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Shakespeare's Treatment of the Troilus and Cressida Story

Lucile A. Gwyn

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SHAKESPEARE'S TREATMENT
OF
THE TROILUS AND CRESSIDA STORY

by

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requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Foreword

The purpose of the following study has been to consider Shakespeare's interpretation of the Troilus and Cressida love story. Like many of the world's greatest writers, Shakespeare was content to breathe new life into old tales which had been handed down through the ages. In order to understand and appreciate his attitude toward this particular love story, it was first necessary to trace and examine, in a comparative way, the many adaptations of the same story which already existed. These adaptations represent different authors, different eras and different influences. By bearing in mind the nature of the changes which gradually came over the characters it was possible to determine just what material Shakespeare accepted from the past, and just how much he invented. By this means, it was possible to render certain that his own story of Troilus and Cressida was much less problematic than it has often been considered.

For the courtesy of Mr. Leland R. Smith, Librarian of Butler University, in arranging loans for materials not otherwise possible, I wish to express my thanks. For the very helpful counsel of Dr. John S. Harrison, I wish to express my most sincere appreciation.

Lucile A. Gwyn

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SHAKESPEARE'S TREATMENT OF THE
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA STORY

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN OF THE STORY

Benoit's Roman de Troie

Later generations have read into many a masterpiece a meaning which the author himself might disclaim, and yet, which might be contained in it, none-the-less, because he had left in latent form what has since then become so apparent to us. A great gulf yawns between us and Shakespeare, and in the centuries that separate us there have been many changes in taste, in opinion and in prejudice due primarily to social conventions which show their influence upon the printed page. From the authentic fragments we have concerning his life we can find no proof that he lived in any unusual or untypical manner. Others lived as he, but the essential point is what Shakespeare did with his fund of material and his fund of contemporary experience. Herein lies the key to the present thesis.

Upon reading Shakespeare's drama, Troilus and Cressida, there arises in one's mind an overwhelming rush of uncertainty and bewilderment together with the shock of the unpleasant. Following in the wake of the prudent reader, one needs to start in search of this traditional story and continue a

careful pursuit, that there may be a wholesome understanding of their characters before one reaches a definite conclusion.

We can understand Shakespeare's Troilus and Cressida only by observing the changes from its origin. The record of Shakespeare's plays prove that his artistic sense ran hand in hand with his powerful imagination, and by patient and repeated experiments with familiar motives he combined old materials from his books into constantly fresh and lasting effects. Throughout his career, he looked calmly about him, took account of what material his contemporary England offered him and with the utmost economy of invention decided what might be done with it and disposed of it accordingly.

Between 1155 and 1160 there appeared for the first time, so far as we yet know, the love story of Troilus and Cressida in a French production, known as Roman de Troie. Very little is known of Benoit de Ste. Maure, the author, except that he was a troubadour at the court of Henry II in England. He tells in his own story only his name.¹ Benoit set out in the joyous spirit of a troubadour to convert into the language of poetry the text of the Trojan war, in honor of Eleanor, Henry's Queen.² His style was by no means lacking in a mediaeval spirit and the quaint effect made his poem extremely popular at once. It was particularly clear and fresh. Long as it was, it naturally had to be tedious in places, but it had a characteristic vigor and a

1. Benoit de Sainte-Maure, Roman de Troie, A. Joly, P., 1870-71
v. 132

2. George Saintsbury, Short History of English Literature
London and New York, 1898 p. 37

dramatic force, making it one of the chief productions of the most brilliant half century of the 'Old French' literature. In Benoit's hands the Trojan romance swelled into a story of more than thirty thousand verses of knights in armour and ladies in castles and bowers. Knowing the French as we do, we acknowledge that it would have been impossible to have a native poem without a strong element of love. To make it vivid and picturesque at Eleanor's Court, he introduced his love story for the purpose of creating a diversion from the long and monotonous succession of encounters between the Greeks and Trojans, and cleverly fit the love story in piecemeal, a little at a time. To be accurate, Benoit attempted the love theme nine times. These sections are as follows:

1. The exchange of prisoners when Briseida was sent to the Grecian camp.¹
2. The grief of Troilus and Briseida at parting and the journey of the latter, under the escort of Diomedes to her father's tent.²
3. The combat between Troilus and Diomedes and the despatch by the latter of the war steed of Troilus as a present to Briseida.³
4. Diomedes' assiduous courtship of Briseida and her gift to him of her sleeve.⁴
5. The second combat between Troilus and Diomedes.⁵
6. The third combat between Troilus and Diomedes in which Troilus wounded Diomedes and reproached him for taking Briseida's love.⁶

1. op. cit. - v. 13065-13102
 2. op. cit. - v. 13261-13866
 3. op. cit. - v. 14268-14352
 4. op. cit. - v. 15001-15186
 5. op. cit. - v. 15617-15658
 6. op. cit. - v. 20057-20118

7. Briseida's grief over the wounded Diomede and determination to give him her love.¹

8. The displeasure of Troilus at Briseida's fickleness and the maledictions pronounced against her by Trojan damsels.²

9. The treacherous slaying of Troilus.³

These nine sections occupy one thousand three hundred and seventy verses of thirty-six thousand three hundred and sixteen which average about one twenty-seventh of the poem.⁴ We can but note that the first venture of the Troilus and Cressida love story did not impose itself too tediously upon Benoit's fellowbeings.

Benoit's interest in his love story was rather cynical and satiric. As we know, he only wished to relieve the monotony of the war, not by presenting the constancy of a faithful lover, but the inconstancy of a faithless mistress. He explicitly declared that he was relating his story of the defection of Briseida as a warning example to all men not to put their trust on womankind, for as Solomon says, "he who can find a faithful woman, ought to thank his creator."⁵ To Benoit, a writer of the middle ages, love was not an elevating and regenerating influence in human society, but a baneful and a destructive one, bringing about the ultimate undoing of those who allowed themselves to fall under its influence. The harsh and caustic aspects seem most distasteful if not actually repellent to us, but

1. op. cit. - v. 20057-20118

2. op. cit. - v. 20193-20340

3. op. cit. - v. 20666-20682

4. op. cit. - v. 21242-21512

5. Griffin and Myrick, The Filostrato, n. 1 Introduction, p. 30

Benoit seemed to write with a great relish. If Briseida fell short of the ideal of womanly fidelity for which a French lover would long for as a model to be his mistress, Troilus too, lacked an emotional uplift that later poets feasted on. But Benoit's interest lay in the story of a woman, light in love; not of a man constant in affection.

This blithe creature of little stability and great attraction is thus described in the Benoit poem. "Briseida was courteous, beautiful and well taught, she was graceful, neither too little nor too tall. She was fair and whiter and lovelier than lily flower or snow upon a branch: only the eyebrows meeting marred the perfection of her face. She had beautiful wide open eyes and her speech was charming, quick and witty. She was very pleasant in manner and sober in bearing; kindly and full of pity. She was well beloved, and loved much in return, but her heart was fickle. The Trojans thought Briseida noble, worthy and wise and because of that fact Priam permitted her to live. We would think Benoit could have better emphasized the contrast of what she was, and what she should have been, by opening with the birth of love.

Though thoroughly saturated with the traits of a Christian bishop, Benoit personifies Calchas, the father of Briseida, as a rich and mighty Trojan famed because of his magic lore. As he had great wisdom he was sent to the temple of Apollo to beg mercy for his people. When Achilles, the Greek, persuaded him to desert the Trojans and join the Greeks whom the Gods were to favor with victory, Calchas did so.

Briseida first appeared in the story when Calchas, the deserter, remembered his daughter whom he had left behind in Troy and persuaded the Greeks to demand her in exchange for a prisoner. The Trojans dubbed Calchas 'baser than a dog' and of all dishonored and vile men, the most miserable. King Priam granted Briseida to him wishing nothing left in the city that should belong to him.¹ Never at any time does Benoit mention the mother of Briseida.

He waited until the news of the exchange of prisoners to reveal the love that existed between Troilus and Briseida, saying:

Whoever had joy or gladness, Troilus suffered affliction and grief. That was for the daughter of Calchas, for he loved her deeply. He had set his whole heart on her; so mightily was he possessed by his love that he thought only of her. She had given herself to him, both her body and her love. Most men knew of that.²

He omitted every single word concerning the birth and growth of their passion and we meet Briseida after she has consummated her love for Troilus, as sworn lovers did in her day. She was simply Troilus's sweetheart, an accepted and not too prominent fact in the life of that splendid young warrior. There was a terrible reality about the part played by women in the daily life of Troy. In startling contrast then, to the other tragic women was Briseida, whose portrait Benoit drew with so much life and satire. Although he called her a girl she was the natural woman, the eternal type common alike to Courts and cottages and everywhere born to be the delight and distraction of all youthful males within her reach. This beautiful, bewitch-

1. R. K. Gordon, *The Story of Troilus*, p. 8

2. *ibid.*, p. 8

ing Briseida could grieve over the wreck of her lover's happiness even while she secured her own by the elasticity of her own nature. This is the key to her character.

In a spirit of passion Benoit describes Troilus. It is truly a picture of a young warrior gaged by a splendid judge of fighting men, and one of the most vital characterizations that Benoit ever composed; Troilus almost comes to life. Benoit says:

Troilus was wondrous beautiful; he had a laughing cheer, ruddy face, a clear open look, and broad brow. He had a true knightly appearance. He had fair hair, very charming and naturally shining, eyes bright and full of gaiety; none ever had beauty like theirs. Whenever he was in good humor his look was so gentle that it was a pleasure to behold him; but I tell you truly that towards his enemies he bore another aspect and look. He had a high nose, well shaped; his frame was well fitted to bear arms. He had a well-made mouth and beautiful teeth, whiter than ivory or silver; a square chin, a long and straight neck which suited well the wearing of armour; shoulders very finely made, gradually sloping; breast sturdy beneath the haubert; well made hands and fine arms; he was well shaped in the waist; his garments sat well upon him; he was powerful in the hips; he was a wonderful fair knight. He had straight legs, arched feet, his limbs fairly fashioned in every part;...He was tall, but bore himself well. I do not think there is now a man of such worth throughout the length of the world who so loves joy and delight, or who says so little to give displeasure to others, or who has so rich a nature, or who so desires fame and honourable exploits. He was not insolent or haughty, but light of heart and gay and amorous. Well was he loved, and endured many great trials. He was not old, but still a young man, the fairest of the youths of Troy and the most worthy....¹

When Troilus said to Briseida, "I will always be true,"²

1. R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, p. 5
2. *ibid*, p. 10

he uttered words which give the key to his character. When parting from Briseida, he was overwhelmed by grief, distress and bitter lamentations. Although full of forebodings and deeply sad farewells were the last night they spent together, there was no mention of any possible escape together, they unquestionably accepted their fate without any rebellion. Yet even at the heart-breaking moment Briseida was concerned to pack up all her gowns and other possessions. Incidentally, Benoit gave us a delightful picture of French life as he describe her domestic affairs on leaving Troy.

She caused her loved possessions to be gathered together; her clothes and garments to be packed up. She arrayed and adorned her body with the most precious raiment she had. She had a tunic of silk brodered with gold, with rich and skilful work upon it, furred with ermine so long it swept the ground. Very splendid and charming it was, and so well did it become her body that nothing in the world, had she worn it, would have suited her better than that.¹

It is a satiric touch that male authors in all ages are fond of repeating, but very few have the secret sympathy with love of splendor which Benoit possessed.

Despite the consoling and uplifting consciousness of finery, Briseida could not restrain her cries when the Trojan ladies took a tearful farewell. From the few hints that Benoit made concerning Briseida's reputation and character we can be safe in supposing that before she became unfaithful to Troilus she held a very high place in the estimation and affections of the Trojans.² When at the barriers of the Greek Camp, she said

1. R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, p. 9

2. A. Joly, Roman de Troie, vv. 13086-13090-13112

goodbye to Troilus pleading her eternal fidelity. But Benoit wastes no serious sympathy on her despair; in four days he assures us her humor will be so completely changed that she will no more desire to return to Troy. "All women are alike," he says, rather sweepingly, "with one eye they weep and are already smiling with the other."¹

Hardly was Troilus out of sight than Diomede, into whose charge Briseida had been delivered, began to look on her with a soldier's eye; and immediately with the frankness of a man at arms, made an avowal of his admiration.² In so doing, Diomede showed little respect for the feeling of the girl just parted from her lover. When we read Benoit's description of Diomede, we can better understand him.

Diomede was very powerful, large and square of limb and very tall. His look was exceeding cruel; he made many a false promise. He was very bold, and very quarrelsome, and very cunning in fight; he was very overbearing and arrogant, and greatly was he dreaded. Very hard was it to find one who was willing to stand against him. Nobody could control him; he was a very evil man to serve. But many times he underwent many torments and many combats because of love....

For all his boldness, love was in a short time to completely subdue him and rob him of sleep, of speech and self-possession. With animated but unnecessary care Briseida declined his advances with a great show of maidenly prudence; she profited by detailing the worth and devotion of the lover.

1. R. K. Gordon, *The Story of Troilus*, p.
2. *ibid.*, p. 5

but not to appear too discouraging she assured him if she were free, no one would deserve her favor more than he. Before they reached her father's tent, Diomede had her glove, whereat she was in no wise displeased.¹ The policy of alternately tormenting and cajoling her suitor Briseida pursued with utmost delight to the exclusion of all other thoughts and regrets. She had such quick understanding, that she clearly perceived that he loved her beyond aught else, wherefore she showed herself all the prouder to him. "This is always the way with ladies," added Benoit who dearly loved to flout at womenkind.² If Briseida remembered Troilus at all, it was only to taunt her new lover with praise of his valor and worth. When she had almost distracted Diomede by her taunts, softening suddenly, she bestowed a favor on him, a scarlet sleeve, fatally familiar to Troilus. Faithless and vain as she was, yet Briseida was not like some of her descendants, altogether heartless. When Diomede was carried, dangerously wounded, from the field, she flung off all pretense, defied wicked tongues and hastened to nurse him in his tent. But even then, she stopped to analyze her own feelings, with the air of a modern heroine. But while she bewailed her faithlessness, she found excuse for it. To herself she thought and said:

Henceforth no good will be written of me, nor any good song sung. No such fortune or happiness will be mine henceforth. Evil and senseless was my thought, I deem, when I betrayed my lover, for he deserved it not at my hands.

