A COMPARISON OF CHAUCER'S AND SHAKESPEARE'S
TREATMENTS OF THE TROILUS-CRESSIDA STORY

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PREFACE

The tale of Troilus and Cressida is one of the most familiar portions of the lore of the siege of Troy as well as one of the world’s most famous love stories. The story itself is a simple one. During the time of the siege of Troy, a young Trojan prince falls in love with a beautiful lady whose father had deserted her to join the enemy in its camp. She returns his love, and they are happy together until her father manages to have her exchanged for a captured Trojan nobleman. Although they must part, the lovers swear to be eternally true to one another. Separated from Troilus, however, Cressida weakens and betrays her lover for a Greek soldier. This, in essence, is the story. It is not at all uncommon, except in that it is the woman, who is generally considered to be more stable than the man in affairs of the heart, who this time proves fickle. Perhaps the very commonness and universality of the story account for its tremendous appeal to readers of all periods.

The Troilus-Cressida story has the unusual distinction of having been treated by perhaps the two greatest figures in English literature, Shakespeare and Chaucer. Each man has retold the story from an entirely different viewpoint; each has written a work which not only possesses great individuality but which also reflects the full creative genius
of its author. No attempt has been made in this study to determine the details in Shakespeare's play which might have been directly derived from Chaucer's poem, for the two works are so different that such a consideration seems fruitless. Because both works contain a wealth of vital, stimulating ideas and observations of life, they are assured of readers throughout all time. They seem fresh and alive even to modern readers, who are prone to attach no particular value to a work merely because it has a distinguished past. In an excellent modern English version by George Philip Krapp, Chaucer's poem was widely distributed as a Literary Guild selection, a fact which seems to prove that when this story is accessible to present-day readers, they still find it far from outmoded.
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CHAPTER I

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STORY OF
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA

This first chapter presents a picture of the development of the Troilus-Cressida story from its origins to its treatment by Shakespeare. It is the purpose of this study to trace the changes that the story underwent from age to age and to discover how these came about and how they influenced the form and concept of Chaucer's and Shakespeare's versions of the tale. The differences that mark these two works, with which this thesis is concerned, may largely be explained by the differences in the story which their authors found in their respective literary sources.

Although the Troilus-Cressida story is based on an episode of the Trojan War, surprisingly enough it has no direct classical sources. Homer's Iliad, the original source for all stories of the siege of Troy, mentions the hero only once, and that incidentally, when Priam, mourning his fallen sons, says,

... Oh woe is me,
Who have begotten sons, in all the land
The best and bravest; now remains not one;
Mnestor, and Troilus, dauntless charioteer,
And Hector, who a God 'mid men appear'd,
... ... ... ... ... ...
All these hath Mars cut off. ... ... 1

Pandarus, another character of prime importance, is scarcely

more than mentioned. He is identified by Homer as a skilled
archer and the leader of the Zeleians:

Who in Zeleia dwelt, at Ida's foot,
Of Trojan race, a wealthy tribe, who drank
Of dark Aeseus' waters, these were led
By Pandarus, Lycacon's noble son,
Taught by Apollo's self to draw the bow.\(^2\)

All else that is told of Pandarus is that one day in battle
he shot and wounded Diomedes, who in turn killed him.\(^3\) Cres-
sida's name, but nothing of her character or story, is de-
derived by a devious route from Chryseis and Briseis in the
Iliad. Chryseis is a beautiful maiden who has been captured
by the Greeks in a raid on Chryse and awarded to the Greek
leader Agamemnon as a war prize. When her father, Chryses,
comes to ransom her, he is insulted by her master. Apollo,
offended at the treatment given Chryses, one of his priests,
sends a plague on the Greek camp. To appease the god's wrath
and allay the plague Agamemnon returns Chryseis to her father
but takes Achilles' mistress, Briseis, in her place. This
action precipitates a feud between Agamemnon and Achilles,
and the latter, keeping to his tent, refuses to fight.

In the Middle Ages, however, not the Iliad, but two
later works, the de Excidio Trojae Historia by Dares Phry-
gius and the Ephemeris Belli Trojan by Dictys Cretensis,
both of them literary frauds, were the standard authorities
for the story of the siege of Troy. These works, both of

\(^2\)Ibid., II, 253-257, p. 41.

\(^3\)Ibid., V, 111-1123, 196-341, pp. 73-79.
which were probably derived from Greek originals of about the second century A.D., survive in Latin versions, Dares' dating from the sixth century and Dictys' from the fourth. Prefacing Dares' history is a letter supposedly written by Cornelius Nepos in Athens to his uncle Sallust telling of his discovery and translation of an authentic account of the siege of Troy by the Trojan priest Dares Phrygius. Like Dares' history, Dictys' account had been hidden away and fortuitously discovered. The preface states that the work had been sealed in a tin box and buried with its author and was uncovered by an earthquake in the thirteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Nero. Purportedly the work of a man who had fought with the Greeks during the Trojan War, it was written in Phoenician on linden bark and translated into Greek at the emperor's request. These two literary hoaxes, neither the first nor last of their kind, were for many years believed to be better authorities for the Trojan story than even the Iliad. In The House of Fame, Chaucer places Dares and Dictys (Tytus) with Homer (Omer), Lollius, Guido delle Colonne, and Geoffrey of Monmouth as the chief authorities for the story of Troy. He implies furthermore, in accordance with general

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5 Ibid., pp. 35-36.
medieval opinion, that Homer was not as reliable as the other authors:

Oen seyde that Omer made lyes,
Peynynge in his poetries,
And was to Grekes favorable;
Therfor held he hyt but fable.7

Many scholars as late as the seventeenth century held Dares and Dictys to be authentic, and the Latin frauds were not thoroughly repudiated until 1702, when Perezonius, a classical scholar, published a systematic study of their faults and inconsistencies in the Delphin Edition of the Latin classics, a series of sixty-four volumes prepared by eminent scholars for the use of the Dauphin of France.8 There are several reasons why these spurious histories should have supplanted Homer as authorities for the Trojan story in the minds of uncritical ages. They were skillfully written to sustain the impression that their authors either had actually observed the events they narrated or had obtained reliable eye-witness accounts of them, whereas the Iliad was believed to have been written at least a hundred years after the siege of Troy. Moreover, in them the activities of the pagan gods were rationalized, whereas Homer put a severe strain on the reader's credulity. The authors of these frauds made their characters seem historically accurate and real by describing them with many homely and intimate details of minute observation. For

7Ibid., Book III, li. 1477-1480.
example, Dares describes Helen as having a shapely leg and a beauty-spot, Polyxena as having large hands, and Aeneas as having sparkling black eyes. Dictys gives the ages of all the characters and describes Menelaus as being less disturbed by the loss of his wife than by the treachery of his kinswomen who helped her to escape. A notable feature of these supplacers of Homer was their tendency to degrade his heroes and glorify his minor characters. Hence, in Dictys Idomeneus replaces Agamemnon as leader of the Greek forces, and Palademes, who is not even mentioned by Homer, is a great leader and a clever inventor. In Dares Troilus becomes a leading champion of Troy, no less valiant than Hector. On the other hand, in Dictys Achilles often acts churlishly, as when he stabs Hector in the back, strangles Troilus, and offers to betray the Greeks for Polyxena; and Ulysses kills Palademes by luring him into a pit and stoning him. In both accounts Antenor and Aeneas betray Troy. Dictys' account was written from the Greek point of view and Dares' from the Trojan. Because all the nations of western Europe felt themselves to be descendants of the Trojans, they favored Dares' account over Dictys'. Dares' contributions to the development of the love story of Troilus and Cressida consisted of the elevation of Troilus to the first rank of Trojan heroes, the characterization of Calchas as a renegade Trojan priest, the

\[^{9}{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{p. 43.}\]
\[^{10}{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{p. 43.}\]
\[^{11}{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{pp. 44-45.}\]
\[^{12}{\text{Ibid.}}, \text{p. 48.}\]
report of an encounter in which Troilus wounded Diomedes, and a passage describing a lady called Briseida. At least two of the details of her description—her medium height and her joined eyebrows—came down to Chaucer's version of the story. Although Dares' Briseida was described in some detail, she did not actually participate in the narrative. There was no story of any sort connected with her nor any hint that she and Troilus were lovers. Dictys contributed nothing to the story directly.13

The love story of Troilus and Cressida was in all likelihood the invention of Benoît de Sainte-Maure, a twelfth century troubadour patronized by Henry II of England. At least the first known version of the story appeared in his Roman de Troie, an account in French verse of the siege of Troy. This work, written about 1160,14 was based primarily on Dares' history with supplementary details from Dictys' work. It has been maintained, but not widely believed, that Benoît had access to a fuller, more complete, version of Dares, now lost, which contained a direct account of the love story.15 But in all likelihood, as Robert Dudley French suggests, Benoît, writing in an age which was fond of love stories, "felt that so charming a lady as Briseida should be

13Karl Young, The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde, the Chaucer Society, issue of 1908 for 1904, p. 2.
15Young, op. cit., p. 3.
provided with a love story, and ... proceeded to invent one for her."²⁶ Benoit's story of Troilus and Briseïda, told in a series of disconnected episodes, formed a minor portion of his large picture of the whole Trojan struggle: only 1349 of the 30,316 lines of the poem are concerned with the love story.²⁷ His narrative of the lovers begins with the departure of Briseïda from Troy and recounts Diomede's prolonged suit of her, his several battles with Troilus, Briseïda's surrender to him after he has been wounded by Troilus, and Troilus' death at Achilles' hands. The Roman de Troie also recounts the dispute between Agamemnon and Achilles over the latter's slave girl. Benoit's source for this story was Dictys rather than Dares, who did not include this episode in his book. In Dictys the girl who is the subject of the contention between the Greek leaders is called Hippodamia, (which was Briseïda's true name). The name Briseïs by which she is known in the Iliad is a Greek patronymic form, which merely means "the daughter of Brises." Because Benoit was unfamiliar with Greek patronymic forms, he did not realize that the Briseïda whom he had made a Trojan lady in love with Troilus was the same person as the Ypodamia who appeared as Achilles' mistress in another portion of his poem.²⁸

The next account of the love story appeared in a Latin prose work, the Historia Troiana, written in 1287 by Guido

²⁶French, op. cit., p. 137. ²⁷Ibid., p. 137.
²⁸Ibid., pp. 136-137.
delle Colonne, a celebrated Sicilian lawyer and poet of the thirteenth century.\(^{19}\) Since Guido's work was little more than a translation and abridgment of Bencoi's poem, he contributed practically nothing to the development of the love story. His importance lies in the fact that during the Middle Ages his work was considered the standard history of the Trojan period, and, as such, helped to spread and popularize the love story.\(^{20}\)

The first full version of the love story, as well as the first work to deal with it exclusively, was *Il Filosorato*, written in Italian ottava rima by Boccaccio about 1338.\(^{21}\) The story of the unfortunate Trojan had a special appeal for him at that time, for he himself was suffering because of the absence from Naples of his beloved Maria d'Aquino.\(^{22}\) To Bencoi's story Boccaccio added the account of Troilus' falling in love with Criseida at first sight; of his wooing and winning of her through the agency of Pandarus; of her promise to return to Troy within ten days when she goes to the Greeks in exchange for Antenor; of Troilus' demoralization by her failure to return; of his discovery of her perfidy through seeing his love token pinned to Diomedes'...

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\(^{19}\) Young, *op. cit.*, p. 4.


\(^{21}\) French, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

\(^{22}\) Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 28-32.
cloak; and of his swearing vengeance on his rival. Boccaccio's chief sources were the Troilus-Briseida story in Benoit and his own Filocelo, a version of the medieval story of Floire and Blanchefleur. These were supplemented by the Achilles-Polyxena story in Benoit, a few suggestions from Guido, and his own personal experiences and invention.\(^{23}\)

One of the most interesting aspects of the development of the Troilus-Cressida story is the derivation of the name Criseida for Boccaccio's heroine. It is, of course, a form of the word Chryseis. But she is no more like the Chryseis in the Iliad than she is like Briseis. By Boccaccio's time the mistake which Benoit had made in failing to identify Dares' undeveloped, unimportant Briseida with Dictys' Ypodamia had been recognized. Boccaccio could not, therefore, use the name Briseida for Troilus' lady, because everyone knew that the real Briseida was Achilles' mistress and no Trojan lady. The story of Chryseis, however, was not familiar to Boccaccio. There is evidence that he did not become acquainted with the Iliad until after he had written the Filostrato.\(^{24}\) In all likelihood his only classic sources for the name Chryseis were two works by Ovid: Tristia, in most manuscripts of which the name occurs erroneously for Briseis, and Remedia Amoris.\(^{25}\) In the latter an unnamed father pleads

\(^{23}\text{Ibid., pp. 5-105.}\)

\(^{24}\text{E. E. Wilkins, "Criseida," Modern Language Notes, XXIV (1909), 67.}\)

\(^{25}\text{Ibid., pp. 66-67.}\)
that his daughter, Chryseis, be allowed to join him, and three lines later the name Calchas appears. Although the father and Calchas are not the same person, it is quite possible that Boccaccio confused the father of Chryseis in Ovid's work with Benoît's Calchas, who in the Roman de Troie makes a similar appeal for the return of his daughter, Briseïda. At any rate Boccaccio probably felt justified in substituting the name Criseïda, which was practically unknown in his day, for Benoît's unsatisfactory name, Briseïda. The name of Boccaccio's heroine is often spelled with a g instead of a c, \(^{26}\) but since the majority of Filostrato manuscripts now extant spell the name with a c and since Boccaccio was a careful scholar who followed his Latin models closely in such matters as spelling, it is most likely that he originally wrote the name with a c. \(^{27}\)

The first version of the story in English was Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, a long narrative in five books, written in rhyme royal. This work attained a wide popularity and was doubtless the most famous treatment of the story before Shakespeare's. Although Chaucer did not list Boccaccio among his sources for his poem, he followed the Filostrato most closely in telling the story of the lovers. \(^{27}\) About a third of the lines in his poem are translated from Boccaccio's

\(^{26}\) The interchange of gr and cr is common in Italian. \textit{Ibid.}, p. 68.

\(^{27}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 66.
work. Save for a few minor details, he has used every important episode in the Italian poem except the one in which Troilus' sisters, coming to comfort him, learn of his love. Chaucer's poem, however, is about a third longer than Il Filostrato, and he has noticeably enlarged and expanded Boccaccio's basic story. French gives the following list of Chaucer's additions to Boccaccio's account:

1. The scene in Criseyde's garden in which Antigone sings of the power of love; and the subsequent description of Criseyde's falling asleep, as she listens to the nightingale, and of her dream of the eagle (II. St. 117-23).
2. The dinner at the house of Deiphobus and the first meeting of the lovers there (II. St. 194-III. St. 34).
3. The elaborate scheme by which Pandaros brings the lovers together at his house for the consummation of their love, and the subordinate episode of Troilus's feigned jealousy of Horaste (III. St. 74-169).
4. The interview between Pandaros and Criseyde on the following morning (III. St. 223-26).
5. Hector's opposition to the proposal that Criseyde be exchanged for Antenor (IV. St. 26-30).
6. Troilus' soliloquy in the temple (IV. St. 136-55).
7. Diomed's advances to Criseyde as they ride from Troy to the Greek camp (V. St. 14-27).
8. The directions of Troilus to Pandaros with regard to his own funeral (V. St. 43-46).
9. The descriptions of Troilus and Criseyde (V. St. 116-20).
10. Incidents in Diomed's wooing of Criseyde, subsequent to their first interview at the tent of Calchas. Her lament for the loss of her fair name (V. St. 148-57).
11. Cassandra's story of the Calydonian boar-hunt and of the Seven against Thebes, and her interpretation of the dream of Troilus (V. St. 208-217).
12. Criseyde's second letter from the Greek camp (V. St. 228-33).²⁹

²⁹Ibid., pp. 180-181.
Most of the added incidents that occur after the separation
of the lovers Chaucer derived from Benoit, primarily, and,
to a much lesser degree, from Guido.\textsuperscript{30} The scene in which
the lovers spend the night together at Pandarus' house, along
with suggestions for other details, apparently was derived
from Boccaccio's \textit{Filocolo}.\textsuperscript{31} Chaucer's most original work
appears in the portion of the narrative preceding Criseyde's
departure from Troy. He has here molded the story to follow
the conventions of a courtly love affair. Perhaps his most
significant contribution to the story is his masterful charac-
terization of his principals. His sympathetic delineation
of Criseyde is a subtle and complex achievement, which stands
apart from any of its predecessors or followers, and that of
Pandarus is scarcely its inferior in skill.

One of the puzzles of Chaucerian scholarship is the iden-
tity of Lollius, whom Chaucer cites as the principal source
for his poem.\textsuperscript{32} No Lollius who wrote on the Trojan War has
ever been discovered. It is possible that Chaucer found the
name in a corrupt version of Horace's Second Epistle— in which
the author is writing to Lollius about "the writer of the Tro-
jan War." Chaucer probably cited the unfamiliar Lollius to
give his story, derived largely from a contemporary source,

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 185-186.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Young, op. cit.}, pp. 139-178.

