). At the same time, it is a joy to see lonely Criseyde join her father (4.687-88). The third woman ardently wishes their reunion would bring peace to both sides (691-93). Pandarus also believes the exchange is determined "for the beste":

"The kyng with othere lordes, for the beste,
Hath mad eschaunge of Antenor and yow."

(4.876-79)²⁶

Unlike Benoît’s Briseida and Boccaccio's Criseida, Criseyde seems to think the same because she never expresses anger against her father and her country.

Most characters of the poem see the exchange as good
"for the beste," while some modern critics think that through the exchange, Chaucer stresses "Criseyde’s weak and subordinate position" as a woman:

So profoundly has she internalised anti-feminist norms, and the downgrading of Eros, that she defends a dominant ideology in which war, male self-interest, and the defense of the male ruling group are more important than human love and her own survival and happiness. (Aers 193)

The poem shows the passive, inferior position of woman in this bargain. The poem also points out that key members of the so-called "male ruling group," Hector and Troilus, are excluded from the process. The emphasis is not on the gender issue but on the ironic situation of the clandestine affair. All the characters-- except Troilus, Criseyde, and Pandarus--misread the hidden meaning of the exchange: they simply do not know about the secret affair between Troilus and Criseyde. No one can answer to this irony. Troilus can answer the exchange with his silence, an ironic symbol for the whole secret affair. Had the story been known to the public, like Paris’ abduction of Helen, the result might have been quite different.

The narrator laboriously defends Criseyde’s sincerity on the night before the separation. He describes Criseyde’s death-like swoon and Troilus’ suicidal attempt (4.1149-1241), as well as her promise of return (4.1254-1414).
Then, the narrator declares that everything she has said is "of good entente":

And treweliche, as writen wel I fynde
That al this thyng was seyd of good entente,
And that hire herte trewe was and kynde
Towards hym, and spak right as she mente,
And that she starf for wo neigh whan she wente,
And was in purpos evere to be trewe:
Thus written they that of hire werkes knewe.

(4.1415-21)

The narrator intrudes to dismiss the "false tongues" that have been accusing her of hypocrisy for centuries. Some may argue such unnecessary comments make his narration insincere and satirical toward Criseyde’s character. But the narrator, sensing the antifeminist expectations, needs to make her sincerity clear. He, thus, emphasizes "good entencioun" in reading of Criseyde from the beginning of the poem: "Now herkneth with a good entencioun" (1.53). He seems to believe that "good intention" is an important part in his rewriting of the Criseida story, for any good words for Criseyde are likely to be read as a satire that attacks the very antifeminist text. We can see here the narrator’s dilemma. On the one hand, he has to keep his words to safeguard his heroine with "good intention"; on the other, he must prove himself a good translator faithful to his textual fidelity to Lollius. Book V further shows his
agony in rewriting the Criseida story.

Criseyde’s sincerity is seriously challenged by her one-time change of mind, her inconstancy, in Book V. The narrator, however, still endeavors to defend her to the final moment. As he did in Book IV (799-805), the narrator emphasizes that Criseyde is the most sorrowful creature depicted in books (5.17-21). Thus, it is a "wonder" for the narrator to see the change of mind of such a woman:

What wonder is, though that hire sore smerte,

Whan she forgoth hire owen swete herte? (5.62-63)

This rhetorical question sets the tone of the whole book. On the one hand, Criseyde behaves as she has been throughout the poem: she is sincere and courteous. On the other, the narrator has to deal with her puzzling change of mind without clear motivation. It is a challenge for the narrator to explain the sudden change in Book V; it is also a dilemma to defend his heroine, upholding his textual fidelity.

At the beginning of Book V, Criseyde behaves differently from her precursors. She looks sorrowful though courteous to others. She is not angry at her country which forced her deportation, not at Diomede who is importunately asking her for "grace," not at her father who caused all these miseries. She is a patriot who helps her country save its hero, Antenor; she is a nice lady who never forgets courtesy even to the annoying Diomede (5.183-89), a filial
daughter who never blames her merciless father (5.193-94). Criseyde's positive behavior matches the consistent portrayal of the heroine by the narrator.

During Criseyde's absence, Troilus suffers much more than what Pandarus, a man of experience in love, expects. He thought that the passionate love between Troilus and Criseyde would be cooled by their separation:

"God woot, refreyden may this hote fare,  
Er Calkas sende Troilus Criseyde!" (5.507-508)

Pandarus' expectation is not based on Criseyde's character but rather on the nature of love itself. He might have thought that man's, not woman's, amorous mind cools faster than woman's. In fact, many tragic stories in The Legend of Good women uphold such theory with women deserted by male partners. The Criseida story is thus peculiar in that male-centered culture. The narrator's agony lies in the absurd social attitude toward women-betrayers in love. It is a grave crime for a woman to betray a man, while this same measure does not apply to man, a reason why Chaucer promises ladies to write about "good" women at the end of the poem.

In Book V, the narrator shows difficulties in justifying his heroine's infidelity, while trying not to damage her character. Such predicament of the narrator goes hand in hand with Criseyde's own dilemma in the Greek camp "With wommen fewe, among the Grekis stronge" (5.688). Criseyde seems surprised at the wide gap between her
anticipation and the reality in the Greek camp: she felt that Calkas would not let her return to Troy. Then, she expects Troilus will blame her for not keeping her promise. She even plans "To stele away by nyght" (5.701-707): "For which, withouten any wordes mo, / To Troie I wole, as for conclusioun" (5.764-65). Criseyde’s soliloquy (5.689-765) testifies how greatly she suffers from the dilemma caused not by herself but by others.

Although the narrator believes that Criseyde’s delay is caused by her own "Tendre-herted, slydyng of corage" (5.825), Troilus reveals the same "slydyng of corage," when he considers disguising himself as a pilgrim to sneak into the Greek camp (5.1576-82). Both lovers are half-hearted in their attempts for a rendezvous. However, the blame goes mostly to Criseyde although her predicament is the worse of the two. When we compare Criseyde with other male "betrayers," she has also been mistreated by male writers. Aneas’ and Jason’s betrayals, for example, are beautified for their "great" missions and women are victimized by the "masculine" works. Criseyde is sent to the Greek camp to save a Trojan hero, but ultimately what she earns is the notoriety, an eternal damnation of female fickleness. Mindful of this traditional, unfair treatment of female betrayers, Chaucer’s narrator has created Criseyde, one of the most sympathetic betrayers in the history of western literature.
The narrator tries to underscore the inevitability of Criseyde's betrayal: she is forced to do so by Calkas' fatherly authority, Troilus' suspicion, Diomede's temptation, malicious "tongues," and the war. Under these circumstances, no one can behave correctly. Unlike other "good" men and women in literature, Criseyde gets no divine guidance, no magic, no miracle, and no good advice. She is on her own. However, Troilus can get practical advice from Pandarus. Realizing what is done is done, she concludes that the only solution to her dilemma is to return. But she has already crossed the "bridge of no return": "er fully monthes two, / She was ful fer fro that entencioun" (5.766-67).

The narrator, then, relates what happens to Criseyde in those two months, relying heavily on the tradition. He suddenly portrays Criseyde's great beauty, including her famous joined eye-brows (5.806-26). Diomede continuously "fishes" for Criseyde's love with "hook and lyne" (5.777). She repeatedly refuses his approaches, although she finally inclines toward his "words," as we see in her cold but ambiguous response to Diomede's confession (5.956-1008). Here, even she lies about her past love life:

"I hadde a lord, to whom I wedded was,
The whos myn herte al was, til that he deyde;
And other love, as help me now Pallas,
Ther in myn herte nys, ne nevere was." (5.975-78)
Some argue that the "lord" actually alludes to Troilus, but we do not know exactly who. At least, what she says is not true. Diomede, who "koude more than the crede" in the craft of love (5.89-90), might have sensed Criseyde's affair shown through her bitter sorrow (5.778-91). Her lying actually signals to Diomede that she is ready to have "mercy" on him, as she unknowingly assures Diomede that her lover in Troy is dead in her mind. She seems here to have concluded that there would be no way for her to return to Troy. Some may protest that she should have looked for a better way to solve her dilemma, expecting a heroic act of suicide as fully explored in Dryden's play. In fact, as Lambert observes, she has had such a chance in the "pseudo-death scene" in Book IV: "... if she had found Troilus dead, she would have used his sword to end her own life. This, then, is the averted ending to the story: a Romeo and Juliet, Pyramus and Thisbe ending" (69).

Although the narrator seems to favor such act, he cannot alter the ending because of his avowed fidelity to textual sources: the poet's intention is not to create a completely different heroine but to show both old and new elements in the traditional story. Until the beginning of Book V, he portrays a charming and sincere heroine. However, by the time of Criseyde's betrayal, the narrator becomes entrapped in his own dilemma. Relying heavily on sources in Book V, the poet tries to "mitigate or evade the
heroine's guilt" through "humane" treatment (Lambert 72): he
does not create a "heroic" Criseyde. This shift causes the
narrator to be silent about Criseyde's future in the Greek
camp: he never talks about what became of Criseyde after her
desertion. He also does not fully relate Criseyde's new
affair with Diomede (5.1030-50); instead, he simply reports
what "the storie telleth us" (5.1037), what he finds "in
stories elleswhere" (5.1044), or what "Men seyn" (5.1050).
The narrator merely repeats how painful Criseyde was in her
decision-making:

But trewely, the storie telleth us,
Ther made nevere womman moore wo
Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.

(5.1051-53)

In her soliloquy, Criseyde realizes that her "name of
trouthe in love" is forever gone (5.1054-85) and, like other
Criseidas, she anticipates that her act of infidelity will
be the object of condemnation in the future (5.1058-66).
Criseyde in fact protests that she is not the first one
unfaithful in love (5.1067-68). Apologizing to Troilus
(5.1072-85), she then avows herself to be truthful to
Diomede (5.1069-71). Her soliloquy is virtually identical
as what other Criseidas have done under similar
circumstances. In tradition, this kind of confession has
been blamed as audacious, insincere, and even hypocritical
for self-consolation. Nevertheless, the narrator, pledged
to defend his heroine from "false tongues," preserves the traditional confession of the heroine because, he explains, this is what the story should "devyse":

    Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde
    Forther than the storye wol devyse.
    Hire name, alias, is publysshed so wide
    That for hire gilt it oughte ynoough suffise.
    And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,
    For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,
    Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for ruthe.

(5.1093-99)

The narrator is not willing to blame Criseyde more than what is required for the development of the plot. He astutely observes that her widely "publysshed" name, transmitted through various stories about her, is enough "for hire gilt." Since Criseyde has regretted her infidelity, the narrator says, he will excuse her though "for ruthe." He accepts his heroine's final confession to be sincere. He tries to excuse her act of infidelity not because he feels good about her "crime" but because he feels pity for a woman or one who happened to commit such a sin.

From this point on, the poem highlights Troilus' miserable waiting for his lady as well as his tragic ending: "The double sorwe of Troilus." Seldom does the narrator now report on Criseyde. In her reply to Troilus' letter, Criseyde explains why she has been delaying her departure--
she could not return "al for wikked speche" (5.1610):

"For I have herd wel moore than I wende
Touchyng us two, how thynges han ystonde,
Which I shal with dissymelyng amende."

(5.1611-13)

We can regard this excuse as a lie, but we also can speculate about a rumor regarding their secret affair. In Boccaccio, the affair is revealed by Deiphebus' overhearing of Troilus' lamentation (7.77-8), a scene that does not reappear in Chaucer's. Troilus tells about his dream only to Cassandra, and later he gets in a dispute with his sister about Criseyde. Thus, we can only conjecture that there was a rumor about the affair, a possible excuse for Criseyde's delay.

Finally, the narrator introduces a brooch, not indicating whether Troilus gave it to Criseyde in the parting scene. Most critics believe that it is the very "broche" Troilus gave Criseyde on the consummation night (3.1370-72). If both brooches are one and the same, we need an explanation why Troilus gives it back to Criseyde. Such confusion may imply that, unable to explain Criseyde's inconstancy in the final stage of the poem, the narrator hastily follows the sources. On the other hand, the narrator might have conceived the brooch simply as an emblem: Criseyde gives her "heart," a heart-shaped ruby, to Diomede. For the narrator, the brooch becomes a convenient
symbol of Criseyde's "heart," since it could indirectly signify her unfaithfulness.

After all, Troilus dies in the battle and, like other heroines in the tradition, Criseyde also silently disappears from the scene. Readers hear only Pandarus' final sentence on her:

"What sholde I seyen? I hate, ywys, Criseyde;
And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!"

(5.1732-33)

This remark echoes the standard view on the heroine--Criseida, the much-hated exemplum of female infidelity. However, we must note that the poet or the narrator never moralizes on Criseyde's behavior. The poet apologizes to ladies, promising to write about numerous cases of male infidelity and female fidelity (5.1772-78). He excuses himself that he does not retell this story,

"... al oonly for these men,
But moost for wommen that bitraised be
Thorugh false folk--God yeve hem sorwe, amen!--
That with hire grete wit and subtilte
Bytraise yow ... . (5.1779-83)

This remark echoes Christine de Pizan's similar notion. In The Book of the City of Ladies, Lady Reason teaches Christine how to read antifeminist writings:

As far as the poets of whom you speak are concerned, do you not know that they spoke on many
subjects in a fictional way and that often they
mean the contrary of what their words openly say?
One can interpret them according to the
grammatical figure of antiphrasis, which means, as
you know, that if you call something bad, in
fact, it is good, and also vice versa. Thus I
advise you to profit from their works and to
interpret them in the manner in which they are
intended in those passages where they attack
women. (1.2)

Christine stresses the importance of readers in reading
numerous antifeminist stories of the day. Chaucer gives
similar advice to his audience. His remarks are, in fact,
his cynical justification of what he has written because he
has kept his promise in The Legend of Good Women.

Criseida is mostly remembered for her one-time change
of mind: a symbol of female infidelity. Donaldson observes
that, as "Helen’s legendary loveliness is the source of her
persistent vitality," Criseida "has existed ever since her
appearance in Bencít de Sainte Maure only because of her
infidelity to the lover" ("Briseis" 3). Chaucer’s rewriting
of the story, however, has forced readers to reconsider this
infamous heroine: his ambiguous representation of Crisneyde,
whether it is satiric or ironic, has evoked hermeneutic
contentions among readers. Crisneyde is much loved and, at
the same time, much hated by various groups of readers, just
as she is so regarded in the poem. It is not clear whether the ambiguous presentation of Criseyde corresponds to the antifeminist horizon of expectation in the past. It is, however, clear that Chaucer’s heroine does not represent, exclusively, the traditional antifeminist text. As she was much loved and hated in the past, Criseyde remains a bone of contention in today’s critical circle.
NOTES

1 I do not repeat here the factual comparison between both poems since there are many studies speculated on this issue.

2 Coghill’s observation resounds C. S. Lewis’ conclusion in The Allegory of Love that "fear" is the ruling passion of the woman, Criseyde.


4 In this regard, Pandarus’ remark to Criseyde on the issue of "intention" and conclusion (2.255-59) is quite significant.

5 Jauss opposes to the traditional idea of self-sufficiency of a literary work. A literary work, according to him, is not a "monument" but an "orchestration": It is not a monument that monologically reveals its timeless
essence. It is much more like an orchestration that strikes
ever new resonances among its readers and that frees the
text from the material of the words and brings it to a
contemporary existence . . . ." (21)

Margaret Adlum Gist observes that many of the
medieval church fathers saw woman's body as "the vilest of
all objects": "St. Odo (d. 942), as Havelock Ellis reports,
called it [woman's body] a 'sack of dung,' and declared that
if man ' . . . could see beneath the skin, woman would rouse
nothing but nausea.' St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1095-1153)
asserted that the outward beauty of a woman's body, which
trapped men into deepest misery, was but the covering for
its inward filth and ugliness" (13-14). However, Gist
continues, it is a question "Whether this narrow and bigoted
view preserved in the recorded opinion of the most vocal
section of society was shared by people at large" (14). The
same question arises in the study of antifeministic
portrayal of Criseida. It is also questionable to suppose
that all the (male) writers wrote their Criseida stories
according to the norms of this biased but dominant socio-
cultural atmosphere.

See Roman 5 and Historia 8.192-99 for Benoît's and
Guido's portrayals of their heroines. See also the second
chapter of this dissertation for the discussion of their
characterizations of Briseida in light of the antifeminist
tradition of the Middle Ages.
8 At least, in the Criseida stories of Boccaccio, Chaucer, and later writers, she represents both images of woman, although the image of Mary is often used as satirical and cynical way to denote the story's antifeministic strain. It is ironic to observe that while Criseida is usually blamed by the narrators, the characters, and maybe the audiences, she is much worshiped by her male partners.

9 In this regard, Ruth H. Cline illustrates more specifically a number of conceptions, related to the collaboration of eyes and heart in the affairs of love, and prevalent in the early literature, such as ancient Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, and early Christian:

1. Love is sudden and powerful, usually occurring at first sight.
2. In forwarding love, eyes serve not only as perceivers of beauty but also as agents.
3. As agents the eyes strike through the eyes of the beloved into the heart.
4. A strike exists between the heart and the eye.
5. The heart may escape from the body in order to be with the beloved (263).

10 Recited from Bloch's translation in his book. See Bloch, pp. 49-54, for more about this poem.

11 Cline reports that the eye imagery has two traditions in relation to love: "The first, love awakened by beauty, is a universal conception, but the eye that by its
glance serves as an agent of love belongs to a specific tradition" (264).

12 Cline indicates that for the classical Latin writers, the love's harm was usually done by the perceiver's eyes, for the writers probably did not know "the specific tradition" (the harm done by the eyes of the perceived):

In the cultural tradition of Latin writers, particularly the Christian philosophers, the eye to be feared, the eye that could bring harm upon one, was one's own eye. So foreign to their way of thinking was the metaphor, "Thou hast wounded me with one of thine eyes," that they did not know what it meant. It seems next to impossible that Bernard [of Ventadorn], the author of Eneas, or Chretien [de Troyes] should, on their own, have developed the idea of the power of another's eye, so unfamiliar to their culture, when they might easily have adopted it from the folk belief or literature of their neighbors, the Arabs, who had for centuries known the fearsome power of another's eye (294).

According to Cline's study, the Arabic erotic literature frequently employed "the metaphor of the eye as a caster of weapons" (282). The eye has tremendous, magical power in the affairs of love, for "it is an eye whose witchery possesses a fatal power" (297). Donaldson-Evans agrees with
Cline's view, saying that "While these [classical Latin] poets occasionally represent eyes as being full of flames, it is rare that the flames are actually projected from the eyes as in the Greek tradition" (204).

13 Troilo tells Criseida that it is not her beauty but her "high and noble acts" that made him fall in love with her. See 4.164-165. Here, Troilo admits that he knows the seductive power of beauty—"Beauty, which will often ensnare others, did not impel me to love you." However, we know that this is not wholly true.

14 Cf. I.29, 39, 41; II.86, 98; III.36, 61; IV.51, 123; V.55; VII.64.

15 In his song Troilus confesses the similar remark on love and Criseyde's eyes: "Ye [the God of Love] stonden in hir eighen myghtily, / As in a place unto youre vertu digne" (1.428-429). Cf. Il Filostrato, I.29 and 39.

16 Cf. Il Filostrato, II.86.

17 It is an evidence that the "aggressive eye topos" was popular as an expression of bewildered lover, for Pandarus' report is not what he has directly seen or heard but his own invention. Like a poet, Pandarus has composed a love poem, employing the day's popular motif.

18 Cf. Il Filostrato, III.36.

19 Cf. Il Filostrato, IV.123.

20 These short poems are listed as "Poems Not Ascribed to Chaucer in the Manuscripts" in The Riverside Chaucer.
George Lyman Kittredge gives a similar view with Mizener's: "As Cressida is at the beginning, such is she to the end; amorous, gentle, affectionate, and charming altogether, but fatally impressionable and yielding" (135). Alfred David also observes that Criseyde seems like changing constantly but it is "a wilful misunderstanding of her character: "In one sense Criseyde is constantly changing in the poem, but in a deeper sense she never changes because she is constant in her mutability" (102).