1. R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, p. 12
 2. *ibid.*, p. 17

I have not done as I should; my heart should have been so set and fixed on him that I should have listened to no other. I was false and inconstant and mad when I gave heed to words; he who wishes to keep himself loyal must never listen to words; by words the wise and the most cunning are deceived. From this time forth those who love me not will not lack things to say of me; the Trojan women will talk of me.... Very changeable and faithless is my heart; for I had the best lover to whom ever a maiden might give her love. Those whom he loved I should have loved, and those who would seek his harm I should have hated and avoided. But much my heart grieves and bleeds that I have been faithless.... God be gracious unto Troilus! Now that I cannot have him nor he me, I give and surrender myself to Diomedes. Dearly should I like to have this boon-- that I should not remember what I have done in the past. Sorely does that trouble me. My conscience reproaches me, which greatly torments my heart....¹

In her isolation she sorely needed distraction from sad thoughts, with the comfort of a practical nature, she deplored her spiritual shortcomings from the vantage ground of material gain; after all, she had the best of the game. Finally, with cheerful good sense she prayed God to bless Troilus and resolved to be true to Diomedes.²

In spite of the poetic enthusiasm of Benoît, there is far more of the natural man in his character of Troilus, than in the patient, heart-broken lovers of later writers. In his jealous rage, Benoît's hero singled out Diomedes in the fight, struck him down and after bidding him carry his wounds to Briseida, he added the bitter warning:

1. R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, p. 19

2. *ibid.*, p. 20

Go now and bide with the woman, with the daughter of old Calchas, who, they say, does not hate you. For her love I had spared you, if I had thought of it in a less evil hour. And yet her short-lived faith, her falseness and her wrong-doing and her betrayal of me have brought all this upon you. Her sins and her false love for me have done you hurt. By you I send her word that now we two are parted. If you have been to her what I used to be, there will be plenty more accepted lovers before the siege is ended; you will have to keep good watch. You may have her wholly to yourself now but she has not yet made an end, since she finds pleasure in the trade of love. For, if there are so many that somewhat please her the very innkeepers will have her favours.

It will be wise for her to take thought from whom she may draw profit!...

These taunts were clearly heard. Neither Trojans nor Greeks forgot them; nor was there a day in all the month that were not reported in a hundred places....¹

Only once again does Troilus appear; just before his death he gives momentary expression to his chagrin over Briseida's unfaithfulness, saying "ladies are faithless and maidens are false....and it was an evil thing to put your trust in them, for there are very few of them who are faithful in love and free from fickleness and disloyalty."

Summing up; the basic characteristic of Troilus, which will carry over, is his own statement, "I tell you plainly my heart will always be true; I will never change it for another." It is the key to his future, just as Benoit prepared Briseida for intense changes when he wrote of her,...."she will soon

have forgotten her grief and changed her feelings, If today she has sorrow, she will have joy again, as great as any that ever was. Soon she will have changed her love; soon she will be comforted once more..."

Why he left the remainder in a cloud of uncertainty we can not know, but the two, Briseida and Diomedes, sank into a comfortable oblivion that did not seem to annoy Henry II or Eleanor or any in the court. Since Benoit mentions Homer in the very beginning, saying,

Homer, who was a wondrous clerk and wise and learned, wrote of the destruction, of the great siege, and of the cause whereby Troy was laid waste so that it was nevermore the abode of men.... we know well beyond doubt that he was born a hundred years after the great hosts met in battle. No wonder if he errs since he never was there and saw nothing thereof.... But Homer had such great fame and wrought so much afterwards, as I find, that his book was accepted and held in reference,¹

and every author we will meet has some comment concerning him, we feel justified in accepting the name and character of Cressida as one which has evolved from the pathetic Briseis who was so innocently the cause of the great wrath between Agememnon and Achilles. In Homer's² tale she was a young tender slave-girl with no father nor mother and no history apart from the fact that she was brought from Brisa, a town in Lemnos, by Achilles in the course of the war.³

Troilus appeared to have figured scarcely more than an engaging youth, one of the younger of the many sons of Priam;

1. R. K. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 3

2. Homer's *Iliad*, Trans., W.C. Bryant, Bk. I, Lines 10-31

3. Murray, Gilbert, The Rise of the Greek Epic, Ch. VIII, p. 11

remarkable for his beauty and his valor. He was slain in his first flower by Achilles, and a career cut short so early obviously provided little opportunity for the development of the tales of heroic exploit and adventure, and so far as is known from surviving records, the ancients never got beyond this single pathetic incident of his death.

This is all the great old world poet said of Troilus,¹ but we find in the middle ages the fame of this said Troilus far outshone that of Hector. It must have been that the brief mention of an early death stirred the imagination, and set fancy at work. Benoit expanded the hint and developed Troilus into a handsome youth who fell by Achilles' lance.

In all modern time Homer has been admired for his noble, tender and chivalrous sense of what is due to women; for his pictures of the perfect wife, and for the woman of immortal charm. And when he did touch on the less loveable, he was manifestly reluctant to tell of any evil deed, or any cruel sorrow. He did not dwell on the passion of love; he could not do so in an epic of war. But each epic turns on and is the motive of love. The Iliad springs from the lawless love of Paris and Helen. The wrath of Achilles too, arises on account of his lost love. But the love of Troilus and Cressida were not in Homer's poem.

Whether Benoit invented this story or found it in an enlarged version of the 'De Excidio Trojae Historia' of Dares

1. Homer, op. cit., Bk. XXIV, Lines 328-335

Phrygius is a question. Griffin thinks it highly improbable that Benoit invented it.¹ Benoit specifically declares at the opening of his poem that he proposes to follow Dares throughout save when he may introduce some 'bon dit' of his own. Hardly could a love story so long and detailed be dismissed as a 'bon dit.' He implies the love of Troilus and Briseida was a matter of common knowledge to his reader. Next, Benoit's constant representation of love as a destructive agency in human society harmonizes much better with an antique conception of such passion than with the ideals we should expect a troubadour to entertain. Finally, it is difficult to believe that a mediaeval author would so far have disregarded the intense respect for the ancient story as to allow himself the privilege of remaking it. Constans believes an enlarged version of Dares existed and doubtless contained a preparatory story of the love of Troilus and Cressida as well as Benoit's own story of Briseida's love for Diomede.²

The earlier portion of Benoit's Roman de Troie is based on Dares, and the latter portion beginning at verse 24397 is based upon the Ephemeris de Bello Trojano of Dictys Cretenses. We are now interested in those two small books of Latin which Benoit found so convincing. This is his own testimony:

1. Griffin and Myrick, The Filostrato, n. 2, intro., p. 26
 2. *ibid.*, intro., p. 27

n. Smith Classical Dictionary, "Dares according to the Iliad (v.9) is a priest at Troy. He advised Hector not to kill Patroclus. In the time of Aelian (V.H.xl2) the Iliad of Dares was still known to exist and is more ancient than Homer.

A great time afterwards, when Rome had already long endured, in the time of the worthy Sallust, who was esteemed so powerful, rich and nobly born, and a wondrous clerk and learned this Sallust I read, had a very wise nephew. He was called Cornelius and was learned and trained in lettersOne day he was looking in a cupboard to find some books of magic. He...found the history that Dares had written, made, and told in a Greek tongue. This Dares of whom you hear now was not fostered and born in Troy. He dwelt there, and did not leave till the army had departed.... He wrote the history of the great deeds in Greek. Each day he wrote it thus, as he beheld it with his eyes....though he was of the Trojans, he did not on that account show more favor to his own people than he did to the Greeks....We must believe him and hold his story true....¹

We have forty-four short chapters of Dares' book surviving, which are written in bad Latin prose which lacks both literary charm and all claim to style. In spite of the letter supposed to have been written by Cornelius Nepos to Sallust, in which Nepos declared that he found Dares' Historia de Excidio Troiae at Athens, and translated it faithfully into Latin, the existing text could not have been written before the sixth century, A.D.²

In the Historia of Dares, there is frequent mention of Troilus, son of Priam, who is described as magnum, pulcherrimum pro aetate valentem, fortem, cupidum virtutis;³ but it is always as a warrior foremost in the battlefield, with no suggestion whatever of his love for Briseida, although her portrait is there. Dares describes her as one of the famous personages, being "formosam, non alta statura, candide, capillo flavo et molli,

1. R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, p. 3

2. R. K. Root, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, intro., p.xxii

3. Dares and Dictys, De Bello Trojano, Chap. 12

superciliis iunctis, oculis venustis, corpore aequali, blandam, affabilem, verecundam, animo simplici, piam."¹ This is all we can find about her in the narrative. However, we are deeply concerned about the many solutions that have been offered concerning her origin.

R. K. Root has spent much time and care in his research, and quoting from him one finds much condensed information. He says, by way of summary:

In Homer there is Briseis, the lovely slave girl taken away from Achilles by Agememnon, and so the occasion of Achilles' wrath, whose name appears in the accusative, Briseida, in Iliad, I, 184, and Chryseis, daughter of the seer Chryses whom Agememnon relinquishes at the command of Apollo. The accusative of her name, Chryseida, occurs in Iliad, I, 182. Dares mentions Briseida only in the portrait which he gives of her and refers to Chryseida not at all. Dictys mentions neither name; though the two personages to whom the names apply appear as Astynome daughter to Chryses, and Hippodamia daughter of Brises. Benoit found in the text of Dares the portrait of a beautiful lady, Briseis who bore no part in the story, and decided to utilize her as the heroine of one of his episodes. He seems not to have realized that the name 'Briseis' means 'Daughter of Brises' and so gives her as daughter to the seer Calchas. From Dictys² he later took over the Homeric story of the real Briseis, whom he knows only as Ypodamia, the daughter of Brises, and of Chryseis who appears as Astinome, daughter of Crises.³

Be that as it may, we do know that true to the hardy standards of an age still largely heroic, Benoit conceived of a Briseida as a pure child of the senses, without moral responsibilities, to be handed around as mere chattel from warrior to

1. Dares and Dictys, De Bello Trojano, Chap. 13

2. N. E. Griff in Dares and Dictys, Baltimore Book 11, 1, 17, 19, 33,

3. R. K. Root, Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, intro. xxvii^{49, 52}

1.n. Here Dictys gives an account of the relations of Hippodamia daughter of Brisis, to Achilles and Agememnon.

warrior in Homeric fashion; and his one touch of tenderness that alone qualified his unsparing treatment of his erring heroine comes forth when she, this girl of circumstances, grew sensible to the havoc she had wrought in the heart of her first lover.¹

The Ephemeris Belli Trojani of Dictys the Cretan is also supposed to be the narrative of an eye-witness, since records show that he fought in the expedition against Troy. During the war, he was supposed to keep a journal of the events that were passing before his eyes. At his death the six books of his journal were buried with him in a tin case which was finally brought to light by an earthquake in the thirteenth year of Nero's reign. The books were then translated into Greek, and later into most excellent Latin. Naturally, the romantic story is but a pretty fable, and there is conclusive evidence that the Latin version is really a translation from a Greek original. A papyrus found in 1899 contains a fragment of the Greek Dictys' which corresponds with seven chapters of Book IV of the Latin version.²

In spite of all the drawbacks, the Dares story especially, had such a stamp of authority, that it grew very popular and became the fountain head for all mediaeval storytelling. Since Benoit's time, Daretis Phrygius the author of the Historia de Excidio Troiae has been declared an impudent forger, the

1. Rom. de Tr. vv 20318-20320

2. Tebtunis Papyri, ed. Grenfell, Hunt and Godspeed, London, 1907
Vol. 2, pp. 9-18

episodes of his manuscript have been shown to be taken from other writers and his flimsy document has been found to have no literary value.¹ Lately, it has been proven that Joseph of Exeter wrote the version in Latin and named it a 'Dares'.²

Benoit's story was very successful as success went those days. His name was ignored, but his poem was freely translated into every tongue in England. His art as a troubadour furnished a notable example of the natural evolution of the drama from the epic. Although more or less bare in complication and interest, the chant of the minstrel had begun to assume a literary form with its dialogue, dramatic action and intricate development of character. There was something so vital about the two new lovers as they played their roles in the Roman de Troie.

We could never pass over this period of the Troilus and Cressida love story, without mentioning the undeserved fate it had to suffer in 1287. Guido delle Colonne, so called because of his famous family in Sicily, paraphrased in turgid Latin prose, and passed it off as original, material which has been thought to be the same as Benoit's.³ It was more or less dull, and in very bad taste, but he inserted such passages of pointed moral

1. W. H. Schofield, Eng. Lit. from the Norman Conquest to Chaucer, ch. V, p. 286
2. R. K. Gordon, The Story of Troilus, intro., p. XI
n. The most available ed. is in Valpy's reissue of the Delphin Classics. London, 1825, where it is included in one vol. with the texts of Dares and Dictys under the title of Josephi Iscani de Bello Trojano, Libri Sex
3. W. J. Courthope, History of English Poets, Ch.11, pp.443-449

comment, and such bitterly severe criticism of women, that it became the popular authority of his time. He altered the narrative content so little that a summary of any portion of Guido would be nearly identical with that of Benoit. Although he made no effective changes in either Troilus or Cressida, his version is important because of the fact it was from this form that later Lydgate took his pattern, which in turn passed into the hands of the most famous storyteller the world has ever known, those of Shakespeare.

For our purpose this much is sufficient. Briseida seemed to step out from a shadowy past, and was allowed to drift into an uncertain somewhere with Diomedes. Troilus, accounted for at all times, had a proper parentage, a proper background and a proper personality. Benoit, beside being picturesque "gave to feudal society an ancestry in the halls of Ilium,¹" and left to us a fairly clear record of the trials of courtly life.

1. G. Saintsbury, op. cit., p. 39

CHAPTER II

STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TROILUS AND CRESSIDA LOVE STORY

1. Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*

Many years slipped away before Benoit's love story of Troilus and Cressida sifted into the materials which writers seized upon. Mediaevalism and its interest in eternal things of the spirit had given place to a brilliant court life and the doctrine of Renaissance culture, both of which declared that man's life consisted in the abundance and variety of sensations he enjoyed.

Giovanni Boccaccio, a poet whose genius was one of the most characteristic products of the Italian Renaissance and known as one of the world's greatest storytellers, wrote a graceful tale of courtly intrigue, while living at the court of Naples when he was a young man. This happened early in the fourteenth century. Very few have heard, however, that he was also one of the world's greatest lovers and was fond of turning his own love experiences into literary account.¹ This poem was the product of his ardent and impetuous youth, being written while a lover of the famous Maria d'Aquino. He was experiencing in his own person all the raptures and torments of that passion of which he wrote, because of the fact that his 'Lady' had recently left Naples. We must constantly bear in mind that Love

1. Griffin and Myrick, The Filostrato, intro., p. 24

was in his age and country the one theme of poetry. Although this Love was elevated into a new kind of worship, it was no longer spiritualized as in the early days; it was frankly and passionately sensuous. Therefore, this leavetaking of Maria plunged him into deepest distress. The anguish that fills the breast of a lover bereaved of his mistress, forms the motif of the entire poem, and the fickleness of Fortune as it affects him, forms the real purpose of the argument. This accounts for the name he bestowed on his creation; Il Filostrato means 'The One Prostrated by Love.'¹ The scene of Boccaccio's courtship was his gay pleasure-loving city of Naples. To conceal his meanings from his fellow readers, he chose to relate his sufferings in the person of some impassioned one, and selected as a mask for his own secret grief, the ancient story of 'Troilus and Cressida.'

Regardless of his notorious impracticability, he was clever enough to be the first to recognize in the Troilus and Briseida episode of Benoit and Guido, the material for a single and unified story.² Boccaccio did no mere imitation, but he transmitted such parts as he needed into pure Italian form, and by the same magic process, he improved the rude framework of the troubadour's fable into a new and independent romance. Like those troubadours of old, Boccaccio was single; and his 'Lady' was married.

1. Griffin and Myrick, The Filostrato, intro., p.41, n. 3.

2. *ibid.*, intro., p. 24

Like them, he too stood beneath his 'Lady' in social rank, and had come as a stranger from afar to court her. And finally like them, he depended for his success upon his skill in song.