\textsuperscript{32}Geoffrey Chaucer, \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, Book I, l. 394,
in \textit{The Complete Poetical Works of Chaucer}, Cambridge Edition,
an air of historical authenticity and authority. 33

Chaucer's poem was very popular in England, and for many years it was recognized as the best authority for the Troilus-Cressida story by most English authors who dealt with the subject in any way. The next retelling of the love story after Chaucer appeared in the Laud Troy Book, written about 1400. Although the author of this work followed Guido in calling Troilus' lady Bryxeida or Brixaida, the fact that he treated her more gently than did the Latin historian, Guido, indicates that he probably knew and was influenced by Chaucer's poem. 34

Lydgate, a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Bury St. Edmund's, translating Guido at the request of Prince Hal, also retold the Troilus-Cressida story. He showed definite knowledge of Chaucer's poem, for he referred his readers to Chaucer for a complete and accurate account of the love story. He reproved Guido for slandering women and showed sympathy for Cryseyde, as he called the erring Trojan lady, and tried to excuse her "because Nature had made her variable." 35

In Caxton's Recuyell of Histories of Troye, which was based on a French version of Guido, Les Recueil des Histoires des Troyes by Raoul le Fevre, the famous English printer also

33 Young, op. cit., pp. 169-195.


referred his readers to Chaucer for details of the Troilus-Cressida story. The Recuyell, written in 1474, was the most popular version of the Trojan story during the Elizabethan age. As such it was most likely one of the sources for Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida. It was more easily read than Lydgate's work, which was its nearest rival in popularity.

In the last quarter of the fifteenth century a Scottish schoolmaster, Robert Henryson, musing over the fate of the characters in Chaucer's story, wrote a sequel to it, The Testament of Cresseid. In this work Chaucer's heroine is made to suffer for her betrayal of Troilus: Diomedes, tired of her, turns her out; returning to her father, she curses Venus and Cupid, who strike her with leprosy for her sacrilege; she is forced by her condition to become a beggar; one day, while she is sitting by the roadside with her "cuppe and clapper," she encounters Troilus, who, although he does not recognize her, impulsively gives her jewels and money and rides on; shocked upon learning the identity of her generous benefactor, she suddenly dies, but not before she sends her ring to Troilus, who, grief-stricken at the fate of the lady he had once loved, builds a beautiful monument to her. By Henryson's time the system of courtly love had disappeared, and, as Hyder Rollins says, the Scotsman regarded Criseyde as "a wanton even in her

36 Ibid., p. 388.

relations with Troilus and as the kept mistress of Diomedes." He wrote his poem to demonstrate the fearful consequences of immoral behavior; the conclusion of the work, with its warning to women to avoid the sins which caused Cressida's downfall, clearly indicates the moral purpose behind his writing:

Now worthie Wemen, in this ballet schort,
Waid for your worshop and instructioun,
Of cheritie I monishe and exhort,
Ming not your lufe with fals deception;
Beir in your mynd this schort conclusion
Of fair Cressi de, as I have sayd befoir;
Sen scho is deid, I speik of hir no moir.

Henryson's poem was published as the sixth book of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in Thynne's 1532 edition of Chaucer, and it was reprinted as Chaucer's own composition in all subsequent editions of his work until Urry's in 1721. As late as 1810 it was listed among Chaucer's poems in Chalmers's *Works of the English Poets*. Throughout the sixteenth and much of the seventeenth centuries it was uncritically accepted as an authentic work by Chaucer and a regular part of his narrative. When, about 1635, while translating *Troilus and Criseyde* into Latin, Sir Francis Kinstone, poet and scholar attached to the court of Charles I, announced that the sixth book was not by Chaucer, he shocked most of his contemporaries. As Rollins says,
For authors and for readers up to 1600 Henryson's Cressid was the Cressid; ... they regarded her as a light-of-love who finally paid for her faithlessness and unchastity by leprosy. ... Every mention of Cressid as a leper, at least to 1600, is an allusion to Chaucer. People thought they were reading Chaucer: nobody had ever heard of Robert Henryson, schoolmaster.42

With the change in attitude which the passing of the Middle Ages brought, as well as with the widespread circulation of the story among the whole English populace of both high and low estate, it is not surprising that the characters in it suffered degeneration in the public mind. In the Story of Troilus and Pandaro, a play acted by Cornish and the Children of the Royal Chapel at Eltham in 1515 or 1516, Pandaros had already become a clown.43 In the popular mind of the Tudor period the reputations of Pandaros and Cressida had so far degenerated that the word pandar had become another name for a procurer and "false as Cressid" had become a familiar expression for describing faithless women.44 In 1501 Gavin Douglas in the Palace of Honor referred to "Trew Troilus, unfaithful Cressida" as if he were using a stock expression.45

A generous portion of the blame for the degeneration which the story and its characters underwent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries may be laid on the popular ballad-makers of the day, who, although they did much to spread the fame of the tale, also befouled it with their coarse, farcical, 

42 Ibid., p. 400.  
43 Ibid., pp. 388-389.  
44 Ibid., p. 389.  
and inept treatments. Rollins cites from a manuscript in the Bodleian Library an anonymous ballad dating from 1565 that pictures a Troilus frankly sensual, much like Shakespeare's hero.\(^{47}\)

An attitude of derision toward the story prevailed even among the best educated and most polished writers of the sixteenth century. In *Philip Sparrow*, written about 1507, John Skelton, a popular rhymester and satirist of the day, referred scornfully to Cressid and Pandarus in a running account of the famous stories known by Mistress Jane Scrope. George Turbeville (circa 1530–1594), who had translated some of Boccaccio's tales but apparently not *Il Filostrato*, wrote a great amount of verse in which he often alluded to the familiar Troilus-Cressida story. Rollins indicates that his writings did little to help the reputation of the lovers: "The enormous popularity of Turbeville's poems, doggerel though most of them are, helped to make the name of Cressid odious, or worse, comical."\(^{48}\) Thomas Howell and George Gascoigne (1530–1577) were two other well-known authors of the period who made frequent uncomplimentary references to the story and its characters.\(^{49}\) In George Whetstone's *Rooke of Regard* (1576) Cressida was depicted as a base strumpet who bestowed her favors on other men even while she was receiving Troilus'\(^{46,47,48,49}\)

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 394. \(^{47}\) Ibid., pp. 393–394. 
\(^{48}\) Ibid., p. 403. 
\(^{49}\) Ibid., pp. 403–407.
faithful love.  

Not all of the writing of the Tudor and Elizabethan period condemned Cressida, however; strangely enough, she was often glorified as the ideal mistress, probably in tribute to her looseness. Many of the authors who often censured her, such as Skeiton, Turbeville, and Gascoigne, also wrote poems praising her as "a complaisant damsel who 'yielded grace' to her lover's importunities, and who was worthy of emulation."  

William Elderton, the first noteworthy professional ballad writer, in his first known ballad "The panges of Loue and louers fitts" (published in 1559 or 1560), dwelt on Cressida's kindness in giving her love to Troilus.  

William Fulwood, a merchant-tailor and writer, in his book of model letters The Enemie of Idlenesse (1568) had a specimen entitled "a constant Lover doth expresse His grievyng grieves, which still encrease" in which the suffering lover begs his mistress to grant him the favors that Criseyde granted Troilus.  

Hyder Rollins thinks that many of the authors of such poems as these had never read beyond the third book of Chaucer's rather lengthy tale.  

At any rate, they exalted Cressida thus only by "poetic license, or licentiousness," for "her reputation had long been hopeless."  

However important these works may have been in forming

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50 Ibid., pp. 407-408.  51 Ibid., pp. 389-390.  
52 Ibid., p. 391.  53 Ibid., pp. 391-392.  
54 Ibid., p. 390.  55 Ibid., p. 392.
the general attitude of the sixteenth century toward the story of the Trojan lovers, there are at least two works of drama which probably had a more direct influence in shaping Shakespeare's play *Troilus and Cressida*, the second great version of the story in English. The first of these was Heywood's *The Iron Age*, written in 1596.\(^58\) It is a long play in two parts, which presents a panoramic picture of the Trojan-Greek struggle. The Troilus-Cressida episode was included because it was so familiar that no account of the siege of Troy would have seemed complete without it. Perhaps Shakespeare's inclusion of a large body of material dealing with the Trojan War in his narration of the love story was influenced by Heywood's play, in which the love story was treated as a subplot of the war story. Heywood obtained most of his material from Caxton; he apparently did not know Chaucer's poem, for he presented no Pandarus and confused the chronology of the love story. He introduced the character Thersites, whom Shakespeare later adopted for his play. The character of Cressida followed the traditional concept popular at the time, of which Rollins says, "By 1596 . . . Cressid's features were fixed, so that no writer could have further degraded her."\(^57\)

Heywood's play was so successful that in 1598 the producer Henslowe ordered a *Trovelles and Cresseda* from Chettle and Dekker. This play is now lost, but an outline of the

plot survives with a stage direction "Enter Cressida with Beggars," which indicates that the authors were following Henryson's tradition.58

J. S. P. Tatlock is convinced that another play on the love of Troilus and Cressida existed and that it was a source for both Heywood's Iron Age and Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida.59 He bases his belief on the number of corresponding details in both works which could have been derived from no known sources:

As to small points, one thing seems certain, without insisting on any one, they cannot all be due to coincidence, or to any known common source, or to any sort of common fund of material generally traditional in Trojan plays. Remaining possibilities are that one borrowed from the other directly, or through an intermediary play, or that both made use of a third play.60

Many of these details which the two plays have in common show an acquaintance with the Iliad. Since only part of Homer's poem was available to Shakespeare in English translation when he was writing his drama, and since none other of his works shows the slightest acquaintance with the Iliad, the Homeric references in Troilus and Cressida must have been derived, Tatlock maintains, from Shakespeare's source play. The possibility that Shakespeare copied his Homeric details from Heywood's play is ruled out by the general lack of verbal similarities between the two works. The only possible conclusion that Tatlock can reach is that both Heywood and Shakespeare

58 Ibid., p. 417.  
59 Tatlock, op. cit., pp. 738-759.  
60 Ibid., p. 753.
made use of a play, now lost, by an author who was familiar with Homer.

About 1600 Shakespeare turned his attention to the famed story and produced his play *Troilus and Cressida*. Just as Chaucer's concept of the tale had been molded by Boccaccio's *Filostrato* and the ideals of courtly love, the form which Shakespeare's drama was to take was dictated, in a very real sense, by the Troilus-Cressida tradition which had become fixed by sixteenth-century English writers. Rollins tells us that at the time Shakespeare was writing his play "Troilus was the name for a constant lover, 'Cressid's kind' was a euphemism for 'harlot', and 'pander' had become a common noun."61 Shakespeare himself lightly employed these concepts in some of his other plays. In *Much Ado About Nothing* Benedick speaks of Troilus as "the first employer of panders"; 62 Rosalind in *As You Like It* calls Troilus "one of the patterns of love"; 63 and in *Henry V* Pistol describes Doll Tearsheet as a "lazar kite of Cressid's kind." 64 However, when Shakespeare turned to a serious consideration of the love story, he raised it to a level of dignity again artistically although

61 Rollins, op. cit., p. 423.


he was unable to improve the bad reputation it had morally. He found real people beneath the stereotypes to which the characters of the story had been reduced by a long succession of crude jests, doggerel versions, and inept treatments. Although Shakespeare's heroine may seem debased compared with Chaucer's Criseyde, she is a plausible human being, and Rollins feels that in reality she is an improvement over the popular Elizabethan conception of her:

In the light of the history of the love story, the remarkable thing really is that Shakespeare has dealt with her so mildly. . . . Certainly he has no apparent bitterness towards Cressida. He does not punish her as did Henryson; he does not make her a common harlot as did Henryson, Whetstone, Howell, and the rest; nor does he make her the wholly contemptible creature of Heywood's or the miserable leprosy-stricken beggar of the Dekker-Chettle play.65

By the force of his genius and imagination Shakespeare was able to create a work of merit out of material that in the hands of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors had been dross.

CHAPTER II

A COMPARISON OF CHAUCER'S AND SHAKESPEARE'S
TREATMENT OF PLOT

Although Chaucer and Shakespeare tell the same story, each author treats it in his own way, giving a different emphasis to the two threads of the narrative—the Trojan War and the love story of Troilus and Cressida. It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss and compare the handling of plot materials in the two versions of the Troilus-Cressida tale.

Chaucer views it as a model romance. Indeed he makes only a slight attempt to picture the world of classical antiquity. The names of the warriors are classical; but the characters, their manners, and the life revealed are purely medieval. Chaucer neglects the Trojan War background of his narrative to tell a love story. That he feels only a slight interest in the war is attested by the fact that he relates only four episodes concerned with it. In the first, near the beginning, he describes the arrival of the Greeks with "a thousand shippes" and the alternate success of Greeks and Trojans as Fortune turns her wheel, but he disclaims any intention of telling the lengthy tale of the final destruction of Troy, for, says he,

In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write.¹

¹Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, I, 146-147.
Chaucer's second reference to the war comes at the beginning of Book IV, in the mention of a battle in which many Trojans are captured. This incident is important to his purpose in that it prepares the way for the ransom of the Trojan prisoners by which Crisseyde is exchanged for Antenor. The poet speaks of the war for the third time in telling of the death of Hector, though he relates little more than that the great warrior was killed by Achilles. In his fourth mention of the war Chaucer tells how Troilus, who fights often and valiantly after Hector's death, is finally slain "despitously" by Achilles.

Shakespeare, on the other hand, gives almost as much attention to the war as to the love story. The prologue to the play announces that the scene is Troy, that sixty-nine ships with armies have arrived "to ransack Troy," and that the action will begin in the middle of the war. And so it does; of the twenty-four scenes that follow, fourteen have almost nothing to do with the story of Troilus and Cressida, and thirteen of them are laid either in the Greek camp or on the battlefield.

Indeed, Shakespeare's preoccupation with the war accounts for the inclusion of a number of incidents which Chaucer, interested primarily in the romance, has neglected entirely or

2Ibid., V, 1548-1561. 3Ibid., V, 1800-1806.

treated only lightly. Such are Achilles' refusal to fight, Hector's challenge to combat with Ajax, the death of Patroclus at the hands of Hector, and the slaying of Hector in revenge by Achilles.

The different treatment of Hector's death by the two authors is significant of the emphasis which each gives to the war. Chaucer mentions it briefly and casually; but Shakespeare, exhibiting the characteristic Elizabethan sympathy toward the Trojans, paints a pitiful picture of the weary, unarmed warrior mercilessly slain:

Achilles: Strike, fellows, strike! this is the man I seek.
So, Ilion, fall thou next: now, Troy, sink down!
Here lies thy heart, thy sinews, and thy bone.
On, Myrmidons, and cry you all amain,
'Achilles hath the mighty Hector slain.'

The death of Hector is of no consequence in the story of Troilus and Cressida, but it is the crucial point, the climax, of the story of the siege of Troy. By placing this scene almost at the end of his play, Shakespeare gives the war story a dramatic importance that almost overshadows the story of the lovers.

Chaucer, emphasizing, rather, the fortunes of Troilus, continues the narrative, telling how that young Trojan fights with great zeal and valor after Hector's death and is finally killed by Achilles.

If, as I have attempted to show, the war story receives

\[Ibid., V, viii, 10-14.\]
greater emphasis in the drama and less in the poem, the converse is true as regards the love story.

It is obvious that Chaucer is interested primarily in the love story of Troilus and Criseyde, and for this reason he lavishes detail and imagination on the development and dissolution of the young Trojans' romance. It is, as Lawrence says, "a masterpiece of subtle psychological analysis." So subtly does the poet delineate Pandarus' craftiness in bringing the lovers together, Troilus' ecstasy and final disillusionment, Criseyde's tender love and hateful perfidy that critics have called Troilus and Criseyde the first great English novel. The tragic love affair is elaborated with great care and treated with all the seriousness that the system of courtly love demanded; and it is this idealized conception of love which chiefly distinguishes Chaucer's treatment from Shakespeare's.

We first see Troilus, scoffing at love and lovers, in the Temple of Palladian, where his eye falls on the beautiful young widow, Criseyde. His sudden love for her is depicted in the fashion of a typical romantic convention, the gaze that pierces the lover's heart:

    And of hire look in him ther gan to quyken
    So gret desir and such affeccioun,
    That in his hertes botme gan to stiken
    Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun.