Bloomfield emphasizes Chaucer's position as that of a historian in rewriting of the Criseida story. As a historian-narrator, Chaucer is detached himself from the major events of the story, that are given, "predestined": "Chaucer cannot change the elements of his story. As God cannot violate his own rationality, Chaucer cannot violate his data. Bound by his self-imposed task of historian, he both implies and says directly that he cannot do other than report his story" (202).

Laila Gross also indicates that Criseyde, like a game, is "hunted" in two wooings by Pandarus (on the behalf of Troilus) and Diomede, and "this fact establishes forcefully her passivity" (122). Gretchen Mieszkowski, in "Chaucer's Much Loved Criseyde," observes that Chaucer's representation of "passive" Criseyde is "his most essential change in Boccaccio's Criseida" (112). See also Muscatine, p. 157. He suggests a third mediating view on these
opposite theories of "Criseyde the calculating woman, and
Criseyde the innocent seduced by treachery." Criseyde, 
according to Muscatine's view, does not represent either 
view, "but has rather some proportion of both, ambiguously 
mixed." Muscatine correctly points out the characterization 
of Criseyde in the poem. However, he does not show why 
ambiguity has characterized Criseyde in relation to the 
tradition of the Criseida story. I believe that this 
characterization of Criseyde reveals the poet's agony in 
rewriting the well-known antifeminist story.

24 Guido, the militant antifeminist, quite curiously 
retains this scene in his Latin redaction of Benoît's poem.

25 See the scene where Criseida is asking Hector for 
clemency in I.12. See also the scenes where Criseida 
ambiguously responses to Pandaro (on the behalf of Troilo) 
in Part II and to Diomede in VI. 9-34.

26 See the chapter, "Criseide and Her Narrator," of 
Speaking of Chaucer for more about the relationship of 
Criseyde and the narrator of the poem.

27 If Aers' reading is correct here, then, Criseyde's 
beauty has the very negative meaning of seductive power as 
the antifeminist tradition labelled it. If she has any 
intention to use her "aungelik" beauty, why does she not go 
to Paris or to King Priam but to Hector? It is, in fact, 
King Priam who has saved Briseida in Benoît's poem: "If it 
were not that the maiden is noble, and worthy and wise and
beautiful, she should be burned and torn to pieces because of him" (8). Then, it is better to interpret Hector's clemency-giving as an obligatory and merciful act of a medieval knight, "a champion of God and the ladies" (Power 27).

26 It is quite a different attitude of Criseyde from that of Boccaccio's Criseida. Calchas's treason does not seem to trouble the heroine in Boccaccio's poem. See particularly the Palladion scene in Il Filostrato.

25 See Hansen, pp. 143-48, for Troilus' sexually motivated "girl-watching." Although I think her reading of the feast scene is quite strange, I generally agree with her view about the circumstances.

30 This remark acknowledges that Troilus' wooing of Criseyde seems strange not only to the narrator but also to his audience. Troilus' "unmanly" behaviors in the process of his courtship probably makes them puzzling: lamentations lying on the bed, frequent swoonings and cryings, and Pandarus' shameful manipulations of his lonely niece.

31 It is ironic to observe later that the narrator desperately tries to "excuse hire yet for routhe" (V.1099).

32 See Il Filostrato, II.71-72.

33 See Il Filostrato, II.75-78.

34 Cf. "Al wolde I that noon wiste of this thought" (2.745).

35 See also Power, p. 38 and John H. Mundy, Europe in
the High Middle Ages, 2nd ed. (London; New York: Longman, 1991), pp. 143-44. Frances and Joseph Gies, however, observe that the dower land is a mere "kind of social security for the widow": "If she remarried, however, dower usually reverted to the husband's family. In most cases the widow's claim was only a life interest; the land remained permanently in the husband's bloodline and the widow had no power to dispose of it" (31).

This scene of indetermination predicts Criseyde's future situations in Books IV and V.

As I have illustrated in Chapter II, Boccaccio's Criseida shows quite a different view on love and freedom from Criseyde's. According to her soliloquy, it seems that the secret joy of the clandestine love affair is Criseida's main goal.

In fact, throughout the poem, we are sometimes puzzled at Criseyde's different ways of acting and speaking with her uncle, Pandarus, and with her lover, Troilus. With Pandarus, she looks like a lively, fabliau woman, and with Troilus, she seems a romantic heroine. See Muscatine, pp.153-54, for the different styles represented by the narrator.

It seems that Criseyde has experienced the similar lawsuit before by "false Poliphete." See Book II, lines 1467-78.

Even modern readers are ironically stubborn to
consider Troilus as noble, who, throughout the poem, weeps, peeps, lies, and gets jealous and angry. On the contrary, Criseyde has long been blamed as a wicked male-destroyer for her only one-time change of mind.

41 See Criseyde’s motive to have mercy on Troilus in Books I and II.

42 See III.1226-29. Criseyde gives her full heart after confirmed Troilus’ truthful love.

43 See also Beryl Rowland, "Pandarus and the Fate of Tantalus," Orbis Litterarum 24 (1969): 3-16. He regards Pandarus as "a bi-sexual pimp" and "voyeur."

44 D. W. Robertson, Jr. labels Criseyde as "a sort of feminine Everyman" (498). Based on the Christian belief that all men and women are sinners, his reading generalizes too lightly Criseyde’s character in the context of the dominant ideology of the Middle Ages. If Criseyde is "a sort of feminine Everyman," Troilus is also "a sort of masculine Everyman." In the case of Troilus, we can see the pattern formulated in Everyman—an Everyman sinned through his folly but regenerated by his self-realization. However, in the case of Criseyde, we cannot see such a pattern (as we can see in Henryson’s poem). What we hear from her is just her resolution, "To Diomede algate I wol be trewe" (5.1071), instead of any kind of self-realization on what she did.

45 Although Criseyde is tricked by Pandarus and Troilus, she is not ravished by Troilus. There is a mutual
agreement between two lovers.

46 The narrator seems happy until this moment because he is reporting the happy love story of the two lovers. The light tone of his narration, however, becomes gloomy in the last two books.

47 Carolyn Dinshaw, Elaine Tuttle Hansen, Priscilla Martin, and many other feminist critics have followed this idea.

48 In Chaucer's poem Calkas is another victim in the sense that he is portrayed as a heartless father in order to underline Criseyde's solitude and sufferings in Troy.

49 This kind of idealism is one reason to continue the "worthless" war. If Hector's opposition is based on reason, he should send back Helen first. He is idealistic or unrealistic, clinging only to his notion of knightly idealism.

50 Troilus also thinks as Pandarus does: "Syn she is chaunged for the townes goode" (4.553).

51 See the prologue of the second book. The narrator vows his textual fidelity to Lollius, his bogus authority: "...as myn auctour seyde, so sey I" (2.18).

52 This kind of Criseyde's characteristic is shown in her remark in 2.807-808: "He which that nothing undertaketh, / Nothyng n'acheveth, be hym looth or deere." Also see another similar remark in 5.1069-71: "But syn I se ther is no bettre way, / And that to late is now for me to rewe, / To Diomede algate I wol be trewe."

53 Derek Pearsall argues that Criseyde might have meant Troilus as her dead husband: "Criseyde gives [Troilus] her private tribute of affection, assigning him the role that may be spoken of with propriety, but not at the expense of closing off other avenues of opportunity. It is, in a new situation, a matter of keeping one's options open" (25).

54 See also Donaldson, Speaking, pp.22-26.

55 The narrator briefly mentions that, according to his source, Criseyde gave it to Diomede together with Troilus horse and a "pencel of hire sleve" (5.1037-43).
CHAPTER IV

CRESSEID: THE WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS

Robert Henryson’s Testament of Cresseid, a unique reading of the Criseida story, deviates considerably from the tradition. Piero Boitani observes that "It is his [Troilus’] death, and his death alone, that interests classical art and that part of the medieval tradition which is directly or indirectly influenced by it" ("Antiquity" 2). Henryson’s poem does not portray "the constant feature of Troilus’ figure," that is, "his death at the hands of Achilles" (Boitani, "Antiquity" 3). Rather, the Testament alters the most typical characteristics of the traditional story of Troilus and Criseida: Troilus does not die with desperation caused by the heroine’s betrayal. It is Cresseid who dies broken-hearted through Troilus’ kindness. Troilus is overlooked as an instrument whereas Cresseid becomes the key figure. The emphasis of the poem is not on "the alternate developments in love and war, nor on the two lovers’ grief at their separation" (Torti 185) but on Cresseid’s miserable suffering and tragic death. The Testament deals with "the fatall desteny / Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitly," while Troilus and Criseyde deals with "the fatal destyne" of Troilus. In this chapter I plan to illustrate Henryson’s unique reading of Chaucer’s Trojan
and Criseyde in the context of the story's tradition: how he handles the main elements of the story, especially the heroine.

Often misunderstood as the sixth book of *Troilus and Criseyde* by Renaissance editors, the Testament continues on Chaucer's line. Henryson expands on the story of the Trojan lovers after their separation at the end of the fifth book of *Troilus*. Henryson's work has a dramatic unity similar to Chaucer's, including the same background and a similar construction with identical characters. The setting of the Testament is outside of Troy, and the poem is mostly written in the same 7-line stanza of Chaucer's rhyme royal (seventy-nine out of eighty-six stanzas). Thus, Gregory Kratzmann is led to observe that, although Henryson's poem is "profoundly original," "some of its most distinctive effects cannot be properly appreciated unless the reader has the same close knowledge of *Troilus and Criseyde* which the poet himself possessed" (63).

Four of Chaucer's characters reappear in Testament: Diomed, Calchas, Troilus, and Cresseid. There is no further character development for Diomed, and Calchas undergoes a major change. Pandarus is not mentioned at all throughout the poem. Henryson's Diomed becomes a worse rascal than Chaucer's, "bestial, slippery, and sudden" (Fox 22). He is a mere foil, a deserter of Cresseid:
When Diomed had all his appetite,
And mair, fulfillit of this fair lady,
Upon ane uther he set his hail delite,
And send to hir ane libell of repudy,
And hir excludit fra his company. (71-5)

Diomede, a seducer of selfish lust, reappears briefly for this dramatic need to create Cresseid’s suffering. His desertion of Cresseid is not surprising because he has been traditionally portrayed as a skillful seducer with “obvious experience” and “cool technique” (Tatlock, "People" 94). Thus, J. S. P. Tatlock concludes that Diomede’s betrayal of Cresseid is anticipated in Henryson’s poem: “Robert Henryson’s Testament of Cresseid shows the inevitable course of events in his tiring of her and abandoning of her” ("People" 95).

Calchas changes greatly from the priest of Apollo to the priest of Venus and Cupid, and from a man “ful of coveytise” (Troilus, IV. 1369) with a “coward herte” (Troilus, IV. 1409) to the dear father of Cresseid, who is eager to take care of his miserable daughter. Their father-daughter relationship is also changed from antipathy and indifference to sympathy and love. The purpose of this modification is to “increase the pathos of Cresseid’s downfall” (Stearns 51), and to sharpen “both the irony and the cohesiveness of the poem” (Fox 22). Opposed to these traditional views on Henryson’s revision of father-daughter
relationship is Larry M. Sklute. He argues that Henryson's modification is only to invite the reader's sympathy: "By making this relationship warm and sympathetic, Henryson invites our sympathy for the familial relationship and for the pain each member suffers when Cresseid is struck down" (191). However, Sklute continues, this change is to show "a narrow, pessimistic attitude to the world and about humanity not usually predicted of him [Henryson]" (192). In other words, this alteration is the result of the poet's hypocrisy, an attempt to disguise his viciously stern morality under "the brilliant use of rhetorical technique" (190). This kind of modification does not display "the sympathy, humanity, and charity which the rhetoric of the poem claims for them, but a retributive moralism on the part of the poet deviously at work beneath the surface" (192).

These opposing views among critics show the deeply divided readings on Henryson's rewriting of the traditional story. Sklute seems too conscious of the traditional characterization of Calchas as a mean-spirited, cruel father. At the same time, he ignores the positive portrayal of Calchas in the tradition. In Calchas' explanation to his daughter (in Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio), his base, unfatherly behavior is partly justified, and from this positive depiction of Calchas comes the possibility of Henryson's characterization of Calchas. It is not unanticipated. Above all, the important role of Calchas in
Testament is that he becomes the last guardian, toward whom Cresseid has been continually sailing from Pandarus to Troilus and from Troilus to Diomede. Cresseid’s change of guardianship may reflect the general picture of the passive medieval woman on the one hand, and Cresseid’s unfaithfulness (from the misogynistic standpoint) on the other. Calchas’ final guardianship over Cresseid enables us to anticipate the last stage of Cresseid’s mutable life. The great change in the characterization of Calchas is a fitting alteration from Chaucer’s version.

Henryson’s Troilus is still noble and generous like Chaucer’s. C. David Benson, however, argues that Cresseid is the only one in Henryson’s poem who "is capable of lasting nobility and true generosity" ("Troilus" 264). In a sense, Troilus looks like a "colorless abstraction" (Stearns 49) who "is seen mostly at a distance" (Fox 22). One reason for this characterization is that Henryson’s poem is not about Troilus but about Cresseid:

Of his [Troilus’] distres me neidis noht reheirs,
For worthy Chauceir, in the samin buik,
In gudely termis and in joly veirs,
Compilit hes his cairis, wha will luik. (57-60)

Although Troilus seems to be only instrumental and illusive, the importance of his presence is to give Cresseid a redemptive self-realization. This characterization emphasizes Troilus’ generous and mature attitude as well as
his constant mind toward Cresseid.

Cresseid appears, at the beginning of the Testament, as selfish, unfaithful, audacious, and even lustful, the same heroine in the continental tradition. But her character changes through the course of the poem, and the spotlight is always on this process. The poet's attitude toward Cresseid is not harsh or stern in spite of her punishment in the poem. Rather, he is "fundamentally compassionate" upon her (Spearing 182), and the poem is "far from being a cruel work of unsparing didacticism" (Tristram 151): the poem "holds out a promise of Christian redemption for Cresseid" (Wittig 49). A promise of redemption, Christian or not, through her self-knowledge, is what makes Henryson’s poem different from the tradition.

C. David Benson contrasts the two characters, Troilus and Cresseid, in Henryson’s poem:

Troilus ultimately plays a minor role in Henryson’s poem. He occupies only a few lines and is presented as a static figure unable to respond adequately to the tragedy around him. His dramatic importance, however, consists in the contrast he provides to Cresseid: it is her Testament. Both suffer, but only she profits. Although she seems to be in an inferior position to Troilus throughout the poem, Cresseid’s response to her lot finally makes her a morally
more admirable figure. . . . Cresseid does achieve a high level of self-understanding, but only after a long and psychologically accurate process. ("Troilus" 268)

As Benson aptly points out, Henryson's poem shows "a long and psychologically accurate process" of Cresseid's self-knowledge. This process, I assume, is not necessarily for a Christian salvation. It is for the salvation of Cresseid, the stereotype of female infidelity, from readers--vicious "tongues" that have been unrightly attacking her for centuries.

At the beginning of the Testament, the narrator treats Cresseid similarly as the Chaucer's narrator did: he does not blame Cresseid but fickle Fortune and Love. He even declares that she is not guilty:

I have piety thou suld fall sic mischance!
Yit nevertheless, whatever men deme or say
In scornefull langage of thy brukkilnes,
I sall excuse, als far furth as I may,
Thy womanheid, thy wisdome and fairnes,
The whilk Fortoun hes put to sic distres
As hir pleisit, and nathing throu the gilt
Of the--throu wickit langage to be spilt!

(84-91)

Chaucer's narrator also treats Criseyde with the same tone, as he pities her for her weakness:
Ne me ne list this sely womman chyde
Forther that the storye wol devyse.
Hire name, alias, is publysshed so wide
That for hire gilt it oughte ynough suffise.
And if I myghte excuse hire any wise,
For she so sorry was for hire untrouthe,
Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe.
(Troilus, 5.1093-99)

Both narrators pity Criseida and vow to "excuse" her.
According to Kratzmann, Henryson's will to defend Cresseid
(lines 84-91) does not mean that "he will attempt to
exonerate Cresseid" but that "he will defend Cresseid's
womanhood, fairness and wisdom as far as he is able . . . ,
and this important limitation upon his ability to defend is
itself a recognition of her guilt" (80). Kratzmann seems to
allude to Dryden's "heroic" Cressida, or he does not seem to
understand for whom the narrators defend their heroine. It
is the reader who judges her "guilt." In the historical
context, I believe, the defense of the infamous heroine is
for the reader who stands firmly in the antifeminist horizon
of expectations. Chaucer and Henryson may "recognize"
Criseida to be guilty by their moral standards. However,
their rewritings about her are not to tell good from bad:
they do not emphasize retribution.

Although both Chaucer's and Henryson's narrators admit
their inability to further support their heroine, they
defend her from all malicious charges. At the end, however, Chaucer’s narrator admits his inability to defend Criseyde’s act of betrayal and thus apologizes to women readers, promising to write about good women. Yet Henryson’s narrator, who knows well his precursor’s agony in explaining the heroine’s unfaithfulness, declares at the onset that, though he cannot explain the heroine’s infidelity, he can excuse her “womanhood, wisdom, and fairness” through the process of her self-knowledge. Henryson’s defense of Cresseid is direct and more aggressive than Chaucer’s: Chaucer’s “ambiguous” defense was to explain Criseyde’s situational incompetencies through her powerlessness in varying circumstances.

As far as the heroine and the narratorial sympathy are concerned, both poets are curiously misunderstood by some readers. To some readers, Chaucer the narrator’s endeavor to excuse Criseyde appears almost satiric because of his obvious involvement with his heroine, whereas Henryson’s narrator seems too stern and harsh to Cresseid because of his dry, objective distancing. However, though both poets see the heroine with a similar eye, and though they admit that the heroine is blameworthy by their contemporary moral standards, a clear difference gaps them; Henryson brings judgment and punishment to Cresseid which Chaucer foregoes. Even though the punishment of Cresseid seems cruel, the narrator is never too harsh to his heroine. Through poetic
justice, he shows generosity and kindness, instead. He ultimately gives Cresseid a chance to annul her sin albeit through her suffering and self-realization; as Kratzmann observes, "Cresseid's story moves us as it does not so much because she suffers, as because she grows in moral stature to the point where she understands the nature and extent of her error" (85-86).

Henryson's less ambiguous narrator is more enthusiastic in his defense of the heroine than Chaucer's is, an important change that makes Henryson's poem unique. Like Chaucer, Henryson too does same revisionist work on Chaucer's story of Criseyde. As John M. Ganim notes, the Testament offers "a corrective reading experience, an antidote to a century of excess or defect" (123). Nikki Stiller also adds that Henryson's poem discloses "an urgency, a sense of the necessity of replying to, perhaps even of refuting, something in the older poet's [Chaucer's] work" (88). Henryson's poem is not only based on Chaucer's poem but also on Henryson's own denial of the absolute authority of his precursor to his poem:

Wha wait gif all that Chauceir wrait was trew?
Nor I wait noht gif this narratioun
Be authoreist, or fenyet of the new
Be sum poeit, throu his inventioun
Maid to report the lamentatioun
And wofull end of this lusty Creisseid.
And what distres sho thoillit, and what deid.

(64-70)

Henryson's narrator begins his rewriting by negating the absolute authority of his textual source, unlike Chaucer's narrator who claims his undivided textual fidelity, except for some linguistic, cultural, and historical differences. Henryson's poem picks up what Chaucer's poem left untouched at the final stage of the heroine's life. The Testament is an epilogue to the question--"what becomes of the heroine after her untruth?"