Since his only interest was a story that would reveal the love that was consuming him, he had very little enthusiasm for the war motif. Although he does not let us forget there is a war going on, it is far removed from his own sorrows; and by a clever inspiration he makes of it a heroic background from which the fearless Troilo returns, covered with honors because of his glorious martial deeds.

Boccaccio speaks of an elaborate version of the Roman de Troie as supplying him with subject matter, saying first "if the tale speaketh true" and "if the story erreth not." In vaguely designating his immediate source by means of "any credit... given to ancient histories," Boccaccio only follows the practice that the mediaeval writers seemed to find so universally popular, owing no doubt, to the feelings they entertained for the dignity of the time-tried traditions. He borrowed from Benoit and Guido brief descriptions of persons, extracts from speeches, sometimes transferred from the lips of one character in the original to those of another in his own poem. But his account of the development of the love of Troilus for Criseida which fills these Cantos, is entirely lacking in both Benoit and Guido. Karl Young, in making a technical survey, finds a total of twenty passages in which Boccaccio parallels Benoit occupying one hundred and six verses in Italian. Since the total number of verses in the

Filostrato is five thousand seven hundred and four, it is one out of a little less than every fifty-four that finds correspondence in Benoit.¹ And to Guido, Young finds only a total of eight passages that show his influence in Boccaccio. But that is little to be wondered at when one comes to think how ill-suited the love stories of Benoit and Guido were to the purposes which Boccaccio had in mind when he wrote.

Since no attention had been paid to the origin and development of the passion of Troilus and Cressida, and so much less to Troilus' heart-stricken condition, Boccaccio naturally had to rely on his own resources. To make up for this deficiency, Boccaccio devoted his first three Cantos of his Filostrato to his own version of the birth, growth and consummation of the love between the two. This invention of Boccaccio's constitutes one of the most outstanding changes ever bequeathed to the literary world. More than once did Boccaccio do this. It seemed to be his heart's outlet, to record his raptures and his misery, and poem after poem bears witness to his passionate theme. Beginning with the first Canto he writes:

....of the amorous labors of Troilo, in which
is recorded how Troilo became enamored of
Cresseida, and the amorous sighs and tears that
were his for her sake before he discovered to
anyone his secret.

In Canto II:

....Troilo maketh known his love to Pandarus

1. Griffin and Myrick, The Filostrato, intro., p. 29

cousin of Criseida, who comforteth him and discovereth his secret love to Criseida and with prayers and with flattery induceth her to love Troilo.

In Canto III:

....Pandaro and Troilo speak together of the need of keeping secret of that which toucheth Criseida. Troilo goeth thither secretly and taketh delight and speaketh with Criseida. He departeth and returneth. And after returning he abideth insong.

Cantos VII and VIII are also Boccaccio's invention. In these he records the extreme anxieties of Troilo and he awaits Criseida's promised return. No one but an Italian could ever find words to express what a man in desperate love would say or do when his 'Lady' fails to be true to him. Although he must have met many stories which made use of a confidante, a friend or some one person whose office it was to mediate, Boccaccio did not find his pattern in Benoit or Guido. Therefore, when he introduced 'Pandaro' he made the second great change in the story of Troilo and Criseida. He appeared early in the story and played a very important part throughout. Boccaccio says in Canto VII:

....Troilo on the tenth day awaiteth Criseida at the gate. Whom, when she cometh not he excuseth and returneth on the eleventh day and again on other days. And when she cometh not, he returneth to his tears. With sorrow Troilo consumeth himself. Priam asketh him the reason Troilo keepeth silent. Troilo dreameth Criseida hath been taken away from him. He relateth his dream to Pandaro, and wisheth to kill himself. Pandaro restraineth and keepeth him back there from. He writeth to Criseida. Deiphoebus learneth of his love. While he lieth in bed, ladies visit him, and he rebuketh Cassandra.

Canto VIII finds Criseida entirely passed from view, except in Troilo's mind. Boccaccio says:

....Troilo with letters and with messages make further trial of Criseida, who beareth him in hand with words. Soon by means of a garment snatched by Deiphoebus from Diomede, Troilo recognizeth a brooch which he hath given to Criseida, and Criseida to Diomede. Troilo grieveth with Pandaro and despaireth of his 'Lady' entirely. Last of all, he was slain, as he issued forth into battle by Achilles, and his woes end.

Canto IV follows his predecessors, Benoit and Guido when,

Criseida was sent back to her father Calchas. The Greeks asked exchange of prisoners. Antenor is surrendered. Criseida is asked for. Troilo at first, grieved inwardly and then he and Pandaro discuss many things for the comfort of Troilo. The rumor of her coming departure reacheth Criseida. Ladies attend her and after their departure Criseida weepeth. Pandaro arrangeth with her that Troilo shall go to her that evening. He goeth to her and there Criseida fainteth. Troilo wisheth to kill himself. She recovereth. They go to bed weeping, and speak of various matters, and Criseida tenderly promiseth to come back within the tenth day.

Canto V continues in the same strain:

Troilo accompanieth her and returneth to Troy. He weepeth alone, and in company of Pandaro, by whose advice they go to spend some days with Sarpedon. He returneth to Troy, where every spot remindeth him of Criseida, and in order to assuage his sorrows he giveth utterance to them in song, awaiting until the tenth day shall pass.

Canto IV,

....Criseida while at her father's tent, grieveth at her separation from Troilo. Diomede cometh to her and holdeth discourse with her. He disparageth Troy and the Trojans, and discovereth his love. To him she replied and leaveth him in doubt whether he pleaseth her or not. Finally, grown indifferent to Troilo she beginneth to forget him.¹

1. Griffin and Myrick, op.cit. The arguments in this text are taken for the thesis.

What most appealed to Boccaccio in Benoit's episode of the love of Troilo for Criseida lay in the provision by the latter for a story of the separation between the lovers. Naturally, Boccaccio had to face new problems, one of which was a deepening or intensifying of certain characters. His few central figures would need deep psychological study.

Troilo was not difficult. Although he was no warrior, Boccaccio achieved a portrait of himself, and made him generous, highspirited and a passionate lover, where tears and sighs, raptures of hope and frenzied regret replaced the call to arms and the stern satisfaction of the fight. Boccaccio was rather subtle when he let it be said that God had never set a soul in any man more perfect than his (Troilo); that he was wise beyond men; honorable of speech, valiant and positively fearless. He also showed an artistic trait of the sentimentalist in the way he planned the slow, steady change through which the character of Troilo passed. Boccaccio began with him as a youth scarred by the cursed fire of love, slighting this lady and that, as any man who wished to be free; expressing doubt as to any woman's faithfulness; boasting of his escape and mocking those who were victims. Then, with one glance, he fell prey to that much scorned love and left the temple hopelessly stricken and heavy of heart. Though he guarded his secret hourly, fearing the taunts of those who had heard him boast, he thought of Cressida¹

1. op. cit., Canto I

night and day. Soon love robbed him of all sleep and took his appetite. He grew weak and pale. Pride made him pass it off as the strain from war. He wept, he sobbed her name, he begged her mercy.¹ Boccaccio then made a new life for Troilo, with beauty, love and bliss following in the wake of his requited love.² Then came anguish and complete prostration; Troilo was more dead than alive; he seemed not a man but a furious animal; he was consumed by a burning sorrow, he swore that only death could part him from his 'steadfast' Criseida.³ He was tempted to kill Diomede. He felt such hatred that he wanted to die.⁴ But all this suffering was in secret, remember.

Boccaccio's second new contribution to the development of the story lay in the fact that he shifted the center of interest from the diverting activities of a frivolous and changeable heroine to the pathetic submission of a patient and long suffering hero. Compare, for instance, the utter hopelessness of Troilo in this:

O my Criseida, where is thy faith, where
 thy love, where now thy desire, where
 the gift so dear that thou didst give me
 at thy going away?....
 Woe is me, for I was born in an evil hour.
 This thought slays me and robs me of any
 hope of joy to come, and breeds in me
 anguish and suffering.⁵

and the scathing manner in which the French Troilus throws Briseida at Diomede as he accepts his betrayal merely as one of

1. op. cit., Canto II

2. op. cit., Canto III

3. op. cit., Canto IV

4. op. cit., Canto V

5. Griffin and Myrick, op. cit., VIII, 11-21

the inevitable hazards of the game of love; Troilus says:

Go now and bide with the woman, with the
daughter of old Calchas....By you I send her
word that now we two are parted. If you
have been to her what I used to be, there
will be plenty more accepted lovers before
the siege is over....¹

It would be impossible to understand this new situation and the perversiveness of Boccaccio's characters, without an understanding of the social conventions of his time, since it is in terms of these conditions that the whole action of the poem is interpreted. Nothing could be more unfair than to judge the motivation of the poem by modern ethical standards. The mediaeval system of courtly love which had grown up under the influence of the social conditions in Provence during the twelfth century, and had received its most elaborate form in the lyrics of the troubadours, was still in vogue. Now, among other things, in this system of courtly morals, the ladies involved were usually, if not always, married; the granting of the ultimate favor to the lover was not held irregular, but instead, entirely proper. Since this was true, Boccaccio must have had good reason for changing his Criseida from Benoit's fresh young maiden to a widow, and such a one!

He, no doubt, desired his literary figure to flatter the actual state of his Maria. In reality she was a wife and conjectures might have arisen unnecessarily, should she be in verse as such; and he might have given offense to Maria if he likened

Criseida so nearly to her own voluptuous self. But more probably Boccaccio might have regarded a widow as an ideal mistress, and his purpose was the characterization of an ideal mistress, rather than the allegorizing of his own love affair. The widow would be more ideal because of her freedom from matrimonial entanglement, of her superior manifestation of love and desire, and of her immediate response to a lover's suit.

Therefore, Boccaccio made still another great change when he began his characterization of Criseida as a young, beautiful Italian widow at a native festival arrayed in black and fairer even through the snowy veil than any other. All her kinsfolk were in Troy, except her father. Through Troilo's eyes (otherwise Boccaccio's) she was tall, stately, gracious and proud in her aloofness. Besides, she had greatness of soul, she was gay, ready of speech, and virtuous above all others; and she scorned love above all things.¹ In reality, she was rich, a court-widow of experience, corrupt in character and capable of the love game. She reasoned on her own merits and position in a spirit of careful calculation. The only obstacle was fear for her own reputation. Her compassion for Troilo became so great and his great love brought tears to her eyes. But even so she doubted men's fidelity and though already stricken with love, she thought it befit her to seem virtuous and observe a certain respect for good form. Even so, she yielded at once to the

1. Griffin and Myrick, op. cit., Canto 1

suggestion of Pandaro and apologized for the apparent reluctance she manifested at first. She observed the code of utter secrecy to the very letter when the two consummated their love. With this southern nature love is a matter of the senses; it is voluptuous, not passionate.¹ Criseida nearly died of grief at parting with Troilus, but not for one instant would she listen to his appeal to defy the world and make a bold stroke with him for happiness. This suggestion of escaping together is Boccaccio's new invention. That such a Criseida should in her first discourse with Diomede make sentimental capital out of her widowhood is perhaps not out of character, but it is a coarse touch to her character which we have not seen before. However, Boccaccio let a strain of inferiority travel with Criseida throughout the poem. There is stress made of her low birth when Troilo fears to ask his father to keep Criseida in Troy, since that father is planning a royal marriage for his son Troilo, and will surely oppose his desire to marry the low-born widow.² Her lowly birth had been mentioned earlier, and was again emphasized by Cassandra in her frenzied taunt,³ to which Troilo replies in one of the most manly speeches in the poem saying:

....why is not Criseida in every respect
 worthy of any great man, of whatsoever sort
 thou wishest? I do not wish to speak of her
 beauty which in the judgment of any man sur-
 passeth that of the highest....But let us
 come simply to the matter of her nobility

1. Griffin and Myrick, op. cit., Canto 3

2. op. cit., IV, v 69, 5-8

3. op. cit., VII, v 87, 1-8

...Nobility is to be found wherever virtue is. This no one who understandeth it will deny... If perchance mine own eyesight and what others say of her deceiveth me not, none more chaste than she will ever be known... Would the gods had made me worthy to have her for my lady so that, are the report circulateth among you. I might hold in the highest praise what the Lady Cassandra holdeth in dispraise.¹

In spite of her delicate reserve; in spite of Boccaccio's name, 'Criseida,' (which means 'The Golden'), his dream of such dazzling imagery proved a very frail true-love, and her luster soon became more or less tarnished. Boccaccio interests himself in her only insofar as her movements affect Troilo. As an artist, he approved of the potent sketch of Benoit, and found courage to draw one of those profiles of frivolous women, by whom he was always diverted as he observed them in Naples. His treatment of the surrender of Criseida was brief, and when she did fall, she never arose. It was not her body alone that she sacrificed, her soul paid too; for she had thought it out and her decision was deliberate.² He brings to the surface that wantonness that had been lurking through the poem most of the time.

Diomede had lost his man-of-war gruffness which Benoit loved and was the proud and mighty Greek, a near-king, very ready of speech and a perfect lover. He was young, tall, fresh, fair, and very subtle. He addressed Criseida in Boccaccio's feudal language, so popular then, and used every means to make

1. op. cit., VII, vv. 91-100

2. op. cit., Canto VIII

1. op. cit., VII, vv. 91-100

2. op. cit., Canto VIII

1. op. cit., VII, vv. 91-100

2. op. cit., Canto VIII

his way into her heart. He was well rewarded, for his secret passion was permitted open avowal on the fourth day. While Troilus fought, as he did in Benoit's tale, he also has a strong Italian flavor of sentiment.

But Boccaccio was not yet finished with his new embellishments. The ideal of a go-between was not a new one, of course. Boccaccio knew the French version of Tristan¹ and of Launcelot²; he also knew the story of Jason and Medea, Achilles and Polixena, all of which had a friend, "ami" or a confidant.³ At any rate, he found something to suggest his adding the character of Pandaro as a literary scheme. But his Pandaro is no mere repetition of any previous type; he is more complex and more human than any other. This fact might tempt one to think he was a real person in Boccaccio's own life. At any rate, Boccaccio nurtured in his own fancy this idea of the gay, cynical loose-principled Pandaro for the sake of intrigue. He had the attributes of a young sprightly Italian courtier, such as Boccaccio no doubt knew; in the poem, however, he was a Trojan youth of high lineage. He felt deep friendship and pity. When he said, "it may be that she who torments thee, is such that I shall be able to achieve thy pleasure and I would satisfy thy desire,"⁴ he gave the key to the part he was to play in the poem. He preached patience, prudence and perseverance. His own enthu-

but his attitude toward women, generally speaking, was

1. Riccardiano, *Il Tristano*, Ed. E. G. Parodi, Bologna, 1896.
n. The Tristan Story in Italian romance form.
2. Dante, *Paradiso*, Dantes Studies and Researches, London, 1902
Launcelot story referred to by Dante, pp. 1-37
3. Griffin and Myrick, op. cit., Intro., p. 81
n. Achilles employed a faithful 'ami' p. 82
4. R. K. Gordon, op. cit., Canto II, p. 40

siasm implied his complete approval of his own role; his conscience seemed to be clear, there is no mention of apology or explanation. He pacified Troilus and persuaded Criseida to consummate her love, he arranged everything; he even saved the very life of Troilus when Criseida deserted him. At last all his diplomacy and painstaking failing, he broke out in vehement remorse saying:

Troilus, I know not what I ought to tell thee, I blame her as thou dost say, as much as I can, and for her great misdeed I purpose to bring forward no excuse, nor do I wish ever to go again where she may be. What I did once I did for thy great love, putting behind all honor of mine. And if I pleased thee it is very grateful to me. I cannot do otherwise than what I am now doing, and like thyself enraged am I because of it. And if I should see any way of making amends, be assured I should be zealous to do so. May the gods, who can change all, bring it to pass. I pray them with all my might to punish her, so that she may not sin in like fashion.¹

This fulfills the demands of the law of courtly love.