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7Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, I, 295-298.
Troilus behaves like a typical courtly lover after he falls in love. Criseyde's conquest of him is complete; his only desire is to serve her with absolute humility, as he says,

\[\ldots\text{myn estat roial, I here resigne}
\text{Into hire hand, and with ful humble chere}
\text{Bicome hir man, as to my lady dere.}^8\]

He worships his lady from afar, for he feels his own unworthiness to such a degree that he thinks his love is hopeless. Languishing in silence, he neglects his duty as a warrior, suffering and pining after love. He sighs and weeps,\(^9\) loses sleep and appetite, grows thin and wan, and finally has to feign illness to disguise the inroads that unrequited love makes on his appearance.\(^11\) He attempts to gain his lady's favor by winning honor and the good opinion of men for himself.\(^12\) His love exercises a refining influence on his whole conduct:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{For he bicom the frendlieste wight,} \\
\text{The gentilist, and ek the mooste fre,} \\
\text{The thrivelest and oon the beste knyght,} \\
\text{That in his tyme was or myghte be.} \\
\text{Dede were his japes and his cruelte,} \\
\text{His heighe port and his manere estraunge,} \\
\text{And ech of tho gan for a vertu chaunge.}^13
\end{align*}
\]

At the height of his anguish and suffering Troilus divulges his love to Pandarusr, who takes upon himself the management of his inexperienced young friend's suit. Pandarusr broaches the subject of Troilus' love to Criseyde with great tact and

\[^8\text{Ibid., I, 432-434.} \quad ^9\text{Ibid., I, 547-581.} \quad ^{10}\text{Ibid., I, 540-544.} \quad ^{11}\text{Ibid., I, 484-491.} \quad ^{12}\text{Ibid., I, 477-483.} \quad ^{13}\text{Ibid., I, 1079-1085.}\]
subtlety. First, he piques her curiosity by hinting that he has news which should make her the happiest woman in Troy. He then praises Troilus and extols his many virtues. When she is shocked by the disclosure of Troilus' affection, he plays upon her tender heart and, pretending to be angry, tells her that she has both Troilus' and his own life in her hands to destroy by her hardness and indifference. He does not leave her until he has received her promise to consider Troilus' suit. By the time he returns on the next day with a letter from Troilus, other subtle influences—the sight of her knight riding in triumph from the battlefield and her serving maids' praise of love—together with the debates which have been going on in her own heart, have considerably softened her former unyielding attitude. After another sight of the prince and constant urging by her uncle, she writes a cautious, but encouraging, reply to Troilus' letter, granting him permission to love her at a distance. There is a seemingly lapse of time before Pandarus finally brings the lovers together. On the pretext of having Criseyde appeal to influential friends for support in resisting the attempts of Poliphetes and his followers to confiscate her property, he has her invited to a dinner party at Deiphobus' home, where Troilus, feigning illness, has come for hospitalization. Pandarus arranges for the lovers to have an hour alone together, during which time Criseyde accepts Troilus as her knight. Always careful to keep their love a secret, the
lovers subsequently meet often, but it is yet some time before they can consummate their love. At length, on a night which promises to be dark and stormy, Pandarus invites Criseyde to dine at his house. When the storm breaks, he persuades her to stay overnight, and the lovers are thus afforded a time together. Troilus and Pandarus overcome her reluctance and modesty by a ruse: they pretend that Troilus is being tortured by a fit of jealousy that Criseyde alone can alleviate by agreeing to see him. When Troilus is finally brought into her presence, she berates him for his groundless suspicions of her; and, suffering embarrassment and remorse, he faints at her bedside. She takes pity on him, and when he awakens, all former unpleasantness is forgotten. The scheming of Pandarus has at last borne fruit.

As I have said before, Shakespeare treats the love story of Troilus and Cressida with much less detail. In fact, the entire affair is presented in three scenes: an interview between Pandarus and Troilus, one between Pandarus and Cressida, and the lovers' assignation at Pandarus' house. The interviews between Pandarus and each of the lovers convey no sense of the development and growth of the love affair, as do those in Chaucer's version. They are merely typical samples from the long series of visits which Pandarus must have needed to accomplish his end. Pandarus appears to have had many conversations with each of the lovers before the play opens, for in the first scene Troilus complains of the
slow progress his agent is making in wooing for him.\textsuperscript{14} Nothing is told of how the affair started; no subtle schemes or clever strategies for winning Cressida are revealed. Pandarus' interview with Troilus merely presents a sketch of an impulsive, enamored youth dominated by an old man who delights in toying with the young lover's emotions. The behavior of the love-smitten Troilus reported in this scene resembles in only a few details that of Chaucer's courtly lover. Shakespeare's hero, too, finds his mind so much preoccupied with thoughts of Cressida that he neglects his duty on the battlefield:

\begin{quote}
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!\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Like Chaucer's prince, he tries to conceal from the world his anguish and restless longing over love, saying

\begin{quote}
... when my heart,
As wedged with a sigh, would rive in twain--
Lest Hector or my father should perceive me,
I have (as when the sun doth light a storm)
Buried this sigh in wrinkle of a smile.
But sorrow that is couch'd in seeming gladness
Is like that mirth fate turns to sudden sadness.\textsuperscript{16}
\end{quote}

Pandarus' interview with Cressida reveals that all his obvious and unimaginative efforts to induce her to accept Troilus are unnecessary, for she has been in love with the young

\textsuperscript{14}Shakespeare, \textit{Troilus and Cressida}, I, i, 15-28.

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., I, i, 2-5; cf. Chaucer, \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, I, 547-581.

prince since the day he began his suit and has appeared "stub-
born-chaste against all suit" merely to increase his desire
for her. Of conquest in love she says,

    Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the
doing.
    That she belov'd knows nought that knows not
this:
    Men prize the thing ungain'd more than it is.
    That she was never yet that ever knew
    Love got so sweet as when desire did sue.17

When the lovers are finally brought together, both are fully
aware of the purpose of their meeting and are eager to pur-
sue their love-making. It is not necessary to employ any
such subterfuge as Chaucer's Pandarus uses to bring them into
one another's arms. Their love scene is frankly sensual in
nature. Oscar James Campbell describes this, their first
and only meeting, in the following terms:

    In this scene Shakespeare has portrayed with a
realism seldom equaled in all literature the amorous
preliminaries of an assignation of two adepts in the
arts of preparatory love-play. He has composed a
chapter in a new Ars Amatoria.18

During this scene Cressida is so carried away by her passion
that she reveals all the womanly wiles she has used to attract
Troilus. In contrast with the sweetness and tender emotion
displayed by Chaucer's lovers during their night together is
the cynicism and worldly-wise attitude of Shakespeare's lovers,
evident in such conversations as the following one:

17Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I, 11, 313-317.
18Oscar James Campbell, Comicall Satyre and Shakespeare's
    Troilus and Cressida, p. 213.
Troilus: ... What too curious dreg espies my sweet lady in the fountain of our love? Cressida: More dregs than water, if my fears have eyes.

Troilus: Fears make devils of cherubins; they never see truly.

Cressida: Blind fear that seeing reason leads, finds safer footing than blind reason stumbling without fear. To fear the worst oft cures the worse.

Troilus: O, let my lady apprehend no fear! In all Cupid’s pageant there is presented no monster.

Cressida: Nor nothing monstrous neither?

Troilus: Nothing but our undertakings when we vow to weep seas, live in fire, eat rocks, tame tigers—thinking it harder for our mistress to devise imposition enough than for us to undergo any difficulty imposed. This is the monstruousity in love, lady, that the will is infinite and the execution confin’d, that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit.

Cressida: 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 act of hares, are they not monsters? 19

As in Chaucer’s poem, the lovers in Shakespeare’s play exchange vows of love and faithfulness. Significantly, Cressida’s pledge of loyalty is phrased negatively; whereas Troilus swears to be true, she promises, rather, not to be false. Ironically she forecasts her own fate as she says,

If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth, When time is old and hath forgot itself, When water drops have worn the stones of Troy, And blind oblivion swallow’d cities up, And mighty states characterless are grated To dusty nothing—yet let memory, From false to false, among false maids in love, Upbraid my falsehood! When th’ have said ’as false As air, as water, wind, or sandy earth As fox to lamb, or wolf 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.’ 20

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19 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, III, ii, 70-96.
20 Ibid., III, ii, 191-203.
Pandarus is present at the lovers' meeting in both versions.
In Chaucer's he is discreet, reassuring, and understanding;
in Shakespeare's, lecherous and mocking.

The climax of the Troilus-Cressida story is reached
when the Greeks grant Calchas' request to exchange the cap-
tured Antenor for his daughter. Both authors treat this
incident in a similar manner. The renegade priest, making
his plea before the Greek leaders, offers almost identical
arguments in both versions: the appropriateness of the time
(in Chaucer's version Calchas makes his plea just after a
battle in which many Trojans had been taken prisoners) and
the unequalled opportunity for the Greeks to repay him for
the loss and shame incurred by his departure from Troy to
serve them. 21 His request is readily granted in both accounts,
and Shakespeare adds that the Greeks have attempted to obtain
Cressida before, but that only a person of Antenor's merit
and nobility is sufficient to purchase her.

In Chaucer's tale a parliament of Trojan leaders is
called to decide whether Criseyde is to be exchanged for
Antenor. All save Hector agree that the Greeks' offer should
be accepted. Troilus, afraid that if he speaks out he will
betray his love and thus violate the cardinal principle of
the code of courtly love—secrecy, is forced to remain si-

cient during the discussion. The Trojans' decision plunges

21 Ibid., III, iii, 1-33; cf. Chaucer, Troilus and Cri-


cseyde, IV, 64-123.
both lovers into a state of grief and desperation, and Troilus' thoughts dwell on foreordination, destiny, and death. Pandarus urges the lovers not to abandon themselves to sorrow but to seek a solution for their dilemma. They all meet together at night, and Troilus and Pandarus propose that they steal Criseyde away. However, she persuades them that a better plan would be for her to submit to the exchange and find a way back to Troy within ten days' time. Troilus reluctantly agrees to this scheme, but he feels that she underestimates the power of the Greeks and her father to keep her in their camp.22 He does not doubt her faithfulness, but his heart is, nevertheless, filled with mysterious foreboding as he watches her depart from Troy.

In Shakespeare’s play the two incidents of the lovers' learning of Cressida’s exchange for Antenor and her departure from Troy occur almost simultaneously. Diomedes, coming to fetch Cressida to the Greek camp, arrives in Troy early in the morning and is directed to the house where the lovers are still sleeping together. By Shakespeare's day the conventions of courtly love had disappeared; hence the lovers in his play make no attempt to keep their love affair a secret. Paris, and perhaps others, know that they are together at Pandarus' house.23 Aeneas is sent ahead to warn Troilus of Diomedes' arrival. When the party which is to escort Cressida

22 Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, IV, 1436-1526.
23 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, IV, i, 40-42.
from Troy arrives, they find the lovers together, and Troilus makes no attempt to conceal the nature of their relationship. There is scarcely time before Cressida leaves Troy for the couple to do more than bid one another farewell. They do not have enough time to search for a way out of their plight as do Chaucer's lovers. Troilus hastily tells Cressida that he will visit her in the Greek camp; and, like Chaucer's hero, he finds himself strangely disturbed by the prospect of Cressida's departure from Troy. Almost as if he does not fully trust her, he again and again admonishes her to be true. When she becomes annoyed by his concern over her faithfulness, he swears that he does not doubt her love, but that he knows the charm and sophistication of the Greeks and realizes the weakness of human nature. Troilus' doubt is another example of Shakespeare's ironic foreshadowing.

In Chaucer's account, Criseyde does not readily betray Troilus for Diomedes. The author carefully warns the reader not to presume that her old love was quickly or easily dismissed, as he says,

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But trewely, how longe it was bytwene
That she forsok hym for this Diomede,
Ther is non auctour telleth it, I wene.
Take every man now to his bokes heede;
He shal no terme fynden, out of drede.
For though that he bigan to owe hire score
Er he hire wan, yet was ther more to doone.```

\[24\text{Ibid.}, \text{ IV, iv, 74-75.}\]
\[25\text{Ibid.}, \text{ IV, iv, 60-99.}\]
\[26\text{Chaucer, } \text{Troilus and Criseyde, V, 1086-1092.}\]
Her father proves stubborn and suspicious and does not permit her either to return directly or to find a way of escape. Diomedes, who has shown an interest in her from the day that he escorted her from Troy, begins to woo her in his most subtle and charming manner. He plays upon her loneliness, fear of insecurity, and natural sympathy as he argues that Troy is doomed, that she needs a friend and protector, and that he is a good man among the Greeks. Criseyde finds it difficult to dispute the logic of his arguments and the cleverness of his well-chosen words, and she cannot prevent his speeches from sinking deep into her consciousness. In the reasons which Diomedes advances for Criseyde to accept him as her lover, Chaucer has provided motivation for his heroine's subsequent betrayal of Troilus. Shakespeare, on the other hand, does not seek to explain the conduct of his less complex and more forthright Cressida. She betrays her lover because she is a wanton.

Shakespeare's Cressida, unlike Chaucer's lady, betrays Troilus almost immediately after her departure from Troy. No sooner has she arrived in the Greek camp than she freely and openly exchanges jests and kisses with the Greek leaders. The very next night after she has lain in Troilus' arms, she surrenders herself to Diomedes.

After her betrayal of Troilus, Cressida in both versions is filled with remorse and self-reproach. Chaucer's heroine seems genuinely sorry for her fault and accepts the blame for
her actions as well as their consequences as she laments,

"Allas! for now is clene ago
My name of trouthe in love, for evermo!
For I have falsed oon the gentileste
That evere was, and oon the worthieste!

"Allas! of me, unto the worldes ende,
Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
No good word, for these bokes wol me shende.
O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!
Thoroughout the world my belle shal be ronge!
And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.
Allas, that swich a cas me sholde faile!

"Thei wol seyn, in as muche as in me is,
I have hem don dishonour, weylaway!
Al be I nat the first that dide amys,
What helpeth that to don my blame awey?
But syn I se ther is no bettre way,
And that to late is now for me to rewe,
To Diomede algate I wol be trewe.

"But, Troilus, syn I no bettre may,
And syn that thus departen ye and I,
Yet prey I God, so yeve yow right good day,
As for the gentileste, trewely,
That evere I say, to serven feythfully,
And best kan ay his lady honour kepe";--
And with that word she brast anon to wepe.

"And certes, yow ne haten shal I nevere;
And frendes love, that shal ye han of me,
And my good word, al sholde I lyven evere.
And, trewely, I wolde sory be
For to seen yow in adversitee;
And gilteles, I woot wel, I yow leve.
But al shal passe; and thus take I my leve."27

Shakespeare's Cressida also admits her error, but she blames
it not so much on her own weakness as on that of her whole
sex:

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,

27 Ibid., V, 1054-1085.
The error of our eye directs our mind.
What error leads must err. O, then conclude
Minds sway'd by eyes are full of turpitude.28

After Criseyde's departure from Troy Chaucer's interest is centered on Troilus and the effects of his lady's betrayal on him. Narrating from Troilus' point of view, Chaucer creates an account full of suspense and pity. The agony of Troilus' ten-day wait is well conveyed. Hoping to relieve his anxiety and impatient longing, the young prince visits a friend who lives in the country. However, he derives no comfort from all his host's efforts to entertain him, and at the end of a week he eagerly hastens back to Troy to await the arrival of his lady. All the ninth night and tenth day he hopefully watches on the city walls for her return. When she fails to appear at the appointed time he is deeply hurt, but he does not doubt her faithfulness. His health declines, and he has disturbing dreams which Cassandra interprets as a sign of his beloved's perfidy. He cannot admit that his sister might be right, and he accuses her of lying. He writes to Criseyde, imploring her to return, but her answers are cold and vague and offer him no hope that she will soon be with him. He contemplates visiting her disguised as a pilgrim, but finds this plan impracticable. Although Pandarus and Cassandra are sure that he has been betrayed, Troilus stoutly maintains his faith in Criseyde until he finds undeniable proof of her perfidy—the brooch which he had given

28Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, V, ii, 107-112.
her as a love token pinned to a cloak captured from Diomedes. He does not cease to love his lady even after he discovers that she has betrayed him, but he vows to revenge himself on Diomedes. He is never able to accomplish this, however, although the two subsequently meet many times on the battlefield.

In Shakespeare's play Troilus is not subjected to the months of agonized waiting that he suffers in Chaucer's poem. Unlike Chaucer's hero, he learns of his betrayal at first hand, for, just one night after Cressida leaves his arms, he watches as she gives herself to Diomedes. Impetuous though Troilus is, he, nevertheless, stands by and witnesses her surrender without attempting to halt it. His words indicate that he is unable to believe what he sees:

This she? No, this is Diomed's Cressida! If beauty have a soul, this is not she; If souls guide vows, if vows be sanctimonies, If sanctimon be the gods' delight, If there be rule in unity itself-- This is not she. 29

Like Chaucer's Troilus, he cannot bring himself to hate his lady, although he has lost all his illusions about her true nature. He seeks no revenge against her, but, again like Chaucer's hero, he swears to kill Diomedes. As the play ends, the two warriors have met in conflict, but neither has been able to overcome the other.

Although Shakespeare concludes his story just after Troilus learns that he has been betrayed, Chaucer relates

29Ibid., V, ii, 137-142.
how the young Trojan prince, "dispiteously" slain by Achilles, goes to heaven, from whence he looks down at the earth and indulgently smiles at human lovers and their follies.