Testament of Cresseid begins with the traditional spring opening. However, Henryson's springtime is not Chaucer's "Aperill, whan clothed is the mede / With newe grene, of lusty Veer the pryme, / And swote smellen floures white and rede, / In sondry wises shewed" (Troilus, 1.156-59). Rather, it is a wintry April of "fervent" weather that "Shouris of haill can fra the north discend, / That scantly fra the cauld I miht defend" (6-7). In a sense, Henryson's narrator hints at his intention that his "tragedy" will be a different one from Chaucer's:

Ane dooly sessoun to ane cairfull dite
Suld correspond, and be equivalent.
Riht sa it wes when I began to write
This tragedy .... (1-4)

This opening remark attests to Henryson's opposition to his textual source. In Chaucer's prologue to the first book of
Troilus and Criseyde, the narrator announces that his poem is about "the double sorrow of Troilus": his hope and despair for Criseyde's love. Despite such proclamation that his poem is a "tragedy," until Troilus' death, it is not a tragedy but a love story. Henryson is more straightforward than Chaucer. He claims that even the weather should correspond to the subject of the poem. In Henryson's poem, then, the traditional meaning of springtime is transformed to that of regeneration strictly through repentance--void of all other connotations, such as love, hope, and feast. Instead of warm and lovely spring night, often associated with rebirth, it is a desolate wintry night. Nevertheless, Venus, "the beuty of the niht" (11), shines brightly in the sky:

The northin wind had purifyit the air,
And shed the misty cloudis fra the sky;
The froist freisit, the blastis bitterly
Fra Pole Artick come whisling loud and shill,
And causit me remufe aganis my will. (17-21)

Here the charms and agonies that love has wrought in Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde are all gone. Just as the northern wind purifies the air, ambiguities that have clouded Chaucer's poem are dissipated: it is a time of judgment and punishment for Cresseid's purification.

In his youth, the narrator vowed to worship Venus, "luifis quene" (22), but he now is "ane man of age" (29) who
cannot feel the heat of love. So, in this wintry night, he
takes a seat before the fire with "ane drink" to comfort
himself with a book "Written be worthy Chaucer glorious, /
Of fair Creisseid and lusty Troilus" (41-42) to "cut the
winter niht and mak it short" (39). In fact, this scene
reminds us of Pandarus who sits before the fireplace in Book
Three of Troilus and Criseyde as if he were reading a
romance, the love-making of Troilus and Criseyde. However,
the motives are quite different; for Henryson’s narrator, it
is not simply a romantic love story but a serious tragedy of
judgment and repentance. Having read through the fifth book
of Troilus, which records the final sorrow of Troilus, the
narrator alludes to yet another book about "the fatall
desteny / Of fair Cresseid, that endit wretchitly" (62-63).
Although the poem does not mention the author’s name, most
critics agree that it is Henryson himself, and thus most of
Cresseid’s miserable story is his own invention.

What do we hear from the narrator in his opening
remarks and how do we interpret the meaning of his words in
the context of the whole poem? First, the narrator
proclaims that it is "ane cairfull" [full of care] poem--the
tragedy of Cresseid--that should correspond with "ane dooly
sessoun" of severe weather, not the usual April.13 Second,
though this poem begins with April, it is not for the
exaltation of love but for penitence and rebirth:14 April is
not only the season of spring and love but also the season
of pilgrimage as we see in The Canterbury Tales. Also the
narrator is "ane man of age" who cannot feel the heat of
love as he once felt.15 Third, after referring to the last
part of the Troilus, the narrator reveals his intention in
the writing of his poem: the Testament will be a tragedy.
Then he begins the miserable story of Cresseid.

At first, the narrator tells us that Cresseid does fall
to a promiscuous life after Diomede cast her off:

Than desolait sho walkit up and down,
And, sum men, sayis, into the court, commoun.

(76-77)

The narrator laments Cresseid's fall with the ubi sunt
motif: "the flour and A per se / Of Troy and Grece" (78-79).
But, like Chaucer's narrator, he does not blame her but
Fortune as he pities her state of degradation:

... how was thou fortunait
To change in filth all thy feminity,
And be with fleschely lust sa maculait,
And go amang the Grekis air and lait,
So giglotlike, takand thy foull plesance!
I have piety thou suld fall sic mischance!

(79-84)

Cresseid, "in this wise destitute / Of all comfort and
consolatioun" (92-93), disguised, goes "Riht prively" to her
last guardian, Calchas, now transformed to a priest of Venus
and Cupid as well as a loving father. Then, as in the
opening scene in *Troilus*, there appear many church-goers (113-15). Here, we witness some ironical behavior on the part of Cresseid. In Chaucer's poem, Criseyde, though she seems extremely cautious, participates in the Palladion feast albeit as a traitor's daughter. However, in this scene, Cresseid does not even dare to see other people, being afraid to give the people "ony deming / Of hir expuls fra Diomeid the king" (118-19). It is an ironic twist on the notion of the courtly love, stressed throughout the *Troilus*--a pledge for absolute secrecy between two lovers. later in this poem, we again witness a similar parody when Cresseid goes to the leper house.

Meanwhile, in "ane secreit orature," Cresseid bitterly blames Venus and Cupid, the deities of love. She angrily cries out:  

Ye gave me anis ane devine responsaill
That I suld be the flour of luif in Troy;
Now I am maid ane unworthy outwaill,
And all in cair translatit is my joy.
Wha sail me gyde? Wha sail me now convoy,
Sen I fra Diomeid and nobill Troilus,
Am clene excludit, as abject odious?

O fals Cupide, is nane to wyte bot thou,
And thy mother, of lufe the blind Goddes!
Ye causit me alwayis understand and trow
The seid of lufe was sawin in my face,
And ay grew grene throu your suply and grace.
Bot now, allace, that seid with froist is slane,
And I fra luiferis, and all forlane. (127-40)

Cresseid laments her miserable fate and condemns only the
gods. She does not realize yet that she herself is to be
blamed. Then, she falls down "in ane extasy" and the dream
vision of Cresseid begins (144-343). In this scene,
Henryson gives a long-winded (almost one-third of the total
lines) description of the seven planets and the parliament
thereof. After the discussion of Cresseid's blasphemy,
Cynthia, one of the seven gods and goddesses, reads the
decree on Cresseid's sin to deprive her of her beauty by
leprosy, for shhas soiled her own god.

For the cause or causes of this punishment, some
critics allege her blasphemy as well as her promiscuous life
style. Ralph Hanna III argues that since leprosy was
commonly regarded as a venereal disease in the Middle Ages,
"The cause of Cresseid's leprosy has to be sought in her own
experience, in her descent toward harlotry, in her career
not just as lady in love but as complaisant agent of lust" (295). However, these critics seem to misread Henryson's
poem, as did some Renaissance writers. Mairi Ann Cullen
rightly observes that "it is simply the 'wickit langage' of
her complaint against the gods that is blasphemy" (152).
John McNamara also contends that Cresseid's lustful living
does not constitute a grave sin and thus is not at issue here: "Cupid argues that she chose this life for herself and must now accept its consequences without impugning divine justice" (103). In fact, we cannot see any such evidence in Cupid's indictment of her:

'Lo', quod Cupide, 'wha will blaspheme the name
Of his awin god, outher in word or deid,
To all goddis he dois baith lak and shame,
And suld have bitter panis to his meid.
I say this by yone wretchit Cresseid,
The whilk throu me was sumtime flour of lufe,
Me and my mother starkly can reprufe,

'Saying of hir greit infelicity
I was the caus, and my mother Venus,
Ane blind goddes hir cald, that miht not se,
With slander and defame injurious.
Thus hir leving unclene and lecherous
Sho wald returne on me and my mother,
To whome I shew my grace abone all uther.

'And sen ye ar all sevin deificait,
Participant of devine sapience,
This greit injure done to our hie estait
Me think with pane we suld mak recompence;
Was never to goddes done sic violence.
As weill for you, as for myself I say;
Thairfoir ga help to revenge, I you pray!'  

(274-94)

Cupid accuses Cresseid's blasphemy ("slander and defame injurious") to be the sole cause of her punishment. According to Cupid, "hir leving unclene and lecherous" is an excuse that Cresseid has justified for her blasphemy. That is, Cresseid's own promiscuous living, for which Cupid or Venus is not responsible, has led her to the present situation "as abject odious," who is "clene excludit" "fra Diomeid and nobill Troilus" (132-33).

Critics have offered four different explanations for the punishment. The first is that Cresseid is justly punished to be brought to penitence and salvation through the working of God's will. The second is that the gods are lacking in justice although the poem establishes a clear moral order. The third is that Cresseid is properly punished, but without Christian providence in the poem. The last, that though Cresseid is punished and though the theme of the poem is judgment, the emphasis of the poem is on sympathy. My own view is that Cresseid is properly punished, but the whole idea of punishment should be examined along with the cycle of her suffering, repentance, and redemption.

After being struck by leprosy, Cresseid bitterly laments her wretched fate--"My blaspheming now have I boht
full deir" (354). She admits that the blasphemy is the only cause of her misery: Cresseid is yet to realize what Cupid has said about the cause of her downfall from "the flour of luif in Troy" (128). From now on, Cresseid must look for the answer, an internal quest, the main concern of the poem. Again in "secreit wise," Cresseid goes, with the help of her dear father, "Unto yone hospitall at the townis end" (381-82). Now, without any guardian, she lies down

In ane dark corner of the hous allone;
And on this wise, weeping, sho maid her mone.

(405-406)

Then begins Cresseid's first lament (407-69), full of the ubi sunt motif, "self-pity, regret for lost elegance and erstwhile honor and despair" (Godman 296). While contrasting the past happiness with the present wretchedness, Cresseid accuses fickle Fortune as the originator of her present hardship. At the same time, she senses, more or less, the vanity of earthly existence:

Noht is your fairnes bot ane faiding flour,
Noht is your famous laud and hie honour
Bot wind inflat in uther mennis eiris;
Your roising reid to rotting sall retour.
Exempill mak of me in your memour,
Whilk of sic thingis wofull witnes beiris.
All welth in eird away as wind it weires;
Be war thairfoir, approchis neir the hour;
Fortoun is fikkil when sho beginnis and steiris.

(461-69)

Through her own misery and suffering, Cresseid comes to realize what Troilus has realized at the end of the *Troilus and Criseyde*—the vanity of earthly things.

Then she hears some practical advice from "ane lipper lady" to "mak vertew of ane neid / To leir to clap thy clapper to and fro, / And leif efter the law of lipper leid" (478-480). The advice strikes us as quite ironical: Criseyde has not been given even a single bit of advice throughout Chaucer's poem. Cresseid is going out to beg, an ironical reversal of her fortune: "before men begged for Cresseid's favor, now she herself must beg for the bare means of sustenance" (Fox 38).

In the next scene, the reunion of Troilus and Cresseid, the poem reaches its climax. Their failure to recognize each other evokes a great dramatic effect and a sad irony. The situation is quite different from Chaucer's: Cresseid is begging Troilus for alms, whereas in *Troilus* he begs her for love. There is reason for Troilus' failure to recognize Cresseid, for her face is deformed by the fatal disease. But there is no clear reason why Cresseid fails to recognize Troilus. According to J. A. W. Bennett, "Weak and almost blind as she is, it is not surprising that she should fail to distinguish him in the company of 'worthy lords' returning victoriously to Troy—though another leper has no
difficulty (535); they are on horseback, in armour and the vizored helmets worn for combat" (99-100). However, the narrator himself is mute on this point. He, I suspect, deliberately presents Cresseid's failure for a more dramatic and ironic effect.

Meanwhile, Troilus sees the leper Cresseid, "not witting what sho was" (497), and suddenly a reminiscence of fair Cresseid is aroused in his mind:

Than upon him sho kest up baith her ene,
And with ane blenk it come into his thoht
That he sumtime hir face befoir had sene.
Bot sho was in sic plie he knew hir noht;
Yit than hir luik into his mind it broht
The sweit visage and amorous blenking
Of fair Cresseid, sumtime his awin darling.

(498-504)

Troilus then gives rich alms to the leper Cresseid, "For knihtly piety and memoriall / Of fair Cresseid" (519-20). Then, he "raid away,"

. . . and not ane word he spak,
Pensive in hart, whill he come to the town,
And for greit cair oftsyis almaist fell down.

(523-525)

Here we can see the unchanged Troilus who is noble, gentle, still heartbroken for the love of Cresseid.

Later, Cresseid, who did not recognize the gentle lord,
hears from one of the lepers that the knight was Sir Troilus "gentil and fre" (536). Now realizing the truth, Cresseid swoons, and then begins her last laments with the cry, "O fals Cresseid and trew kniht Troilus!" (546):

Thy lufe, thy lawty, and thy gentilnes
I countit small in my prosperity,
Sa elevait I was in wantones,
And clam upon the fickill wheill sa hie.
All faith and lufe I promissit to the
Was in the self fickill and frivolous:
O fals Cresseid and trew kniht Troilus! (547-53)

Cresseid truly repents her wrongdoings toward Troilus, and she regrets her wanton living in the past. She now realizes the true meaning of love and faithfulness, virtues she ignored before:

Becaus I knaw the greit unstabilnes,
Brukkill as glas, into myself, I say--
Traisting in uther als greit unfaithfulnes,
Als unconstant, and als untrew of fay--
Thoht sum be trew, I wait riht few ar thay;
Wha findis treuth, lat him his lady ruse;
Nane but myself as now I will accuse. (568-74)

In the parliament of the seven planets, Cupid has already accused Cresseid of "leving unclene and lecherous," the cause of her downfall from her place of "the flour and A per se / Of Troy and Greek" (78-79), although, not realizing
it, Cresseid convinces herself that the disfavor of Cupid and Venus is the cause of her downfall. As a result of her blasphemy, Cresseid then is struck by leprosy. Now, her own confession, as quoted above, reveals Cresseid's third crime: her unfaithfulness. She realizes that neither the leprosy nor Fortune is to be blamed for her suffering. It is rather her own inconstancy to Troilus (and thus her loss of him).

Finally, Cresseid writes down her testament:

Heir I beteiche my corps and carioun
With wormis and with taidis to be rent;
My cop and clapper, and mine ornament,
And all my gold the lipper folk sall have,
When I am deid, to bury me in grave.

This royall ring, set with this ruby reid,
Whilk Troilus in drourie to me send,
To him agane I leif it when I am deid,
To mak my cairfull deid unto him kend.
Thus I conclude shortly, and mak ane end:
My spreit I leif to Diane, whair sho dwellis,
To walk with hir in waist woddis and wellis.

O Diomeid, thou hes baith broche and belt
Whilk Troilus gave me in takning
Of his trew lufe . . . . (577-591)
Cresseid dies with these words. There is her final
recognition of the vanity and transiency of earthly life, just as Troilus does in the last part of the *Troilus*. There is also her commitment to pray for Diana: "a divine representative of what Cresseid lost in life" (McNamara 106). Diana is "the goddess of whom she knows least" (Godman 299), and chastity or faithfulness is the least virtue Cresseid had, hence, the most needed virtue to her. Troilus thus is in woe because "Sho was untrew" (602).

*Testament of Cresseid* exhibits a didactic message on the surface, and this fact seems to contrast Henryson's sternness with Chaucer's generosity. Critics are sharply divided on the issue of Henryson's treatment of Cresseid. Some see Henryson as a stern, orthodox moralist, and his *Testament* a didactic, moral poem. Tatyana Moran, who views the punishment of leprosy as "a grim warning to women who use their beauty for immoral purpose" (23), criticizes Henryson's treatment of Cresseid: Henryson "felt no sympathy, not even the slightest compassion for his heroine, but only contempt and a kind of sadistic pleasure in describing her degradation" (23). Ralph Hanna III also observes that unlike "Chaucer's ultimate refusal to judge his heroine," Henryson enacts a "licensed destruction of the heroine" (288). Others see Henryson as a humanist like Chaucer, whose poem focuses not on judgment but on sympathy. Douglas Gray argues that Henryson, like Chaucer, "is taking care to dissociate himself firmly from
the antifeminist view of her detractors that she is the exemplification of the deceit, fickleness and changeableness of women" (174). He further comments that "From the contemplation of the suffering comes not only compassion, but understanding: 'the sky was clear of clouds'" (208). Jill Mann suggests, however, that Henryson is more sympathetic toward the heroine than Chaucer: "Henryson's compassion for Cresseid goes much further than his echo of Chaucer in his proclaimed intention to 'excuse als far furth as I may / Thy womanheid, thy wisdome and fairnes'" ("The Planetary" 99-100).

The first group complains that the poet's punishment of the heroine is too severe, while the second emphasizes the importance of the final self-knowledge of Cresseid. I disagree with the first view. Henryson ultimately gives Cresseid a chance to repent and regenerate herself through her suffering and self-realization. On this point, Chaucer's attitude toward the heroine is different: he is silent when dealing with the resolution of Criseyde's unfaithfulness. Diomede, for example, does not remain a good person since he was not punished. Judgment and regeneration are more valuable than silence. Jill Mann argues that self-recognition is the key to differentiating Henryson from Chaucer: "[Henryson's] compassion resides in the simple fact that his poem gives back to Cresseid a role, the role of self-recognition that Chaucer had denied her"
("The Planetary" 100). Probably because of his fidelity to
the textual authority, Chaucer's narrator merely presents
Criseyde's infidelity only to show pity on her weakness.
Being free from Chaucer's fidelity, Henryson's narrator
thus solves the dilemma that has much troubled Chaucer's
narrator.

Critics also question Cresseid's salvation in the
Testament. The traditional view is that Henryson's poem
displays "the true repentance of Cresseid and the salvation
of her soul" (Tillyard, Five 18). Many critics, however,
oppose this Christian interpretation. Douglas Gray observes
that what happens to Cresseid is not "a Christian repentance
or conversion" but an epiphany: "a sudden moment of
awakening, a moment of self-discovery" (205). Another
group views that Cresseid's sin is not against Christian
morality but against the courtly love convention. Dolores
L. Noll argues that Henryson's Testament is "a poem built
upon courtly love premises," not related to "Henryson's
personal beliefs as a Christian" (24). Thus, for Noll, "the
narrator's moralitas reveals a concern not with sexual
immorality in the Christian sense but rather with the
cardinal courtly love sin of infidelity" (24). As far as
Criseida and her reputation are concerned, I would argue
that the moral regeneration is given to Cresseid, whether
Christian or no, and that it is intended as a salvation of
the heroine from readers. Mairi Ann Cullen argues that the
Testament is not a poem of defense but of judgment, "Unless . . . Cresseid's coming of self-knowledge of her unworthiness excuses her in the eyes of the world by showing her moral growth" (137). It is this evolving process of the heroine's character, a "learning by suffering," that promises her deliverance from her attackers. If Cresseid's salvation is closely related with Christian morality, there is no reason for the narrator to arouse "our sympathy and our sense of injustice by the travesty of a fair trial to which Cresseid is subjected" (Cullen 150). Also, we cannot understand why the portraits of some deities (Saturn, Mars, Venus, and Cynthia) are so negative. These portraits stress the fact that the trial is not fair to the accused: she is a victim. This is why the narrator protests Saturn's cruel sentence:

O cruell Saturne, fraward and angry,
Hard is thy dome and to malitious:
On fair Cresseid why hes thou na mercy,
Whilk was sa sweit, gentill and amorous?
Withdraw thy sentence, and be gracious--
As thou was never; so shawis thou thy deid,
Ane wraikfull sentence gevin on fair Crisseid.

(323-29)

The negative images of deities and their unfair trial manifest injustice toward the heroine. The more important meaning of this trial resides not in the cruel sentence
itself but in the chance for self-actualization given to the heroine. It is well implied in the fact that the ubi sunt motif dominates Cresseid's laments after being struck by leprosy.

Henryson intends to show the evolving character of the heroine particularly to antifeminist readers. A traditional Criseida worries about her reputation, as she is always concerned about the aftermath of her infidelity. In the first part of the Testament, Cresseid is depicted as the traditional Criseida, trying to hide herself from the public: Cresseid goes to her father's place, "Riht prively" (95), "Disagysit" (96). In the temple scene, she hides herself in "ane secreit orature" (120) not "giving of the pepill ony deming / Of hir expuls fra Diomeid the king" (118-19). After being struck by leprosy, she is led by Calchas, "wonder prively" (387) through "ane secreit yet" (388), to the leper house. In the leper house, in spite of her deformation, "sum knew hir weill, and sum had na knowledge / Of hir" (393-94), and she weeps and laments "In ane dark corner of the hous allone" (405). However, in the last part of the poem, her repentance and self-knowledge embolden her to open up. She publicly acknowledges her grave fault to Troilus and regrets her shameful life in the past--"Fie fals Cresseid; O trew kniht Troilus!" and "Nane but myself as now I will accuse" (574). Then, she dies, leaving her testament (577-91) to the public. She is no
longer conscious of her name and other people. Her repentance and self-knowledge make her free from those "earthly" connections. As if to acknowledge such transformation, "ane tomb of merbell grayy" (603) is built upon her grave with "hir name and superscriptioun" (604), written "In goldin letteris" (606):

'Lo, fair ladyis, Cresseid of Troyis town,
Sumtime countit the flour of womanheid,
Under this stane, lait lipper, lyis deid.'