Pandaro's cousinly relationship to Criseida must be sacrificed to his more sacred office as a friend to Troilo. With Pandaro Boccaccio has enriched the tale with a character which Benoit had not dreamed of using in the love episode. A confident was as necessary to an Italian lover as a ladylove. Pandaro was also a hopeless lover and a fantastically devoted cousin to Criseida, but his attitude toward women, generally speaking, was almost brutal in its cynicism.

1. Griffin and Myrick, op. cit., Canto VIII, 23, 7-8

Since Benoit gave no account of the courtship of Troilus and Cressida, the small masterpiece of sentiment regarding the love of Achilles must have attracted Boccaccio's fancy and he must have turned to it for a pattern. It possessed certain redeeming features that presented a much more suitable model for him to follow in his representation of a courtship that was to mirror his own, than that of the impudent Diomede and his very hasty lovemaking to Briseida.¹ If one is interested he can find many points of likeness. Both first see their ladies at an annual religious festival.² The hearts of both are suddenly smitten.³ Both leave with a heavy heart.⁴ The early love experience can be compared.⁵ There are yet many more comparisons for which we shall not take time.⁶ With the lover Achilles before him it was but natural he should draw upon Ovid's exquisite slave-girl, Briseis. Boccaccio knew Ovid, of course, as all scholars of his day did, and it would have been strange if he had not used the third epistle of the Heroides in which Briseis addressed Achilles and conveyed by implication an account of her history.⁷

From Stolen Briseis is the writing you
read, scarce characterized in Greek by her

1. Benoit, *Rom. de Troie*, vv. 13529-13616
2. *Fil.*, I, 17, 608----*Rom. de Troie*, vv. 17 489-22098
3. *ibid.*, I, 25, 6-8----*ibid.*, vv. 17552-17568
4. *ibid.*, I, 31, 1-2----*ibid.*, vv. 17615-17616
5. *Fil.*, Introduction, p. 38
6. *ibid.*, Introduction, p. 37
7. Showerman Grant., *English Trans. Ovid*, pp. 33-43

barbarian hand. Whatever blots you shall see her tears have none the less the right of words. If 'tis right for me to utter brief complaint of you, my master and my beloved, will I utter brief complaint. That I was all too quickly delivered over to the king at his command is not your fault--yet this too, is your fault....Each, casting eyes into the face of the other, inquired in silence where now was the love between us. My going might have been deferred...Ah me! I had to go, and with no farewell kiss; but tears without end I shed, and rent my hair-miserable me I seemed a second time to suffer the captive's fate!Oft have I wished to elude my guards and return to you; but the enemy was there to seize upon a timid girl....And not to have claimed me back is but a light thing; you even oppose my being restored, Achilles. Go now deserve the name of the eager lover! What have I done that I am held thus cheap to you Achilles? Whither has fled your light love so quickly from me? I have seen my wedded lord stretched all his length upon the ground heaving in agony his bloody breast. For so many lost to me I still had only you in recompense; you were my master you were my husband, you my brother....Ah, rather save my life, the gift you gave me! What you gave when victor, to me your foe, I ask now from you as your friend...Only whether you make ready to speed on with the oar your ships, or whether you remain O! by your right as master. Bid me come!"

Ovid's theme is universal love; woman's love; love in complicated situations. Briseis has been made into a tender forgiving maiden writing a letter to Achilles in a delightful way.¹ While she employed no calculating schemes with which to bring herself into intrigues with her fellowbeings, yet there was a very significant echo of her, as Boccaccio's plot unfolded itself during the stages of his love-making.

1. Homer, Iliad, Bk. IX

Other sources must come under consideration also. First, Boccaccio had a habit of repeating himself in many of his poems for the sake of immortalizing his own love experiences. He met Maria in the Church at Naples; therefore, Troilus met Criseida so. The cynical attitude that Troilo had toward love was largely prompted by Boccaccio's own unfortunate love affairs which he had passed through.¹

To make his story rich, Boccaccio sought to penetrate far down into the hearts of the two lovers and toward the end of his poem he succeeded in reaching to the very depths of human emotion. To find sentiments and images equal to describe the grief of Troilus, he was driven to seek other sources than those of Benoit. He used some of the love lyric that had been borrowed from the South of France by his own splendid predecessors.² Whenever, in the representation of the sorrows of Troilus, Boccaccio became most intimate and personal; seeming to have his own anguish in his mind, he employed more abundantly of that school of poetry, of which Dante was an inspired member.³ Although Dante was devoted to the memory of a dead woman, he conferred on the human passions a mood and a ritual that raised them to the dignity of a religion. But it was not to be expected that Boccaccio should kneel before women with the devout worship of Dante. Of his poetry, however, we meet constant echoes throughout the *Filostrato*.⁴ But in the treatment of Criseida, Boccaccio

1. Griffin and Myrick, *Fil.*, Intro., p. 14

2. *Fil.*, Intro., p. 60

3. *Fil.*, Intro., p. 61

4. *Fil.*, Intro., p. 61

inevitably leaned to Italian models of less exalted nature to depict her inconstant character. Furthermore, the love represented by Boccaccio was never platonic; it always contemplated possession. But he succeeded in merging with the sensuous story certain sentiments and reflections inspired by the conceptions of love as a spiritual force far beyond the sphere of physical experience.¹

No poet who ever undertook to compose a love story for upper circles of society could afford to neglect certain well established rules of literary procedure which prescribed the nature of the relationship which should exist between his hero and his heroine. That system known as Courtly-Love was satisfactorily derived from the actual practice of free love between the troubadour and his lady. There were thirty-one rules of Courtly-Love, none of which were more emphasized than that of secrecy. Here appears another innovation. Boccaccio's story had no courtly rules, it was frankly publicized and there was no secrecy whatsoever. But Boccaccio laid tremendous stress upon that particular rule. Each of his three principal actors were acutely conscious of the need of absolute care concerning their proceedings. Troilus was keenly alive to his need of his own council when

He went not thence as he had entered free and
lighthearted, but departed thoughtful and
enamored beyond his belief, keeping his desire

1. Fil., Intro., p. 68-70

well hidden, And in order the better to hide his amorous wound he continued to mock at those that love....Therefore being minded to pursue his love he made up his mind to try to act with discretion first proposing to hide the ardor conceived in his amorous mind from every friend and attendant.¹

Pandarus, of the same mind said:

Think not Troilus that I do not fully realize that affairs so conducted are not becoming to a worthy lady and what may come therefrom to me, to her, and to hers, if such a thing ever reach people's ears that she, on whose person honor was wont to dwell, hath, for thus obeying the dictates of Love, become by our folly, an object of reproach. But as long as desire hath been checked in its action and everything like unto it held secret it seemeth to me reasonable to maintain that each lover may follow his high desires provided only he be discreet in deed and in semblance, without causing any shame to those to whom shame or honor are matters of concern. I believe indeed that in desire every woman liveth amorously and that nothing but fear of shame restraineth her. And foolish is he that doth not ravish her....Therefore, since I know thee wise and reasonable, I can please her and both of you and give you each an equal comfort, provideth you undertake to keep it secret and it will be as though it were not.²

Criseida's reaction to secrecy was one of Boccaccio's clever strokes. She regarded a clandestine attachment as preferable to the less romantic possibilities of connubial bliss, and thought of it as more attractive than more safe, but how gracefully she said it:

Water acquireth by stealth is sweeter far than wine had in abundance. So the joy of

1. Fil., Canto I, v. 31-36

2. Fil., Canto I, v. 31-36

love when hidden ever surpasseth that of
 the husband held perpetually in arms.
 Therefore with zest receive the sweet
 lover, who hath come to thee at the cer-
 tain behest of the gods....¹

Mediaeval writers rarely found it possible to write a story and observe all thirty-one of the rules for Courtly-Love. The Italians, in contrast to Benoit's fellowbeings, looked upon love as an absolute good, regardless of the outcome; it disciplined the soul, and cherished an end above that of the gratification of the senses. Of that highly idealistic conception of love, Boccaccio, by diverting attention from Criseida and her perfidy, and concentrating it on Troilo and his woes, fulfilled those demands, making him more liberal, more brave in battle, and more humble before his fellow man.²

But it was impossible for him to write his story in accordance with the principles of Courtly-Love, for infidelity in love was a most grievous offense. Criseida, therefore, because of her desertion of Troilo, had no standing as a Courtly-Love heroine. Out of regard for the plot, Boccaccio violated those sacred rules; Criseida was not a mere married woman, but a widow.³ One can see he had a huge task; he had great literary patterns of love to follow; he had the ancient legend as his trust, and he had to stay within the bounds of his Lady's sensitiveness, together with the conventions of the court.

Summing up the most important changes that we find in the

1. Fil., Canto II, v. 74

2. Fil., Canto I, v. 84

3. Fil., Canto I, v. 11--II, 27-69

Filostrato, we note:

1. His purpose. He wanted to relate his sufferings in the person of some ancient lover. It became almost an autobiography. Benoit, in contrast, merely wanted to add lightness and romance to the war story.
2. The change of native influence to an Italian atmosphere.
3. The change of name from Briseida to Criseida, to mean The Golden. She is a widow instead of a young girl of humble origin. She has less vitality than Benoit's Briseida. She is a compound of charm, weakness, inconsistency, and voluptuousness. She yields with too much haste, and is not carried away by vanity and sympathy as was Briseida.
4. The shifting of interest; Troilo, rather than Criseida, becomes the center of the story.
5. The change in his attitude toward the influence of Love. In Boccaccio's work love brings out the best in humanity. Benoit's doctrine dwelt upon its evil effect.
6. The addition of Pandaro and the use of intrigue, secrecy, and other devices, such as nocturnal visits, dreams and letters.
7. His vast dependence upon his literary knowledge, and his free usage of other sources. Benoit had very little to build from.
8. The inventions of splendid entertainments, hunting, music, and magnificent feasts.
9. The introduction of the element of jealousy beginning with the exchanging of mutual warnings against new loves, and mutual assurances of fidelity. Later Troilo sends Pandaro to the Greek

camp in time of truce and thinks of going disguised as a pilgrim. He also is driven to ask news from everyone he meets.

10. Troilo is not a warrior but a lover. His courage is weakened/^{for-}ever by the love malady of his age and country.

Troilo persists in his constancy, however, but Criseida shows promise of some sort of a revolution as time goes on. Boccaccio left to us a perfect picture of his own country and manners of his time. The *Filostrato* is yet the standard of purity in the Italian tongue¹ and romantic folks will say it is because Boccaccio made Troilo flesh of his flesh and blood of his blood. It is fitting that we quote Boccaccio himself when attempting to publish his moral lesson:

O youths, in whom amorous desire gradually riseth with age, I pray you for the love of the gods that ye check the ready steps to that evil passion and that ye mirror yourselves in the love of Troilo.... A young woman is fickle and is desirous of many lovers, and her beauty she esteemeth more than it is in her mirror, and abounding vain glory hath she in her youth.... She hath no feeling for virtue or reason, inconstant ever as the leaf in the wind.²

1. Ker, W. P., English Literature, Preface, p. 248
2. *Fil.*, Canto VIII, vv. 29-30

2. Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde

Sometime near 1380 while on his journey to Italy, Chaucer saw for the first time Il Filostrato by Boccaccio. An understanding of the fascination that this story held for him is impossible without an understanding of the social conventions of the time, since it is in terms of these conventions that the whole action of the poem is interpreted. Chaucer was quite as much under the spell of the mediaeval system of courtly love as Boccaccio, feeling its influence very directly in French verse with which he was so familiar. At the court of Edward III where all things elegant were French or Italian, a brave show of chivalric splendor was kept up against the storm of social upheaval. Every English countess was familiar with the code of courtly love. Romantic stories without homage to its laws would have been scorned. Chaucer's whole story is built around these interpretations. His characters are not Trojans; they might have lived at the court of Marie or Edward III. He had no wish to bring the institution of Knighthood into contempt, but he was the first great painter of real life. In this capacity he ridiculed the extravagant affectation which had grown out of the mere fashion of chivalry.

For the main outline of his action Chaucer has been content to follow Boccaccio's Filostrato faithfully; though into its fundamental sentiment he breathes a spirit of ironical humor which is all foreign to the Italian poem. Even as he recounts the idealism of Troilus and the inexhaustible charm of Criseyde,

he is conscious of the bitter mockery provided by Criseyde's ultimate treachery. That such angelic beauty and womanly charm should reside in a nature so essentially shallow and unstable; that the youthful ardor and utter loyalty of Troilus should be expended on a woman capable of such baseness, proves to be a great part of the mystery and mockery of human life.

Love was frequently interpreted in terms of religious devotion in a universe ruled by Cupid and Venus, or in terms of feudal obligation in which the lady exercised control over her vassal and her servant. When love had been granted, the greatest of sin was inconstancy on the part of either. The opening line, "The dowble sorwe of Troilus," contains Chaucer's descriptive title. We interpret that his double change of fortune through which Troilus passes is in the mediaeval sense of the terms, first a comedy and then a tragedy.¹ However, as he dwells upon the analysis of Troilus, the complication of his plot and the psychological problem of Criseyde's character, he achieves a masterpiece of irony.²

Something had to be done. Chaucer had produced by a judicious combination an admirably artistic story, but according to contemporary rules of art, he was obliged to show his moral example was founded on good historical authority, especially because Criseyde was contrary to the chivalrous conception of the

1. Root, R. K., Poetry of Chaucer, p. 409, Note 4

2. ibid., intro., p. 17

immaculate virtue of women. His sources are somewhat involved in obscurity. He echoes Benoit by mentioning Homer, Dares and Dite (Dictys). Great as Chaucer's debt to Boccaccio might be, he never at any time mentions him by name. Boccaccio probably would have carried no weight. Nor does Chaucer mention Benoit and Guido, although their stories fill Books IV and V; they might lack antiquity. He assures us many times that he is but retelling in English that wonderous story of "...myn auctor called 'Lollius'." Krapp is amusing in his 1932 solution of Chaucer's neglect to mention Benoit Guido or Boccaccio saying:

Chaucer was telling what purported to be an authentic episode in the Trojan war, concerning which these writers, approximately contemporary with himself, could not be regarded as authorities of high value. Very discreetly, therefore, he put the whole matter of source beyond debate by a blanket citation of a mysterious Lollius, whom nobody could question because nobody knew anything about him, though naturally nobody would acknowledge such ignorance.¹

Chaucer has drawn upon the whole range of his reading that he might elaborate, comment philosophically, analyse, illustrate, and give a poetic adornment to his great "learned poem." These contributions make a vast portion.