In summary, Chaucer is concerned only with the love affair of his principals, whereas Shakespeare further incorporates a great body of material dealing with a large group of the notable figures of the Trojan-Greek war. Because of the broader scope of his material, as well, possibly, as the restrictions on the amount of time and the number of events which can be depicted in a drama, Shakespeare condenses and telescopes the action of the love story. In Shakespeare's play Troilus and Cressida meet, love, and part, Cressida betrays her lover, and Troilus discovers her perfidy, all within a period of two days. In Chaucer's tale three years elapse between the time that Troilus first falls in love with Criseyde and her departure from Troy, as this passage indicates:

The gold-ytressed Phesus heighe on-lofte
Thries hadde alle with his bemes clene
The snowes molte, and Zepherus as ofte
Ibrought ayeyn the tendre leves grene,
Syn that the sone of Ecuba the queene
Bigan to love hire first for whom his sorwe
Was al, that she deparde sholde a-morwe.30

Chaucer does not say exactly how long it was after her departure before she betrayed Troilus, but he emphasizes that she did not quickly succumb to Diomedes' wooing.31 Finally, Shakespeare emphasizes the gross aspects of the story, whereas

30 Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, V, 8-14.
31 Ibid., V, 1086-1092.
Chaucer handles the sordid passages with delicacy, preferring to emphasize the nobility of his characters and the ennobling influence of love.
CHAPTER III

CHARACTERIZATION IN CHAUCER'S AND SHAKESPEARE'S
VERSIONS OF THE STORY

A consideration of characterization in a study of any important work by either Shakespeare or Chaucer is almost inevitable, for both men possess an ability to create characters unsurpassed by any other writers in English. In the two authors' versions of the Troilus-Cressida story, such a discussion becomes a study in contrasts. Perhaps the dissimilarity of the characters in the two stories is to be explained by the difference in emphasis and plot construction in the two works or perhaps by differences in attitudes toward life in the two periods in which they were written.

The number of significant characters in Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida is, by the scope of the work, necessarily larger than in Chaucer's poem. An entire group of Greek warriors not even mentioned by Chaucer is, if not delineated in complex detail, at least clearly sketched by the dramatist. Agamemnon is regal; Nestor, ancient and venerable; Ulysses, serious and crafty. Ajax and Achilles are characterized as proud men of great brawn but little wit, not only by the vindictive Thersites but by their own leaders as well. When Nestor states that even Achilles will divine the purpose of Hector's challenge, he affirms that the great warrior is not especially bright:

... Achilles, were his brain as barren
As banks of Libya (though, Apollo knows,
'Tis dry enough), will with great speed of judgment, . . . find Hector's purpose Pointing on him

and Ulysses describes Ajax as "dull" and "brainless." 2 The character of Thersites has puzzled many readers of Shakespeare's play. Full of raillery and venomous utterances, he is a coward physically, who attempts to compensate for his inadequacies by assuming an air of intellectual superiority. If he were not so contemptible we could almost feel sympathy for him when, realizing his inferiority, he says,

How now, Thersites? What, lost in the labyrinth of thy fury? Shall the elephant Ajax carry it thus? He beats me, and I rail at him. O worthy satisfaction! Would it were otherwise: that I could beat him whilst he rail'd at me. 3

It is hard to conceive what dramatic purpose Shakespeare had for creating Thersites. He might have thought of him as a clown, or he might have meant him to serve a more serious purpose. If he were meant to be a clown and nothing more, he more often disgusts than amuses modern readers of the play. For them his speeches are too cynical and malicious and his language too often tasteless and coarse to be considered humorous. Oscar James Campbell believes that he combines the functions of a clown with those of a commentator who expresses Shakespeare's attitude toward the characters and

1Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I, ii, 328-331.
2Ibid., I, iii, 381.
3Ibid., II, iii, 1-6.
action of the play. He considers Thersites an example of a
definite, recognizable dramatic type, the railer of the "com-
ical satyre" evolved by Jonson and Marston during the period
when Troilus and Cressida was written. Campbell says,

    In the exercise of his office [of railler, detractor,
and buffoon] Thersites, . . . in his comments does not
observe fitness of time, place, or language. His envy,
which we are given to understand is his ruling passion,
serves as the recognized credentials for his satiric
office. But, being a "prophane Jester," he reflects
the author's point of view only in the import of his
outbursts, not in their tone. . . . His speech is de-
signed to evoke amusement and aversion simultaneously.

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

Thersites calls right things by wrong names. He tells
the truth, however awry the form and spirit of his ex-
pression.4

Several minor characters appear in both versions of the
story. One of these, Aeneas, is characterized by Shakespeare
as "one of the flowers of Troy."5 He is young, proud, and
dashing. He handles the Trojans' communication with the
Greeks in a manner that is condescending and blandly insulting.
For example, he delivers Hector's challenge to single combat
with any Greek in words which, though polite on the surface,
carry an easily perceptible undertone of insolence.6 Later
in the play, he exchanges taunts with Diomedes, who has come
to Troy to fetch Cressida as ransom for the captured Antenor.7
Shakespeare probably wished us to admire Aeneas and to accept

4Campbell, op. cit., pp. 203-204; 217.
6Ibid., I, III, 223-259.  7Ibid., IV, I, 10-33.
his behavior as gallant and spirited rather than as arrogant and presumptuous, as it might seem to be; for, as the great grandfather of Brutus, the legendary founder of the British nation, Aeneas was a hero to the Elizabethans. Chaucer, on the other hand, dismisses him with a single derogatory reference to his support of Poliphile, who unscrupulously attempts to obtain Crisyeid's property. 8

Another of Poliphile's supporters is Antenor. Chaucer adds that in addition to the shame that accrues to him for attempting to take advantage of a woman he proves a traitor to his country. 9 Shakespeare praises him faintly for his wit rather than for the valor and bravery which are admired in Hector, Aeneas, and Troilus:

He has a shrewd wit, . . . and he's a man good enough. He's one o' th' soundest judgments in Troy, whosoever, and a proper man of person. 10

In characterizing Deiphobus (or Deiphebus, as Chaucer spells his name) Shakespeare and Chaucer are directly at variance. Chaucer presents him as a generous and friendly person, Troilus' favorite brother, Pandarus' lord and comrade, and a loyal friend to Criseyde, whose cause he readily and whole-heartedly espouses. Shakespeare mentions him only briefly as a "sneaking fellow." 11

8 Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, II, 1473-1475.
9 Ibid., IV, 203-205.
10 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I, 11, 206-209.
11 Ibid., I, 11, 248.
The authors' different treatments of the two soothsayers, Calchas and Cassandra, form another pair of interesting contrasts. Shakespeare fails to develop Calchas as a character at all; he does not give the old traitor even one sentence of description, as he does some of the unimportant warriors, such as Helenus and Deiphobus. Chaucer, on the other hand, describes the renegade priest as greedy and shrewd. Although the aged Calchas forgets his daughter when he flees Troy, he is nowhere near mental eclipse, a fact of which Troilus is well aware as he says

Youre syre is wyse; and seyde is, out of dred
"Men may the wise atrenne and naught atrede."\(^{12}\)

Shakespeare does not neglect Cassandra as he does Calchas. He recounts two of her prophecies, both of which are laughed at and ignored by her royal brothers. Troilus dismisses her predictions of the fall of Troy by saying,

... Cassandra's mad. Her brainsick raptures
Cannot distaste the goodness of a quarrel
Which hath our several honours all engag'd
To make it gracious.\(^{13}\)

Chaucer presents Cassandra only once—for the purpose of telling Troilus that Criseyde has betrayed him for Diomedes. Her prophecies are not scorned nor lightly dismissed. Troilus, in reality deeply hurt by what she has revealed, will not permit himself to admit that it might be true and violently denounces her as a liar.\(^{14}\) There is a noticeable

\(^{12}\) Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, IV, 1455-1456.

\(^{13}\) Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, II, ii, 122-125.

difference in Cassandra's language in the two versions. Shakespeare's Cassandra speaks violently and extravagantly, whereas Chaucer's prophetess speaks with reason and self-control.\textsuperscript{15}

All that is said of Paris in Chaucer's tale is that Helen "may leden Paris as hire liste."\textsuperscript{16} He is, however, portrayed in some detail by Shakespeare. At one time his father reproves him for his voluptuousness:

\begin{quote}
Paris, you speak
Like one besotted on your sweet delights.
You have the honey still, but these
the gall...\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

When the other Trojans are on the field of battle, he is often at home amusing Helen.\textsuperscript{18} Having literally stolen another man's wife, he is the subject of many jests based on the old theme of cuckolding. For example, wounded in battle by Menelaus, Paris is said to be "gored by Menelaus' horn."\textsuperscript{19} Aeneas, meeting him early one morning, greets him with the words,

\begin{quote}
Had I so good occasion to lie long
As you, Prince Paris, nothing but
heavenly business
Should rob my bedmate of my company...\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

No one makes any attempt to gloss over his conduct, which is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{15}Cf. Shakespeare, \textit{Troilus and Cressida}, II, ii, 104-112 and Chaucer, \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, V, 1513-1513.
\item \textsuperscript{16}Chaucer, \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, II, 1449.
\item \textsuperscript{17}Shakespeare, \textit{Troilus and Cressida}, II, ii, 142-144.
\item \textsuperscript{18}Ibid., III, i, 146-150. \textsuperscript{19}Ibid., I, i, 115.
\item \textsuperscript{20}Ibid., IV, i, 3-5.
\end{itemize}
openly joked about everywhere.

Helen, in Shakespeare's version, comes off with no greater respectability than Paris. When she flirts with Pandarust\(^2\) or fondles Troilus' chin, counting the hairs on it,\(^2\) her behavior seems more than a bit immodest even by Elizabethan standards. Save for her beauty, she is not highly regarded by either the Greeks or the Trojans. Hector believes that "she is not worth what she doth cost the holding."\(^2\) Diomedes, too, condemns her severely, saying,

She's bitter to her country. Hear me, Paris:  
For every false drop in her bawdy veins  
A Grecian's life hath sunk; for every scruple  
Of her contaminated carrion weight  
A Trojan hath been slain. Since she could speak,  
She hath not given so many good words breath  
As for her Greeks and Trojans suff'red death.\(^2\)

Chaucer, with characteristic gallantry, treats Helen more sympathetically than Shakespeare does. He depicts her as a lady of charm and graciousness, who is respected and honored by all the Trojans. At Deiphobus' dinner, she expresses genuine sympathy for Crisseyde in her plight\(^2\) and Troilus in his illness.\(^2\)

The character of Hector is developed rather fully by both authors. By both he is regarded as a model warrior and gentleman. As a warrior he is without peer, "the townes wal and

\(^{21}\)Ibid., III, i, 50-160.  \(^{22}\)Ibid., I, ii, 113-182.  
\(^{23}\)Ibid., II, ii, 51-52.  \(^{24}\)Ibid., IV, i, 68-74.  
\(^{25}\)Chaucer, Troilus and Crisseyde, II, 1604-1610.  
\(^{26}\)Ibid., II, 1667-1678.
Grekes yerde." Achilles bests him only by taking him at a disadvantage. In addition to being a great warrior he is also a noble man, of whom Chaucer says,

In al this world ther nys a bettre knight
Than he, that is of worthynesse welle;
And he wel moore vertu hath than myght.

This good opinion is justified by his championing Crisseyde when she faces the anger of the town because of her father's flight, and his opposing her exchange for Antenor when it is debated before the rulers of the city. Of all the men of Troy, Hector is the only one whose moral sense is strong enough to argue the ethical aspects of the proposed exchange. He insists,

... she nys no prisonere, ...
I not on yow who that this charge leyde,
But, on my part, ye may eftsone hem telle,
We usen here no wommen for to selle.

The greatest motivating force in the character of Shakespeare's Hector is his love of honor. The only arguments strong enough to shake his convictions that Helen is not worth the lives it costs to hold her and that she should be returned to the Greeks are the dishonor attached to abandoning a cause which the Trojans have pledged to support and the opportunity the war provides to win honor and glory on the battlefield. When Andromache, Cassandra, and Priam urge him to refrain

27Ibid., II, 154.
29Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, II, 177-179.
30Ibid., IV, 179-182.
31Ibid., II, ii, 190-213.
from going to war on the day on which his doom has been predicted, he replies,

Mine honour keeps the weather of my fate.
Life every man holds dear, but the dear man
Holds honour far more precious-dear
than life.\textsuperscript{32}

There are times when Shakespeare's Hector, although generally an admirable man, behaves meanly. For example, on one occasion, humiliated at having been bested in an encounter with Ajax, he chides his wife and strikes his armor bearer.\textsuperscript{33} Another time, he kills a foe to obtain his armor.\textsuperscript{34} When Hector agrees to fight in single combat under any conditions that the Greeks may demand, Achilles remarks, with some apparent justice,

'Tis done like Hector; but securely done,
A little proudly, and great deal misprizing
The knight oppos'd.\textsuperscript{35}

There is evidence of his pride and arrogance in the tone of his brazen and somewhat frivolous challenge to single combat with the Greeks.\textsuperscript{36} His confidence in his own ability often approaches boastfulness, as in the speech which he makes after the exchange of blows in the contest with Ajax.\textsuperscript{37} Although Shakespeare shows Hector's human imperfections, he emphasizes the great warrior's nobility. Troilus once chides his famous

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., V, i11, 26-28. \textsuperscript{33}Ibid., I, ii, 4-6.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., V, vi, 27-31; viii, 1-4. \textsuperscript{35}Ibid., IV, v, 73-75.
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., I, iii, 265-283. \textsuperscript{37}Ibid., IV, v, 120-135.
brother for too often showing mercy to a fallen foe. They also disagree over the question of returning Helen to the Greeks. Hector favors giving her up; Troilus wishes to continue the fight to hold her. Hector's stand, which is supported, as he says, by the "law of nature and of nations," shows that he possesses the most highly developed ethical sense among the Trojans. He recognizes that he is fighting to support a cause which is both wrong and not worth the sacrifice of life required to maintain it. Troilus, with much the attitude of a professional soldier, requires only a cause--just or unjust--for which to fight. This difference in attitude serves to contrast Hector's serious, conscientious nature with Troilus' fiery, gallant one.

Now that the minor characters in both versions of the Troilus-Cressida story have been discussed, there remain to be treated only the four principal characters, Diomedes, Pandarbus, Troilus, and Cressida (or Crisneyde, as she is called in Chaucer's version). Although the minor characters are better developed in Shakespeare's tale than in Chaucer's, the converse is true of the major characters.

Shakespeare's Diomedes is described by Thersites as

... a false-hearted rogue, a most unjust knave. ... The sun borrows of the moon when Diomed keeps his word.

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38Ibid., V, i11, 37-49.  39Ibid., II, i1, 51-96.
40Ibid., II, ii, 184-185.  41Ibid., V, i, 96-104.
Any criticism made by Thersites, however, must be accepted with reservation because of his malicious and scurrilous nature. Of more value is Ulysses' observation:

... I ken
the manner of his gait;
He rises on the toe. That spirit of his
In aspiration lifts him from the earth.\textsuperscript{42}

This statement seems to imply the presence of driving ambition in Diomede's character. Further information concerning him must be gathered from his actions. Toward Helen he shows a bitter attitude. He condemns her vehemently as a strumpet, affirming that she is unworthy of the blood that is being spilled over her. In Cressida he tolerates no capriciousness nor coquettishness. He makes love in a driving, unsentimental manner, and each time that Cressida seems reluctant or hesitant in accepting his demands, he threatens to abandon her. Within one night after her departure from Troy, he has usurped Troilus' position in her favor. The quickness with which he wins her indicates experience in spotting loose women and deep understanding of their nature. He appears to be an excellent warrior, for the vengeance-seeking Troilus is unable to defeat him in battle. He seems not to be among the top-ranking Greeks, for he is not among the notables presented to Hector during his visit to the Greek camp. In addition to soldiering he performs the functions of an ambassador to the Trojans. In brief, he is a hard man, with a great deal of drive and

\textsuperscript{42}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, v, 14-16.
ambition. Although generally blunt and rough in his behavior, he is capable of acquitting himself creditably in an exchange not only of blows but also of words, as he does with Aeneas in Troy.\textsuperscript{43}

Chaucer, writing in a narrative rather than dramatic form, gives the following direct description of Diomedes:

\begin{quote}
This Diomede, as bokes us declare,
Was in his nedes prest and corageous,
With sterne vois and myghty lymes square,
Hardy, testimon, strong, and chivalrous
Of dedes, lik his fader Tideus.
And som men seyn he was of tonge large;
And heir he was of Calydoigne and Arge.\textsuperscript{44}
\end{quote}

Like Shakespeare, Chaucer stresses Diomedes' boldness and decisiveness of action, calling him "he that bold was ay."\textsuperscript{45} Thus, he begins his suit of Criseyde the very day he meets her and pursues it with determination and attention in the belief that "he that naught n'asailth, naught n'acheveth."\textsuperscript{46} Again, like Shakespeare's Diomedes, he possesses drive and ambition, but he seems in the poem to have cleverness and graciousness, as well as nobility of manner and background, that he does not have in the play. For example, in contrast to the overbearing urgency with which he presses his suit in Shakespeare's play is the intelligence and tact with which he woos Criseyde in Chaucer's poem. He begins by offering her his friendship and his assistance if she is ever in need.