(607-609)

There is no more to say about Cresseid: "Sen sho is deid, I speik of hir no moir" (616). Henryson probably might have hoped to put an end to the controversy over this infamous heroine.

However, during the Renaissance, the story continues, and the image of Criseida deteriorates.\(^37\) Hyde E. Rollins argues that Henryson's treatment of Cresseid "forever damned her as a loose woman" (397), although Mieszkowski opposes such view because Criseida has already been famous, a standard of female infidelity even before Henryson's time.\(^38\) Alice S. Miskimin also observes that the Testament is "a far more rigorous and severe conception of what she was, and what Troilus loved, than any of the earlier versions, and it, more than Troilus, established false Cresseid as the literary type of feminine traitor, until the incomparably greater image of Milton's Eve" (209-10). However, I do not
think Henryson is directly responsible for the Renaissance phenomena; the Criseida-bashing "was the result of later misinterpretations of Henryson, not of Henryson's misinterpretation of Chaucer" (Jentoft 99-100). In fact, some serious writers of the period, such as Shakespeare and Dryden, did not portray Criseida in a similar light. In the Renaissance period, the regenerated Cresseid by Henryson is once again swept by another wave of the (male) horizon of expectations.
NOTES


2 Alice S. Miskimin observes that it is a paradox that "the best of all the fifteenth-century imitations of Chaucer" had been accepted for two centuries as "Chaucer's last judgment on Criseyde" (208).

3 In Troilus Chaucer pictures Diomede as "Hardy, testif, strong, and chivalrous" (5. 802), who is as "fressh as braunche in may" (5. 844). Like thus, he possesses knightly virtues enough to be Criseyde's lover. However, it seems that Henryson's portrayal of Diomede comes from the tradition. Both Benoît and Guido depict him as a shrewd and skillful seducer of woman.

4 While there is clearly enmity between Calchas and Criseida in Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio, it is dubious in Chaucer's poem because of Criseyde's silence in the reunion scene of Book Five. Nevertheless, Henryson's portrayal of sympathetic Calchas is not surprising to readers, since he has been showing his fatherly concerns for his endangered daughter in the hostile situation.

5 Fox indicates that such a sympathetic portrayal of Calchas makes Cresseid's faults completely her own. See p. 22.
6 See also E. M. W. Tillyard, *Five*, p. 18; Edwin Muir 15-16.

7 See also Tillyard, *Five*, p. 17.

8 Mairi Ann Cullen, however, thinks that the portrayal of Cresseid's "moral growth" does not fully correspond to the narrator's claim to "excuse Cresseid's womanhood, wisdom and fairness" (137-38).

9 See Ralph Hanna III. 288. He says that "In stark contrast to Chaucer's ultimate refusal to judge his heroine, Cresseid's career in Henryson's poem begins with the most devastating of sentences: licensed destruction of the heroine." I believe that there is not any work (except Henryson's) in the tradition of Troilus story which gives any judgment on Criseyde. When the story ends in those works, Criseyde remains as a forgotten "bad" woman, unfaithful and even lustful.

10 See *Troilus and Criseyde*, 2.15-49.

11 See Friedman 16-17. He argues that "Henryson's weather is more suggestive of March. Great heat combined with a sudden north wind produces showers of hail from the north. Such climatological disorder has attendant consequences for man, and what has seemed to be a happy beginning now proves otherwise: it is a time of a 'tragedie.'" See also Speirs 46. He observes that "The Testament is a poem for Lent, the season of repentance, a wintry season in the north. It is a winter night's tale."
In addition to both views above, I think, April is the month for the pilgrimage as we see in *The Canterbury Tales*, but Henryson's weather is quite different from the weather of *Tales*. So I believe that together with the narrator's old age and the title of the poem, these two facts—April and its severe weather—have symbolic meaning to indicate the direction of *Testament*: the poem will be about the suffering, repentance, and redemption of the heroine.

12 Nikki Stiller gives an interesting interpretation for this metaphor: "It is possible to see Henryson's *Cresseid* as the product of a kind of northern backlash against the sunnier views of the southern culture that gave birth to *fin amors* in the first place" (90-91).

13 See Note 11 above, Friedman.

14 See Note 11 above, Speirs.

15 See John MacQueen, 60-61. He argues that "the failure in his [the narrator's] own heart parallels the external failure of spring... Fire, drink, and Chaucer bring him the pleasure he no longer obtains from love."

16 See Fox 37. He says that "Her [Criseyde's] desire is all for security and love."

17 See Tillyard, *Five*, p. 16. He indicates that pride and anger were serious sins according to medieval notions.

18 The detailed astrological explanation on the planets and the trial is in Stearns 70-96.

19 For the full explanation on the causes of leprosy in
the medieval belief, see Fox 26-37. The usual causes of leprosy were (1) as a venereal disease; (2) by an astrological influence; (3) as a punishment sent by God.

20 See Friedman 20; MacQueen 61.

21 Rollins indicates that some Renaissance writers used "Cresseid's kind" as an euphemistic expression for "harlot" (423).

22 See Tillyard, Five, pp. 5-29; Fox 20-58; MacQueen 45-93; Speirs 46; Wittig 41-49.

23 See Harold Tolliver 300-309.

24 See Spearing 165-87.

25 See Edwin Muir 7-19.

26 See Troilus and Criseyde, 1.96-98:

"As she that nyste what was best to rede;
For bothe a widewe was she and allone
Of any frend to whom she dorste hir mone."

27 See Friedman 20.

28 Anna Torti observes that "The most novel element in the presentation of Cresseid is not so much the leprosy—which represents just punishment for her inconstancy—as her final self-awareness in acknowledging her guilt" (187). Tillyard says that "by itself, the leprosy is not enough to make her repent," but Troilus' riding by and his great generosity (Five 18). See also Godman 297; Tristram 147. However, Fox argues that "Through suffering comes knowledge,
and the last part of the Testament is devoted . . . to showing how Cresseid is brought, by means of her leprosy, into an understanding of herself and of the world" (41).

29 See Fox 43. He indicates that Cresseid's poem on death "stresses the transitoriness of all the joys of the flesh and dwells on the repulsiveness and corruption of the deadly body."

30 Sklute also argues that Henryson's brilliant use of rhetoric covers up his "dark moral vision" in the Testament: "Henryson uses Chaucerian conventions so well that they obscure his underlying morality which, unlike Chaucer's, is as stern as it is orthodox, and his vision of the world and of man's place in it which is, also unlike Chaucer's, as harsh as it is pessimistic" (190).

31 Edwin Muir observes that Henryson "does not bring her to judgment . . . ; he shows the judgment of fate and of her own heart overtaking her" (17).

32 See the Testament, 64-70. Not only the narrator denies the absolute authority of Chaucer's version of the Criseida story but also he questions the authority of "ane uther quair" (61) which is thought to be the poem's bogus source or the Testament itself. The narrator's remark implies that his main concern is to portray the heroine's "wofil end" without being restricted by textual authority.

33 Some critics, such as A. C. Spearing and Tatyana Moran, deny the possible salvation of Cresseid in the poem.
Spearing claims that "the question of her possible salvation is not raised" (186).

34 See also Fox 48; MacQueen 82; Edwin Muir 17; Tristram 147; Wittig 49.

35 See also Kratzmann, p. 71: "What distinguishes the Testament from Troilus and Criseyde is not questioning of God's justice versus an affirmation of it, but rather Henryson's un-Christian willingness to maintain a vigorous focus on the unpleasant consequences of willful and concupiscent behavior."

36 See also C. W. Jentoft, who sees Cresseid's sin as "blasphemy against the deities of love" (101): "Cresseid's leprosy is tragic because it is punishment not for the Christian sins of Pride and Anger . . . , but for Pride and Anger directed blasphemously against Venus and Cupid, the divine arbiters of a different moral system" (102).

37 Both Rollins and Mieszkowski indicate the popularity of Criseida's infamous renown in the sixteenth-century English literature.

38 See Mieszkowski, "Reputation," pp. 73-74.
William Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida* portrays yet a different heroine from its medieval, English predecessors. Unlike Chaucer’s "ambiguous" Criseyde or Henryson’s "regenerated" Cresseid, Shakespeare’s Cressida is a "naked" antifeminist text. As Alice S. Miskimin observes, in Shakespeare’s play, "The flickering ambiguity that plays on Chaucer’s Criseyde like light . . . can no longer be imagined when we see her seduction before our eyes" (167). In this chapter, I speculate, first, on Shakespeare’s representation of the heroine: whether the anti-Cressida criticism is fair in the light of the tradition. I then examine Cressida’s role in her relationship with other characters in Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*. In the antifeminist horizon of expectations, she is a perfect exemplar to readers. To understand the play’s "naked" portrayal of the heroine, however, this antifeminist text should be reexamined from the whole context of the play.

Cressida is conceived as a "bad" woman not only by other characters of the play but also by numerous critics. Ulysses calls her one of "sluttish spoils of opportunity / And daughters of the game,"¹ and Thersites, without any
reservation, labels her as a "whore." Some critics regard Cressida as a "wanton" (Parrott 53) or "the wanton of tradition" (Knights 154) or "a shameless wanton" (Lawrence 140); "a light woman" (Ellis-Fermore 59); "shallow, hard, and lascivious" (Tillyard, Shakespeare's 90); "The self-possessed girl" "with calculated charms and encouragements" (Ann Thompson 122; 128); and a heroine "as hard, calculating, and promiscuous as the stereotype of any professional prostitute" (Pitt 143-44).

Another group of critics, however, argues that perhaps "the critical conditions surrounding the play have been infected by this climate of opinion within the play" in which no one "is capable of speaking in women's defense" (Burns 111). Recently, pro-feminist and feminist critics suggest a new view to see Cressida as victim: "... the play consistently reveals the operations by which women . . . are produced as objects" by an "economy of masculine desire" (Cook 179; 182). Robert Ornstein argues that Cressida "is a daughter of the game which men would have her play and for which they despise her . . . . More realist than sensualist, more wary and weary than wanton, she is alone in Troy and defenseless among the Greeks" (245). Marilyn French also observes that Cressida is an object or "commodity" for men's own purposes in the world controlled by them: "intelligent" Cressida, who knows well the nature of such a world, "goes in, and tries to maintain herself
Critics name specific causes for Cressida's victimization. Some stress Cressida's subjection to a society in which there is "no fixed intrinsic value in objects" (Asp 409). Some emphasize her subjection to Troilus' idealism. Grant L. Voth and Oliver H. Evans see Cressida as a victim not only of her "corrupt" world but also Troilus' "idealistic vision" (235): "She is responsible...for the 'folly' (III.ii.110) of ignoring her knowledge of the world of the play and of giving herself to Troilus's 'ideal' vision" (237). For R. A. Yoder, Cressida is a victim of war: "whether or not Cressida knows about sex, she knows about war . . . not as one who seeks its glory . . . but as an onlooker and victim who must learn to survive with it" (22). Others see Cressida as a victim of her own inconsistency. Jill Mann argues that Shakespeare's fundamental attitude toward his heroine is based on "the conception that her shift from Troilus to Diomedes is a Change, rather than the dropping of a mask." She points out that " . . . the transfer of allegiance to Diomedes is profoundly disturbing precisely because we cannot relate it to the old Cressida. 'This is, and is not, Cressid.' What Criseyde/Cressida stands for is not sensuality but change--the change which is indelibly rooted in human beings" ("Shakespeare," 240).

Unlike these readings, in which Cressida becomes an
inevitable product of her world, Grace Tiffany observes that Cressida's total submission through her silence, the role men assigned to her in the play, can be used to unveil the nature of "a patriarchal universe," in which she was created:

Shakespeare takes advantage of Cressida's prior negative symbolic value to elaborate the archetype of the dishonest person, from its origins in defensive hypocrisy to its final manifestation in nonbeing: the total disappearance of an integrated self . . . . Rather than positing that female decisions are determined by a patriarchal universe, we may study the ways that universe is ratified by female consent: by silence or by acquiescence in discursive practices that discourage direct female self-expression. (54)

Tiffany suggests two important points in the reading of Shakespeare's Cressida: Cressida in the tradition and her *raison d'être* in relation to the world of the play. As I shall show, Cressida appears deteriorated in Shakespeare's play, but her *raison d'être* in the play becomes meaningless if we separate her from the tradition and from the context of the whole play. While Tiffany shows the paradoxical "ways that [a patriarchal] universe is ratified by female consent," I wish to stress how Cressida makes the antifeminist readers mute toward this open antifeminist text
Cressida ratifies the world of play and its people with her "body," the antifeminist stereotype of female inconstancy.

Looking from the tradition of the Criseida story, Shakespeare's heroine is drastically reduced to a mere wanton or, as Angela Pitt puts it, a near-prostitute: "The relationship between Troilus and Cressida is founded on sensuality and sexual indulgence, and there is little indication that it ever goes beyond these bounds. The difference between the two of them is that Troilus is demonstrably prepared to be sexually faithful whereas Criseyde is not" (143-44). From the beginning of the play, we see a heroine quite different from Criseyde and Cresseid; Cressida resembles the earlier European Criseidas (the heroines of Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio): sensual, audacious, hypocritical, and aggressive.

Cressida's dialogue with Pandarus reveals that she is sharp-tongued, sensual, witty, and bawdy. In her first soliloquy, Cressida discloses her character:

- 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'.

in relation to other male characters and their world.
Then though my heart's content firm love doth bear,
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.

(1.2.272-81)

She is self-possessed, clear-headed, and calculating. She knows well what love is and what a woman’s destiny is in love, although she is an inexperienced maid. For many modern critics, her remark is an indictment of woman's unfair lot in Shakespeare's day. However, I doubt that in the dominant antifeminist horizon of expectations, Shakespeare's contemporary audience/readers welcomed these qualities. Rather, these qualities may have been what they expected from the old Criseida stories. Cressida, "Lacking Chaucer's narrator as a companion" (Donaldson, The Swan 87), is exposed to such prejudiced attackers.

In 3.2., Cressida’s confession of love to Troilus reveals both her fear and her calculation in the "game" of love. Cressida fears the widespread notion of woman's lot in love:

They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform; vowing more than the perfection of ten, and discharging less than the tenth part of one. They that have the voice of lions and the acts of hares, are they not monsters? (3.2.79-84)
Her fear is reasonable, real, and practical rather than ideal or philosophical, as demonstrated in Troilus' comment on the "monstruosity in love": "This is monstruosity in love, lady--that the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit" (3.2.75-78). For Cressida, love is a fatal game that alters a woman's destiny. Being assured by Troilus, she finally discloses her inner mind:

Boldness comes to me now and brings me heart:
Prince Troilus, I have loved you night and day
For many weary months. (3.2.106-108)

Cressida also confesses that, although she fell in love with Troilus at first sight, she has been pretending indifference toward Troilus' proposal: "Hard to seem won; but I was won, my lord, / With the first glance that ever--pardon me" (3.2.110-11). She explains briefly the reason for her pretension--"If I confess much, you will play the tyrant" (3.2.112). She, then, lists the predicaments of woman in the game of love:

. . . . See, we fools!
Why I have blabbed? Who shall be true to us,
When we are so unsecret to ourselves?
But, though I loved you well, I wooed you not;
And yet, good faith, I wished myself a man,
Or that we women had men's privilege
Of speaking first . . . . (3.2.116-22)
In Cressida, we see another Wife of Bath who continuously complains about female disadvantages in love life.

Until this moment, it is neither Troilus nor Pandarus but Cressida herself who, through teasing and tantalizing, manipulates the two men in the game. Unlike Chaucer’s Criseyde, her only concern is to be in control of the affair. We never see Cressida fret over her instability in Troy (as the daughter of a traitor) or over her honor (as a lady). Unlike Criseyde, she does not act like a "prisoner." According to Pandarus, Cressida was not deserted by Calchas: "She’s a fool to stay behind her father. Let her to the Greeks, and so I’ll tell her the next time I see her" (1.1.77-80). Pandarus’s words strongly suggest that Cressida chose to stay in Troy. Cressida’s situation is thus very different from Criseyde’s, a reason why Cressida appears less sympathetic than Chaucer’s heroine.

Without any narratorial protection and without any ambiguous camouflage, Cressida, like the Wife of Bath, is portrayed as "unusually libertine of tongue" (Donaldson, The Swan 87) and a woman of "high sexuality" (Donaldson, "Briseis" 10). In 3.2., for example, Cressida cunningly asks Troilus for a kiss:

    . . . . Sweet, bid me hold my tongue;
    For in this rapture I shall surely speak
    The thing I shall repent. See, see, your silence,
    Cunning in dumbness, from my weakness draws
My very soul of counsel! Stop my mouth.

(3.2.122-26)

She then immediately regrets what she has done, apparently, to avoid the embarrassing moment:

My lord, I do beseech you, pardon me.
'Twas not my purpose thus to beg a kiss.
I am ashamed. O heavens! What have I done?
For this time will I take my leave, my lord.

(3.2.129-32)

While acknowledging Cressida's predicaments of being a woman, we cannot but think that this is an act of coquetry here.

Another example of Cressida's "high sexuality" appears in 4.2. In this scene, many pro-Cressida critics argue that Troilus, sexually satiated, becomes indifferent toward Cressida after the consummation night, which seems to hint at Cressida's future betrayal:

This scene is in the normal pattern of Shakespearean morning-after scenes, in which the woman typically wishes to hold the man with her while the man asserts the necessities of the outside world. But both Romeo and Antony seem to have more pressing reasons for leaving than Troilus; and neither Juliet nor Cleopatra respond to the parting with the sense of betrayal, and of the reasons for betrayal, that Cressida
expresses here. Immediate after the consummation, that is, the lovers seem already separate. And the rest of the scene---indeed, the rest of the plot---in some sense constitutes an objective correlative to that experience. [Adelman 125]

Cressida's words, "Prithee tarry. / You men will never tarry" (4.2.16), actually display the literary convention, as we see in Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women* or Marlowe's play on Dido. In this scene, however, the situation is different. Although Adelman argues that "both Romeo and Antony seem to have more pressing reasons for leaving than Troilus," Troilus is still "affectionate . . . and displays only a reasonable interest in preserving their mutual secrecy by getting about the day's business" (Tiffany 49). Troilus does not want to disturb Cressida, worrying about her health: "Dear, trouble not yourself; the morn is cold" (4.2.1); "You will catch cold, and curse me" (4.2.15). He furthermore yields to Cressida's repeated urges to stay longer. We see here the same kind of coquetry of Cressida as in 3.2. She embarrasses Troilus who seems to remain the same after the consummation:

C. Are you weary of me?

T. O Cressida! But that the busy day,

Waked by the lark, hath roused the ribald crows,

And dreaming night will hide our joys no
longer.

I would not from thee.

C. Night hath been too brief.

T. Beshrew the witch! With venomous wights she stays

As tediously as hell, but flies the grasps of love

With wings more momentary-swift than thought.

You will catch cold, and curse me.

C. Prithee, tarry.

You men will never tarry.

O foolish Cressid! I might have still held off,

And then you would have tarried. . . .

(4.2.7-18)

Cressida is obsessed not to lose her control over Troilus in the game of love. She also overtly reveals her sexual appetite:

C. My lord, come you again into my chamber.

You smile and mock me, as if I meant naughtily.

T. Ha, ha!

C. Come, you are deceived; I think of no such thing.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Exeunt Troilus and Cressida (4.2.36-41)

If we consider woman's disadvantage in the love affair of the period, Cressida's act here may be understandable.
Nevertheless, we cannot but regard her act as sexually candid or calculated, for she knows exactly what she is doing: Cressida does not want to lose her control over Troilus. She does not want to be another betrayed woman.