Of the subsidiary sources, Boethius² holds the foremost place. The most extended and most significant of his passages are the discussion of Fortune;³ Criseyde's discussion of false felicity;⁴ the hymn of Troilus sung to Love as the bond of all

1. Krapp, George Philip, Troilus and Cressida, Literary Guild, New York, 1932, intro. p. XV

2. Boethius, De Consolatione Philosophiae

3. Gordon, R. K., The Story of Troilus, B.I. 837-54

4. *ibid.*, B.I. 813-36

things;¹ and the long soliloquy of Troilus on the conflict between God's foreknowledge and man's freedom.² These have no counterpart in Boccaccio and we would omit such long arguments, but it was a favorite topic in Chaucer's time. Chaucer sees in the story of the tragic love of Troilus one which transacts itself in a world of which Destiny is the inevitable master and which Fortune, the principle of deceitful inconstancy is forever turning into bitter vanity the hopes of man, and even the happiness which he seems to have achieved.

There are in Troilus even three direct quotations from the Bible, and these are from the writings attributed to Solomon, two from the Ecclesiastes and one from Proverbs. Indirect allusions are found in the second and third books.

Bible: For if they fall the one will lift
up his fellows; but woe to him that
is alone when he falleth; for he
hath not another to help him up.

Troilus: The wise seith; wo hym that is
allone, For and he falle, he
hath non helpe to ryse;³

Bible: To every thing there is a season,
and a time to every purpose under
the heaven:

Troilus: Nece, alle thyng hath tyme, I
dar avowe;⁴

Bible: And he said unto her, Daughter, be
good comfort; thy faith hath made
thee whole: go in peace.

Troilus: Thow shalt be saved by thi feyth
in trouthe.⁵

1. Gordon, R. K., The Story of Troilus, B. III, 744-71

2. *ibid.*, B. 4, 953-1085

3. Ecclesiastes 4-v 10, Troilus, B. 1, 694-5

4. Ecclesiastes 3-v 1, Troilus B. 3, 855

5. St. Luke 8-v 48, Troilus, B. 2-L 1503

As Troilus and Criseyde was to be a love poem, Chaucer too helped himself to Ovid's Heroides. Those Epistles in which Ovid revealed the character of the heroine who was the cause of the siege of Troy were to have a greater influence on Chaucer than on Boccaccio. He drew from this ancient Roman both the atmosphere of Antiquity and the prototype for his 'Criseyde,' who became much more subtle and elusive than she had ever appeared at any time before.¹ Ovid had just such a character in the Epistles. She was much in the same position as Criseyde, beloved by both a Greek and a Trojan; the wife or mistress of one and then the other. A comparison of the two characters proves that Chaucer must have patterned his heroine after Helen. First, Helen was a married woman and knew Paris' meanings: Criseyde was a widow and knew to what her yielding to Troilus led.² Next, Helen pretended she wished to be let alone by Paris: Criseyde reproached Pandarus for coming to her with Troilus' love.³ Helen insisted that she could not forget her modesty, her fame was unspotted, and no paramour had ever had cause to glory: Criseyde promised to try to please Troilus so far as her honor was safe but he would never get a chance to boast of her favors.⁴ They both thought men's words were false, and women too credulous: though skillfully disguised both were amorous, each in his own

1. Shannon, E. F., Chaucer and Roman Poets, p. 120

2. *ibid.*, Her. xvi, 261-273 -- Tr. iii, 155-161

3. *ibid.*, Her. xvi, 111-114 -- Tr. ii 59-60

4. *ibid.*, Her. xvi, 17-18 -- Tr. ii, 479-480, 727-728

way and age, one classical, the other mediaeval.¹ Fate played a great part with both Helen and Criseyde. Paris urged the fact, Helen accepted it, that the gods decreed her for his wife; Diomedes urged that Troy was a doomed city and that fate planned Criseyde to belong to him.² These and many other likenesses make the conclusion inescapable.³

In the proem to Book II Chaucer warns his readers there is more than one way to make love. He evidently felt there might be criticism then in the 14th century. Art of love, like every other art, has its conventions changed greatly in sundry ages and in sundry lands;

Remember in the forms of speech comes change
 Within a thousand years, and words that then
 Were well esteemed seem foolish now and strange;
 And yet they spake them so, time and again,
 And thrived in love as well as any men;
 And so to win their loves in sundry days,
 In sundry lands there are as many ways.⁴

One central feature is that ideal love is seldom, if ever, compatible with marriage. Modern readers are sure to ask why Troilus and Criseyde did not marry. In the code of courtly love marriage is an arrangement of convenience quite outside the region of romantic love, and implies, theoretically at least, the subjection of the wife to husband. Records of great love stories find the lady rules supreme, and her lightest whim a law.⁵

1. op. cit., Her. xvi 41-48 -- Tr., v. 1067-1068

2. *ibid.*, Her. xv 41-42 -- Tr., v. 904-1029

3. *ibid.*, p. 120-168

4. Krapp, George Philip, Troilus and Cressida, p. 44

5. Kittredge, G. L., Chaucer's Lollius, Ch. 28, p. 47-133

Courtly love is removed from grossness and sensuality by its elaborate idealization. It seeks final consummation in the complete surrender of the lady. When Criseyde accepted Troilus as her lover she granted by invitation, the bestowal of ultimate favors and did not incur the slightest hint of blame. The relationship established was ideal with all sanctity which modern feeling casts about an ideal marriage. Chaucer repeatedly told us that love's influence on Troilus was adoring despair; and that his final possession of Criseyde was ennobling. Though a lion in war; friendly and gracious with people; blessed with rank and riches; Criseyde accepted him, not because of these things, but "his moral vertue grounded upon trouthe."¹

Criseyde is far more complex and elusive than Boccaccio's Criseida. She is a young widow, recently bereaved, alone and in great peril; she is in strict retirement in her stately home. Three young neices of Chaucer's invention make her company. She conducts herself to win respect and love of everyone. She is exquisite, beautiful and queenly. She possesses dignity and grandeur. The Trojan Easter day comes. Everyone goes to church in festive clothes. Criseyde goes in simple black. Her concern for her father's shame makes her take an inconspicuous place near the door. Thus in the temple, Troilus first sees her, enslaved by her beauty. He pities and admires her fine dignity with which she meets her trying situation. This is all he sees of her, but he is consumed with feverish love longing.² Chaucer has transformed the mature woman of Boc-

1. R. K. Gordon, op. cit., Bk. I, 1075-82, Bk. III, 1082-83, Bk. IV, 1667-73

2. *ibid.*, Bk. I

caccio's into a timid girl whose youth and inexperience appeals to his reader's pity, and a very interesting change it is.

Book II is mostly directed to the unfolding of Criseyde's character. By deft touches Chaucer refines the sensualities of Boccaccio's widow. He makes a subtle analysis of her heart as the figure of Troilus gradually establishes itself there. She is slowly won to love, she yields ground gradually and reluctantly. Chaucer adds scene after scene to show the stages of her surrender. No small part of Criseyde's charm is conveyed through the scenes with her uncle in which her wit is keen. She reminds him she is a widow and must live quietly. When Pandare advises that she give love for love, she melts into passionate tears and reproaches him, that he, her uncle should counsel her to love. Her resentment slowly shatters and she listens, tremblingly. She regains her self-control and settles down to cool calculations. Love of Troilus does not sweep her off her feet; unlike Criseida, she does not fall at once, though she drinks in the love with her eyes open. Pandare is too shrewd to press an opinion. By good fortune, Troilus is presented to her view, the mighty warrior returning from battle on his wounded horse; "It was heaven upon him for to see." Chaucer uses the 'letter' device for the furthering of the wooing, as did Boccaccio. Criseyde first refused to read Troilus' epistle, but finally consents to send an answer by Pandare, offering sisterly love only. The third day, Troilus rides by her window, so fresh, so young, the very ideal of a young knight when seen through a maiden's eyes. Criseyde will not speak. This is a prime article in a code of courtly love, the lady must not let herself be easily

won. With this image in her eyes and Pandare's words in her ears, she goes out to walk. Antigone takes up the love theme and sings out of the gladness of her own full heart. Her song is of the love of woman, frankly and proudly yielded up to man and every word sinks into the heart of the listening Criseyde.¹ Then nature herself takes up the plea and works for Troilus. "A nightingale upon a green cedar under her room sang loud and full."

Chaucer, as he conceived it, would have found Boccaccio's course of action too direct. With all her self-assurance, Criseyde never takes a single step of her own volition. She may seem to have been ensnared. Pandare gives full play to his love of cunning stratagem. Pandare brings Criseyde to Troilus's sick bed. This is the decisive moment of the story. Criseyde unable to make up her mind, accepts the decision made for her by her uncle. It is Troilus, not Criseyde, that is panic stricken. She listens to passionate declarations and gives in, completely surrendered. Pandare promises to devise meetings at his home when they shall have full leisure to speak of love aright. He makes plots in which the apparent victim is at least a willing accomplice. Chaucer's Criseyde, unlike the Italian widow, would probably have balked at an openly avowed meeting and consummation. As a proof of her modesty the act must seem inevitable, not her own choosing. Yet, there could be no doubt she knew Troilus would be there. Pandare's denial of her suspicion is a virtual acknowledgement of its truth. By courtly love standards, the relationship is

1. Krapp, op. cit., p. 74-76

ideal. It is urged that Criseyde has committed no sin. There is much talk of honor but it must not be confused with chastity. Two or three years pass till one August day when parliament decrees that she shall be delivered over to her father, then weal is turned to woe. In her grief at leaving Troilus, sincere we feel, Criseyde falls into a swoon. Troilus believing her dead, draws his sword and is on the point of ending his own life. Had he done so, Criseyde says she would have slain herself with the same sword. Criseyde might have defied all and fled to a strange land, had Troilus taken things into his own hands. He leaves the judgment to her and it is one of those irrevocable decisions which Criseyde is incapable of making. She thinks of the event, her reputation and Troilus; if he should desert his city and become a wandering exile! It comes to a struggle between Love and Reason. It is easier to accept the circumstances that fate has ordained. Chaucer finds nothing in the lovers to satirize. He intends to prove their love innocent. He paints it with naive and enraptured simplicity. So she departs for the Grecian camp under guidance of the handsome Diomede, with the promise to return by the tenth day. She meets with no success in her attempt to persuade her father to let her return. False to Troilus and her solemnly plighted word, Criseyde allows herself to be wooed with most indecent haste by the masterful cynic Diomede, though bitterly condemning her own unfaithfulness. It was quite in a spirit of prophesy that Chaucer's Criseyde lamented:

Allas! for now is clene ago
 My name of trouthe in love for ever mo:
 For I have falsed oon the gentileste
 That ever was, and oon the worthieste
 Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende
 Shal neither been y-written nor y-songe
 No good word, for these bokes wol me shende
 O rolled shal I been on many a tonge
 Through-out the world my belle shal be ronge.¹

Diomedes needs no Pandare to help him. With a man of such force and willpower, Criseyde is helpless; she neither accepts nor rejects, she prefers to drift. She loves Troilus but Diomedes is pleasant in her loneliness. On the day of her promised return when Troilus is feverishly waiting at the city walls, she is listening, not unwillingly, to the lovemaking of Diomedes. In fair season she accepts her inevitable fate. Over the details of the courtship, Criseyde's infamy, the gift of the bay steed and brooch Chaucer hurries; with utmost reluctance he relates the shame of Criseyde as it stands recorded in his old books. Her indecision, her irresolute tendency to drift has brought her to the depths. Criseyde's damnation is complete. Chaucer's sympathy is put to a severe strain. He can only say he will not condemn her, he pities her weakness and brings in the terrible influence of fate.

Chaucer set out on no light task, when he drew a heroine at once lovable and fickle and attempted to enlist our sympathy for one whose name had become a by-word for faithlessness. With his consummate skill he makes one feel her childlike simplicity as

1. Gordon, R. K. op. cit., Bk. 5, v. 151-152

she wonders about her garden, spreading no snares for men. When she leaves Troilus, Criseyde's sorrow is sincere, and yet in her very sorrow we see her weakness. She is incapable of being swept away by a great passion. Though genuinely distressed at parting from Troilus, she is incapable of any inconvenience or sacrifice for love's sake. Only the very greatest author can show us the weakness of human nature without becoming cynical or contemptuous.

Ten Brink says, "The English Criseyde is more innocent, less experienced, less sensual and more modest than her Italian prototype. How much temptation was needed to inflame her love for Troilus! What a display of trickery and intrigue to make her surrender. The circumstances were closing in on her, and her fall was unavoidable. And if she did not resist Diomedes how was she accountable when Troilus first taught her the lesson, and her first fall robbed her of her moral backbone. She only surrendered to Diomedes when touched with sympathy for his wounds he had received from Troilus; and then her infidelity was followed by repentance."¹

Though Chaucer's chief interest seems to lie in the person of Criseyde, it is none the less true that Troilus remains the central figure. When her unfaithfulness is accomplished, she fades from the story. Boccaccio drew the character of Troilo to illuminate his own passionate love for Maria, and Chaucer's

1. Brink, Ten, English Literature, p. 92.

Troilus is well fitted to command the love of any woman. He is of a different mold. Because he was a scoffer at Love, he is punished by Cupid, and smitten with passion for Criseyde. After the approved fashion he takes himself to his own quarters where he suffers in secret, becoming the ideal lover according to the standards of love. These standards need no apology. It is the utter humility and subjection which may seem unnatural. Modern lovers find emotion and desire an end in themselves rather than a spur to action, and without Pandare, Troilus would never have let Criseyde know his helplessness. The tendency to think of his own sorrow is not unlike lovers of today, we see; but this trait, together with the workings of fate, brings about his great tragedy. Troilus gets as a reward for his faithful service to the God of Love and Adoration for Criseyde, a disillusion, a broken heart and finally death. Pathos and irony attend the closing scenes. Troilus sadly revisits the scenes of his former happiness looking at the barred windows of Criseyde's house on the tenth day, with his fair dreams shattered. Here is pathos in its purest form. Nothing remains but his own integrity. His only hope is a speedy death in battle. He is a tragic victim of his own character and fortune. Through Troilus's experience Chaucer seems to endeavor to elevate the thoughts of his reader from human to divine love. The further answer is that 'Cupid' is not the Diety for men to serve; they should rather put their trust in the Christian God who will treat no man falsely.

Chaucer dictates his book to a great moralist and a profes-

sor of philosophy, saying, 'Ther nede is to corecte,' and leaves us in no doubt as to the moral he would have us draw from it. He says, 'let us free the vanity from the world and set our love on Him who in the fullness of His love died for us on the cross.' As his soul mounts the heavens, Troilo looks back at this 'littel spat on erthe.' Chaucer has done his utmost to make the poem end with full emphasis on the moral and philosophic significance; he calls it tragedy: tragedy according to mediaeval conception is a man cast down by fortune from great prosperity and high estate into misery and wretchedness.

The more innocent Cressida is, the more inexperienced and helpless Troilus is, the greater grows the role of Pandarus. Chaucer makes of him the dominating person, the prime mover of the plot; he is gay, genial, shrewd and ironic; he gives the poem its prevailing tone. He is transformed into an elderly man with great experience of life. In judging of the character of Pandarus we must remember the inconsistencies of the laws of love, and how much honor depended upon good form, upon due observance of the rules of the game of love, and upon concealment and discretion. The complexity of his character together with the code of love makes the analysis very difficult. Only an imagination filled with a mediaeval spirit and inspired by courtly models, could conceive as noble the character of Pandarus; only an era when Love was held the highest aim in life could represent the go-between as a real hero. Troilus, too, would have been a go-

between, if Pandare saw fit, by offering to gain for Pandare the love of his own sisters.