\textsuperscript{43}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, i, 10-31.
\textsuperscript{44}\textit{Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde}, V, 733-805.
\textsuperscript{45}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 795.  \textsuperscript{46}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 784.
He urges her to regard him as her brother,\textsuperscript{47} shyly adding that he is not expert in speaking with women.\textsuperscript{48} Although he is impulsive and direct by nature, he is cautious not to offend her by being too forward. Not until the tenth day after her arrival from Troy does he begin his wooing in earnest. He handles his suit on that day very craftily. He asks, first, what she thinks of the siege; then, how she is enjoying her life among the Greeks; and, finally, why her father has delayed marrying her to some worthy knight. Voicing his suspicion that she is grieving for some Trojan, he points out the foolishness of such an action. He argues that Troy is doomed (as her father well knew when he sent for her), that the Greeks are men of great merit, and (with circumspect blushes) that he himself is a worthy man among the Greeks. He presses his suit day after day until he has worn down her resistance.\textsuperscript{49}

Like Shakespeare's Diomedes, he is an able warrior whom Troilus is unable to defeat in battle. In summary, Chaucer's Diomedes is a man of action—personable in manner and crafty and capable in any activity he undertakes.

The character of Pandarus presents one of the most striking differences in the two versions of the story. Chaucer's Pandarus has an ingratiating personality and possesses many close friends, including Troilus, Criseyde, and Deiphobus.

\textsuperscript{47}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 134-135. \textsuperscript{48}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 155-161. \textsuperscript{49}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 871-1036.
Because his friends are young and because he is a votary of love (as he indicates when he swears "by the blisful Venus that I serve")\textsuperscript{50} as well as a lover himself, although an unsuccessful one, he appears to be still a young man. Perhaps his outstanding quality is his devotion to Troilus. The friendship between the two men has the quality of such classic examples as that of Damon and Pythias, Palamon and Arcite, and David and Jonathan. Pandarus sums up his creed of friendship when he says,

\begin{quote}
I wol parten with the al thi peyne,
If it be so I do the no comfort,
As it is frenes right, soth for to seyne,
To entreparten wo as glad desport.
I have, and shal, for trewe or fals report,
In wrong and right iloved the al my lyve:
Hid nat thi wo fro me, but telle it blyve.\textsuperscript{51}
\end{quote}

Throughout the poem he exhibits sympathetic understanding; he does not tease Troilus about having scoffed at love but seeks rather, some method to help him. The extent of his willingness to aid the suffering prince is indicated in his declaration:

\begin{quote}
To Cerberus yn helle ay be I bounde,
Were it for my suster, al thy sowe,
By my wil she sholde al be thyn to-morwe.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Making Troilus' cause his own, he tells Crisneyde that he himself will die for pity if she does not in some manner relieve his young friend's woe.\textsuperscript{53} Unsolicited by either of the lovers, he gives their affair his whole-hearted attention. Indeed,

\textsuperscript{50}\textit{Ibid.}, II, 234. \quad \textsuperscript{51}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 583-595.

\textsuperscript{52}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 859-861. \quad \textsuperscript{53}\textit{Ibid.}, II, 339-446.
he plays the major part in promoting and guiding the romance, although the code of courtly love stressed secrecy between lovers. As Criseyde's uncle and guardian, he is fully aware of the seriousness of his actions in bringing the lovers together; but to him it is not a reprehensible action, but clearly a deed of brotherly kindness. He defines his attitude toward the affair when he says to Troilus,

For the have I bigonne a gamen playe,
Which that I nevere do shal eft for other,
Although he were a thousand fold my brother.

"That is to seye, for the am I bicomem,
Bitwixen gamme and ernest, swich a meene
As maken women unto men to comem;

.. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
"But God, that a woot, take I to witnesse,
That never I this for coveitise wroghte,
But oonly for t'abregge that distresse
For which wel neighe thou deidest, as me thoughte.54

Like a genuine friend, he remains true to Troilus throughout the whole of the story. Even when he is convinced that Criseyde is false, he keeps Troilus' hopes up; and, when her perfidy is proved beyond a doubt, he maintains his loyalty to Troilus, even as he denounces his kinswoman:

"My brother dear, I may do the same the.
What sholde I seyen? I hate, y'wys,
Criseyde;
And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!

.. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
"If I dide aught that myghte liken the,
It is me lye; and of this tresoun now,
God woot that it a sorwe is unto me!55

Another of Pandarus' outstanding characteristics is his cleverness. Throughout the entire love affair his ingenuity

54Ibid., III, 250-263. 55Ibid., V, 1731-1739.
and imagination are apparent. All of his quick-wittedness, knowledge of human nature, and charming manner are displayed, for example, in his first interview with Criseyde, in which he successfully introduces Troilus' suit by skilfully playing on her emotions: her curiosity, \textsuperscript{56} vanity, \textsuperscript{57} self-interest, \textsuperscript{58} pity, \textsuperscript{59} and personal friendship. \textsuperscript{60} The arrangements for the meeting of the lovers at Deiphbus' house and their first night together at his own home are further examples of Pandarus' abilities in intricately-plotted and skilfully-executed intrigue. Possessing an unusually facile brain, he can quickly produce a series of convincing arguments on almost any question. His statements create the impression that he has an essentially practical nature. When problems arise, he wastes no time despairing, as Troilus is apt to do, but, ever ready to face reality, he actively seeks to overcome them. His attitude toward dreams, which he counts "nought a bene," \textsuperscript{61} is but one concrete illustration of his realistic and practical nature.

Pandarus in Shakespeare's play is not the important character that he is in Chaucer's poem. Resembling in almost no respect the noble friend of Chaucer's version, he is a frivolous and salacious old man who is nothing more than a procurer. No motives of friendship or love prompt him to urge Troilus' suit. Instead, he appears to undertake the

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., II, 120-144.  \textsuperscript{57} Ibid., II, 344-350.  
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., II, 281-291.  \textsuperscript{59} Ibid., II, 432-446.  
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., II, 430-431.  \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., V, 362-363.
role of a pander because it gives "his senile licentiousness vicarious satisfaction." With obvious relish he officiates at the lovers' first meeting, urging them on step by step as they gratify their aroused passions. On the morning after the lovers' night together, he comes to sneer and gloat. Chaucer's Pandarus also teases Criseyde after the night that the lovers spend in his house, but his spirit—gentle and sympathetic rather than nasty and mocking, as it is in Shakespeare's play—emphasizes the essential difference in this character in the two versions of the story.

Troilus, as Chaucer draws him, approaching in his qualities the ideal hero. Although he is the central figure of the poem, the core about whom Chaucer weaves his tale, he seems less real than either Pandarus or Criseyde. Chaucer describes him in typical medieval fashion as a man possessed of all the virtues and none of the vices:

> Troilus wel woxen was in highte,  
> And complet formed by proportion  
> So wel that kynde it nought amenden myghte;  
> Yong, fressh, strong, and hardy as lyoun;  
> Trewé as stiel in ech condicioun;

> Troilus was nevere unto no wight,  
> As in his tyme, in no degree secounde  
> In duryng don that longeth to a knyght.  
> Al myghte a geant passen hym of myght,

62Campbell, op. cit., p. 218.
63Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, III, 11, 42-63.
64Ibid., IV, 11, 82-83.
65Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, III, 1555-1578.
His herte ay with the first and with the beste
Stood paregal, to durre don that hym leste. 66

Well qualified physically for the role of hero, he is
also intellectually adept, for he argues with much familiari-
ity and authority on the profound subjects of foreordination
and foreknowledge. 67 In regard to his character, Crisyde
says it was not his royal estate or his worthiness in battle
that made her first love him, but rather his "moral vertu,"
gentle heart, courtesy, and "resoun that bridled his delit." 68
He is, in short, a model knight, observing all the conven-
tions in what is, primarily, a story of courtly love. He
worships his lady at a distance; he keeps his love a secret
from the world, preferring to languish and die in sorrow than
to offend his lady by declaring it; he performs great deeds
for her honor; he binds himself to protect her good name at
all costs; his whole attitude and his manner become ennobled
as a result of the purifying power of his love. He is obedi-
ent to his beloved in all things, and Crisyde loves him for
his humbleness. 69 To the modern reader so much of Troilus'
behavior seems to be stylized or stereotyped that the sin-
cerity and depth of his love are often overlooked. Troilus
perhaps feels love more deeply than any other character in
the story. There are evidences of the genuineness of his
affection that are not romantic conventions. For one,

66Ibid., V, 827-840. 67Ibid., IV, 956-1078.
68Ibid., IV, 1667-1680. 69Ibid., III, 85-88.
Troilus is so grateful to Pandarus for helping him to obtain Criseyde’s love that he volunteers to secure him a lady, even one of his own sisters.\textsuperscript{70} Despite his intense agony at the prospect of being separated from Criseyde by her exchange for Antenor, Troilus will agree to no scheme for keeping her in Troy which will reflect adversely on her honor. Again, when she falls into a death-like trance at the thought of being parted from him, he draws his sword and would have killed himself if she had not revived in time to stay his hand.\textsuperscript{71} His grief after her departure from Troy is so acute that it is pathetic. Although he is keenly disappointed when she fails to return within the appointed time, he never doubts her faithfulness, even when Cassandra’s interpretation of his disturbing dreams implies the contrary. When he finds undeniable proof of her infidelity—the brooch which he had given her as a love token pinned to Diomedes’ cloak—he still has only love for her in his heart, as he says,

\begin{quote}
... I se that clene out of youre mynde
Ye han me cast; and I ne kan nor may,
For al this world, withinne myn herte
fynde
To unloven yow a quarter of a day!\textsuperscript{72}
\end{quote}

With her betrayal life has lost its meaning for him, and he declares that he will seek death on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{73} One possible explanation for his great devotion to her is his youth and inexperience. Not only has he never loved before,

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{70}\textit{Ibid.}, III, 407-413. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{71}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, 1178-1215.
\textsuperscript{72}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 1635-1636. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{73}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 1717-1719.
\end{flushleft}
but he has scoffed at all lovers; hence a love strong enough to conquer his hostility would be more than a passing fancy. His love for her is whole-hearted and completely free from cynicism or any ignoble motive. The very fact that he requires the help of an agent such as Pandarus in his wooing is proof of his inexperience. Convinced of the impossibility of obtaining love for himself, he had resigned himself to suffering forever his unrequited love in silence before Pandarus wrung his secret from him. There is a certain naivete about the very intensity of his joy and sorrow. At his first meeting with Crisseyde, he boyishly stammers in embarrassment and forgets his pretty speeches, but she finds his shyness and humility endearing. He remains submissive to his lady throughout the entire affair.

Shakespeare's Troilus is hardly the ideal hero that Chaucer's is, but he is perhaps a more realistic person. The dramatist's conception of him is set forth in Ulysses' speech:

   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 soonprovok'd, nor being provok'd soon
calm'd;
   His heart and hand both open and both free,
   For what he has he gives, what thinks he
shows,
   Yet gives he not till judgment 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.74

74Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, IV, v, 96-107.
His youth is remarked by Pandarus, who comments that "he has not past three or four hairs on his chin."\textsuperscript{75} Primarily a man of action, he rebukes Helenus for being too cautious on the battlefield.\textsuperscript{76} An eager warrior, he chides himself for his "womanish" spirit when his pursuit of love keeps him from the battlefield.\textsuperscript{77} Unlike Hector, who is inclined to show mercy to fallen foes, Troilus slays them in cold blood, believing that killing enemies is the business of war.\textsuperscript{78} He several times characterizes himself as a rude and simple warrior rather than a man of social graces, saying

\begin{quote}
I cannot sing,
Nor heel the high lavolt, nor sweeten talk,
Nor play at subtile games--fair virtues all
To which the Grecians are most prompt and pregnant.\textsuperscript{79}
\end{quote}

Again, referring to his supposed simplicity, he says,

\begin{quote}
While others fish with craft for great opinion,
I with great truth catch mere simplicity.
Whilst some with cunning gild their copper crowns,
With truth and plainness I do wear mine bare.
Fear not my truth. The moral of my wit
Is 'plain and true'; there's all the reach of it.\textsuperscript{80}
\end{quote}

Perhaps Shakespeare's Troilus is most strikingly differentiated from Chaucer's hero by his sensual and voluptuous attitude toward love. He is virtually intoxicated with the thought of his pleasure with Cressida, as his speech indicates:

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{75}Ibid., I, ii, 121-122.
\item \textsuperscript{76}Ibid., II, ii, 30-51.
\item \textsuperscript{77}Ibid., I, i, 109-110.
\item \textsuperscript{78}Ibid., V, iii, 37-49.
\item \textsuperscript{79}Ibid., IV, iv, 87-90.
\item \textsuperscript{80}Ibid., IV, iv, 105-110.
\end{footnotes}
I am giddy; expectation whirls me round.
Th' imaginary relish is so sweet
That it enchants my sense. What will it be
When that the wat'ry palates taste indeed
Love's thrice-repurred nectar? Death, I
fear me;
Sounding destruction; or some joy too fine,
Too subtle-potent, tun'd too sharp in
sweetness
For the capacity of my ruder powers.
I fear it much; and I do fear besides
That I shall lose distinction in my joys,
As doth a battle when they charge on heaps
The enemy flying. 81

Oscar James Campbell considers this speech an expression of
the "agony of unsatisfied sexual desire." 82 He maintains

Troilus is beset with the sexual gourmet's anxiety lest
the morsel which he is about to devour will be so rav-
ishing that thereafter he will lose his sense of nice
distinctions in sexual experience. For Troilus is not
meant to suggest Shakespeare's idea of a brutish lover,
but the educated sensuality of an Italianate English
roue. 83

He never completely trusts Cressida, for he repeatedly begs
her to be true. 84 Shakespeare's Troilus is, briefly, a man
of impulsive and direct action, an eager but somewhat ruthless warrior, a cynical and sensual lover.

The characterization of Cressida, inevitably faithless,
is one of the chief problems confronting any author who tells
the Troilus-Cressida story. In dealing with her Shakespeare
and Chaucer have created two widely dissimilar characters.
Shakespeare's Cressida is basically a shallow, sensual woman.

81Ibid., III, ii, 19-30.
82Campbell, op. cit., p. 212.
83Ibid.
84Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, IV, iv, 60-99.
Her betrayal of Troilus is surprising only in the quickness with which it comes, for Shakespeare has consistently shown her to be nothing more than a flirt. To attract Troilus and increase his desire for her she pretends to be "stubborn-chaste against all suit," shrewdly philosophizing:

Women are angels, wooing:
Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.
That she belov'd knows naught that knows not this:
Men prize the thing ungain'd 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; ungain'd, beseech.
Then, though my heart's content firm love doth bear,
Nothing of that shall from mine eyes appear.

When she hesitates and attempts to be coy with Diomedes, he threatens to abandon her. Of her relationship with the Greek Oscar James Campbell says,

So incorrigible a coquette and wanton clearly disappoints no dramatic expectation when she takes Diomed for her lover. He is a much more suitable mate for her than Troilus was, for he is a cynical realist, without romantic ideals which she must try to actualize. He does not put . . . her feelings . . . under any undue tension.

Ulysses immediately recognizes her true nature and expresses Shakespeare's conception of her when he says,

There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip;
Nay, her foot speaks. Her wanton spirits look out
At every joint and motive of her body.
O, these encounterers so glib of tongue,

85 *Ibid.*, I, 1, 100.  
That give accosting welcome ere it comes
And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
To every ticklish reader—set them down
For sluttish spoils of opportunity
And daughters of the game. 88

She shows her passionate nature in her first meeting with
Troilus, when she becomes so excited that judgment and self-
control leave her and she confesses all her feminine wiles:

Hard to seem won; but I was won, my lord,
With the first glance that ever—pardon me!
If I confess much, you will play the tyrant.
I love you now; but till now not so much
But I might master it. In faith, I lie!
My thoughts were like unbridled children,
grown
Too headstrong for their mother. . . .

. . . . . . . . . . .

. . . 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. 89

As she continues her self-disclosure, she reveals more of her
true nature than she perhaps realizes when she says,

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. 90

Her great protestations of love are marked by abandonment and
extravagance of language as if they were spoken under the
influence of an intoxicating passion. Campbell says,

This violence would seem to her hearers the hypo-
critical posturing of a wanton putting on an ill-con-
ceived display of feeling. They would murmur, "Methinks
the lady doth protest too much." 91

88 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, IV, v, 54-63.
89 Ibid., III, 11, 125-141. 90 Ibid., III, 11, 155-158.
91 Campbell, op. cit., p. 214.
Although she is probably sincere at the moment in what she is saying, she is easily swayed by her emotions. The puns and broad jests she exchanges with her uncle and serving man and with the men in the Greek camp indicate that she is not by nature modest and demure. Shakespeare's Cressida is, in short, nothing more than a "highborn harlot," a beautiful, superficial woman with an intense, emotional nature.