In 5.2. we witness one of the most shocking scenes in the whole tradition of the Criseida story--the ocular proof of Cressida's infidelity. In Guido's version, we see Briseida's hypocritical behavior toward Diomede who steals her glove before her eyes. In Troilus and Cressida, not only the audience but also Troilus, Ulysses, and Thersites are on the scene of Cressida's coquetry and betrayal. This scene is what Chaucer's narrator judiciously omits and dilutes with ambiguity to protect his heroine from harsh words. However, without "winnowing," Shakespeare shows everything she has represented for centuries: a symbol of female infidelity or a femme fatale. Many critics try to defend Cressida, saying that she, as a powerless victim, needs to look for a new guardian. Unlike other Criseidas, Shakespeare's heroine seems to be on her own without any confidant "among Greeks strong." She cannot even rely on her own father, who acts as a panderer at the beginning of 5.2. As Stephen J. Lynch observes, her wit is her only guide in "a world that has degenerated to the point where her cynicism proves accurate" (357).

Although Cressida partially succeeds in manipulating Greek generals in the kiss scene of 4.5., she completely
C. Sweet honey Greek, tempt me no more to folly.

D. Nay, then--
C. I'll tell you what--
D. Foh, foh! Come, tell a pin; you are forsworn.
C. In faith, I cannot. What would you have me do?
D. No, no, good night; I'll be your fool no more.

C. Hark a word in your ear. (5.2.18-33)

Cressida, who has always been pursued by Troilus and Diomede in the tradition of the story, now becomes the suitor herself. Some critics indicate that Cressida's changed position here reflects her difficulties as a woman in the Greek camp; that is, Cressida needs a new guardian. However, whatever the reason, this scene discredits her integrity. As a result, Cressida loses her power over male suitors (Troilus and Diomedes); even her will to enjoy the control is missing in her flirting with Diomedes. On the one hand, Cressida becomes a victim of the situation because her effort to look for a new guardian is a matter of survival: she is a powerless woman in a time of war. On the other, there arises, due to her compromising demeanor, a serious question about her character. For readers in the antifeminist horizon of expectations, Cressida's defeat in
the love game with Diomedes is a small poetic corrective to her hypocrisy and unfaithfulness, as we see her in the final desertion by Diomede in Henryson's poem.

Shakespeare's characterization of Cressida closely echoes the tradition, and in some sense, it is too deeply colored by the traditional claim that Cressida is the damned stereotype of female infidelity and disruptiveness. Chaucer's ambiguous "clouds" are completely removed in Shakespeare's play, and Cressida has been criticized by many in and out of the play. No one in the play remarks favorably on the heroine, let alone giving advice to her. She is on her own. Furthermore, Shakespeare's major characters are flat: Troilus is a true lover, Cressida a false wanton, Pandarus a panderer, and Diomedes a skillful Casanova. Interestingly, these characters perform acts as if they knew fully what their given roles are in the play within the play, that is, in the love plot within the war plot. At the same time, the characters watch and comment on themselves as if they were spectators. As far as the love plot is concerned, the play maintains this kind of acting and commenting.

Since the play begins in medias res, we do not know how Troilus, suddenly or gradually, fell in love with Cressida. We only see the traditional Troilus grumbling, time and again, over his uneasy love life:

Call for my varlet: I'll unarm again.
Why should I war without the walls of Troy
That find such cruel battle here within?
Each Trojan that is master of his heart,
Let him to field--Troilus, alas, hath none.

(1.1.1-5)
Pandarus, like his counterpart in Chaucer, is busy consoling his friend, though he appears less honest and less sincere than Chaucer's Pandarus. Troilus is well aware of Pandarus' traditional role: "I cannot come to Cressid but by Pandar" (1.1.93). Then, in the next scene, we see Cressida in a different form from Chaucer's heroine--we see only one half of Criseyde. She first appears as a fabliaux woman rather than the suffering daughter of a traitor in a hostile environment. Pandarus, moreover, cannot (or needs not) manipulate his lonely niece because he is outwitted by her and because she is already ready to accept Troilus' love. It is Pandarus who is manipulated by Cressida:

C. Upon my back, to defend my belly; upon my wit,
to defend my wiles; upon my secrecy, to defend mine
honesty; my mask, to defend my beauty; and you,
to defend all these: and at all these wards I
lie, at a thousand watches.
P. Say one of your watches.
C. Nay, I'll watch you for that; and that's one of
the chiefest of them too. If I cannot ward what
I would not have hit, I can watch you for telling how I took the blow; unless it swell past hiding, and then it's past watching.

P. You are such another! (1.2.247-57)

Shakespeare's Pandarus is not a skillful Machiavellian but a fool (in 3.1., he is even outwitted by Paris, Helen, and their nameless servant). Such negative portrayal dominates Shakespeare's characters.

In 3.2. we see Cressida fearful, but her fear is fundamentally different from Criseyde's. While Chaucer's heroine dreads woman's disadvantages in love and her endangered stability as a free widow, Cressida fears losing power over Troilus and the possible desertion by him after she is "won." Throughout this scene, she appears more hypocritical, sensual, and aggressive than Chaucer's heroine. Timidness and passivity least characterize Shakespeare's Cressida. This scene also reveals that the two lovers and their go-between are well cognizant of traditional roles. Troilus, "as true as truth's simplicity" (3.2.159), pronounces his truthfulness all over the world:

True swains in love shall in the world to come Approve their truth by Troilus. When their rymes, Full of protest, of oath, and big compare, Want similes, truth tired with iteration--'As true as steel, as plantage to the moon, As sun to day, as turtle to her mate,
As iron to adamant, as earth to th'centre--
Yet, after all comparisons of truth,
As truth's authentic author to be cited,
'As true as Troilus' shall crown up the verse
And sanctify the numbers. (3.2.163-73)

Cressida, who has declared war against Troilus on the issue
of constancy in love (3.2.161), asserts her "falsehood" in
ironic similes:

. . . . Prophet may you be!
If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
When time is old and hath forgot itself,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
. . . yet let memory,
From false to false, among false maids in love,
Upbraid my falsehood! When they've said, 'as false
As air, as water, wind or sandy earth,
As fox to lamb, as wold to heifer's calf,
Pard to the hind, or stepdame to her son',
Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of
falsehood,

'As false as Cressid'. (3.2.173-86)¹²

Pandarus, who witnesses these oaths, gives his own words to
this "virtuous fight" (3.2.162) between Troilus and
Cressida:

Go to, a bargain maid. Seal it seal it. I'll be
the witness. 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 Cressids, and all brokers-between Pandarus! Say 'Amen'. (3.2.187-94)

These sworn statements ironically confirm their future behaviors, firmly imprinted in the tradition. These mock-oaths prove that they are subconsciously aware of their traditional roles.

In the parting scene of 4.4., this self-awareness of their fixed roles reappears:

T. Hear me, my love: be thou but true of heart--
C. I true! How now! What wicked deem is this?
T. Nay, we must use expostulation kindly, For it is parting from us.
   I speak not 'be thou true' as fearing thee, For I will throw my glove to Death himself That there's no maculation in thy heart; But 'be thou true' say I, to fashion in My sequent protestation--be thou true, And I will see thee.
C. O, you shall be exposed, my lord, to dangers As infinite as imminent! But I'll be true. (57-68)
Cressida is struck dumb at Troilus' repeated requests, "be thou true." Although she might have had many responses to Troilus' skepticism, the chance is not given to her. She only responds with monosyllabic exclamations: "I true! How now! What wicked deem is this?"; "But I'll be true"; "O heavens! 'Be true again!" (4.4.73); "O heavens! You love me not" (4.4.81); "Do you think I will?" (4.4.91); "My lord, will you be true?" (4.4.99). Troilus' suspicion bespeaks the antifeminist expectations toward the "false" heroine in the tradition.

Ulysses also serves as a spokesman to denounce Cressida, the antifeminist text:

. . . Fie, fie upon her!

There's language in her eye, her check, her lip,
Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.
O, these encounters, so glib of tongue,
That give accosting welcome ere it comes,
And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
To every tickling reader! Set them down
For sluttish spoils of opportunity
And daughters of the game. (4.5.54-63)

This may be the bitterest attack on the heroine throughout the entire canon. According to Lisa Jardine, medieval and Renaissance literature saw that "the woman with a sharp tongue breaks the social order: she is strictly disorderly"
In the general kiss scene of 4.5., Cressida appears as "A woman of quick sense" (4.5.54) and "the disruptive woman with a quick tongue" (Jardine 104) who publicly humiliates Ulysses and Menelaus. Without any previous knowledge of Cressida, however, Ulysses calls her "wanton" and a "slut" who can destroy the orderly patriarchal social system. He is furious because "the best-ordered male life" (Jardine 103) is disrupted by unruly women, such as Helen, Polyxena, and Cressida. For Ulysses, women are the "apple of discord." However, Vernon P. Loggins observes that Ulysses' judgment of Cressida is unfounded because he "responds to Cressida's appearance" without enough information about her: "Ulysses can act the way he does with Cressida because she has just rejected him . . . . His assessment of Cressida is in part, therefore, jealous resentment. Instead of reproving Achilles, Ulysses attacks Cressida" (511). It seems, nevertheless, that Ulysses reacts here as if he were a sour reader of Criseida in the antifeminist tradition, a spectator of the love story: one of those prejudiced Criseida-bashers, mindless of her predicament as a woman.

At the end of 5.2., Troilus, after witnessing Cressida's betrayal with his own eyes, gives a final sentence to her, which has already been given to her in the tradition:

O Cressid! O false Cressid! False, false, false!
Let all untruths stand by thy stained name,
And they'll seem glorious. (176-78)
"False Cressid," after all, mirrors the same femme fatale represented by Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio.

When viewing her apart from both the tradition and the context of the play, Shakespeare’s rendition of Cressida is meaningless because she is portrayed, again, as another traditional "false" heroine. Shakespeare’s play, however, gives an important clue to the mystery of Criseyde’s change of mind, the question raised mainly by Chaucer’s narrator. According to the analysis given by Cressida herself, she embodies two opposing minds within a single self:

T. What offends you, lady?
C. Sir, mine own company.
T. You cannot shun yourself.
C. Let me go and try.
I have a kind of self resides with you,
But an unkind self that itself will leave
To be another’s fool. I would be gone.
Where is my wit? I know not what I speak.
(3.2.135-41)

Two sets of mind struggle in Cressida and Cressida herself cannot control them. One half, submissive and trustful, inclines to love Troilus, but the other half, aggressive and revolting, blocks that very urge.¹⁵

In 5.2., Cressida offers a similar analysis of her
divided self:

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 eye directs our mind;
What error leads must err--O, then conclude
Minds swayed by eyes are full of turpitude.

(105-110)

This confession of split personality may be a convenient self-excuse for her audacious behavior and inconstancy. It is clear, however, that Cressida, an absolute antifeminist text, must have truly loved Troilus,¹⁶ even though her love was sensual. Her last words indicate that her frailty is due to her sex (O, poor our sex!): her weakness, her lack of discretion,¹⁷ unfairly endowed to woman’s nature, has brought her infidelity. Her remark is clearly anti-feministic; but in the context of the play, it implies, in a cynical way, male inconsistency in the world of Troilus and Cressida, for she is not the only one inconstant in the play.

Cressida is certainly represented not only as "the clearest representative of woman’s ‘frailty’ in [Shakespeare’s] plays" but also as the heroine "Proverbial in literary tradition as a source, standard, and symbol of faithlessness" (Greene 133). At the same time, Shakespeare’s traditional representation enables us to see
the inconsistencies of male characters and their corrupt world. She is simply one of them who tries to survive in that world:

What more appropriate heroine could there be for a play, one of whose major themes is human inconstancy and inconsistency, than the woman whose name had become a synonym for inconstancy? The play is full of passionate statements of ideals which are then ignored by the very characters who stated them. Every man in the play, except Pandarus and Thersites, who are unburdened by ideals, is inconsistent . . . . For a world in which virtues blaze up, sputter, and then go out, what better symbol could there be than the Cressida of literary tradition? In her inconstancy she is in excellent company.

(Donaldson, The Swan 79-80)

As Donaldson indicates, the traditional portrayal of Cressida becomes meaningful only when she is understood in the light of her world and its people. I do not believe that Cressida is portrayed as a mere antifeminist text. Shakespeare's reading of the Criseida story is so subtle that critics simply call Troilus and Cressida a "problem" play. However, the play is no longer problematic when we re-examine the careful characterization of Cressida in the context of the whole play.
Troilus and Cressida is a curious play which has been regarded as history,\textsuperscript{18} comedy,\textsuperscript{19} tragedy,\textsuperscript{20} satire, "tragic satire," or "comical satyre."\textsuperscript{21} The genre is ambiguous. So is the world the play depicts. John S. P. Tatlock observes that "No traditional story was so popular in the Elizabethan age as that of the siege of Troy and some of its episodes; because of its antiquity and undying beauty, of the fame and greatness of the early writers who had treated it, and to some extent of the tradition that the Britons were descendants of the Trojans" ("The Siege" 673). The world of Shakespeare's play, however, is far from being heroic and magnificent.\textsuperscript{22} Rhetoric inflates the heroic stature of all the great men. But their inconsistencies deflate their greatness--honor, as Falstaff puts it in 1 Henry IV, is merely "air." Thus, Troilus' remark on Cressida's letter, "Words, words, mere words" (5.3.108), is applicable to all the rhetoric in the play, in which most characters seldom practice what they preach.

Troilus cannot escape this world of inconsistency. Ulysses eulogizes Troilus, raising him up next to Hector--"A second hope, as fairly built as Hector" (4.5.109):

The youngest son of Priam, a true knight;
Not yet mature, yet matchless-firm of word;
Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
Not soon provoked nor, being provoked, soon calmed;
His heart and hand both open and both free;
For what he has he gives, what thinks he shows;
Yet gives he not till judgement guide his bounty,
Nor dignifies an impair thought with breath;
Manly as Hector, but more dangerous;
For Hector in his blaze of wrath subscribes
To tender objects, but he in heat of action
Is more vindicative than jealous love;
They call him Troilus. . . . (4.5.96-108)

According to this remark, Troilus seems a perfect warrior.
Like his comment on Cressida, Ulysses simply recapitulates
the traditional Troilus, although he admits that he is
merely retelling Aeneas' words about Troilus (4.5.110-12).
Nevertheless, what we see at the beginning of the play is a
childish Troilus, whining:

But I am weaker than a woman's tear,
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
Less valiant than the virgin in the night,
And skilless as unpractised infancy. (1.1.9-12)

He sounds like a valiant knight effeminated by a beauty.
However, it is not Cressida but Troilus who causes this
problem. From a heroic standpoint, Troilus is not a true
warrior. Marlowe's Tamburlaine has a similar problem in
Tamburlaine the Great, where Zenocrate appears as the only
setback to his conquering mind:

But how unseemly is it for my sex,
My discipline of arms and chivalry,
My nature, and the terror of my name,
To harbor thoughts effeminate and faint!
Save only that in beauty’s just applause,
With whose instinct the soul of man is touched;
And every warrior that is rapt with love
Of fame, of valor, and of victory,
Must needs have beauty beat on his conceits.
I thus conceiving and subduing both,

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Shall give the world to note, for all my birth,
That virtue solely is the sum of glory,
And fashions men with true nobility. (5.2.111-27)

When the play ends, Tamburlaine proves himself a true
warrior, a world conqueror by "conceiving" love (or its
encouraging power) and then "subduing" its effeminating
influence. Chaucer’s poem also shows Troilus experiencing
similar antithetical influences—he, following Pandarus’
advice, valiantly fights for Criseyde’s love. In
Shakespeare’s play, however, Troilus sabotages the war,
totally effeminated by the discouraging influence of beauty.
We never see or hear Troilus fight until the final battle
scene of the play. Instead, what we see is his unknighthly
participation in the returning parade (1.2). Shamefully,
Troilus jeers at their worthless fighting just before he
participates in that parade:
Peace, you ungracious clamours! Peace, rude sounds!
Fools on both sides: Helen must needs be fair,
When with your blood you daily paint her thus.
I cannot fight upon this argument:
It is too starved a subject for my sword.

(1.1.87-91)

If we blame Cressida, the lover, for her inconstancy,
Troilus, the warrior, should also be condemned for his sabotage.

Troilus' inconstancy also appears in his words. In 1.1. he expresses an anti-war sentiment, but in 2.2., however, sarcastically, he becomes a warmonger:

I would not wish a drop of Trojan blood
Spent more in her defence. But, worthy Hector,
She is a theme of honour and renown,
A spur to valliant and magnanimous deeds,
Whose present courage may beat down our foes,
And fame in time to come canonize us;
For I presume brave Hector would not lose
So rich advantage of a promised glory
As smiles upon the forehead of this action
For the wide world's revenue. (2.2.196-205)

Troilus urges Hector, an anti-Helen pacifist, to continue the war. Troilus' strategy is to inspire Hector with vainglory in a "worthless" war. Such remark on the nature
of the Trojan war reveals that Troilus, who was "mad" about Cressida's love in 1.1, is now blind to "a promised glory."

Troilus appears inconsistent not only as a warrior but also as a lover. He lacks patience. In medieval and Renaissance literature, however, patience seems to be required not of men but of women: many patient women prove themselves as true lovers. Chaucer's Grisilda and Shakespeare's Desdemona are such patient women who prove their loyalty. Troilus' impatient reaction to Cressida's betrayal in 5.2. discloses that he is not genuinely constant toward her but subconsciously suspicious of her, as Marilyn French observes:

But Troilus is not constant in the way of Julia, Helena (Midsummer Night's Dream), Hero, or Viola, who are constant in the face of rejection, betrayal, undeserved hatred, or threat. Cressida's inconstancy does not turn Troilus into patience on a monument; it shifts his focus from Cressida to Diomedes. (168)

As I shall show in the next chapter, Dryden's infidelity scene also portrays Troilus' impatience. Troilus, after all, proves himself neither a true warrior nor a true lover. Shakespeare's denial of Troilus' heroic death at the end of the play clarifies how he has conceived of the traditional hero, the true Troilus; like other characters, Troilus is imperfect, inconstant, self-deceptive, and thus, debased.
The heroic statue of other great figures is also significantly reduced by their inconsistencies. Achilles, like Troilus, refuses to participate in the war because he is in love with Polyxena. His loyalty is inconsistent to his country as well as to Polyxena as he finally joins the war. Achilles goes back to the war simply because of the death of his male partner, Patroclus, and he then kills the unarmed Hector:

**ULYSESSES.** O courage, courage, princes! Great Achilles

Is arming, weeping, cursing, vowing vengeance;
Patroclus' wounds have roused his drowsy blood,
Together with his mangled Myrmidions,
That noseless, handless, hacked and chipped, come to him,
Crying on Hector . . . . (5.5.30-35)

Heroism, a representative patriarchal virtue, is totally missing in this ugly war. Ulysses' words on the great Achilles are nothing but "air."

Ulysses' speech on order (1.3.74-136) has long been regarded as the centerpiece of the Elizabethan world order. The play's inconsistent portrayal of Ulysses, however, proves that the speech is just another piece of rhetoric. According to Barbara L. Parker, Ulysses is at the center of the play: only Ulysses, among the foolish Greek generals in the kiss scene, "pass[es] judgment, correctly assessing her
a bawd . . . . Between the extremes of Troilus's idealism and Thersites' cynicism falls Ulysses' restrained and dispassionate commentary" in the infidelity scene (132). However proper and accurate his commentaries may sound, Ulysses' inconsistent behaviors do not uphold his words. He is, at best, "Shakespeare's ultimate characterization of the politician, whose art is the manipulation of other men's ambitions and desires" (Ornstein 246). Or, at worst, Ulysses is a fool (Loggins 512) like Pandarus:

In short, Ulysses is a meddler. An attention-seeker, a flatterer, a talebearer, an eave's dropper, a contriver of plans which sound plausible but consistently fail, a man caught up in a war over someone else's wife, Ulysses exemplifies that aggressive behavior in which one surmounts one's own frustrations by making trouble for other people. (Burns 120)

Ulysses diagnoses the current stalemate of the war and proposes solutions to the problems; but his words remain merely words. He surmises that Achilles' sabotage of the war is due to "his airy fame" (1.3.143), although he later realizes that it is for the love of Polyxena (3.3.191-94). Ulysses seems a traditional commentator who repeats the antifeminist slogan--true Troilus and false Cressida--and who unsuccessfully reiterates the reconstruction of the world order demolished by women.24
Other legendary Greek heroes are also reduced to mere scornful simpletons and rascals. Diomedes, portrayed as a positive knight/suitor by Chaucer, appears as a skillful, tough, yet vulgar playboy; Agamemnon, a colorless commander-in-chief who leads his army to the vengeance of his brother's cuckoldry; Nestor, an old statesman proud of his oration; Ajax, a brainless braggart; and Menelaus, the joke of the whole world for his stupidity and cuckoldry.