....To wipe from all your act the shameful blot;
Behold my sister Polyxena fair,
Cassandra, Helen or any of the lot,
Though she be fair with never a stain or spot,
Just tell me which of these you'd like to be
Your very own, and leave the rest to me!¹

The fault of Pandare according to courtly conventions was not of morals, but of manners. But if we agree as to Criseyde's submission, it is equally necessary that we should agree to his office as go-between. The intervention springs from his friendship for Troilus and we could defend him by appealing to the mediaeval notion that in fulfilling the duties of friendship one may even commit a crime. His position is elaborately set forth when he says to Troilus:

For thy sake I have become a go between
And made my niece, who has thus far been
free from error of conduct, trust thy
chivalrous action. But I call God to
witness I did it with no desire for gain,
but only for love.²

Chaucer employed him for the purpose of infusing into the Italian narrative a comic spirit, essentially English. Such a person may play a part in tragedy without realizing what tragedy is. The contrast between the shrewd, elderly man of the world and the love-sick youth has been brought out admirably.³ Questionable as the parts both are, the sly, kindly, unprincipled old uncle of Criseyde is far less repulsive than the chivalrous pro-

1. Krapp, op. cit., p. 125

2. *ibid.*, Bk. III, p. 120

3. *ibid.*, Bk. II

fligate whom Boccaccio described as cousin to Criseida. The English Pandare lives in a world of agreeable intrigue. It is he who induces Helen to ask Criseyde to dinner. He takes advantage of the rainy aspect of the heavens to invite Criseyde to supper, knowing the stress of the weather will compel her to stay. It needs, however, more than his skill to capture the maidenly favor, though he prosaically regards the whole affair as child's play. Even when the two have parted forever, he has nothing better to say than "friends cannot always be together."¹ He thinks Troilus is making an unnecessary fuss and urges he pull himself together; although he laments his failure as go-between.

Probably Chaucer thought there was too much love when he undertook to turn the story in English. Though love to him was a craft too sharp and hard that life seemed all too short to learn it perfectly; yet even love could not shut out from his interest the beauty of his delightful world, the trafficking and gossiping of ordinary men and women, the pleasantness of fair ladies and the absurdities of human life. Chaucer's story of Troilus and Criseyde is as full as any modern novel of incident, conversations, chance meetings, lively descriptions of characters and delicate analysis of feeling. Criseyde receives visits from the Trojan ladies, she plays and dances under the blossoming boughs in her garden, and she improves her time reading.

1. Krapp, G. P., op. cit., Bk. V, p. 255

The poem possesses an important literary significance as an epoch making contribution to the mediaeval story. No detailed argument is needed to demonstrate how much Boccaccio's Il Filostrato supplies Chaucer with the story of his masterpiece which is the only one of Chaucer's major undertakings brought to final completion and showing his brilliantly creative imagination and his high standard of refinement sustained throughout a poem of large demensions.

Largely Chaucer's own is the account of the banquet at Deiphoebus' house. He invented it so that Troilus might offer Criseyde his moral support against a wicked lawyer who had designs on her worldly estate. In reality, it is a literary trick to accomplish the meeting of Troilus and Criseyde. Likewise, the supper party at the house of Pandare is Chaucer's device where the final surrender of Criseyde may take place, although the nocturnal visits had become fairly stereotyped by his time.

Concerning the plot, Chaucer makes a notable departure from his predecessors by not paying exclusive heed to Troilus and his woes; he makes Criseyde equally important. This distribution of interest comes by enlarging the accounts given by Boccaccio of the wooings of Troilus and Diomedes, and by reducing the length of the narrative of the anxieties of Troilus as he awaits in vain the return of Criseyde from Troy. Chaucer lengthened the account of the wooing of Diomedes and followed Benoit's version. Diomedes makes love at once. Criseyde answers the same as did Briseida,

"I am in no mood for love." He added to Benoit's account of the betrayal of Troilus by Briseida his own story of remorse in which he represents Criseyde as pronouncing her own doom through the prophesy that the bell of her infamy shall resound through the ages. Chaucer seized upon this theme for the purpose of largely recasting Benoit's generally ruthless conception of Criseyde's character so as to make her a pathetic figure. He brightens his story immensely by restoring the colorful personality and varied activities of Benoit's Briseida to something of the position of commanding interest, which she originally occupied in the histories of Benoit and Guido.

The life of Chaucer's world was distinguished by its happiness. There was pain and perplexity, but no agony or rebellion. Fortune was fickle and all powerful. Of moral or spiritual tragedy in its full sense Chaucer knows nothing, only the material ones which Fortune can bring about. Because his world was happy his element of humor was ever present, and radiated far into the dark recesses of Troilus's palace, Deiphobus's banquet halls and Pandare's secret chambers.

A true dramatist has a special relation to his personages, he has not merely observed them, he has made them. He has endowed them with the very blood and breath by which he lives. But Chaucer was never content to be lost in his; he was surely a reporter, and always personally with the audience. By dialogues and descriptions he unfolded the nature of the universal passion in all its phrases becoming the poet of living humanity with a

haunting poetic beauty.

Robert Kilbern Root, after having studied all the known manuscripts of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde says, "This is the only one of his major undertakings which he brought to a final completion. If less universal in its appeal....it has by way of compensation the heightened power which comes from a work of creative imagination brilliantly sustained throughout a long and unified poem. It is of all Chaucer's works the most perfect expression of his art. In portrayal of character, in easy flow of dramatic action in mastery of execution and grace of manner, it is the outstanding masterpiece of English narrative verse."¹

Concerning Chaucer there is so much that could be said, that there is no logical place to stop; he represented the culture of the Middle Ages and saw it at its closing vigor. He was the first to naturalize the chivalric allegory in England. Newer influences were coming on soon, and Chaucer was there as a guardian angel over the Troilus and Criseyde story that he so much cherished.

Summing up Chaucer's vital changes in his Troilus and Criseyde love story we note:

1. He created and held within his poem at all times an atmosphere of irony, humor, and mockery.
2. He inserted long arguments on the topic of his day such as

1. Root, R. K., The Poetry of Chaucer, Ch. VI, p. 87

the inevitableness of love, destiny and fortune. He states the thesis which Troilus sets out to prove that it was the destiny of Troilus to be lost.¹ Chaucer arraigns heathen practices, although he has a curious blending of the cult of love and Christian theology.

3. He includes moral and philosophic lessons.
4. Nature plays a very important part.
5. Pandare becomes a comic spirit essentially English. The wise adviser of youth becomes an old beau type. He is the outstanding man in literature who finds a keener delight in the love affairs of others than in his own.
6. Troilus becomes more manly and heroic, he loves with all the ardor and freshness of youth. His imagination invests the object of his passion with perfection.
7. Jealousy figures prominently in order to excite Criseyde's passion for Troilus, Pandare reports to her Troilus' sorrowful plight over a rumor as to her infidelity, a rumor untrue. The name of the supposed rival occurs as Horaste in the lines, "How that ye shoulde love oon that hatte Horaste, Horaste! allas! and falsen Troilus."²
8. Rings are used with matrimonial significance.
9. Criseyde has all other virtues, therefore, she must have pity. Pity as the active manifestation of charity is the supreme

1. Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde, Bk. IX, 958-59

2. ibid., Bk. III, 797-806

mark of Christian behavior. But Troilus must not expect that Criseyde's pity shall go so far as to lead to the blemishing of her good name, for a virtue which is stretched to the point of bringing/^{shame}on itself is no longer a virtue.¹ Chaucer proposes to establish her innocence by one of three methods; that of ordeal, solemn oath, or solemn drawing of lots with the faith that divine justice would so declare her innocence.² She is the only Criseyde who mentions her mother. She says, "O moder myn, that cleped were Argyve, Wo worth that day that thou me here on lyve."³ Chaucer represents her pronouncing her own doom. He seized upon the theme for the purpose of largely recasting Boccaccio's generally ruthless conception of Criseida so as to make her a pathetic figure. Chaucer does not mean to represent her as a wanton. Her weakness is her indecision, her tendency to drift. The keynote to her character is that she let others direct her life. As a result of this directed life, Criseyde will wear a black habit of a nun who has renounced the world and the observances of her religious order shall be sorrow, lamentation, and abstinence.⁴

1. Chaucer, op. cit., Bk. I, 897-903
2. Chaucer, ibid., Bk. III, 1046-1049
3. Chaucer, ibid., Bk. IV, 762
4. Chaucer, ibid., Bk. IV, 778-784

3. Henryson's Testament of Cresseid

While the Chaucerian tradition was becoming more or less a part of literature throughout England, it also commanded rapt attention in Scotland. This happened to be the era when the modern spirit was rebelling against the old world fancies concerning courtly love. The influence of the Renaissance was largely confined to court life, but it was the moral rebirth that had left the deeper mark on the national character. The two movements seemed to be going hand in hand at this particular time, finding elaborate expression in the literature, then written.

Although Chaucer's dramatic power had reached its fullest expression in his Troilus and Criseyde, and he made of Pandarus a remarkable character; although he knew just how delicate a line he needed to separate pathos and sentiment in order to make his poem a "Tragedie"; and although he could not find it in his own heart to condemn this frail creature of his own invention, he shocked the moral senses of a Scottish schoolmaster with his extreme leniency and Criseyde fell into more rigorous hands, where she received such punishment as ought to satisfy the severest advocate of poetic justice.

About 1462 this Scotlander, Robert Henryson by name, who left no more to be said of him than that he was a teacher in Glasgow University,¹ seemed to be inspired to continue the tale of the faithless Criseyde and give it a more sternly retributive

1. Buchan, John, History of English Literature, p. 36

close according to the gripping claims of the strict morality, which his countrymen demanded.

Sir Francis Kynaston,¹ sums up the episode thus:

For the author of this supplement called the Testament of Cresseid, which may passe for the sixt and last booke of this story, I have very sufficiently bin informed by Sir. Tho. Ereskin--late Earle of Kelly, and divers aged schollers of the Scottish nation, that it was made and written by one Mr. Robert Henderson sometimes, chiefe schoolemaster in Dumfermling--much about the time that Chaucer was first printed and dedicated to King Henry VIII by Mr. Thiane, which was near the end of his reign. This Mr. Hendryson wittily observing that Chaucer in his 5th booke had related the death of Troilus but made no mention what became of Cresseid he learnedly takes upon him in a fine poetically way to expres the punishment and end due to a false unconstant whore, which commonly terminated in extreme misery.

Although the Scottish were usually incapable of rising to the refinements or even conceiving the delicacies of the English poets, Henryson possessed a genuinely dramatic gift and did not allow his moral purpose to overwhelm his sense of the beautiful. Therefore, the Testament of Cresseid became both the most artistic and the most powerful poem made by any author after Chaucer.²

He could never have been willing to have the story end as Chaucer left it, when the ghost of Troilus looked down from the clouds upon the "Comedie Humaine" in which he played so unfortunate a role, leaving Criseyde triumphantly glorified in the love of the proud Diomede. He no doubt wondered as we do, could

1. Moulton, C. W., The Library of Literary Criticism
Loves of Troilus and Criseyde translated into Latin, Commentary XXX.

2. Godwin, Wm., Life of Chaucer, 1803, Vol. I., p. 493

Criseyde be true to Diomedes or was it a mere infatuation or a whim? On the other hand, could Diomedes be true to Criseyde? Henryson did answer all such questions, and he did so with a sure touch of a genuine artist but in doing so, he fixed Cresseid's character with such determination that she was forever after dubbed a loose woman.

Henryson knew Criseyde and Diomedes but he was not enslaved by the rules of courtly love. He constructed his poem on the basis of love-allegory, it is true, but when he wrote, the old system of courtly love was breaking down, and modern ethical ideas were creeping in. He encountered a confused public notion. On one side of the scale was the theory that Cresseid's fickleness was the supreme sin against Love. On the other, the condemnation of a woman who gave herself to more than one man. Society no longer cultivated secret intrigue. Henryson regarded Cresseid as a wanton even in her relations with Troilus. She was a mere kept-mistress of Diomedes's. Therefore, according to the promptings of his own set standards he changed the story for all time. He told us it was not long before Diomedes tired of Cresseid and drove her away.

Quhen Diomed had all his appetyt,
 And mair, fulfillit of this fair lady
 Upon ane uther he set his haill delyt,
 And send to hir ane lybel of repudy,
 And hir excludit fra his company.
 Than desolait sho walkit up and doun,
 And, sum men sayis, into the court commoun.¹

1. Gordon, R. K., The Story of Troilus, p. 352

It greived Henryson to be forced to admit that Cresseid had had to fall so far; his words express native pity.

O fair Cresseid! the flour and A-per-se
 Of Troy and Grece how was thou fortunait,
 To change in filth all thy feminitee,
 And be with fleshly lust sa maculait
 And go amang the Greikis air and lait
 Sa giglot-lyk, takand thy foull plesance!
 I have pity thee suld fall sic mischance!

Finally Cresseid returned to her father, but finding no rest there she went into the private oratory of the temple, where she bitterly reproached Venus and Cupid for the evils they sent her. Falling asleep she dreant that her case was being tried by the Gods, demanding punishment for her impiety. They finally decreed her offense was punishable by leprosy. Cresseid awoke to find that her dream had come true.

In many towns of Scotland in the fifteenth century, might have been seen a lazar house, silent and shunned, set apart for those afflicted with that awful curse, leprosy. On all roads they might be seen begging, fearful figures in mantles and beaver hats, with cup and clapper.

To this last humiliation of the flesh does Henryson's Cresseid sink. What could ever be worse than lying alone in a dark corner of a lazar house, sleepless, loathing food, seeking no comfort? Henryson has succeeded in making one of the most pathetic situations in literature. When death overtakes the young and fair and proud, it melts the heart to pity, but when not death, but some dark taint in the blood suddenly wrecks beauty and gentle nature and the pride of life, reducing them below the

coarseness of the common lot, the heart sickens and the mind recoils with shuddering pity.

Cresseid thus bemoans her own fate:

This lipper luge tak for thy burelie bour,
 And for thy bed tak now ane bunch of stro.
 For waillit wyne and meitis thou had tho,
 Tak mowlit breid, peirry and syder sour;
 But cop and clapper, now is all ago.

With the dreadful commonsense born of long acquaintance with misery, a sister in misfortune counsels her to make a virtue of her need.

....I counsall thee mak vertew of ane neid,
 To leir to clap thy clapper to and fro,
 And live efter the law of lipper-leid.¹

With that woeful crew Cresseid goes forth next day to clamor for alms to every passerby. As she sits by the wayside, a company of young knights ride by toward Troy. One of them draws up beside her for an instant, but disease has so dimmed her sight that although she casts her eyes on him she fails to recognize Troilus. He, looking down on the poor seamed face, sees no trait of Cresseid, and yet some strange swift memory of his lost lady drives all the blood back to his heart. Impetuously he drops his purse into her dish and rides away without a word, while round the poor lady flock her ghastly associates clamorous to share the spoils.