Chaucer is unfailingly kind and sympathetic to his Criseyde. He is careful to answer or moderate any possible criticism that might be raised against her. After he has told how she begins to find her heart stirred by love for Troilus, he cautiously adds that she did not act with unbecoming haste:

For I sey nought that she so sodeynly
Yaf hym hire love, but that she gan encline
To like hym first, and I have told yow whi;
And after that, his manhod and his pyne
Made love withinne hire herte for to myne,
For which, by process and by good servyse,
He gat hire love, and in no sodeyn wyse.32

Although he cannot deny her fault in betraying Troilus, he maintains his faith that she did not quickly nor easily succumb to Diomedes' wooing.34 Realizing that she will be punished for her perfidy by her bad reputation, he says that he would forgive her out of pity if he could.35

32Ibid., p. 214.
32Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, II, 673-679.
34Ibid., V, 1006-1092. 35Ibid., V, 1093-1099.
In his description of her, Chaucer uses the details of feminine beauty typical of the heroines of medieval romances:

Criseyde mene was of hire stature,
Therto of shap, of face and ek of cheere,
Ther myghte ben no fairer creature.
And ofte tyme this was hire manere,
To gon ytressed with hire heres chere
Doun by hire colore at hire bak byhynde,
Which with a thred of gold she wolde bynde.

And, save hire browes joyneden yfere,
Ther nas no lak, in aught I kan espien.
But for to spoken of hire eyen cleere,
Lo, trewely, they writen that hire syen,
That Paradis stood formed in hire yen.
And with hire riche beaute evere more
Strof love in hire ay, which of hem was more.

She sobre was, ek symple, and wys withal,
The best ynorished ek that myghte be,
And goodly of hire speche in general.
Charitable, estatlich, lusty, and fre;
Ne nevere mo ne lakked hire pite;
Tender-herted, slydyng of corage;
But trewely, I kan nat telle hire age. 96

The detail of the eyebrows meeting is of interest, for it was regarded as a sign of a passionate nature in Chaucer's day. 97 Her love seems sincere and noble when she declares that her greatest grief over her departure from Troy is the unhappiness it will bring to Troilus:

"Grevious to me, God woot, is for to twynne,"
Quod she, "but yet it harder is to me
To sen that sorwe which that he is inne;
For wel woot I it wol my bane be,

96 Ibid., V, 306-826.
And deye I wul in certeyn," the quod she . . .

If it is admitted that Crisseyde is a generally admirable woman and that she genuinely loves Troilus, what weaknesses cause her to betray him? In the first place, she is older than he and, being a widow, has already experienced love. Her previous married life appears to have left her with some disillusionment about love, for, when she is arguing whether or not to accept Troilus' love, she says,

"For love is yet the mooste stormy lyf,
Right of hymself, that evere was bignonne;
For evere som mystrust or nice strif
Ther is in love, som cloude is over that sonne."98

She is entirely independent of him; her only tie to him at the time of her betrayal is an already consummated love.

One of those persons who by nature are self-sufficient, she hesitates to exchange her freedom as a widow for Troilus' 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?100

She is a person who is greatly influenced by convention and the pressure of social forces. For example, as a proper widow, sober and retiring, she is fittingly shocked by Pandarus' suggestion that she lay aside her mourning weeds and celebrate the May.101 Dominating every step in her love affair with Troilus is her concern that her good name be

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preserved. She agrees to no proposal from either Pandarus or her lover until she is sure that her honor has been properly considered. She especially prizes the good opinion of Hector and her friends among the Trojan nobles. After her fall, one of her chief concerns is what mankind will say of her. Before accepting Troilus as her lover, she argues with herself about the risks of being involved in a scandal if her affair were ever discovered:

"How bisy, if I love, ek most I be
To plesen hem that jangle of love, and dremen,
And coye hem, that thet seye noon harm of me!
For though ther be no cause, yet hem semen
Al be for harm that folk hire frendes quemen;
And who may stoppen every wikked tonge,
Or sown of belles whil that thei ben ronge?"

She resolves her doubts by falling back on the familiar philosophy of "nothing ventured, nothing gained":

... He which that nothing undertaketh,
Nothyng n'acheveth, be hym looth or deere. 104

This decision illustrates another facet of Crisseyde's character, her essentially practical nature. She is not unmindful of the honor of being loved by a king's son who is also a worthy knight, able to keep his peace; and she realizes that she is free to follow her own inclinations in the matter,

102Ibid., V, 1058-1068. 103Ibid., II, 795-805.
104Ibid., II, 807-808.
having no one to gainsay her. Unlike Troilus, she does not surrender to despair upon learning that she is to be exchanged for Antenor. She seeks, rather, a means of continuing her relations with her lover and at the same time preserving her honor. The scheme she proposes, to return to Troy within ten days after her exchange, seems both workable and more desirable than Troilus' and Pandarus' plans to steal her away. She is not primarily a loose woman, but, rather, a weak one. It is her self-interest--her willingness to accommodate herself to circumstances rather than fight them--together with a conventional personality that accounts for her failure.

These then are the differences in characterization in the two versions of the Troilus-Cressida story. Chaucer is unfailingly kind and sympathetic to his characters, even when they do wrong. One feels that he has a personal fondness for each of them. He has a tendency to picture them as idealized or romanticized types, possessed of all the blessings of God and untrammeled by human vices. Shakespeare, on the other hand, strips his much larger cast of characters of their heroic qualities and treats them in a realistic manner, that is, as real men with human weaknesses. All of his characters lack the nobility of their counterparts in Chaucer's version, and his Cressida and Pandarus even seem debased; but they are nonetheless skilful creations, perfectly convincing as human beings.

\[105\] Ibid., II, 708-763.
CHAPTER IV

THE TONE OF CHAUCER'S AND OF SHAKESPEARE'S VERSIONS

This final chapter attempts to describe the fundamental nature and character of Chaucer's and Shakespeare's versions of the Troilus-Cressida story. Each offers an entirely different interpretation of the story. Each reflects the age in which it was written.

Chaucer's poem contains in the narrative proper a mixture of ancient and medieval elements. Except for the names of the Deity and the mysterious medieval writer Wade, whose story Pandarus tells at the supper he gives for Criseyde, all the names and many of the allusions in it are classical. Classical names include, in addition to those of persons involved in the Trojan-Greek struggle, those of the classical gods—Jupiter, Juno, Mercury, Apollo, Diane, Janus, Mars, Venus, and Cupid; legendary mortals—Mida, Crassus, Edippe (Oedipus), Orpheus, Euridice, Mirra, and Alceste; and inhabitants of the underworld—Ticius, Cerberus, Ixion, Tantalus, and Pluto. Chaucer shows his indebtedness to classical tradition by invoking at the beginning of each of the five books of the poem pagan deities: Tisiphone; Clio, the Muse of History; Venus; the Herynes, or Furies; and the Parcas, or Fates. The poet frequently refers to objects of natural history by their classical names. For example, he calls a swallow Proigne and the sun Phebus. Chaucer's fondness
for evoking pictures of Greek life is evidenced in the details of the funeral which Troilus asks for, with its accompanying bonfire, feasting and games\(^1\)--a funeral such as that which was held for the slain Arcite in the "Knight's Tale."

Despite, however, its abundance of classical names and images the poem is thoroughly medieval in spirit, portraying the trappings, customs, and attitudes toward life of Chaucer's own day.

Just as medieval painters pictured Biblical and ancient subjects in the dress and surroundings of the Middle Ages, so Chaucer placed his Trojans and Greeks in a medieval environment. For example, Crisseyde is dressed in medieval widow's garb, as is indicated by reference to her "barbe,"\(^2\) a scarf of white plaied linen which hung like a beard from the chin or neck of a nun or woman in mourning; and, like a lady in some medieval romance, she gives Diomedes her sleeve to use as a pennant.\(^3\) Another allusion to contemporary custom is Pandarus' invitation to Crisseyde to celebrate the May.\(^4\) Chaucer's description of the countryside in May suggests the fields and meadows of England rather than the plains of Troy; and, although the Trojans are celebrating the feast of Palladian, the description of the spring season recalls

\(^1\)Chaucer, *Troilus and Crisseyde*, V, 302-315.
\(^2\)Ibid., II, 110.
\(^3\)Ibid., V, 1043.
\(^4\)Ibid., II, 110-112.
the opening lines of the *Canterbury Tales*:

And so bifele, whan comen was the tyme
Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede
With newe grene, of lusty veer the pryme,
And swote smellen floures white and rede,
In sondry wise shewed, as I rede,
The folk of Troie hire observauncces olde,
Palladiones feste for to holde.⁵

Mention is made several times of Troilus' engaging in the medieval sports of hawking and falconry;⁶ and the old custom of serving guests a night cup before they retire is observed by Pandarus when he entertains Criseyde and her retinue at his house.⁷ The popular medieval superstition that bells ring spontaneously to mark an important event is recalled by Pandarus, who thinks he hears bells when Criseyde accepts Troilus as her knight.⁸

Probably the most pervasive medieval convention in *Troilus and Criseyde* is the treatment of love. The love affair, which constitutes so considerable a part of Chaucer's work, is conducted according to the rules of courtly love, an understanding of which is necessary for a real appreciation of the poem. This system consisted of a set of principles and forms which virtually made a game of love. Based on the writings of Ovid, it was originated during the eleventh century by the troubadours in the courts of southern France. Eleanor of Aquitaine introduced the system to northern France,

⁵Ibid., I, 155-161.
⁶Ibid., III, 1779-1780; V, 64-66.
⁷Ibid., III, 671-675.
⁸Ibid., III, 188-189.
and under the reign of her daughter, Marie de Champagne, Chretien des Troies codified it.\textsuperscript{9} It was copied throughout the courts of western Europe and still enjoyed a degree of popularity in the English court of Chaucer’s day.\textsuperscript{10} In medieval society love was not a condition for marriage but was normally to be sought outside the marriage bond. Although the relationship between lovers under the courtly love system would today be considered frankly adulterous, there was no moral stigma attached to it by medieval gentility if it were kept a secret shared only by the lovers. It was honorable, even desirable, so long as no one else knew of it. When a lady accepted a man as her knight, they became joined in a union as binding as marriage, if not more so. Unfaithfulness on the part of either lover was unforgivable.\textsuperscript{11} Love was an idealized emotion, which was pursued for its purifying and ennobling influence. It was felt to possess moral virtue in its own right. A woman yielded her love as a reward for the meritorious conduct of her lover. A man, to be worthy of his lady's gifts, must have suffered long and patiently for them and have earned them by performing whatever duties his lady saw fit to lay on him. Such behavior ideally had a refining effect upon his character, and in consequence

\textsuperscript{9}William George Dodd, Courtly Love in Chaucer and Gower, pp. 1-3.

\textsuperscript{10}Lawrence, op. cit., p. 196.

\textsuperscript{11}Dodd, op. cit., pp. 1-20.
of his love he lost all his vices and pettiness. A popular conception of love was that of a feudal system in which the lady was an overlord and the lover her vassal. Love was also thought of as a religion in which Cupid and Venus were the deities.\textsuperscript{12} In accordance with this convention Troilus prays to them to help him win his lady.\textsuperscript{13}

The concept of love in Chaucer’s poem becomes so exalted that it takes on a metaphysical aspect. Proceeding from his love for Criseyde, Troilus is able to discover a broader, divine love which binds all the universe together in harmony:

"Love, that of erthe and se hath governance,
Love, that his hestes hath in hevenes hye,
Love, that with an holsom alliaunce
Halt peples joymed, as hym lest hem gye,
Love, that knetteth lawe of compaignie,
And couples doth in vertu for to dwelle,
Bynd this acord, that I have told and telle,

"That that the world with feith, which
that is stable,
Diverseth so his stowndes concordyng
That elementz that ben so discordable
Holden a bond perpetuely duryng,
That Phebus mote his rosy day forth brynge,
And that the mone hath lordshipe over the nyghtes,--
Al this doth Love, ay heried be his myghtes!

"That that the se, that gredy is to flowen,
Constreyneth to a certeyn ende so
His flodes that so fiersly they ne growen

\textsuperscript{12}Ibid., pp. 18-20.

\textsuperscript{13}Chaucer, \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, I, 421-434; III, 712-721; IV, 263-291.
To drenchen erthe and al for evere mo;
And if that Love aught lete his bridel go,
Al that now loveth asondre sholde lepe,
And lost were al that Love halt now tohope.

"So wolde God, that auctour is of kynde,
That with his bond Love of his vertu liste
To cerclen hertes alle, and faste bynde,
That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste;
And hertes colde, hem would I that he twiste
To make hem love, and that hem liste ay rewe
On hertes sore, and kepe hem that ben trewe!—14

The ideas and images in this passage are derived from the eighth meter in the second book of Boethius' Consolation of Philosophy, which sets forth the doctrine of the "bond of love," that force which holds all the diverse elements of creation together in just balance. Without this benevolent influence, directed by Providence, the universe would be in a state of chaos, with each entity in it pursuing without restriction its own self-nature. Hence, things that were by their nature light, unless limited by the controlling force of love, would forever rise, and things that were by nature heavy would forever sink and seek low places. The universe would be in eternal conflict. Working from the broader to the smaller manifestations of divine love, Boethius affirms Troilus' original premise, that the love between man and woman is the same in nature as the love that controls the universe.15

14Ibid., III, 1744-1771.
15Bernard L. Jefferson, Chaucer and the Consolation of Philosophy of Boethius, p. 65-68.
Chaucer considers three other important concepts of Boethian philosophy in *Troilus and Criseyde*: the workings of Fortune, the relationship of man's free will to God's foreordination, and the falseness of earthly felicity. In his poem Chaucer adopts Boethius' hierarchy of providential agencies. According to the Latin philosopher the universe is ruled by a benevolent Providence, whose will is executed by the forces of Destiny.\(^{16}\) In the following passage Chaucer expresses the same idea, substituting for Christian terminology the classical Jove and the Parcas or Fates:

Aprochen gan the fatal destyne  
That Joves hath in disposicioun,  
And to yow, angry Parcas, sustren thre,  
Committeth, to don executioun; . . .\(^{17}\)

Under Destiny are Chance and Fortune as executors of the will of Providence. The concept of Fortune was a popular one during the Middle Ages. The representation of Fortune as a fickle goddess who turned a wheel that determined the destinies of men was as familiar to medieval society as the blindfolded figure of Justice holding a pair of scales is to us today. All men rode on her wheel and enjoyed prosperity or misery as in her capricious turning she either raised them or lowered them. All that was certain about her was that she was unpredictable and that she turned for all. In *Troilus and Criseyde* Fortune's wheel is depicted as turning now for the

\(^{16}\)Ibid., pp. 48-49, 60.  

Greeks and now for the Trojans:

The thynges fallen, as they don of werre,
Bitwixen hem of Troie and Grekes ofte;
For som day boughten they of Troie it derre,
And eft the Grekes founden nothing softe
The folk of Troie; and thus Fortune on loft, and under eft, gan hem to whielen bothe
Aftir hir cours, az whil that thei were wrothe. 18

Troilus, suffering from the love he has kept pent up within himself, feels accursed by Fortune and complains

For wel fynde I that Fortune is my fo;
Ne al the men that ridden konne or go,
May of hire cruel whiel the harm withstonde;
For, as hire list, she playeth with free and bond. 19

Pandarus comforts the young lover by pointing out that Fortune, because she is by nature changeable, must soon befriend him. 20

But no sooner has the fickle goddess brought him the bliss of meeting Criseyde than she turns from him and raises Diomedes up:

But al to litel, yealaway the whyle,
Lasteth swich joie, ythonked be Fortune,
That semeth trewest when she wol bygyle,
And kan to fooles so hire song entune,
That she hem hent and bient, traitour commune!
And when a wight is from hire whiel ythrowe,
Than laugheth she, and maketh hym the mowe.

From Troilus she gan hire brighte face
Away to writhe, and tok of hym non heede,
But caste hym clene out of his lady grace,
And on hire whiel she sette up Diomed; ... 21

Troilus complains of his treatment by Fortune, whom he had honored above all other gods:

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18Ibid., I, 134-140.  19Ibid., I, 827-840.
20Ibid., I, 845-849.  21Ibid., IV, 1-11.
Throughout the poem Troilus displays a belief that his life is shaped and controlled by fate. He says that he was ordained to be a lover\textsuperscript{22} and declares that his destiny was shaped before his birth:

O fatal sustren, which, er any cloth
Me shapen was, my destine me sponne,
So helpeth to this werk that is bygonne.\textsuperscript{24}

Chaucer includes a disquisition on the destiny of man in Troilus' long soliloquy on God's foreknowledge and man's free will. The ideas expressed in this famous passage are all derived from Boethius. Troilus begins his discourse by declaring that there are "clerkes" who say that man has free will and others who say he does not, and that he himself does not know which are correct. He believes that all things happen because they are foreordained:

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.}, IV, 260-287.

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, I, 519-522.