On the Trojan side, Paris is the same playboy as in the legend, who enjoys his sensual life with his abducted wife, Helen. Aeneas and Hector may be the only warriors portrayed least negatively. Aeneas, however, is a minor character. Although Hector appears as the most reasonable and consistent character, he cannot escape from the destiny of the war and his world set up. Hector does not die in a heroic manner but is brutally murdered by treachery as a result of his covetousness.

Pandarus and Thersites are the two witnesses / commentators in the love plot and the war plot. Pandarus is reduced to a go-between, a mere pimp, different from Boccaccio's Pandaro and Chaucer's Pandarus: "Chaucer's Pandarus is a kind and well-meaning friend with love-problems of his own (I.667ff), and he can take pleasure in helping his friend without the disgust that comes in Shakespeare from his declined reputation and the linking of Troilus's love with the vicarious lust of an old man" (Ann
Unlike Chaucer’s Pandarus, he is denied any genuine friendship with Troilus and any respect from Troilus and Cressida. He is deformed with the ravages of venereal disease ("my aching bones," 5.10.35) and at the end of the play, he is rejected by Troilus without any clear reason:

Hence broker-lackey! Ignomy and shame
Pursue thy life, and live aye with thy name!

(5.10.33-4)

Nemesis finally visits him, perhaps, for what he has done to Chaucer’s Criseyde: it is an ironical twist of the fate of Pandarus who worried about his future renown in Chaucer’s poem.

Many critics concur that Thersites is the only constant character "who ‘measures’ the others" (Loggins 514). Thersites’ evaluation of other characters is extremely negative and cynical, as the play itself portrays the ugly side of the Trojan War rather than its heroic aspects recorded in classical epics. Thersites calls the Greek generals "those crafty-swearers rascals" (5.4.9) for their empty rhetoric, and "All incontinent varlets" (5.2.94) as they flock to kiss Cressida. No one in the play can escape from Thersites’ malicious tongue: Ajax is a "mongrel beef-witted lord (2.1.12-3), "mongrel cur" (5.4.12); Achilles an "idol of idiot-worshippers" (5.1.6-7), "a bad kind of dog" (5.4.12); Patroclus a "parrot" (5.2.191), "Achilles’ male
varlet" (5.1.15), and "his masculine whore" (5.1.17); Menelaus a "double-horned Spartan" (5.7.a.10-11), "the primitive statue and oblique memorial of cuckolds" (5.1.53); Agamemnon "an honest fellow enough and one that loves quails" (5.1.50); Nestor a "stale old mouse-eaten dry cheese" (5.4.8-9); Ulysses a "dog-fox" who "is proved not worth a blackberry (5.4.10-11); Diomedes "a false-hearted rogue, a most unjust knave" (5.2.85-86), "dissembling abominable varlet" (5.4.2); Troilus a "scurvy doting foolish young knave" (5.4.3), "young Trojan ass" (5.4.3.); Paris "a dog," "the cuckold-maker" (5.7.a.9-10); and Cressida "a Trojan drab" (5.2.92), "a commodious drab" (5.2.192).

Since Thersites serves in the Greek camp, his venomous tongue is limited to the Greek generals. His cynical observation, however, is correct when the play ends. For Thersites, all the people of the play are fools looking for honors and values in this worthless war against nothing but "lechery":

"Lechery, lechery! Still wars and lechery! Nothing else holds fashion. A burning devil take them!"

(5.2.192-94)

The war becomes a game for fools. Thersites himself is an official fool in the Greek camp, "a Privileged man" (2.3.54). It is a strange world, upside down and inside out, in which a fool calls generals "fools":

Agamemnon is a fool to offer to command Achilles;
Achilles is a fool to be commanded of Agamemnon; Thersites is a fool to serve such a fool; and this Patroclus is a fool positive. (2.3.58-61)

While the fool, Thersites, remains as an observer of this absurd war, the other fools strenuously fight for the vain glory. An extremely ironical world is presented to the audience, in which "the distorting lenses" (Faber 142) of Thersites (and Pandarus) help us understand this deformed world of ancient chivalry and grandeur.

While Thersites is the only constant character, Cressida is the only inconstant character who knows what she is and recognizes her inconstancy. While Thersites remains a spectator-commentator (or, at best, a messenger), Cressida is a player-commentator who comments about the world of the play with her body, with her inconstant behaviors. Her body, the traditional antifeminist text, thus becomes a personified theme of the play. The play shows that the ancient heroic world is an idealized picture of the audience's or readers' imagination, just as Cressida is an ideal beauty to Troilus. As far as Cressida's behavior is concerned, she is one of the most perfect antifeminist texts in the tradition. When her characterization, however, represents the contemporary situation of her world, Cressida's act of inconstancy, that has been ridiculed for many centuries, may be excused. The play begins with the hyperbolic rhetoric by the Prologue in armor but ends with
Pandarus and his petty, bawdy epilogue. Such sarcasm might have been a great disappointment for the audience or readers in the antifeminist horizon of expectations: the heroic, masculine world collapsed along with Cressida's degradation. This may explain why the play was never performed on the English stage until this century. While a fool rails at the foolish behaviors of the renowned heroes, Cressida, the traditional symbol of infidelity, is now laughing at the fallen state of the heroic age. Though she is ridiculed, in Troilus and Cressida, Cressida is thus excused after all.
NOTES


2 Carolyn Asp observes that in "an ambiguous world in which value is elicited from or projected onto objects by observers" (409), Cressida "uses her physical beauty to attract the praise of men and thus assure herself to her worth" (410). Gayle Greene remarks that Cressida strives to survive in a "society that values appearance and treats people objects" (139). Kristina Faber indicates that, although Cressida is not a "good" woman, "her circumstances and her society help make her what she is--a survivor who sells her single commodity to the highest bidder" (142). John Bayley acknowledges that both Criseyde and Cressida are the victims of their societies--"social exigencies compel them to act in ways which society then condemns" (68).

3 According to Janet Adelman, Cressida is a victim of Troilus' "fantasies" and "she becomes a whore to keep [Troilus] pure" (138): "For the effect to keep Troilus pure seems to me finally evidence of Shakespeare’s failure to dissociate himself from the fantasies explored in the creation of Troilus; and insofar as the play consequently embodies Troilus’ fantasies, Cressida as a whole character must be sacrificed" (140). It seems to me that Adelman’s observation misses the main point of the play. There is not
a single character who keeps himself or herself pure in the whole play.

4 M. M. Burns also observes that Cressida, Helen, and all other characters of the play are helplessly subjected to the war machine: "... the whole play portrays the analogous manipulation of women and soldiers, always for ulterior reasons and always with disappointing results. Generally speaking, both the women and soldiers become commodities to exploit, in an overall debasement of human values indicated by the play's ubiquitous images of commerce and merchandising" (116). See also Lorraine Helms who argues that *Troilus and Cressida* explores the wartime struggle of Cressida "against the violence of deracination and concubinage" (35).

5 James O'Rourke observes that "Shakespeare's Cressida retells and explicates the position of the archetypal woman as it is told in the Troy legends: she does what she has to, she enjoys what she can, and she is condemned as a whore for it" (156).

6 Yoder indicates that Cressida's speech does not necessarily implies her previous experience of sex because "Playful bawdry and sharp passion are commonly found in the speeches of Shakespeare's virginal heroines, Rosalind or Juliet" (22).

7 Ann Thompson observes that Cressida "seems to have the upper hand throughout this scene [1.2.]" she is
manipulating Pandarus rather than vice versa" (122). Not only in 1.2., however, but also throughout the play, Cressida tries to manipulate men. She succeeds in the case of Troilus, and partly succeeds in the general kiss scene, but fails in the case of Diomedes.

I suspect that the reason for her stay in Troy is "To angle for your [Troilus'] thoughts" (3.2.145). If we assume that Pandarus' remark is true, Cressida might have remained in Troy for the love of Troilus.

Yoder also considers that in this scene "love loses" (20): "... surprisingly, perhaps, but with psychological precision, Shakespeare shows that Troilus is calmed, even relieved in returning to his public role--he belongs to 'the general state of Troy'" (21).

Cressida actually calls Diomedes "my sweet guardian" (5.2.7) and "Sweet honey Greek" (5.2.18).

However, I doubt that Cressida's wit can be a positive feature of her character in the antifeminist horizon of expectations. According to Lisa Jardine, "woman with a quick tongue" was conceived as "disruptive" in medieval and Renaissance periods (104).

She repeats the same kind of oath in 4.2.: "O you gods divine! / Make Cressid's name the very crown of falsehood, / If ever she leave Troilus!" (97-99)

Troilus asks Cressida to be true six times in this scene.
Ulysses knows that Achilles idly stays in his camp with Patroclus because he is in love with Polyxena, one of Priam's daughters. See 3.3.191-94.

Adelman argues that "Her betrayal becomes in effect the assertion of her status as a separate person not simply the creature of Troilus' fantasy" (134). Thus, for Adelman, Cressida's another self ironically makes Troilus "pure" (138) and "idealized" (139).

Cressida's hypocritic act, revealed in her first soliloquy (1.2.268-81), does not discredit her true (though true for the moment) love toward Troilus. She is calculating here not because she wants something other than love from Troilus but because Cressida the woman is afraid of being disinterested by Troilus the man. M. M. Burns correctly indicates that Cressida does not "gain some material or emotional benefit from holding out against Troilus" (111). In this regard, Ornstein observes that "[Troilus] is not gulled by Cressida's pose of modesty, nor is she a hypocrite" (245).

Chaucer's Criseyde also similarly regrets her lack of "prudence" in Troilus and Criseyde, 5.743-49.

The 1609 Quarto lists the play as a "history."

The second state of the Quarto refers to the play as a "Comedie." The play is also grouped in comedies in The Riverside Shakespeare (1974) and David Bevington's edition (1980).


Tatlock seems to believe that Shakespeare's transformation of the ancient heroic world was for "the romantic and rather undiscerning taste of the not highly
educated": "There is curious evidence of the popularity of the Troy-saga in the talk of uneducated people in Shakespeare, especially in historical plays" ("The Siege" 674).

23 According to a letter from Queen Hecuba, Achilles has promised not to take part in the war. See 5.1.36-43.

24 As I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, Ulysses seems very hostile against women. He is furious because the Greeks has to fight for a worthless woman, Helen, and Menelaus, the "deadly gall, and theme of all our scorns! / For which we lose our heads to gild his horns" (4.5.30-31); because Achilles is refusing to fight, who seems to Ulysses to be trapped by his oath to Polyxena; and because he is ridiculed by a "Trojan's [s]trumpet" (4.5.64).

25 Kenneth Muir observes that Chaucer’s Diomede wins over Criseyde’s heart "by his long and eloquent wooing," proving himself a noble warrior; in Shakespeare’s play, however, "his attitude to Cressida is one of lustful contempt, although his sardonic remark on Helen as a war aim shows him willing to animadvert on the sexual morals of others" (15).

26 See Kenneth Muir’s comment on Nestor’s speech (1.3.30-53) in the note of his edition.

27 See 3.1. The scene shows Paris and Helen enjoy music and Pandarus’ bawdy song.

28 See 5.6. and 5.7. His sudden covetousness for the
"sumptuous armour" causes his death.

29 The character of Boccaccio’s Pandaro may not disappoint Thompson’s favorable estimate of Chaucer’s Pandarus. In Boccaccio’s poem, however, young Pandaro is more positively portrayed than Chaucer’s.

30 Kenneth Muir, however, argues that Pandarus is not portrayed unsympathetically in Shakespeare’s play as usually commented: "[Pandarus] is genuinely fond of his niece, and even fonder of Troilus. He wants them both to be happy, unlike his critics who are vaguely disapproving. There is no suggestion that he is rewarded for his pains. Moreover he does not trick Cressida into an assignation, as Pandare does, and his bawdy jokes are harmless" (13-4).

31 R. A. Foakes comments that "no character is allowed to win sufficient prominence or sympathy to dominate the stage" (45). Agreeing with this view, however, critics suggest that Thersites plays the role of the nearest center of the play. M. French admits that the play has no center, but, she continues, "Insofar as the play contains an upholder of a true ideal, it is Thersites, whose rancor must be rooted in some unexpressed moral standard" (165). Michael Hall similarly observes that "Thersites becomes an important character only because the play refuses to allow validity to any but the view he proposes" (117). Parker, however, believes that Ulysses is the center of the play "By reason of his clear-sightedness" (132).
Faber observes that the main functions of Pandarus and Thersites in the play are those of "distorting lenses through which we sometimes view the lovers and which help prevent our permanently adopting such extreme view."

"Thus," Faber continues, "the warping operation of Thersites and Pandarus to correct our own perspective on Troilus and Cressida, and on Troilus and Cressida, as eyeglasses correct defective vision by distorting it in the opposite direction" (142).

Lynch says that Cressida is "a trustworthy commentator in the play" (357).

Some critics assume that Troilus and Cressida was originally written for the performance in one of Inns of Court. However, there is no written record about performance history of this play: "After the hypothetical adaptation of the play for performance at the Globe, there is no record of a revival in England until the present century, except for performances of Dryden's adaptation (1679), of which there were four productions in the first half of the eighteenth century" (Kenneth Muir 9).
CHAPTER VI

DRYDEN'S CRESSIDA:

THE WOMAN KILLED WITH HONOR

John Dryden’s adaptation of Shakespeare’s play, *Troilus and Cressida or Truth Found Too Late*, departs considerably from the tradition: he vindicates Cressida and rebuilds the heroic world. He alters the traditional story of Troilus and Criseida by creating a completely different heroine from the stereotype: "a martyr to her own beauty and trouthe, and Troilus’s incredulity" (Miskimin 223). Many critics argue that Dryden’s tragedy is a failure in that the writer misunderstood traditional implications of the Criseida story: "In a traditional tale, such as the myths . . . , the characters have traditional qualities; alter these qualities, and the myth no longer makes sense" (J. Thompson 225). In the preface, Dryden defends himself that he has reduced the chaos of Shakespeare’s play to enhance dramatic order. A closer examination, however, reveals that his is not only a "destruction" of the heroine from the tradition but also just another male attempt to maneuver the female "text" in the antifeminist horizon of expectations. Just as how the open, antifeministic characterization of Cressida works in Shakespeare’s play, it is important to see how Dryden’s transformation of the "heroic" Cressida is
orchestrated in his tragedy. This chapter shows how Dryden rewrites the story to create an unprecedented type of the heroine particularly in relation to Shakespeare’s play.

Critics agree that Dryden’s Cressida loses most of what she represents in the tradition. Void of her former vitality and mysterious attractiveness, Dryden’s Cressida conforms to the patriarchal order. In his comparison of Dryden’s heroine with Shakespeare’s, Denzell S. Smith argues that Dryden’s Cressida represents the conventional "Woman in Love":

Shakespeare’s Cressida is deceitful; Dryden’s is loyal and faithful. Shakespeare’s Cressida is sure of her charms; she knows the arts of love and is confident of her ability to use them. Dryden’s Cressida is more timid; she needs to be pursued to be caught. Shakespeare’s Cressida is skilled in courtly conversation and concerned for her reputation as a woman of quality; Dryden’s Cressida is a turtledove by comparison, a conventional figure of a woman in love. (51)

Smith misses here an important point in Dryden’s rendition. In the antifeminist horizon of expectations, the transformed Cressida, from evil to good, is a perfect exemplar the antifeminist readers have expected. Dryden’s tragedy is "a legend of good woman." Many critics, however, believe that Dryden’s version is misdirected because "true" Cressida
"violates the integrity of the legend": The audience of *Troilus* knows too well that Cressida will not be true; there have been too many witnesses, and the myth, in Dryden’s play, no longer makes sense. By subjecting it to rational principles of design, he made the myth conform to morality external to it, and in so doing damaged it beyond repair. Criseyde’s betrayal is inexplicable, and it is a given. (Miskimin 224)

It seems that Dryden’s version does not make sense in the tradition of the Criseida story, but such reading is understandable from the antifeminist’s point of view. Dryden’s total reversal of the traditional heroine might have evoked the same impression in the antifeminist readers as his predecessors did in the past, for the transformation is not for the genuine salvation of the infamous antifeminist text but for the restoration of the long-forgotten male heroism. In other words, Dryden’s play is a revision of the traditional story, written exclusively from the male standpoint.

Dryden’s attitude toward the traditional heroine is not totally changed until the final moment of the play. Numerous antifeminist remarks in the play prove that the author has just changed his heroine for his own purpose without compassion for her. Furthermore, Dryden’s play retains almost all the scenes related to Cressida from
Shakespeare's play, although they are rewritten less negatively concerning the heroine. Dryden actually does not create a completely different Cressida from the tradition except for her final heroic death. He closely follows Shakespeare: the parade scene (1.2); Pandarus' arrangements for the consummation night (2.2); the morning scene after the consummation night (4.1); the betrayal scene (4.2). The clearest difference between the two plays as far as the heroine is concerned is that Dryden adds Cressida's noble death at the finale of the play and merely reports the general kiss scene (by Pandarus in 4.2.353-61). The deletion particularly signifies the direction of Dryden's play, for the scene not only discredits Cressida's character but it also hurts the heroic statue of the Greek generals.

Unlike Shakespeare's heroine, Dryden's Cressida is not self-possessed, calculating, or sensual. She no longer worries about the possible disadvantages of a woman in love and her freedom as an independent woman:

A strange dissembling Sex we Women are;
Well may we men, when we our selves deceive.
Long has my secret Soul lov'd Troilus.
I drunk his praises from my uncle's mouth,
As if my ears cou'd nere be satisfi'd;
Why then, why said I not, I love this Prince?
How cou'd my tongue conspire against my heart,
To say I lov'd him not? O childish love!
'Tis like an Infant froward in his play,
And what he most desires, he throws away.

(1.2.242-51)

Cressida's first soliloquy only stresses her self-accusing female weakness. The same soliloquy in Shakespeare's play implies that she dissembles in her love confession, not because it is an inborn quality given to womankind, but because it is imposed upon women by the male-centered social system. Dryden, consciously or unconsciously, ignores this problem.

The consummation scene (3.2) again portrays Cressida behaving according to the decorum her society sets: she wants a priest to seal their special relationship before going to bed:

Cress. And will you promise that the holy Priest
Shall make us one for ever?

Panda. Priests! marry hang 'em! they make you one!
go in, go in, and make your selves one without
a priest: I'le have no priests work in my house.

Cress. I'le not consent unless you swear.

Panda. I, do, do, swear; a pretty woman's worth an oath at any time. Keep or break as time shall try; but 'tis good to swear, for the saving of her credit: Hang 'em sweet Rogues, they never expect a Man shou'd keep it. Let him but swear,
and that's all they care for.

Troil. Heavens prosper me as I devoutly swear,

Never to be but yours. (3.2.84-96)

Pandarus hates priests' and thus distrusts such convention believing that swearing fidelity is not important because it often becomes "air" as time goes by. He, nevertheless, admits that the oath is good for a woman "for the saving of her credit." Dryden's portrayal indeed parallels what Pandarus has claimed. He credits Cressida's character by depicting her within the code of patriarchal morality, a code required only by Cressida the woman: Troilus the man is never asked or mentions this "serious" moral question. Cressida, as antifeminist readers might hope, does not pursue the secret joy of the clandestine love affair and never cares about her security. She is totally under the mercy of her "man."