Henryson's mask of allegory was perilously thin, and anyone could see that his account of her punishment was due in the greater measure to the feeling that poetic justice should be

1. Gordon, R. K., op. cit., p. 363

bestowed upon her because of her unfaithfulness, although his heart ached even while granting her frightful fate.¹

Henryson gives evidence of a certain reserve, a certain direct simplicity as he lifts the veil that Chaucer in pity had drawn over the life of Criseyde. It must be admitted that in the single instance of the state of mind, the half recognition, the half ignorance of Troilus in his last encounter with Cresseid there is a purity and ease of conception impossible to be surpassed.

After all Henryson is less relentless than Nature. When Cresseid learns the name of the knight who threw her his purse, she grows frantic with grief. Feeling death approaching, she requests one of the lepers to make her testament, bequeathing her body to worms and toads and all of her goods to lepers, save a ring set with rubies, which is to be carried to Troilus after her death. Then in his mercy Henryson sees to it that death swiftly covers her disgrace in everlasting darkness. When Troilus receives the ring and hears the message, he is filled with agony but what can he do! Following Chaucer and Boccaccio, Henryson's Troilus swoons for the great sorrow in his heart. Cresseid has been untrue to him; he can only furnish the grave, in which the leper had hastily buried her, with a splendid monument. Only the epitaph on her tomb cries for pity for her.

Sum said he maid ane tomb of merbell gray,
And wrait hirname and superscriptioun,

1. Legouis and Cazamain, History of English Literature, p. 172

And laid it on hir grave, quhair that sho lay,
 In goldin letteris, containing this resoun:
 'Lo! fair ladyis, Cresseid of Troyis toun,
 Sumtyme countit the flour of womanheid,
 Under this stane, late lipper, lyis deid!¹

This austere and touching conclusion remained an invincible digression in the history of the tale of Cresseid. We admit that Henryson gave to his borrowings a Scotch atmosphere such as we are not to find again, but we could never consider that the Testament of Cresseid is an anticlimax nor even a sequel to Chaucer's exquisitely bright poem. Henryson's Testament of Cresseid was published in Thynne's edition of Chaucer in 1532 introduced with the statement that

Thus endeth the fyfth and laste books of
 Troylus; and here foloweth the pyteful and
 dolorous testament of fayre Cresseyde.²

Perhaps Thynne did not intend it to be taken as Chaucer's work, but for authors and for readers up to 1600 Henryson's Cresseid was 'The Cresseid.' His realistic composition had been accepted more as a bold continuation of Chaucer's supreme love story than a sequel. However, lacking Henryson's sympathy those authors and readers regarded her as a light of love who finally paid for her faithlessness and unchastity by leprosy. Henryson's influence was intense, he completely diverted the story from the channel in which Chaucer had left it, and every mention of Cresseid as a leper, at least till 1600, was an allusion to Chaucer because no one had heard of Henryson, the schoolmaster. Nor did the

1. Gordon, R. K., op. cit., p. 367

2. *ibid.*, p. 17

Elizabethan writers have any idea of the origin of the Cresseid myth.

Henryson's story was always in George Turberviles' mind, his poems are literally crowded with the Troilus and Cressida story, and the enormous popularity of these 'doleful ditties' helped to make the name of Cressida odious and comical. In his poem called The Lover in Utter Dispaire of His Ladies Returne¹

Turberville compares his estate with Troilus:

But though my fortuen frame awrie
 And I, dispoylde hir companie
 Must waste the day and night in wo
 For that the gods appointed so
 I naythesse will wish her well
 And better than to Cressid fell
 I pray she may have better hap
 Than beg hir bread with dish and Clap
 As shee, the sillie miser did
 When Troilus by the spittle rid
 God sheild hir from the lazars lore
 And lothsome leapers striking sore
 And for the love I earst hir bare
 I wish hir as myself to fare
 Farewell thou shamelesse shrew
 Fair Cresides heire thou art
 And I Sir Troylus earst have been
 As prooueth by my smart
 Hencefoorth beguile the Greekes
 No Trojans will thee trust
 I yield thee up to Diomede
 To glut his filthie lust.²

George Gascoigne was also fascinated by the Troilus and Cressida story and referred to it persistently. His information about Cressida's in chastity came from Henryson's Testament of Cresseid.

1. Rollins, H. E., The Troilus-Cressida Story From Chaucer to Shakespeare, Publication of the Modern Language Association of America, Vol. XXXII, 1917, pp. 223-226
 J. P. Collier's Reprints of Epitaphs
2. Rollins, H. E., op. cit., p. 249

An ungainly collection of plays and poems known as The Posies mentions the lovers on nearly every page.¹ In Dan Bartholmewe's Dolorous Discourse, Gascoigne wrote

I found naught else but tricks of
Cressides kind
....I found that absent Troylus was forgot.

These two excerpts suffice to show the nature of the poetry which Henryson's interpretation of Cressida inspired in the hearts of the later writers.

1. Rollins, H. E., op.cit., p. 407

CHAPTER III

THE POPULARITY OF THE TROILUS AND CRESSIDA STORY IN ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

When we read Elizabethan literature, we must always remember that we are following one of the most brilliant, resourceful and active eras ever recorded in literary history. Though no monarch had ever entered upon a reign under more unfavorable conditions than did Queen Elizabeth in 1558, she exercised such wonderful tact and patience, that by 1580, England was a nation ready for great authorships.¹ Accumulated wealth provided the leisure and means to enjoy these productions. Many writers were living by their pens; creating dramas, poems and novels. The theater grew more respectable. Noblemen kept their own companies of actors, where opportunities were provided for men with talent.

Although the general atmosphere of the times was luxuriant to excess, it would be unfair to forget that civilization was over-ripe. Courtly elegance and culture were but a gorgeous cloak for irregularity in morals. Bodily cleanliness was lightly esteemed and strong perfumes took the place of the bath. Household conditions were not sanitary. Masses of filth filled the streets. What relation the general uncleanness had to the loose speech and degrading contacts would not be safe to conjecture, but it would be strange if women of those times did not suffer some contamination.

1. Buchan, John, History of English Literature, p. 97

If we do wince at the coarse speech, we need not rashly condemn, for custom is powerful and impels in strange ways.

The ages had already immortalized the romantic love story of 'Troilus and Cressida,' but had not been kind to these two lovers, and under no circumstances could such a tale be dramatized as a gentle concoction dripping with sweetness. The very fact that the tale was a tremendously familiar one, proved that it held some experience of life that compelled universal notice. There was no mistake about the condemnation that both the heroine and her moral issues had received from the brutal followers of the popular ideals of realism. The charming, impossible tales with love a pretty game, played according to courtly rules were discarded for the picturesque grossness of contemporary life where prostitutes, thieves and rough soldiers thrived.

So many versions of 'Troilus and Cressida' had arisen that it was difficult to trace sources and relationships. Never had the story been so persistent. Old ideals were broken down and new ethical conclusions had crept in. To these Elizabethans, Cressida became the very type, not only of fickleness in woman, but of absolute moral depravity. They would have jeered at a conception of her as a pure and noble character and would have considered her whitewashed.¹ The phrase 'Cressid's kind' was proverbial for a woman of ill fame.²

Between the years 1559 and 1599, the records now standing

1. Lawrence, W. W., Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, p. 152
2. Adams, Joseph Quincy, The Life of William Shakespeare, p. 352

(and these are very incomplete) show that this one love story of Troilus and Cressida had received dramatic handling at least twenty-nine times, and it was astonishingly popular.¹

While the insatiable curiosity of the public made a constant demand for stories of these famous lovers, all it wanted was to be amused and scandalized. Consequently, there was a great confusion of plays, caused by the popular habit of repeating or rearranging earlier efforts, and it is now impossible to follow with certainty the individual history of any playwright.

In 1558, while at Oxford, George Peele wrote a 'Tale of Troy,' but his highly adorned characters aroused no affection and the play was soon lost. Beaumont and Fletcher made a similar attempt. Others followed with short-lived success until Dekker and Chettle were invited to write a play, Troeylus and Creasseday for the Admiral's Troupe in 1570. It was later known as 'Troilus and Cressida' and once again as 'The Booke of Troilus and Cressida.' Dekker was a typical Londoner, acquainted with the squalid aspects of courts and taverns. He combined an ethical rectitude with cruel animal spirits, and imparted a free, frank vitality to his lovers. Although his final scene presented Creasseday midst a swarm of miserable grumbling beggars, his heroine was of such poor interest to his fellow beings that the drama was dropped.²

1. Adams, Joseph Quincy, op. cit., p. 346

2. Cook, A. S., The Character of Criseyde, Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn. Vol. XXII, p. 540

Since it would be impossible to find all of the Elizabethan dramas of Troilus and Cressida, we shall follow the advice of Joseph Quincy Adams¹ and pay detailed attention to Thomas Heywood, fellow actor of Shakespeare's. He was able to create dramatic and moving situations eliminating the excess of lyricism and fancy that retarded the interest of his audience. In his Iron Age, the Troilus and Cressida love story rang true to the popular standards of the times. He did not possess the imagination of Shakespeare, but his one delight was the drawing of frail women who fall and later become devoured with remorse and shame. He was careful to provide every detail which might be needed to satisfy a critical public. Concerning its sources he wrote:²

....The History where on it is grounded, having beene the selected Argument of many exquisite Poets:....it exceeds the strict limit of the ancient Comedy (then in use) in form, and transcends it both in the form and fulnesse of the scene and the gravity of the subject.³

To his readers he wrote in part:

Courteous Reader:

....I presume the reading thereof shall not proove distastfull to any: First in regard to the Antiquity and Noblesse of the History:--Next because it includeth the most things of especial remarke which have beene ingeniously Commented upon and laboriously Recorded by the Muses Darlings-the Poets;-and Time learned Remembrancers, the Histriographersfor what pen of note in one page or another hath not remembered Troy....

Prodesse et Delectare
Thomas Heywood.

1. Adams, Jos., The Life of William Shakespeare, p. 352
Note 2, Heywood does the same thing in his Iron Age which should be read by ever student of Troilus and Cressida.
2. The Dramatic Works of Thomas Heywood, Printed at London by Nickolas Okes, 1632, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.
3. Lydgates Troy Book, Based on Britain Museum M.S.Cotton Aug.A.iv.
Note: This Troy Book was condensed and modernized by Heywood in 1614. Ward. Sir A.W. Chaucer. P.P. 75-9

These introductions betray his desire to minister to the tastes and vanities of his English readers, and they serve as a bait to us; we too are tempted to venture into the lives of these two lovers, as we find them in the Iron Age. By sketching Heywood's play we will easily recognize the types and standards of all 'Troilus and Cressida' stories during the Elizabethan era.

Troilus first appears in Act I, Scene 1, in conference with his family over the Greeco-Trojan Conflict, having the pride, valiance and courage as ever before. The opening conversation with Cressida follows the patterns before him.

Tr:-Faire Cresida, by the honor of my birth I protest
Thy beauty lives enshrined heere in my brest.

Cres:-As I am Calchas daughter, Cresida
High Priest to Pallas, shee that patrons Troy
....I hold the love of Troilus dearer farre
Then to be Quenne of Asia.

Tr:-Daughter to Calchas and the pride of Troy
Plight me your hand and heart.

Cres:-Faire Heaven I doe
Will Troilus in exchange grant me his too?

Tr:-Yes, and fast sealed you Gods Your anger wreak
On him or her that first the union brake.

Cres:-So protest Cresida, wretched may they dye
That twixt our soules these holy bonds untie.

Act III, Scene 1. At a Trojan banquet, Calchas whispers to his daughter saying:

In one word this Troy shall be sacked and spoil'd
....leave then imminent perill
and flye to safety.

Cres:-From Troilus?

Cal:-From destruction; take Diomed and live or Troilus
and thy death.

Cres:-Troilus and my ruin.

Cal:-Is Cresida mad?

Wilt thou forsake thy father, who for thee
And for thy safety has forsook his country?

Cres:-Must this city perish?

Cal:-Troy must fall.

Cres:-Alas for Troy and Troilus.

Cel:-Love King Diomed.

A Prince and valiant which made Empharis
To his Imperiall Stule! live Diomed's Queene
Be briefe, Say Quickly, wilt thou?-is't done?

Cres:-Diomed and you-ile follow-Troilus shun.

Then follows the quarrel between Diomed and Troilus the unhorsing of Troilus and Diomed's taunts to Cressida concerning Troilus as her first lover.

Part II

Diomed and Synon are on the field.

Di:-Come, then Synon-

Goe with me to my Tent, this night we'll revell
with beauteous Cressida

Sy:-Not I, I hate all women....

I love thee less

Because thou doatest on Trojan Cressida

Di:-Shes worthy of our love-I tell thee Synon

Shes both constant, wife and beautifull

Sy:-She's neither constant, wife nor beautifull

I'll prove it Diomed. Four Elements

Meete in the structure of that Cressida

Of which there's not one pure-Shes compact

Merely of blood of bones and rotten flesh

Which makes her Leaprous....

Can she be beautifull? No Diomed.

Di:-Leave this detraction

Sy:-Now for this Cressid's wifedom: is the wife

Who would forsake her birthright, her brave friend

The Constant Troylus, for King Diomed

To trust the faith of the Greekes, and to love thee

That art to Troy a profest enemy?

Di:-Cans't thou disprove her constancy?

Sy:-I can...

Never was woman constant to one man

For prooffe, doe thou but put into one scale

A feather, in the other Cressid's truth

The feather shall down weigh it - Diomed

Wilt thou believe me if I win Cressid

To be my sweete heart; - to bewitch a Lady

I never practiced Courtship, but am blunt

Nor can I file my tongue, yet if I win....

Enter Cressida

Di:-There shee comes

Affront her Synon I'll withdraw unseene.

Sy:-A gallant Lady who but such a villaine
 As Synon would betray her; but my vowe
 Is past, for she's a Trojan. Cressida
 You are well encountered: whether away Sweet Lady?

Cres:-To meet with King Diomed and with kisses
 Conduct him to his Tent.

Sy:-Tis kindly done
 You love King Diomed then?

Cres:-As my own life.

Sy:-What seest thou in him that is worth thy love?

Cres:-He's of a faire and comely personage.

Sy:-Personage? ha, ha
 I prithee looke on me, and view me well
 And thou wilt find some difference.

Cres:-True more oddes
 Twixt him and thee than betwixt Mercury
 and limping Vulcan.

Sy:-....Leave Diomed and love me, Cressida

Cres:-Thee

Sy:-Well

Cres:-Deformity forbears. I will to Diomed
 Make known thine insolence.

Sy:-I care not - for I not desire to live
 If not beloved of Cressida; tell the King
 If he stood by, I would not spare a word.
 For thine own part, rare goddess, I adore thee
 And owe thee divine reverence - Diomed
 Indeed's Aetolian's King and hath a Queen.

Cres:-A Queene?

Sy:-A Queene that shall hereafter question thee
 Or canst thou think hee loves thee really
 Beeing a Trojan;....

Cres:-Canst thou then love me?

Sy:-I am a politician, oathes with me
 Are but tooles I worke with, I may breake
 An oath by my profession. Heare me further
 Thinkst thou King Diomed forgets thy breach
 Of love with Troylus! Ey, or that he hopes
 Thou canst be constant to a second friend,
 That wast so false with thy first beloved?