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Ibid.}, III, 733-735.
For other thought, nor other dede also,
Myghte nevere ben, but swich as pur-
veyaunce,
Which may nat ben deceyved nevere mo,
Hath feled byforn, withuten ignorance.25

Since God is omnipotent, he continues, there can be no mis-
take in His foreknowledge; therefore, what He foreordains
must necessarily come to pass:

For yf ther myghte ben a varaunce
To writhen out fro Godis purveyinge,
Ther were no prescience of thyng comynge,

But it were rather an opynyoun
Uncerteyn, and no stedfast forseynge.
And certes, that were an absioun,
That God sholde han no parfit cler wytyng
More than we men that han doutous wenynge.
But swich an errour upon God to gesse
Were fals and foul, and wikked cursednesse.26

Troilus therefore concludes that if God has foreknowledge and
if His foreknowledge cannot be wrong then man has no free will:

Wherefore I seye, that from eterne if he
Hath mist byforn oure thought ek as oure
dede,
We han no fre choys, as thise clerkes rede.27

He then considers the argument that God foresees things be-
cause He sees the causes that will make them happen, that is,
that His foreknowledge does not necessitate events:

I mene as though I laboured me in this,
To enqueren which thyng cause of which thyng be:
As whethere that the prescience of God is
The certeyn cause of the necessite
Of thynges that to kommen ben, parde;
Or if necessite of thyng comynge
Be cause certeyn of the purveyinge.28

Troilus goes on to assert that whether or not foreknowing

27Ibid., IV, 378-380.  28Ibid., IV, 1069-1015.
causes things to happen, things which are foreknown must necessarily come to be if God sees truly, and He cannot be mistaken:

But now n'enforce I me nat in shewynge
How the ordre of causes stant; but wel woot I
That it byhoveth that the byfallynge
Of thynge wiste byforen certeynly
Be necessarie, al seme it nat therby
That prescience put fallynge necessaire
To thynge to come, al faile it foule or faire.29

Therefore Troilus concludes that since things which are foreseen must come to be, no matter what their cause, man cannot have free will. Troilus cannot believe that temporal things can have control over the mind of God; therefore, he concludes that all things happen only because God foreordains them:

Yet natheles, binovel it nedfully,
That thing to come be purveyd, trewely;
Or elles, thynge that purveyed be,
That they bitiden by necessite.

And this suffiseth right ynoough, certeyn,
For to destroyeoure fre choiseverydel.
But now is this abusesoun, to seyn
That fallyng of the thynge temporael
Is cause of Goddes prescience eternel.
Now trewely, that is a fals sentence,
That thynge to come sholde cause his prescience.

What myght I wene, and I hadde swich a thought,
But that God purveyeth thynge that is to come
For that it is to come, and elles nought?
So myghte I wene that thynge alle and some,
That whilom ben byfalle and overcome,
Ben cause of thilke soveryne purveyaunce
That forwoot al withouten ignoraunce.30

Another of the chief ideas of Boethius which appears in

29Ibid., IV, 1016-1022. 30Ibid., IV, 1054-1071.
Chaucer's poem is the falseness of earthly joys. According to the philosopher neither riches, power, fame, noble birth, nor pleasure can bring true happiness, which is only to be found in virtue or goodness.\textsuperscript{31} Highest felicity is attained through resignation and contentment with what life offers and through contemplation of eternal values and the realization that heaven, not earth, is man's true home.\textsuperscript{32} Boethius' teachings about false and true felicity are echoed in \textit{Troilus and Criseyde} when Criseyde, learning of Troilus' groundless jealousy over her innocent friendship with Horaste, voices her conviction that no man can have perfect joy\textsuperscript{33} and when Troilus, caught up into heaven after his death, looks down and laughs at the futility and inconsequentiality of earthly activities when judged by heavenly values.\textsuperscript{34} Chaucer himself points the moral, that only heavenly love is lasting and certain:

\begin{verbatim}
O yonge, fresshe folkes, he or she,
In whiche that love up groweth with your age,
Repeyreth hom fro worldly vanye,
And of youre herte up casteth the visage
To thilke God that after his ymage
Yow made, and thynketh al nys but a faire
This world, that passeth soone as floures faire.

And loveth hym, the whiche that right for love
Upon a crois, oure soules for to beye,
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{31}Jefferson, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 81-82.
\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 112-116, 108.
\textsuperscript{33}Chaucer, \textit{Troilus and Criseyde}, III, 813-836.
\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Ibid.}, V, 1807-1823.
First starf, and roos, and sit in hevene above;
For he nyl falsen no wight, dar I seye,
That wol his herte al holly on hym leye.
And syn he best to love is, and most seke,
What nedeth feynede loves for to seke?36

These final passages of the poem color the meaning of the rest of the story. Impressed by Chaucer's conclusion of the tale, W. M. Lawrence interprets *Troilus and Criseyde* as a denial of the traditions of courtly love. He says

... the story, in Chaucer's hands, is an attempt to analyze love on the basis of traditional conventions, which leads to the decision that these conventions break down as a rule of life. The situation is much the same as if a theologian were to interpret the facts of human existence in accordance with a preconceived system, having assumed for the purposes of the experiment that the system is sound, and were to find out at the end that it breaks down in its application completely.36

Whether or not Chaucer in his poem was actually attempting to expose the weakness of the courtly love system, and this seems an arbitrary assumption, the fact remains that his story has a moral, whose meaning is unmistakable: that only heavenly values are constant and dependable.

Another scholar, Bernard L. Jefferson, interestingly conceives *Troilus and Criseyde* as an interpretation of Boethian philosophy.37 He finds that the poem illustrates the ideas of fate and felicity, two fundamental concepts in the *Consolation of Philosophy*. He remarks, quite justly, that Chaucer's tale is a fatalistic story. The lovers are guided in their love by supernatural influences, such as the propitious

37 *Jefferson, op. cit.*, p. 120.
position of Venus during the time that Troilus is presenting his suit. Through no fault of their own, they are doomed by Fortune to be separated. The extensive degree to which the actions of the story are shaped by Fortune has already been indicated. In reality, the young Trojan lovers, like Romeo and Juliet, are "star-crossed." It is curious to notice, as Jefferson points out, that the fatalistic elements in the poem are voiced by Troilus:

If the poem be examined, it will be found that Troilus alone of the characters imparts the fatalistic spirit evident in the poem, that he alone makes the speeches which tell of the inexorable might of God.

As Troilus is the spokesman for fate, Criseyde delivers the philosopher's ideas on human felicity. Jefferson remarks that

just as Troilus displays an intellectual interest in fate, so Criseyde displays an intellectual interest in felicity. Above all things she desires the highest happiness possible of attainment. At the same time, perhaps because she has had the experience of being a daughter of Calcas, the traitor, she understands the falseness of the world, and shudders at it because it is what may take her joy away. Worldly happiness, she reasons, is transitory, is subject to fickle human relations; and constantly, she is confronted with the fear that now has come the dreaded, but expected moment, when her happiness will disappear, just as Troilus was constantly confronted with the fear of the intervention of the gods in his happiness.

Finally, the conclusion which Chaucer reaches in his poem is the same conclusion which Boethius reaches in the Consolation of Philosophy: that Fate works out in the affairs of men the

38Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, II, 680-686.
divine will of Providence, whose justice and benevolence can only be realized from an unlimited vantage point, such as Troilus has after his death, and that from such a vantage point the joys and struggles of earthly life assume insignificance when compared with true goodness which is God.

In addition to his heavy indebtedness to Boethius Chaucer has also drawn freely on the Italian poet Dante. In Troilus' song in praise of love he includes some lines which Dante addresses to the Blessed Virgin; and the fine prayer with which he closes his poem is derived from the same poet:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Thow oon, and two, and thre, eterne on lyve,} \\
\text{That regnest ay in thre, and two, and oon,} \\
\text{Uncircumscript, and al maist circumscribe,} \\
\text{Us from visible and invisible foon} \\
\text{Defende, and to thy mercy, everichon,} \\
\text{So make us, Jesus, for thi mercy digne,} \\
\text{For love of mayde and moder thyren benigne.} \\
\text{Amen.} \quad 42
\end{align*}
\]

From the eighty-eighth sonnet of Petrarch Chaucer has translated Troilus' famous love song, beginning "If no love is, O God, what fele I so?" All these and other examples of literary indebtedness are pointed out by R. D. French in A Chaucer Handbook.

Undeniably a part of the flavor of any work by Chaucer is his distinctive handling of its details. The brilliant nuggets of observation and comment which are scattered

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41 Chaucer, Troilus and Criseyde, III, 1262-1267.
42 Ibid., V, 1863-1869. 43 Ibid., I, 400-420.
throughout his poems are characteristic features of his style and a source of great delight to his readers.

It would be impossible to list all the subtle, gently ironic glimpses of human nature to be found in *Troilus and Criseyde*. A better than typical example, however, is the sketch of the ladies who come to call on Criseyde after the news of her forthcoming exchange for Antenor has been circulated through Troy. One of these "Job's comforters" is glad that Criseyde will be able to see her father; another is sad because they will no longer have her with them. Still another becomes so excited by her emotions that she envisions Criseyde as the bringer of peace.\(^45\) Criseyde courteously listens to them; but her mind is on her own sorrow, and she begins to weep. Her foolish guests believe that she is sorrowing because she must part from them and begin to weep themselves.\(^46\) Their efforts to cheer her up, as Chaucer says, are as effective as the treatment of rubbing the heel to cure a headache:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{And bisyly they gnnen hire conforten} \\
\text{Of thyng, God woot, on which she litel thoughte;} \\
\text{And with hire tales wenden hire disporten,} \\
\text{And to be glad they often hire bysoughte.} \\
\text{But swich an ese therwith they hire wroughte,} \\
\text{Right as a man is esed for to feele,} \\
\text{For ache of hed, to clawen hym on his heele!}^{47}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{45}\)Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, IV, 687-693.

\(^{46}\)Ibid., IV, 708-721.  

\(^{47}\)Ibid., IV, 722-728.
With numerous delicate touches Chaucer reveals a thorough knowledge of his principal characters: Troilus, the love-stricken youth; Pandarus, the inveterate salesman; Diomedes, the "lady's man"; and Criseyde, of whom he says "that creature was nevere lasse mannysh in semynge."\textsuperscript{48} The poet pictures her as being completely feminine, even to remarking that he "kan nat telle hire age."\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{Troilus and Criseyde} is full of small touches which help to give it a definite Chaucerian flavor and reveal its author's sense of humor. Sometimes they are merely sly turns of phrase, as when Troilus, suffering the pangs of unrequited love, is described as weeping "til neigh that he in salte teres dreynte,"\textsuperscript{50} and when Criseyde, seeing Troilus for the first time, says, as though someone had slipped her some mysterious potion, "Who yaf me drynke?"\textsuperscript{51}

Much of the characteristic flavor of Chaucer's verse is derived from his use of homely phrases and imagery. The poet compares the noble Troilus, suddenly conquered by love, to the proud horse Bayard that says to himself,

\begin{flushright}
... "Though I praunce al byforn
First in the trays, ful fat and newe shorn,
Yet am I but an hors, and horses lawe
I moot endure, and with my feres drawe".\textsuperscript{52}
\end{flushright}

and in another homely phrase Pandarus reports on his success

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid., I, 283-284. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{49}Ibid., V, 826.
\textsuperscript{50}Ibid., I, 543. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{51}Ibid., II, 651.
\textsuperscript{52}Ibid., I, 221-224.
in Troilus' suit: "Algate a foot is hameled of thi sorwe!," that is to say "your sorrow is wounded in the foot," or "you have made a good beginning." When Troilus is troubled by disturbing dreams, Pandarus dismisses his doubts and fears in the familiar and homely phrases that practical Pertelote turned against Chauntecleer:  

A straw for all swevenes signifiaunce!  
God helpe me so, I counte hem nought a bene!  

Pandarus, counseling Troilus to counterfeit sickness at Deiphbus' house, cites a proverb, "hym men demen hoot that men seen swete," to prove that the youth who is suffering with love, will have little difficulty convincing people that he is ill.  

Another device which Chaucer uses with subtlety and wit is litotes, or understatement. Writing to Crisseyde in the Greek camp, Troilus condenses all the suffering and anguish that separation from her has caused him in the statement that "At wrytyng of this lettre I was on-lyve." Chaucer, declaring that Crisseyde has betrayed Troilus, merely says, "She nas nought so kynde as that hire oughte be."  

From time to time in the narrative Chaucer inserts asides, or direct comments to his readers. In many of these he assumes a favorite pose, that of a simple man who is modestly
working at the job of retelling a story from his authors. He is not above laughing at himself for his somewhat verbose and circumlocutory account of a simple natural phenomenon:

The dayes honour, and the hevenes ye,
The nyghtes foo--al this clepe I the sonne--
Cant westren faste, and downward for to wrye. . .

Having attempted to analyze in some degree the elements which go to produce the basic spirit and character of Chaucer's poem, we are now to consider the tone of Shakespeare's play.

Like Chaucer's work, Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida mirrors the age in which it was written. If it seems closer in spirit to the classical sources of its material than does Chaucer's tale, it must be remembered that the spirit of the Renaissance—with its emphasis on humanism and the glorification of the individual, its enthusiasm for the rediscovered Greek and Roman culture—approached more closely the spirit of classical times than did that of the Middle Ages.

Although the Elizabethan attitudes toward life which Shakespeare's play naturally reflects are Renaissance in spirit, they are, at the same time, evolved from those of the Middle Ages, and it is not surprising to discover vestiges and traces of medieval spirit appearing at times throughout the drama. There is something of the medieval spirit of chivalry, perhaps, in the gallantry practiced by Elizabethan gentlemen and in

58 See, for example, ibid., III, 1224-1277.
59 Ibid., II, 904-906.
the flattery and adulation bestowed upon the Virgin Queen by her courtiers. One of the several examples of the Elizabethan version of chivalry which are found in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* is Hector's challenge to any Greek to defend in single combat the honor of his lady:

... Kings, princes, lords! 
If there be one among the fairst of Greece
That holds his honour higher than his ease,
That seeks his praise more than he fears his peril,
That knows his valour and knows not his fear,
That loves his mistress more than in confession
With truant vows to her own lips he loves,
And dare avow her beauty and her worth
In other arms than hers— to him this challenge!
Hector, in view of Trojans and of Greeks,
Shall make it good or do his best to do it:
He hath a lady, wiser, fairer, truer,
Than ever Greek did compass in his arms;
And will tomorrow with his trumpet call
Midway between your tents and walls of Troy
To rouse a Grecian that is true in love.
If any come, Hector shall honour him;
If none, he'll say in Troy when he retires,
The Grecian dames are sunburnt and not worth
The splinter of a lance. ... 60

The tone of this challenge, with all its bravado, marks its author as a man who is assuming the pose of chivalry rather than one who feels a genuine emotion toward his lady. What true lady would feel herself treated with either chivalry or gallantry by a man who loudly proclaimed her charms for the purpose of provoking a fight? The conception of courtly love as it was known in Chaucer's day was completely outmoded in Tudor England and, as a consequence, Elizabethans could never completely understand Chaucer's poem. As Lawrence says,
Roger Ascham, speaking for the severer moralists, called the love of the earlier romances "bold bawdry," and branded the greatest lovers of medieval story as "those who commit foulest adulteries by subtiest shiftes." The people of Elizabeth's court liked to play at chivalry, but they were very far from understanding or accepting the system of such a court as that of Marie de Champagne or even Edward the Third. They were no more moral, perhaps, but the conventions prescribing what was moral and what was not had become altered. . . . The Elizabethans read their Troilus story as Chaucer had set it down, and they felt its power and mastery, but they rarely, if ever, saw in it more than the tale of a dissolute woman, a broken-hearted lover, and an unprincipled procurer.61

The degeneration of the Troilus-Cressida story is largely a product of the disappearance of courtly love, as I have attempted to show in the first chapter of this study.

Because of the increasingly wide-spread familiarity with classical literature during the Renaissance, the persons in Shakespeare's play would be expected to resemble their Homeric counterparts more closely than those in Chaucer's poem do. Although there is little in Shakespeare's conception of his characters which cannot be justified by classical sources, there are many Greek enthusiasts who are constantly offended by what they consider to be his debase- ment of the Homeric heroes. Speaking of Elizabethan versions of the classic stories in general, J. S. P. Tatlock says,

They are not simple, dignified, unified; in other words, they are not in the least "classic," in the sense used by aestheticians. These works bring to our mind's eye no picture of white and plastic forms against a background of immortal brightness. The material is treated

61Lawrence, op. cit., p. 207.
just as any other would be treated, with no sense that it is entitled to especial reverence or reserve; . . . 62 Elizabethans did not regard the classic tales as worthy of special veneration or awe merely because they were antique, and they held no particular reverence for Greek culture per se. Unless viewed through the eyes of the classical Greeks, the figures in the Iliad often appear less than noble. As Lawrence remarks,

We know that the actions of these warriors, when viewed in the light of cold common sense, appear in many respects the reverse of heroic. The verdict of the age of Elizabeth was somewhat like that pronounced by an American critic, Henry Cabot Lodge, who finds that cowardice and meanness and self-glorification are prominent characteristics of such men as Achilles and Agamemnon.63

The ethics by which all stories would be judged and interpreted in Elizabeth's day were Christian and not pagan; and although the conduct of Homer's heroes might be rationalized when judged by Greek ethical standards, it could scarcely be sanctioned or approved by any true Christian believer. Furthermore, it must be remembered that the versions of the Trojan story which were best known to Elizabethans, Caxton's Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye and Lydgate's Troy Book, represent the medieval attitude toward the classical stories, and that this attitude was one of little esteem for Homer.