The climax of Cressida's transformation takes place in the final death scene--the centerpiece of the play's manipulation of her. This manipulation, however, is not unanticipated. The fourth book of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* suggests the possibility of a Romeo-and-Juliet-type ending by Troilus and Criseyde. Although it does not happen in Chaucer's poem, it seems to have always been expected by antifeminist readers. The tradition shows that the heroine has no choice in her final catch-22 situation: whenever Criseida is stuck in the dilemma, "heroic" suicide appears
as the only alternative for her to save her good name.

Although Dryden depicts his heroine differently from the tradition, his representation of Cressida ultimately confirms the expectations of the antifeminist readers. What we cannot miss in the final scene, however ironically, is that even Cressida's noble death makes her a victim. David Collins argues that "circumstances cause her to be misunderstood" (27). It is a different mode of rewriting from the tradition because circumstances always cause her predecessors to be unfaithful:

Cress. Where is he? I'll be justify'd or dye.

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Calch. You must prevent, and not complain.

Cress. If Troilus dye, I have no share in life.

Calch. If Diomede sink beneath the sword of Troilus,

We lose not only a Protector here,

But are debarr'd all future means of flight.

Cress. What then remains?

Calch. To interpose betimes

Betwixt their swords; or if that cannot be,

To intercede for him, who shall be vanquish'd:

Fate leaves no middle course.-- (5.2.182-95)

Cressida is trapped between the two men's "blind" desires, between her father's urge and Troilus' credulity; as Calchas says, there is no middle ground offered to her. Calchas'
view, in fact, can be applied to all other Criseidas, driven
to the walls between the good and the evil. Dryden’s
Cressida chooses the good, which makes her conform to the
male ideology, fulfilling the antifeminist expectation.

Dryden’s preface to the play reveals his hidden agenda in rewriting Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*; that is, his tragedy is to "remove that heap of Rubbish, under which many excellent thoughts lay wholly bury’d" (226: 17-19), as in Shakespeare’s "problem" play. Convinced that Shakespeare’s play is the most incorrect copy he has ever read, Dryden focuses mainly on the stylistic feature of the play to rediscover "the beauties of [Shakespeare’s] thoughts":

If Shakespeare were stript of all the Bombast in his passions, and dress’d in the most vulgar words, we should find the beauties of his thoughts remaining; if his embroideries were burnt down, there would still be silver at the bottom of the melting-pot: but I fear . . . that we who Ape his sounding words, have nothing of his thought, but are all outside; there is not so much as a dwarf within our Giants cloaths. Therefore, let not Shakespeare suffer for our sakes; ’tis our fault, who succeed him in an Age which is more refin’d, if we imitate him so ill, that we copy his failings only, and make a virtue of that in
Dryden claims that his interest lies solely in the sublime "thoughts" ambiguously presented in Shakespeare’s play. Although he does not clarify what Shakespeare’s thoughts are latent in the play, his revision emphasizes order and heroism. According to Dryden, this order is mainly for dramatic order largely violated by Shakespeare’s characterizations: "left unfinish’d" (226:21), and by "a confusion of Drums and Trumpets, Excursions and Alarms" (226:12-13). Dryden’s real motif, however, arises from his discontent with Shakespeare’s portrayals of the main characters. Shakespeare’s false Cressida is not punished, and other "great" heroes are distorted:

... when a Poet has the known character of this or that man before him, he is bound to represent him such, at least not contrary to that which Fame has reported him to have been: thus it is not a Poet’s choice to make Ulysses choleric, or Achilles patient, because Homer has describ’d ’em quite otherwise. Yet this is a Rock, on which ignorant Writers daily split: and the absurdity is as monstrous, as if a Painter should draw a Coward running from a Battle, and tell us it was the Picture of Alexander the Great. (235:28-36)

Dryden argues that the obligation of a writer is not to
alter the well-known characters in literary history. While Dryden's view resounds J. A. K. Thompson's view, cited earlier, such view becomes self-contradictory in his actual rewriting of the heroine infamous for her infidelity. Dryden least represents Criseida as the tradition knew her. In the antifeminist horizon of expectations, however, her transformation seems to be approved because Dryden's alteration aligns her within the male ideology of order and heroism. Cressida, along with Andromache, is used as a mere symbol that magnifies the patriarchal order.

There is no evidence in the play that Dryden is a defender of the antifeminist "text." The reason for transforming Cressida seems quite simple: her constancy is a prerequisite to restoring the heroic stature of all the major heroes, whose reputations are severely tarnished in Shakespeare's play:

... the most conspicuous change in the play: the new ending, the complete overturning of Cressida's reputation that it entails. But ... the restoration in Dryden's rewriting of Hector and Troilus to a more constant level of heroism, and the consequent return to a climate of nobility on both the Greek and Trojan sides, could be necessary conditions only, not sufficient ones, to transform Cressida into the epitome of constancy. Therefore, we cannot exclude the hypothesis that,
apart from the rather obvious possibility of reshaping Troilus (Hector) according to the rules, the whole operation may have arisen also from the much more striking one of redeeming Cressida. (Rufini 247)

Dryden transforms Cressida to reclaim the ancient heroic world. As Shakespeare's Cressida is excused in the world of chaos and inconsistency, Dryden's heroine is redeemed in the world of order and constancy.

Dryden's design in his rewriting of the Criseida story is well illustrated in the prologue spoken by the Ghost of Shakespeare:

In this my rough-drawn Play, you shall behold
Some Master-strokes, so manly and so bold,
That he, who meant to alter, found 'em such,
He shook; and thought it Sacrilege to touch.
Now where are the Successours to my name?
What bring they to fill out a Poets fame? (13-19)

This remark alludes to what Dryden claims as Shakespeare’s worthy ideas hidden under the "heap of Rubbish": "Some Master-strokes, so manly and so bold." Dryden here seems to misread not only Shakespeare's play but also the whole tradition of the Criseida story. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida does not inflate the war and its heroes; rather, it deflates the traditional heroes by making fun of their folly, their
blind pursuing of glory. In *Truth Found Too Late*, however, "heroique Constancy in Men" (1.1.10), the very concept Shakespeare denies, becomes the most important concern for the writer. Dryden not only restores the traditional images of those heroes but also reshapes Cressida and Andromache to accentuate the "manly" heroism.

Almost all characters of Dryden's tragedy act constantly: both great men and inferior villains act accordingly to their mettle. We seldom see satire or cynicism toward the war and soldiers since the war is to keep the order; most characters are constant and faithful to this mission. Although Dryden seems to be on the Trojan side in rewriting the story, even Greek generals (Agamemnon, Ulysses, Diomede, Nestor, Achilles, and Patroclus) are depicted nobler than those in Shakespeare's play. Thersites' tongue is not as biting as before because the play generally portrays a more positive heroic world than Shakespeare's.

Although *Truth Found Too Late* deals with the double plots of war and love, the love plot becomes a mere attachment to the play's single, grave theme: the restoration of the ancient heroism. Unlike Shakespeare, Dryden begins with the Greek council scene and ends with Ulysses' closing statement about the restored world of order. The chaotic world diagnosed by Ulysses in 1.1 becomes purified in the end:
Now peacefull order has resum'd the reynes,
Old time looks young, and Nature seems renew'd:
Then, since from homebred Factions ruine springs,
Let Subjects learn obedience to their Kings.

(5.2.323-26)

For this purpose, Dryden "corrects" some "errors" that Shakespeare made in the negative characterization of ancient warriors. One of the most important corrections is the view that constancy entitles the ancient heroes to be great warriors. For example, Ulysses, a skillful strategist and politician, analyzes the weaknesses of his army (1.1.30-48) and consistently works to improve it throughout the play. He breaks the close friendship between Achilles and Ajax and coaxes Achilles to war (2.3.1-16): he manipulates Thersites (2.3.70-172) and uses him to break off that friendship.

While Ulysses continually employs Machiavellian tactics throughout the play, he no longer bothers others. Nor does he bother Cressida and Troilus; thus, he is not ridiculed by Cressida and Thersites. As a public figure, his only aim is to win the war and to restore the order. For his purposes, Ulysses even flatters Thersites, the official fool in the Greek camp, by saying that "His Satyrs are the physick of the Camp" (2.3.120). Thersites eventually collaborates with Ulysses. He serves as a spy and informs Ulysses of Polyxena's letter--"Pray Heaven Thersites have inform'd me true" (4.2.346). Most critics argue that
Thersites is probably the most consistent and accurate commentator in Shakespeare's play. In Dryden's play, however, he becomes Ulysses' puppet reduced to an entertaining clown. In Dryden, Thersites' cynical remark no longer carries Shakespeare's sarcastic attitudes toward the war, the world, and its people.

Dryden suppresses negative images associated with Helen to make the Trojan war worth fighting: the abduction of Helen, the pretext of the war, is thus significantly reduced to a mere backdrop. Helen does not even appear on the stage. As far as Helen and the war are concerned, they are completely separated from each other: Helen, the cause of the war, is consciously converted to Helen, the embodiment of honor. The attitude toward the war is thus twofold:

Troil. Why there you touch'd the life of our designe:

Were it not glory that we covet more
Then war and vengeance (beasts and womens pleasure)
I wou'd not wish a drop of Trojan blood
Spent more in her [Helen's] defence: But oh my Brother
She is a subject of renoun and honour,
And I presume brave Hector wou'd not lose
The rich advantage of his future fame
For the wide worlds revenew. (2.1.63-70)
Unlike Shakespeare's frequent cynical remarks on Helen and the war, Dryden does not undermine the pretext: the abduction is given as a precondition, and the war is for "renoun and honour." All the characters of the play, except Thersites, consciously ignore Helen's presence in the war. Dryden's heroes are not fighting for a "whore" in an absurd war, as Thersites jeers at their pursuit of vain glory. Rather, they--most of them are consistent warriors--are more concerned with achieving fame in the battleground. In this new environment, Thersites loses the acid tongue he had in Shakespeare's play.

However, the images of Achilles, Ajax, and Diomedes are still negative in spite of Dryden's efforts. Achilles continues to dodge the war until the final moment of the play; Ajax is ridiculed by most of the Greeks as a brainless fool; and Diomedes is busy tempting innocent Cressida. All these characters, nevertheless, are portrayed differently from those of Shakespeare. Their reputations are not in danger from their inconsistent and mean-spirited behaviors, as they are in Shakespeare's play. Dryden deletes or does not show their dishonorable deeds. Achilles' relationship with Patroclus is based on genuine friendship without any sexual undertone (5.2.142-53). Dryden, in fact, cunningly exploits the male friendship over the heterosexual relationship: Achilles breaks up his relationship with Polyxena for the vengeance of his friend's death.
reports, though not shows, intentionally Achilles' unmanly killing of Hector:

Reveng'd it basely:

For Troilus fell by multitudes opprest;
And so fell Hector, but 'tis vain to talk.

(5.2.313-15)\(^{14}\)

Dryden eventually succeeds in characterizing Achilles more positively than Shakespeare does, without damaging the stature of the Greek "terminator."

Although Ajax's stupidity is a joke among the Greeks, he is regarded by Trojans as one of the two great Greek warriors:

Aeneas. Suppose one, Ajax, or Achilles lost.

They can repair with more that single loss:

Troy has but one, one Hector. (2.1.116-18)

Ajax is the only one capable of criticizing Achilles' unchivalric killing of Hector and Troilus. Ajax no longer brags; he becomes one of the few flawless warriors like Hector. Diomede also consistently plays the traditional role of a skillful lover. Calchas thus accuses Diomede as a false schemer: "bred in Ulysses School / Can never be deceiv'd, / But by strong Arts and blandishments of love" (4.2.255-57). Diomede, a student of the "Ulysses School," echoes his master's analysis of the disordered world: "Troy in our weakness lives, not in her strength" (1.1.56).\(^{15}\)

Like Ulysses, the skillful politician, Diomede, the skillful
Casanova, becomes a patriot to his country by destroying Troilus, one of the two Trojan pillars. Both Ulysses and Diomede share a common goal: they help the Greeks win the war through their guile.

While the two Greek heroes are practical and political, their Trojan counterparts, Hector and Troilus, are more heroic though less realistic. Hector is an ideal warrior. The Trojan council scene (2.1) shows that he is not a blind warrior who pursues the vain glory. As he has been depicted in the tradition, he is the only one to propose Helen’s return to her Greek husband. Unlike Shakespeare’s, Dryden’s Hector never discredits his renown by coveting armor. Dryden does not explain what happens in Hector’s death, but Ajax’s account (5.2.313-15) implies that Hector is killed differently from what Shakespeare describes: Achilles kills him only in an unfair battle with the help of the Myrmidons. There is no mention that Achilles kills the unarmed Hector.

In his domestic life, Hector is a strict husband and a stern master:

... Hector whose patience
Is fix’d like that of Heav’n, to day was mov’d:
He chid Andromache, and strook his Armourer,
And as there were good Husbandry in War,
Before the Sun was up he went to field.

(1.2.101-105)

Hector honors his wife’s (or woman’s) advice, although it is
frustrated by Troilus' sudden intervention (5.1). Hector is an embodiment of the traditional hero.

Troilus is no longer an inexperienced, "Not yet mature" knight but a more seasoned, valiant, and resolute warrior/lover than what Shakespeare portrays. He does not whine about his troubled love life nor does he sabotage the war. Rather, Troilus calms down his nerves by fighting the battle:

I'le make one,
And try to lose an anxious thought or two
In heat of action.
Thus Coward-like from love to War I run,
Seek the less dangers, and the greater shun.

(1.2.90-94)

Unlike Shakespeare's hero, Dryden's Troilus honorably marches in the parade (1.2). When he hears from Hector about the exchange of Cressida for Antenor, Troilus resolutely refuses to give up Cressida:

Hope for no more: for shou'd some Goddess offer
To give her self and all her Heaven in change,
I wou'd not part with Cressida: so return
This answer as my last. (3.2.283-86)

This response is in contrast to that of Shakespeare's Troilus: "Is it so concluded?"; "How my achievements mock me!" (4.2.65, 68) Troilus, after all, yields to Hector for "publick Sacrifice for Troy" (3.2.292) and in the name of
friendship between him and Hector:

Go then; and the good gods restore her to thee,
And with her all the quiet of thy minde;
The triumph of this kindeness be thy own;
And heaven and earth this testimony yield,
That Friendship never gain'd a nobler field.

(3.2.435-39)

This scene emphasizes the patriarchal ideology of "public good" and male friendship, on the one hand, and Troilus' new stature both as a true defender of a lady and as the "second Hector," on the other. Troilus sacrifices his private life for his country (3.2.291-92). His clash with Hector also raises his position as a valiant warrior equal or next to Hector.¹⁷

Like other heroes in great tragedies, Dryden's Troilus has a tragic flaw in his character: it is not hubris or overreaching ambition but a "hot and fiery" temperament:

Hector.       Come, you are not,
I know you Troilus, you are hot and fiery:
You kindle at a wrong; and catch it quick
As stubble does the flame.

Troilus.      'Tis heat of blood
And rashness of my youth; I'le mend that error:

Begin and try my temper.  (3.2.237-42)

His rashness results in the tragic but heroic deaths of
Troilus and Cressida in the final scene. Diomede takes a great part in destroying Troilus. As a student of the "Ulysses School," he cunningly manipulates Troilus, blinded by his rashness: "I resign her freely up: / I'm satisfi'd" (5.2.238-39). Troilus, without any doubt, believes even his enemy's words. Finally, he concludes that no remedy but poetic justice is left to the putatively "false" Cressida:

Grateful! Oh torment! now hells blewest flames
Receive her quick; with all her crimes upon her.
Let her sink spotted down. Let the dark host
Make room, and point, and hisse her, as she goes.
Let the most branded Ghosts of all her Sex
Rejoyce, and cry, Here comes a blacker fiend!
Let her-- (5.2.250-56)

Cressida interrupts Troilus' groundless accusations because she can no longer bear the cruel words of her true lover:

Enough my Lord; you've said enough:
This faithlesse, perjur'd, hated Cressida,
Shall be no more the subject of your Curses:
Some few hours hence, and grief had done your work;
But then your eyes had miss'd the Satisfaction
Which thus I give you--thus-- (5.2.256-61)

Cressida then stabs herself in a "noble" way that has been awaited by antifeminist readers for several centuries. Even
in the final moment of her life, Cressida seeks for her lover's approval that she is not false:

Stand off; and touch me not, thou Traitor, Diomede.

But you, my only Troilus, come near:
Trust me, the wound which I have giv'n this breast Is far lesse painful, then the wound you gave it. Oh, can you yet believe, that I am true?

(5.2.262-66)

This scene evokes both compassion and admiration. The play emphasizes the heroic death of the heroine: it is not easy for a woman to prove her innocence in a male-dominant society. She has no choice but death.

Dryden's play fails to address this kind of difficulty women experience in his contemporary society: rather, Cressida's noble deed reinforces the patriarchal ideology of heroism. The play aims to show the pathetic nature of Troilus' rash gullibility:

Diom. Thy worst, for mine has been beforehand with thee,
I triumph in thy vain credulity,
Which levels thy despairing state to mine:
But yet thy folly to believe a foe;
Makes thine the sharper, and more shamefull loss.

(5.2.290-94)
We pity Troilus and Cressida for their tragic end; and at the same time, we admire them for their noble deeds. In the tradition of the Criseida story, however, Dryden's moral message is too heavy-handed. The play confirms the antifeminist expectations for the infamous heroine in a reversed way to the tradition: she is no longer a disruptive other but a "good" woman who inflates the patriarchal ideology. Such "clever" transformation explains why Dryden's adaptation was comparatively more popular than Shakespeare's in the past, and somewhat ironically, it explains why Dryden's play is quite less attractive than Shakespeare's in this century.¹⁸

Readers, however, must acknowledge that Dryden's version shares with the tradition an important aspect concerning the heroine—the victimization of the heroine. Although Dryden downplays this aspect in characterizing his heroine, her tragic ending inevitably evokes our compassion, not because she behaves nobly, but because she falls victim to the war and her society. The reader's role is thus to find other meanings implicit in the text.

Dryden's Cressida is portrayed as one of the most unblemished heroines in the whole tradition of the story: guiltless, passive, and faithful. In Troy, she behaves like Chaucer's Crisseyde, totally manipulated by Pandarus. We never see any aggressiveness in "passive" Cressida. Unlike Shakespeare's and like Chaucer's, Dryden's Cressida is a
passive object whose fate is "to be pursued to be caught" (Smith 51). Cressida keeps silent so that Pandarus regains his traditional role, much reduced in Shakespeare's play. In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Pandarus seriously worries about his future renown because he feels guilty about his involvement in the love affair (3.239-343). In Dryden's play, however, Pandarus seems confident in his act of "procuring" without feeling any guilt, when Cressida banter her uncle about his reputation:

Cressi. For these good procuring Offices you'le be damn'd one day Uncle.

Pand. Who, I damn'd? faith I doubt I shall: by my troth I think I shall; nay if a man be damn'd for doing good, as thou saist, it may go hard with me.

Cressi. Then I'le not see Prince Troilus, I'le not be accessary to your damnation.

Pand. How, not see Prince Troilus? why I have engag'd, I have promis'd, I have past my word, I care not for damning, let me alone for damning; I vallue not damning in comparison with my word. If I am damn'd it shall be a good damning to thee girl, thou shalt be my heir. Come, 'tis a virtuous girl, thou shalt help me to keep my word, thou shalt see Prince Troilus. (2.2.41-53)
Pandarus does not feel any shame for his role as a go-between. Like other characters of the play, he wants to keep his words, although his act is not as noble as those of others. But Pandarus is faithful and honest to both Troilus and Cressida. Thus, when Troilus rejects him (4.2.386-91), Pandarus is deeply wounded, not because of Cressida’s infidelity, but because of Troilus’ betrayal:

O world, world; thou art an ungratefull patch
of Earth! Thus the poor Agent is despis’d! he
labours painfully in his calling, and trudges
between parties: but when their turns are serv’d,
come out’s too good for him. I am mighty
melancholy: I’le e’en go home, and shut up my
doors; and dye o’th sullens like an old bird in
a cage. (4.2.392-97)

Pandarus also is a victim of Troilus’ suspicion. He thus disappears from the stage after this poignant regret.