In style Troilus and Cressida is a mature work which contains many passages of fine poetry. Lawrence says of it that

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62 Tatlock, op. cit., p. 697.
it compels instant attention by the telling imagery of its great speeches, with their pregnant wisdom and mature philosophy, and by the acid brilliancy of its character-drawing. It reveals, too, despite its reflective quality, something of that irresistible power, that magnificent opulence of creative energy, which we feel in Antony and Cleopatra or King Lear. Goethe, in talking with Eckermann, ranked the play in this regard above Macbeth in the achievement of Shakespeare, saying, "Would you learn to know his unfettered spirit, read Troilus and Cressida."\(^{64}\)

The play is at the same time a peculiarly undramatic work.

It is detached and impersonal in spirit. Lawrence, commenting on its untheatrical nature, says,

> The play is not one for which success on the public stage can easily be imagined. It is fundamentally undramatic in character, ... and it is overweighted with reflective passages.\(^{65}\)

It is entirely possible that, as Lawrence suggests, the play was a failure when it was presented before the general public.\(^{66}\) Upon this thesis he accounts for the puzzling discrepancy between the title page of the first quarto, which states that the play had been presented at the Globe Theater, and that of the second quarto, which declares that the play was "neuer stal'd with the stage, neuer clapper-clawd with the palmes of the vulgar."\(^{67}\) Lawrence maintains that the second quarto does not say that the play had never been publicly performed but, rather, implies that it did not appeal to the groundlings. Thus, the advertisement to the second quarto is an appeal to

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\(^{64}\)William Witherle Lawrence, *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, p. 122.

\(^{65}\)Ibid., p. 126.

\(^{66}\)Ibid., p. 134.

\(^{67}\)Ibid., pp. 129-130.
the snobbishness of a select audience to induce them to purchase a copy of a play which had failed because it was too rare for the taste of the common playgoers. The play itself was most likely originally written for a special audience. Peter Alexander's theory that it was designed as an entertainment for members of the Inns of Court is generally accepted today. As Lawrence says,

The selection of the theme, the intellectual rather than emotional treatment, the long philosophical speeches, might be supposed to appeal to such an audience, as well as the disillusioned treatment of romantic love, the ribald jesting, the direct allusions to the sexual looseness of the time, and the familiar tone, well adapted to those who knew the shady haunts of London at first hand. There is good evidence that the revels in the Inns of Court had a reputation for indecorum.

The play itself is too scurrilous to have been designed for presentation at the court of the Queen, liberal-minded as it was.

As it has been previously intimated, Troilus and Cressida is a reflective play, which at times becomes philosophical in spirit. There are three chief philosophical scenes in the play. In the first of these Ulysses states the Renaissance theory of social and political order, which held that by nature all systems were organized in a hierarchy of orders or castes, each with its own function to fulfill and with its own position to be maintained in the system as a whole. Chaos, or the disruption of the whole system, resulted when any member

68Ibid., pp. 131-135.  
69Ibid., p. 128.  
70Ibid., p. 127.
of it revolted or failed to function properly. Ulysses cites an illustration of the theory from the kingdom of the bees:

When that the general is not like the hive,
To whom the foragers shall all repair,
What honey is expected? . . .

and from the universe:

The heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre
Observe degree, priority, and place,
Institutes, course, proportion, season, form,
Office, and custom, in all line of order;
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
In noble eminence enthron'd and spher'd
Amidst the other, whose med'cina ble eye
Corrects the ill aspects of planets evil
And posts, like the commandment of a king,
Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,
What raging of the sea, shaking of earth,
Commotion in the winds! Frights, changes, horrors
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture! . . .

All of man's social life is regulated by degree, he continues:

. . . How could communities,
Degrees in schools and brotherhoods in cities,
Peaceful commerce from dividable shores,
The primogenity and due of birth,
Prerogative of age, crowns, sceptres, laurels,
But by degree, stand in authentic place?

Without divinely sanctioned "specialty of rule" the strong and

71 James Emerson Phillips, Jr., The State in Shakespeare's Greek and Roman Plays, Number 149 of the Columbia University Studies in English and Comparative Literature, pp. 19-111.

72 Shakespeare, Troilus and Cressida, I, iii, 81-83.

73 Ibid., I, iii, 85-101.

74 Ibid., I, iii, 103-106.
powerful alone would control society:

Take but degree away, untune that string,
And hark what discord follows! Each thing
meets
In mere oppugnancy. The bounded waters
Should lift their bosoms higher than the
shores
And make a sop of all this solid globe;
Strength should be lord of imbecility,
And the rude son should strike his father
dead;
Force should be right; or rather, right and
wrong
(Between whose endless jar justice resides)
Should lose their names, and so should jus-
tice too.
Then everything includes itself in power,
Power into will, will into appetite;
And appetite, an universal wolf,
So doubly seconded with will and power,
Must make perforce an universal prey,
And last eat up himself. . . . 75

When the chief, or highest degree, is scorned by envious
men, as Agamemnon is scorned by Achilles, the infection of
rebellion spreads throughout the entire order, and the whole
system is rendered impotent, just as the Greeks are rendered
powerless to defeat the Trojans:

And this neglect of degree it is
That by a pace goes backward with a purpose
It hath to climb. The general's disdain'd
By him one step below, he by the next;
That next by him beneath. So every step,
Example'd by the first pace that is sick
Of his superior, grows to an envious fever
Of pale and bloodless emulation.
And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot,
Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length,
Troy in our weakness stands, not in her
strength. 76

In the second of the major philosophical episodes Hector

75Ibid., I, iii, 109-124. 76Ibid., I, iii, 127-127.
and Troilus argue over returning Helen to the Greeks. Hector believes not only that the cause of the war is not worth the sacrifice of lives necessary to support it, but also that the Trojans have no moral justification for holding Menelaus' wife. He says,

    ... she is not worth what she doth cost
    The holding. 77

Troilus challenges him by asking, "What is aught but as 'tis valued?" 78 Hector replies that there exist universal and unchanging standards of value which cannot be rightly repudiated for personal whims or desires:

    But value dwells not in particular will:
    It holds his estimate and dignity
    As well wherein 'tis precious of itself
    As in the prizer. 'Tis mad idolatry
    To make the service greater than the god;
    And the will dothes that is attributive
    To what infectiously itself affects
    Without some image of the affected merit. 79

Troilus' defense is that a position once taken cannot be abandoned with honor. 80 Hector insists that moral laws must be placed above either pleasure or honor:

    ... pleasure and revenge
    Have ears more deaf than adders to the voice
    Of any true decision. Nature craves
    All dues be rend'red to their owners. Now
    What nearer debt in all humanity
    Than wife is to the husband? If this law
    Of nature be corrupted through affection,
    And that great minds, of partial indulgence
    To their benumbed wills, resist the same,
    There is a law in each well-ord'red nation

77 Ibid., II, ii, 51-52. 78 Ibid., II, ii, 53.
79 Ibid., II, ii, 54-60. 80 Ibid., II, ii, 61-72.
To curb those raging appetites that are 
Most disobedient and refractory.
If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king 
(As it is known she is), these moral laws 
Of nature and of nations speak aloud 
To have her back return'd. Thus to persist 
In doing wrong extenuates not wrong, 
But makes it much more heavy. ... .81

The third of the chief philosophical scenes is Ulysses' 
discussion with Achilles about fame. Achilles himself, 
scoffed by the Greek leaders, has recognized the fickleness 
and shallowness of man's opinions, and he asserts that 

... men, like butterflies, 
Show not their mealy wings but to the summer; 
And not a man for being simply man 
Hath any honour, but honour for those honours 
That are without him, as place, riches, and favour, 
Prizes of accident as oft as merit; 
Which when they fall, as being slippery standers, 
The love that lean'd on them as slippery too, 
Doth one pluck down another, and together 
Die in the fall.82

Ulysses tells him that no man possesses greatness except as 
he sees it reflected in other men's opinion83 and that all 
deeds are quickly forgotten in the face of the onrushing ex-
periences of daily life.84 All life is the slave of time, 
he argues:

For Time is like a fashionable host, 
That slightly shakes his parting guest by th' hand, 
And with his arms outstretch'd as he would fly 
Grasps in the corner. The welcome ever smiles, 
And farewell goes out sighing. Let not virtue seek 
Remuneration for the thing it was! 
For beauty, wit, 
High birth, vigour of bone, desert in service,

81Ibid., II, ii, 171-188. 82Ibid., III, iii, 78-87. 
83Ibid., III, iii, 115-123. 84Ibid., III, iii, 145-164.
Love, friendship, charity, are subjects all
To envious and calumniating Time.\textsuperscript{85}

He asserts that men notice only things that are happening before their eyes:

One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,
That all with one consent raise new-born gauds,
Though they are made and moulded of things past,
And give to dust that is a little gilt
More laud than gilt o'erdusted.
The present eye praises the present object.\textsuperscript{86}

He concludes that a man must daily renew his deeds if he wishes to preserve his reputation.

Troilus and Cressida has often been called the most perplexing problem in Shakespeare.\textsuperscript{87} The dramatist's reason for giving such prominence to the story of the quarrel between the Greek generals and Achilles is but one of the play's many puzzles. Perhaps he was merely following a literary model, such as Heywood's Iron Age, in which the love story is of secondary importance; perhaps he felt that the thrice-familiar love story was not sufficiently dramatic or interesting to sustain alone the attention of the audience; perhaps, as Lawrence suggests, he became increasingly engrossed with the Greek material as he was working on the play, and the subplot of the quarrel between the Greek leaders grew of its own accord.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{85}Ibid., III, iii, 165-174. \textsuperscript{86}Ibid., III, iii, 175-180.


\textsuperscript{88}Lawrence, Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, p. 138.
However, the aspect of the play which disturbs its critics perhaps more than others is its inconclusive dénouement. A sense of failure and futility accompanies the conclusion of both plots of the tale. The scheme of the Greek leaders to stir Achilles to action by making him jealous of Ajax does not succeed. The great warrior is finally goaded into fighting, but only to revenge the chance killing of his companion, Patroclus. The only result of the generals' strategy is to inflame beyond tolerance the pride of Ajax. The love story also is marked by futility and failure in that Troilus discovers Cressida's infidelity and is unable to revenge himself on Diomedes. He is left in the grip of the unpurged passions of disillusionment and anger.  

Critics for many years have sought to explain away the problem of the peculiar ending of the play by asserting that Scenes IV-X of Act V are not Shakespeare's own work. Even if some other hand did write these scenes, a supposition which can scarcely be proved, the structure of the rest of the play would hardly allow the narrative action to continue beyond the point at which the play concludes. Lawrence is convinced that the ending of the work as it is known to us today represents Shakespeare's own dramatic intentions.

Despite all of its hard puzzles, Shakespeare's play is really a finished work of art for which a satisfactory
interpretation is possible. The tone of the piece is readily felt to be cynical and satiric, and the play must be interpreted in this light. Lawrence terms it a reflective play, "an experiment in the middle world between tragedy and comedy in which experience often places us."\footnote{Ibid., p. 168.} Realistic truth rather than dramatic truth is presented. Lawrence comments,

Dramatic justice lies in the future, not in the cheap and illogical solution of leprosy for Cressida and sudden death for Troilus, but in the realization for both of them, that character and conduct bring inescapable consequences in life. The ending of the tale is in accord with facts of human experience; life often settles nothing, it leaves the innocent to suffer, and the guilty to prevail.\footnote{Ibid., p. 168.}

C. J. Campbell in his \textit{Comical Satyre} and Shakespeare's \textit{Troilus and Cressida} presents a very interesting and credible interpretation of the play. He finds it to be a "comical satyre," which was a dramatic form devised by Jonson and Marston when, in 1599, formal satire was banned by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London.\footnote{Campbell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. vii.} Comical satyre was an attempt to fuse the conventions, methods and spirit of the prohibited formal satire with those of traditional comedy. In the new form a group of characters exhibited various topical follies and vices, were exposed, and were either purged of their faults or scornfully dismissed, literally "laughed off the stage." The principal feature of the comical satyre form was the utilization of the two commentators,
one serious and one comic and vituperative, who acted as the agents for the exposition and purgation of their fellow characters' follies. In the war plot of Troilus and Cressida Ulysses is the serious commentator who reveals for the audience the chaotic disorganization of the Greek camp and analyzes its cause, the neglect of authority and degree, which has its foundations in the rebellious pride of Achilles. The wise general, acting as "wit-intriguer," then devises a plan, the praising of Ajax, whereby Achilles, who is the chief figure of scorn in the war story, is made to realize and admit his own folly. Achilles, however, is too great a fool to be reformed; as Campbell says, he must be laughed from the stage as a personal failure:

Ulysses, in the combined roles of commentator and wit-intriguer, has precipitated one of the situations essential to satiric comedy. He has exposed the fool or humourist. In most plays of the type, Achilles would immediately have announced his intention to divest himself of his pride and his amorous fondness. So he would have done here, had he been in any degree amenable to reason. But, in the composition of his nature, blood ruled and prevented him from acting rationally. Hence the expected purgation does not take place... Failure overtakes Ulysses' nicely devised plan to induce this Olympian schoolboy to obey the dictates of self-interest as rationalized and implemented by the social ideal. The outcome, as in the case of all the other efforts of the characters, whether reasonable or irrational, is futility, and was meant to awaken scornful laughter.95

As Ulysses represents the serious commentator required by the comicall satyre form, Thersites represents the comic commentator, whose function it is to direct the scorn and laughter of the audience toward the figures of folly. This character

95Ibid., pp. 200-201.
is traditionally a buffoon and a raider and is not free himself from some "humour" or vice, which is usually envy. Thersites fits well the requirements for this type of role. Campbell asserts that the conduct of the Trojans as well as that of the Greeks illustrates the thesis of the war plot, which he defines as follows:

Complete social and moral confusion . . . results when socially reasonable action is thwarted by the continual triumph of subversive personal emotion or even of whim. Plans formed by reason, and so recognized when the characters are temporarily rational, are totally destroyed because, when they begin to act, these men become the slaves of passion.

The Trojans' folly lies in ignoring the counsel of their serious commentator, Hector, and pursuing the irrational course of defending a wrong and stupid action, the abduction of Helen.

The vice which is exhibited and exposed in the love story is licentiousness or lust, which was a common subject for satire in Elizabethan days. Campbell maintains that both Troilus and Cressida are "virtuosi in sensuality" whose folly and ultimate disillusionment would have been obvious to Elizabethan audiences from the first moment of their meeting together. Pandarus fills a role analogous to that of Thersites in the war story; he is a satiric commentator on the action of the love story. Troilus, because he is so completely the slave of his passions, is doomed to failure and frustration, either

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96 Ibid., pp. 201-205. 97 Ibid., p. 197.
in love or on the battlefield. Campbell says,

Troilus follows unreasonable pleasure and becomes the slave of the wanton Cressida. He follows turbulent, irrational courses of revenge and is left rushing wildly and futilely after his rival, whom he is doomed never to overtake.100

Two endings were traditional for comical satyres: the characters whose follies had been exposed either reformed or they were scornfully dismissed from the play;101 the latter ending was the only possible one for Shakespeare's drama, for characters guilty of such serious moral flaws and follies as Troilus was could not be reformed on the stage. As Campbell says,

Social affectation might be appropriately purged by exposure that induced promises of amendment. But moral delinquency was too fundamental to the nature of the culprit to be thus easily corrected. It deserved to be pursued to the last by the scornful laughter of both author and audience. . . . Critics should not be greatly troubled because Cressida is not punished and Troilus is not slain by Achilles on the stage. If we insist on following him beyond the limits of the play, after hearing his hysterical threat to haunt Achilles "like a wicked conscience still," we may surmise his fate. But, as a victim of uncontrolled passion for a wanton, he did not deserve the dignity of a death before the eyes of the spectators. And any similar moment of nobility Cressida deserved still less.102

One further point in Campbell's theory needs to be mentioned. The follies and vices held up for ridicule in comical satire were not generalized or abstract, but were the actual social, political, and moral laws existing in Elizabethan society. Campbell is convinced that in Troilus and Cressida Shakespeare was satirizing insubordination and rebellion within

100Ibid., p. 207.
101Ibid., p. 217.
102Ibid., p. 217.
the armed forces in the war story and indiscriminate and unbridled sexual appetite in the love story, and that the great dramatist considered these flaws as a menace in the society of his own day and was determined to bring them to the attention of the Elizabethan audience.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 218-223.} At the time that the play was written, England, much like the Greek army outside of Troy, was suffering military reverses caused by individual rivalries among the leaders of her armed forces. As for lust, it had long been a favorite subject for English satirists, and there is considerable evidence that this particular sin was fairly widespread in Elizabethan society.

In summary, what may be said about the tone of the two versions of the Troilus-Cressida story which are the subject of this study? Chaucer's poem reveals a penetrating but sympathetic understanding of human nature. Its style, always delightful and charming, reveals the hand of a master craftsman, a modest, generous man with a sense of humor.

Shakespeare's play is bitter and cynical in tone. Although it is graceful and eloquent in style, obviously the work of a man of genius, its language and humor, in many passages, are extremely coarse and poisonous. The work is best interpreted, perhaps, as a scornful exposition of human weakness and vice.
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