In the Greek camp, Cressida falls victim to circumstances of war: she struggles between Diomede’s malicious manipulation and Troilus’ die-hard suspicion. Dryden’s transformation of the infamous heroine proves that he is aware how traditionally she has been portrayed, in general, and by Shakespeare, in particular. While Shakespeare’s inconstant Cressida represents the chaotic world and the inconsistent people around her, Dryden’s noble heroine symbolizes the ordered world and its heroic
warriors. Since Cressida is at the core of Shakespeare's play, the different characterization of her is essential to Dryden.

Sergio Rufini argues that Thersites is still at the center of Dryden's play as far as the war is concerned: "those who are highest in the hierarchy express far fewer doubts about it [the Trojan war], and the only one who still sees it as an absurd battle between cuckold sons for the sake of a whore is the vitriolic Thersites" (277). This reading seems accurate on the surface. Thersites invariably rails at the war, the people, and the stupidity of the warriors. His inconsistent behaviors, however, discredit such interpretation. In the light of the play's direction, furthermore, he is not and cannot be at the center of Dryden's play. Dryden's preface contends that "Tragedy describes or paints an Action" (229.30-31) which "ought to be great, and to consist of great Persons, to distinguish it from Comedy; where the Action is trivial, and the persons of inferior rank" (231.4-6). Thersites is the lowest, worst coward in the play. His biting comments are no longer appropriate to Dryden's heroic world.

Quite oddly, Thersites seems to be the only character who behaves inconsistently:

Ulyss. Here comes Thersites,

Who feeds on Ajax,

Yet loves him not, because he cannot love;
But as a Species, differing from mankind,
Hates all he sees; and rails at all he knows;
But hates them most, from whom he most
receives,
Disdaining that his lot should be so low,
That he should want the kindness which he
takes.

(2.3.70-76)

He pretends to serve Ajax but then he rejects him: "I serve
thee [Ajax] not" (2.3.201). He serves as Achilles'
messenger (4.2) only to betray him. Thersites in fact works
for Ulysses as a spy because of Ulysses' flattery--that
Thersites' satire is the salt of the Greeks (2.3.120). As a
result of Ulysses' coaxing, Thersites informs him of
Polyxena's letter: "Pray Heaven Thersites have inform'd me
true" (4.2.346). Thersites, a base coward, even denies his
Greek nationality and ushers in his enemy:

Thers. I will not dye for Greece; I hate Greece,
and by my good will would never have been born
there; I was mistaken into that Country: and
betray'd by my parents to be born there. And
besides I have a mortal Enemy amongst the
Grecians, one Diomed, a damned villain, and
cannot dye with a safe conscience till I have
first murder'd him.

Troil. Shew me that Diomed and thou shalt live.
Thers. Come along with me and I'le conduct thee to Calchas his Tent, where I believe he's now making warre with the Priests daughter.

(5.2.106-15)

Thersites' action signifies that his railing at the war and its participants is nothing but a convenient excuse for his discrepancy between words and deeds. His cynicism about the war thus becomes meaningless. While Pandarus is redeemed as a honorable go-between, Thersites remains, simply, as a railing fool, a malcontent in the world of Dryden's play.

In Dryden's play Troilus is at its center: _Truth Found Too Late_ "directs our attention to the play's real center--Troilus" (Bernhardt 141). The real center of the play, however, is not Troilus but the heroism itself which Troilus (and most of other characters of the play) embodies. Through Troilus' heroic deeds and tragic death, the writer restores the old demolished heroism. Dryden memorializes Cressida's noble death only to strengthen the heroic statue of that world. As the episode of patriotic Andromache and her son implies (2.1.177-89), Cressida's final act is one of the numerous heroic showcases. Although Dryden's new rendition of the antifeminist text seems to deviate from the tradition of the Criseida story, it still delivers the old message: the patriarchal ideology of order and heroism. Dryden's play lacks not only Chaucer's--and, to a certain degree, Henryson's compassion toward the heroine--but also
Shakespeare's effective handling of her traditional role.
In the context of the antifeminist horizon of expectations, then, Dryden's unprecedented transformation of the heroine, infamous for her infidelity, is an appropriate alteration.
NOTES

1 I use this subtitle when indicating Dryden’s play.

2 According to Miskimin, Dryden’s play is doomed to fail because Dryden "revised not only Shakespeare’s play, but the fundamental elements in the conflict at its heart: that Troilus loved a beautiful illusion and was true to the death to a symbol of mortal mutability" (224). See also David Collins, p. 28.

3 David Collins argues that "Cressida’s ‘redemption’ is her destruction" (28).

4 David Collins also argues that "Without the tension generated by the clash of truth and falsehood . . . the play loses its center of interest, its very reason for being" (28). See also Sergio Rufini, pp. 277-79.

5 Antifeminist remarks (not particularly on Cressida but on women in general) are found in the play fourteen times: 1.2.8; 1.2.84-85; 1.2.242-43; 2.1.64; 2.1.156-57; 2.1.159; 3.2.56-57; 3.2.253; 4.2.251; 5.1.81-82; 5.1.133; 5.2.230-31; 5.2.283; and The Epilogue, 8.


7 Anti-priest mood dominates the whole play. Troilus, for example, saves Thersites’ life because Thersites curses priests (5.2.164-67). It is not clear, however, why most characters of the play dislike priests. It is probably
because Dryden himself detests priests or simply because the tragedy of Troilus and Cressida is caused by Calchas the priest’s defection to the Greeks. The play plainly shows that Calchas is not welcomed both by Trojans and Greeks. Even in the Greek camp, he is "treated like a slave and scorn’d" (5.2.217). Calchas the betrayer must be condemned for his dishonorable behaviors in the heroic world.

8 The numbers indicate page and lines.

9 But Maximillian E. Novak believes that Dryden fully understood Shakespeare’s play: "Those critics who believe Dryden misunderstood Shakespeare’s aim in making Troilus and Cressida neither a tragedy nor a comedy misunderstand the degree to which the Restoration consciously rejected the ideals of Renaissance art. Dryden knew the drama of his predecessors intimately" (57-58).

10 Thersites rails at the war and people as he does in Shakespeare’s play, but somewhat curiously, he holds his sour tongue about Ulysses. I suspect it is a result of Ulysses’ manipulation of Thersites.

11 See also Andromache’s same attitude toward the theme of the war in 2.1.166-72.

12 Dryden’s characters, unlike Shakespeare’s, seldom comment about Helen and her negative image as the cause of the war. Thersites is the only one who satirizes the war as a game of cockolds for a "whore."

13 Dryden’s emphasis on the male friendship over
heterosexual relationship appears again in the conflict between Troilus and Hector in 3.2.

14 Even in this report, there is no mention about Achilles' killing of the "unarmed" Hector.

15 This line is given to Ulysses in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*: "Troy in our weakness stands, not in her strength" (1.3.136).

16 Shakespeare's Ulysses sees Troilus as "a true knight; / Not yet mature, yet matchless-firm of word" (4.5.96-97).

17 It is also interesting to observe that Aeneas, who expects Troilus' fury over the exchange, hesitates to go to tell him about the news (3.2.149-52). He thinks that there is no one but Hector who can persuade Troilus.

18 While there is almost no record of the stage history of Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*, Dryden's adaptation of it "enjoyed considerable popularity, both on the stage and as a reader's play, during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (Bernhardt 130). See also Kenneth Muir, p. 9. However, recently, critics turn their faces away from Dryden's play, while Shakespeare's play enjoys enormous popularity.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

This study explores the historically evolving love story of Troilus and Criseida in the light of Criseida's character. She is, I believe, at the center of each version by the four English writers from Chaucer to Dryden. The love story, infamous for its misogyny, is a product of the Middle Ages, though the setting is the ancient world of Troy. Thus, many readers, like Dryden, incline to see the story as a mere "Satyr on the Inconstancy of Women" ("The Prologue" 226.1). The four writers, however, do not remake Criseida the infamous antifeminist text often rendered by Continental writers. Sometimes English writers use her as a mere symbol of female infidelity; other times, a victim of her society, being a woman. This study presupposes multifarious readings about the heroine; but it does not pursue simple reactions by individual writers in the chain of Criseida stories. Just as each writer responds to his past work(s) from his contemporary standpoint, this study simultaneously shows modern responses to the past readings and writings of the story. Thus, the direction of this study is twofold: how the four writers have read and responded to their predecessors' works (including the Continental works) and how modern readers react to them.
Hans Robert Jauss underlines the dialogical relationship between the past and the present in the study of a literary work. The historical objectivity of one age is not universally fixed but variable according to the standpoint of the present, for the objectivity is linked by "the thread between history's past and present--between the period 'as it really was' and that 'which followed from it'" (Jauss 8). The reader, "the addressee for whom the literary work is primarily destined" (Jauss 19), formulates both the aesthetic and historical value of a literary work in this dialogical relationship. In the Jaussian historical concept, the four English Criseida stories are closely related not only to the Continental tradition but to one another. All four writers—Chaucer, Henryson, Shakespeare, and Dryden—are readers of the continually evolving story of Troilus and Criseida. They are, at the same time, critics, writers, and literary historians. They critique their predecessors' works, write what they have conceived from the tradition of the story, and re-interpret the old works in that historical context.

The Continental writers (Benoît, Guido, and Boccaccio) established a popular antifeminist paradigm, "true" Troilus and "false" Criseida, simply offering a moral lesson through her infidelity and Troilus' death. In the antifeminist horizon of expectations, Criseida has been a favorite subject, time and again. However, the ending of the story
remains troublesome to some readers, for innocent Troilus
dies while guilty Criseida survives. Piero Boitani argues
that most of the authors, who wrote about Criseida, are
troubled by the "unsatisfactory" ending of the story:

All these changes [in the chain of Criseida
stories] proves that after antiquity the end of
the story is felt to be unsatisfactory,
disturbing, and hence open to debate and
reinvention. . . . The problem, however, is not
merely 'literary'--a question of dramatic
consequentiality and choice of genre--it is also
the reflection of basic moral and philosophical
attitudes. ("Eros" 299)

Such a remark implies that most authors of the Criseida
story accept the literary tradition of true Troilus and
false Criseida but feel the lack of justice in the end.
Boitano's observation, however, is not applicable to all the
four English writers. Chaucer's narrator, for example, gets
into trouble at the end of the poem, not because of the
absence of justice, but because of his compassion toward the
heroine. Henryson may be "obsessed" with the ending of
Troilus and Criseyde: his sequel to Chaucer's poem
underlines the tragic aftermath of Cresseid's
unfaithfulness. Nevertheless, Henryson's poem emphasizes
the infamous heroine's regeneration rather than her
punishment.
The four writers do not merely follow the continental tradition. The four stories reveal that the writers, more or less, seem to be troubled with the rewriting of the traditional heroine. Chaucer, for example, particularly shows his dilemma in his representation of Criseyde: he solves the dilemma, to a certain degree, by creating Lollius and the narrator. However, Henryson makes plain his predecessor's dilemma by portraying the heroine straightforwardly evil but redeemed. The same phenomenon appears in the Renaissance pair. Shakespeare's Cressida resembles the heroine of the continental tradition, but he cunningly excuses her by rewriting every heroes in the story inconsistent (like "inconstant" Cressida). Cressida behaves along with other inconstant people. Dryden's adaptation of Shakespeare's play reveals that the change in Cressida's character is a necessary condition to restoring the heroic status of the ancient warriors and their world.

Among the four English Criseida stories, Chaucer's version follows most closely the rising and falling fortune of Troilus in his love life with Criseyde. Troilus dies a miserable death as a result of Criseyde's betrayal. His love and death are enough to evoke pathos from some readers. It is clear that Chaucer's poem lacks justice in the antifeminist horizon of expectations. What the poem tries to deliver, however, is not an antifeminist moral message--the centerpiece of the traditional Criseida story. Rather,
Chaucer’s poem explains how its heroine is helplessly trapped in her destiny created not by her but by others. Henryson is the "only" writer "to come up with a radical answer" (Boitani, "Eros" 300) to the problem of the story’s vexing ending. Cresseid is punished with leprosy as antifeminist readers have expected. The punishment, however, does not bring her death; she dies with a broken heart caused by Troilus’ kindness. The Testament of Cresseid is not about justice but about suffering and redemption.

Many critics, such as Hyde E. Rollins, observe that Henryson’s portrayal of Cresseid had caused Renaissance writers to treat her more severely than ever. Shakespeare’s Cressida is a perfect example of such a trend. However, I believe that Renaissance antifeminist readers might have realized that Cressida represents unknowingly the people of the ancient heroic world. In Shakespeare’s play, the noble patriarchal world is demolished not by "disruptive other," Helen or Cressida, but by unheroic heroes themselves, a reason why Shakespeare’s play may be never performed on public or private stage until this century. Dryden probably knew what went wrong with his predecessor’s play. He undertakes to "correct" Shakespeare’s "tragedy" and ennobles most of characters, properly to their positions in the hierarchy.

Dryden, in fact, is the only writer who misread the
traditional Criseida story. The preface to Truth found Too Late reveals that Dryden did not understand the core of the story:

The Original story was Written by one Lollius a Lombard, in Latin verse, and Translated by Chaucer into English: intended I suppose a Satyr on the Inconstancy of Woman. I find nothing of it among the Ancients; not so much as the name Cressida once mention'd. Shakespear, (as I hinted) in the Apprenticeship of his Writing, model'd it into that Play, which is now call'd by the name of Troilus and Cressida; but so lamely is it left to us. . . . (225:29-226:5)

Dryden simply acknowledges that the Criseida story in the tradition is a mere satire on female infidelity. He does not know why Chaucer's narrator is reluctant to condemn Criseyde and why Shakespeare willingly rewrites a perfect antifeminist text in the disordered world. Dryden is discontented with Shakespeare's play, particularly with its ending: "The chief persons, who give name to the Tragedy, are left alive: Cressida is false, and is not punish'd" (226:13-15). Dryden, after all, rebuilds the ancient world that is supposed to be perfectly ordered. However, this reconstruction costs the mysterious attractiveness of Cressida as a popular literary figure. Dryden's heroine becomes a shadowy character, simply conforming herself to
the male ideology of heroism.

Many modern readers no longer see only the antifeminist moral message carried on the surface of the Criseida stories. Readers are digging out other hidden meanings implanted in the text: "the 'unwritten' part of a text stimulates the reader's creative participation" (Iser 275). At the present time, we see the Criseida stories of the past with enlarged perspectives. As far as Criseida the woman is concerned, we cannot ignore Chaucer the narrator's continuous strife to defend his heroine although his endeavor falls short in a society where a strong antifeminist trend was overwhelming. For this reason, we cannot blame him as a skillful manipulator of the age's antifeminism. Christine de Pizan, one of few female voices in the past, protests against her society's prejudiced attitude toward women in The Book of the City of Ladies. In this book about the history of women, Christine urges women from all ranks of society to organize a school for themselves to their advantage. From a modern point of view, her idea is not revolutionary. Her defense of women is limited:

For they [male authors] never address women nor warn them against men's traps even though it is certain that men frequently deceive women with their fast tricks and duplicity. There is not the slightest doubt that women belong to the people of
God and the human race as much as men, and are not another species or dissimilar race, for which they should be excluded from moral teachings. Therefore, I conclude that if these men had acted in the public good—that is, for both parties—they should also have addressed themselves to women and warned them to beware of men's tricks just as they warned men to be careful about women. (2.54)

Such observation is not radical from a modern standpoint: Christine simply protests against her society's prejudiced attitude toward women. Nevertheless, her protestation shows a genuine concern about women in the male-centered society. Christine's "uncommon" remark echoes Chaucer the narrator's apology and warning to women at the end of Troilus and Criseyde. This same voice between a man and a woman proves that there were some people in the past who could share a favorable view toward women with us moderns. It is a rash judgment to consider everything about women in male writings of the past as satiric and manipulating. We cannot call Shakespeare an antimasculine writer because of his cynical depiction of male heroes in Troilus and Cressida. Although Henryson's poem relates the aftermath of the heroine's promiscuous life, its emphasis is not on the nemesis-factor but on the redemptive value of a human being. Cresseid's final self-knowledge sublimates the infamous heroine like King Lear and other tragic heroes. In the antifeminist
horizon of expectations, readers expect to see the result of the heroine's infidelity, ignoring the whole process leading to her unfaithfulness.

Rewriting woman evil was a popular literary phenomenon in the past, although such rewriting may not mean antifeminism characterizes the whole literature of the past. For example, according to Francis Lee Utley's analytical index to medieval and Renaissance English literature about women, the literary attitude toward women in those periods is a mixed reading of satire and defense. Breaking off the link between Zeitgeist and literature, Utley denies "the old false dichotomy between Eve and Mary" (90):

Early medieval defenses of women repeatedly assert the falseness of the men who write satire, and with the Renaissance this charge becomes historical in nature. When humanism and reformation merge to make Elizabethan England at least outwardly a new thing, the ad hominem argument becomes a matter of chronology, and the "false men" are identified with an unenlightened or "monkish" past. (3)

Utley's analysis implies that antifeminism no longer labels the past English literature about women. That is, the general history is not necessarily identical with the literary history. In reading English Criseida stories, however, many readers still believe that each story is a
reflection of its age. They are suspicious of the rewriting on Criseida because she is a product of strong antifeminism.

In fact, I believe, readers proclaim the four writers guilty by suspicion. Hermeneutic questions thus arise from the reading of medieval and Renaissance Criseida stories.

We moderns cannot correct what was wrong in literature of the past. But we can rectify the prejudiced readings of the past literature with new perspectives, for we are situated on the vantage point to see the past. The chain of four Criseida stories shows that history does not always evolve progressively. Chaucer creates a new Criseyde with ambiguity and compassion against the old, vicious representation of the infamous heroine. Chaucer's ambiguous Criseyde, in turn, is corrected by Henryson in a medieval mode of punishment and redemption. Henryson's genuine yet open regeneration is then misunderstood by Renaissance writers. They deride Cresseid the leper, ignoring her rebirth through her self-realization. Shakespeare's Cressida seems to respond to such trends in Renaissance English literature. She is left "naked," stripped of Chaucer's ambiguity and Henryson's goodwill. However, some readers may be aghast at Shakespeare's masterful use of the traditional symbol of female inconstancy. Dryden, like Henryson, reacts to his precursor's "problematic" play. Dryden's Cressida becomes a "noble" marionette, devoid of her traditional role as a disruptive other. As a result,
Dryden's heroine loses most of her attractiveness: her revolting vitality against the social injustice toward women and her mysterious power that invites many rewritings.

The four Criseida stories illustrate an interesting evolution of one female character in medieval and Renaissance English literature. For many centuries, just as Dryden misunderstood the story as a satire, Criseida is viewed merely as a perfect antifeminist text. Some modern readers also simplify the evolving status of Criseida's character in the chain of her stories, regarding her as a product of medieval and Renaissance misogyny. However, I believe, if we see the four representations of Criseida from the modern point of view, such simplification disappears. Although she is morally wrong, her unfaithfulness can be excused as an act of a human being. Conceived as a stereotype of female inconstancy in the past, Criseida becomes a fascinating character in the present. Modern readers wonder at the mysterious attractiveness of Chaucer's Criseyde, feeling sympathy towards her. We admire the final self-knowledge of Henryson's Cresseid; we are charmed by the revolting vitality of Shakespeare's Cressida; yet, we are disappointed in the colorlessness of Dryden's Cressida. Rewriting woman evil?--it is simply a misunderstanding.
NOTES

1 See Jauss, p. 19.

2 Henryson, for example, questions the absolute authority of Chaucer's version of the Criseida story. See The Testament of Cresseid, ll. 64-70. See also Dryden's preface to his Troilus and Cressida.

3 Chaucer's narrator, for example, points out that his "translation" of the ancient love story written in Latin appears somewhat oddly to his contemporary audience because of linguistic, cultural, and historical gaps between the two ages. See the prologue of the second book of Troilus and Criseyde.

4 Dryden regards Shakespeare's "problematic" play as tragedy. See Dryden's preface to his play.

5 See Troilus and Criseyde, 5.1772-1785. The narrator apologizes to ladies saying that the lesson out of the love story is not only for men but also for women.
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