Cres:-Synon- thou are deceived, thou knowst I never
 Had left Prince Troylus, but by the Command
 Of my old father, Calchas.

Sy:-Then love Diomed.

Yes, do so still, but Cressida marke the ende
 If ever he transport thee to Aetolia
 His Queene wil bid thee welcome with a vengence
 Hast thou more eyes then these? she'll fal to work
 For such another vixen thou ne're knewst
 Come Cressida, bee wife

Cres:-What shall I doe?

Sy:-Love me, love Synon

Cres:-Synon loves not mee
 Sy:-I'll swear I do
 Cres:-I heard thee say that thou would'st break thine oath
 Sy:-Then I'll not sweare because I will not break it
 But yet I love thee Cressida, love mee
 I'll leave the warres unfinished Troy unsack't
 And to my native Country beare thee hence;
 Troy wench I'll do't: come kisse me Cressida
 Cres:-Well you may use your pleasure:
 But good Synon - keep this from Diomed

Entre Diomed

Di:-O perjured strumpet
 Is this thy faith? Now Synon, I'll believe
 There is no truth in women
 Cres:-Am I betrayed? oh thou bare ugly villaine
 I'll pull thine eyes out.
 Sy:-Ha! Ha! King Diomed
 Did I not tell thee what thy sweet heart was.
 Cres:-Thou art a Traytor, to all women kinde.
 Sy:-I am - and nought more grieves me then to thinke
 A woman was my mother....
 Di:-Go get you backe to Troy, away begon
 You shall no more be my companion.
 Sy:-And now faire Troian Weather Hen - adew.
 And when thou next loves't thinke to be more true.
 Cres:-Oh all you powers above, looke downe and see
 How I am punished for my perjury....

Act III. When the Greeks had appeared in the Iron Horse the palace was surprised. The guards were all slain. Priam was wounded. Troilus had been killed as in the original story. Hellen and Cresida enter from opposite doors at the Sacred Altar of the Gods.

Cres:-Whether runnes Hellen?
 He:-Death in what shape forever he appears
 To meet me is welcome....
 But here with Cresida abide him...
 How hath Cresida's beauty sinned 'gainst Heaven
 That it is branded thus with leprosie?
 Cres:-...I did once suppose
 There was no beauty but in Cresida's lookes
 But in her eyes no pur divinity:
 But now behold me....

Heywood closes the drama with the slaying of Cresida and a continued life for Diomed, who returned to his home and brought

about complete reconciliation with his Queen.

However, the drama did not monopolize the legend. John Skelton, poet-laureate of Oxford, was known to possess a combination of savage cruelty in questions of morals and exquisitely tender personal emotions and abandoned himself to a varied type of poetry. In one instance he used Cressida as a convenient means of complimenting Lady Elisabeth Howarde's beauty, in

A Right Delectable Treatise Upon a
 Goodly Garland of Laurel.
 To be your remembrancer, madam, I am bound.
 You....Whom Dame Nature....
 Hath freshly embeautied with many a goodly sort
 Of womanly features whose flourishing tender age
 Is lusty to look at pleasant demure and sage,
 Good Criseyde fairer than Poleyxene
 For to enliven Pandarus' appetite
 Troilus I trow, if that he had you seen¹
 In you he would have set his whole delight.

This sort of flattery in his day was considered fresh and charming. In contrast he was severe with Pandarus, Troylus and Cressid in his Book of Phillip Sparrow when he made repeated allusions to them:

And of the love so hote
 That made Troylus dote
 Uppon faire Cressid:
 And what they wrote and said,
 And of their wanton wills
 Pandar bare the bills (billet doux)
 From one to the other;
 His master's love to further,

 Sometimes a precious thing
 An ouch (jewel or broach) or else a ring;
 From her to him again,
 Sometimes a pretty chain
 Or a bracelet of her fair,
 Pray'd Troylus for to wear
 That taken for her sake;
 And all that was in vain

1. Shakspeare's Allusion Book

For Cressid did but feign;
 He could not oplain
 Tho his father were a king.

....

Yet there was a thing
 That made the male to wring (his Withers)
 She made him to sing
 The song of love's lay:
 Musing night and day,
 Mourning all alone,
 Comfort he had none,
 For she was quite gone.

....

Thus in conclusion
 She brot him in abusion,
 In earnest and in game.
 She was much to blame
 Disparaged is her fame,
 And blemished is her name,
 In manner half with shame;
 Troilus also hath lost
 On her much love and cost;
 And now must kiss the post;
 Pandarus, that went between,
 Hath nothing won I ween
 Yet for a special laud
 He is named Troilus' bawd
 Of that name he is sure
 Whule the world shall endure.¹

Rollins cites three instances when authors compared the love of Troilus for Cressida with their own loves for their ladies. As a model lover William Elderton, the first noteworthy professional ballad writer, recommends Cressida's pity for Troilus to his ladie's attention in his first known ballad (1559) called The Panges of Loue and Louers Fittes. Here Elderton threw in a number of stock comparisons to the romance and story, and wrote of 'Cressida'

Know ye not, how Troylus
 Languished and lost his joye,
 With fittes and fevers mervailous
 For Cresseda that dwelt in Troye....

1. The Complete Works of John Skelton, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

William Fullwood, a merchant tailor wrote a bitter satire on this Elderton, publishing it as The Enemie of Idlenesse conteyning sundrie Letters belonging to love. In his letter entitled A Constant Love doth Express his grypyng Griefs, he wrote familiarly of Troylus and Cressida, intending it to serve as a model for lovers in which he beseeches his mistress to grant him grace, as Cresseda did. As a representative of the humble folk, he says:

As Troylus did neglect the trade of Lover's
skillful lawe
Before such time that Cresseid faire with
fixed eyes he saw
....Therefore graunt grace, as Cresseda did
unto Troylus true,
Foe as he had hir love by right, so thine to
me is due.

These two writers, together with an anonymous one,¹ who compared his "loue with the faithfull and painfull loue of Troylus to Creside" made no mention of the later treachery of Cressida, but instead they seemed to put her story to personal uses to plead their own cause, applying the love of Troilus to their own arguments. One would not have to guess that such efforts as these were from the uneducated classes who had never been near Greek or Latin, but only knew how to express themselves as the humble being of Elizabeth's world.

University life was the fashion, and many young scholars congregated at Oxford for study. But literary matters had a fashion too. Many minor poets known as the University Wits were

1. Rollins, H. E., Pub. Mod. Lang. Assn., Vol. XXXII, p. 391
Paul Wolter's Wm. Fullwood Diss. Rostock
Potsdam, 1907

swept on by a spirit of contest and self glorification. Naturally, they chose the popular topics of the day, and Troilus and Cressida never failed to intrigue. Under the influences of the times their poetry was more or less sensual, satirical, and slanderous. Henry Willobie, in his Avisa or the True Picture of a Modest Maid and of Chaste and Constant Wife, is faithful to the popular but unfortunate interpretation of Cressida, saying,

Though shameless callets may be found
That soil themselves in common field
And can carry the whore's rebound
Yet here are none of Cressid's kind.¹

George Whetstone, when writing the Rock of Regard conceived a novel idea, that Cressida should do some of the preaching. She says:

You ramping gyrles, which rage with wanton lust
Behold in me the better bloumes of change.

He has young men especially in mind when he wrote:

The inconstancie of Cressid is so readie
in every man's mouth as it is a needless
labor to blame, at full her abuse toward
young Troilus, her frowning on Syr Diomedes,
....her beggerie after braverie; her loth-
some leprosie after lovely beauty; her
wretched age after wanton youth and her
perpetuall infamie after violent death;
are worthy notes (for othre's heede) to be
remembered. And for as much as Cressid's
heires in every corner live, yea, more
cunning then Cressid herself in wanton
exercises, toyes and inticements, infected
to fall from their follies, and to rayse
a feare in dames untainted to offend. I
have reported the sleites, the leaud life
and evill fortupes of a courtisane in
Cressed's name.

Thomas Dekker, the co-dramatist, wrote an occasional tract

1. Lawrence, W. W., op. cit., p. 157

2. *ibid.*, p. 151

on some social problem or some phase of London life. In his Wonderful Yeare he tells the story of the cobbler's wife, who believing herself at the point of death, confesses to her husband and neighbors the infidelities with the husbands of other women of which she had been guilty. But she recovers, and the wronged women are getting ready to tear her eyes out. At this place, Dekker voices the public rebuke of Cressida.

Oh: lamentable! never did the olde buskind
tragedy beginne till now: for the wives of
those husbands with whom she played fast and
loose, came with nayles sharpened for the
nounce, like cattes and tongues of adders,
first to scratch out false Cressidaes eyes,
and then, (which was worse) to worry her to
dath with scolding.¹

Ballad mongers took an unfavorable view of Cressida's relation with Troilus. There is a ballad in praise of London Prentices and what they did at the Cock-Pitt Playhouse which tells us,

King Priam's robes were soon in rags
And broke his gilded scepter:
False Cressida's hood that was so good
When loving Troilus kept her....

If this ballad is genuine, it will throw some light on the way which actors looked upon the part of Cressida.²

Those many writers, of which Taine says there were more than two hundred in a few years, intermittently employed either Troilus, Cressida or both to prove their points, be it in drama, poetry or prose.³ Although there was very little of this vast material that survived the test of time, yet the knowledge of its one-time existence makes it easier for a reader to view Shakespeare as one element in a world larger than himself, and that world, which in a manner dominated him, was ready with its verdict of these two lovers.

1. Shakspeare Allusion Book, p. 128

2. Legouis and Cazamian,
op. cit., pp. 199-200

3. Taine, H.A., History of English
Literature, BK. I, p. 137

CHAPTER IV
SHAKESPEARE'S TREATMENT OF THE
TROILUS AND CRESSIDA STORY

At the very time that Elizabethan geniuses were being obsessed with their own creations in matters of drama, poetry and prose, Shakespeare was approaching the very height of his powers, when it was destined he was to reveal in the fullest degree that marvelous comprehension of human life which set his work apart from that of all his fellow men. Shakespeare wrote his words specifically for actors and audiences of his day, and his words demand a dramatic interpretation before they can surrender their full content or disclose their ultimate potency. Shakespeare's school was the acting profession, where he learned to impersonate all sorts and conditions of humanity and came to ponder over the problems of character and personality. While busy day by day with these things, the English drama was brought to perfection by him because no writer in the history of the world had a more intimate knowledge of the human heart.¹ This is the secret of his greatness.

All of his life these two forms of Troilus and Cressida had preoccupied his imagination. A few years before he attempted his play with these two as hero and heroine, he made use of their popular fame in other works. Note his various adaptations: Lorenzo says, in terms of romance, in the Merchant of Venice,

1. Harrison, John S., Lecture on Problem Plays, Butler University, 1936

In such a night
Troilus, me thinks mounted the Trojan walls
And sighed his soul toward the precious tent
Where Cressid lay.¹

In Much Ado About Nothing, Benedick says after his song to the God of Love,

Troilus the first employer of pandars....
whose names yet run smoothly in the even
road of a blank verse, why, they were
never so truly turned over and over as my
poor self, in love.²

It is Pistol who degrades the poor woman to the depths where Whetstone, Howell, and Willobie had already shoved her. Jealous of the attentions that Nym is paying to Mrs. Pistol, the irate husband cries out, in Henry V:

O hound of Crete, think'st thou my
spouse to get?
No; to the spital go,
And for the powdering tub of infamy
Fetch forth the lazar kite of Cressid's kind,
Doll Tearsheet, she by name.³

Shakespeare in a playful mood alludes to Pandarus' office as letterbearer, in the Merry Wives of Windsor,

Pist:-Shall I Sir Pandarus of Troy
become, and by my side wear steel?
then, Lucifer take all!⁴

In As You Like It, Rosalind jests about Troilus and yet her speech reveals a viewpoint more nearly approaching the one projected in the Troilus and Cressida drama,

1. Merchant of Venice, Act V, Scene 1, Line 4
2. Much Ado About Nothing, Act V, Scene II, Line 31
3. King Henry V, Act II, Scene I, Line 80
4. Merry Wives of Windsor, Act I, Scene III, Line 81

....The poor world is almost six thousand years old and in all this time there was not any man died in his own person, videlicet, in a love cause. Troilus had his brains dashed out with a Grecian club; yet he did what he could to die before, and he is one of the patterns of love.¹

The clown in Twelfth-Night says to Viola,

I would play Lord Pandarus of Phrygia, sir, and bring a Cressida to this Troilus....²

Shakespeare must have been thinking of Henryson's Testament of Cresseid,

The matter, I hope, is not great sir, begging but a beggar: Cressida was a beggar.³

In All's Well That Ends Well, Shakespeare alludes to the role of Pandarus, saying,

I am Cressid's uncle,
That dare leave two together.⁴

Petruchio calls his puppy 'Troilus' in Taming of the Shrew, although we wonder why, when he says,

Where's my spaniel Troilus?⁵

His attitude toward the classic figures of Troilus and Cressida underwent a steady development as his life advanced. And finally when he did assume the responsibility of weaving their strange love story into a drama, he had become reflect-

1. As You Like It, Act IV, Scene I, Line 96

2. Twelfth-Night, Act III, Scene I, Line 58

3. ibid., Act III, Scene I, Line 63

4. All's Well That Ends Well, Act II, Scene I, Line 100

5. Taming of the Shrew, Act IV, Scene I, Line 152

ive, even unto cynicism. He was venturing deep in the study of the inner man, and seemed aware that "cynicism was eminently logical in the modern post-Renaissance mind."¹ However, Shakespeare worshipped the beauty of external form and thereby leaves for all time a drama whose poetry is exquisite, with such an array of lovely images, that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them clearly. Shakespeare thinks in images drawn from Life itself and employs them, not only for their own sake, but as a contribution to the harmony of his drama. It is a certain striving after a deeper meaning which marks the many allusions in Troilus and Cressida. He uses more than in any other production. The myths appear not in explicit allusion but as types of qualities, sometimes moral, sometimes physical.

The love story of Troilus and Cressida as Shakespeare created it, when stripped of all its poetic beauty would sound something like this:

Cressida, daughter of Calchas the Greek, had during her enforced sojourn within the walls of Troy ensnared the heart of Troilus, son of Priam. She was a seasoned coquette, who though in love with Troilus from the first, knew that a man was better caught if kept at a distance. Troilus was an ardent, idealistic fellow, thoroughly under the fascination of a sensual, calculating woman. When his passion was at last gratified by the assistance of the elder lecher, Pandarus, Cressida confessed she loved him. Pandarus further degraded the whole affair by the coarsest of comment on their physical union. Arrangements for the exchange of prisoners was proposed;

1. Knight, G. Wilson, The Wheel of Fire, p. 52

Cressida to be returned to her father, Antenor to be returned to the Trojans. Cressida at first protests but finally goes, leaving Troilus with many protestations of fidelity, giving him her glove as a token in return for which he gives her a sleeve. On her arrival in the Greek camp under escort of Diomedes, she greeted the chiefs with bold coquetry and Ulysses commented in stinging terms on her wanton character. She is soon in an amorous affair with the vigorous but cynical Diomedes. Ulysses later persuaded Troilus to go with him to the tent of Calchas where they witness a love scene between Cressida and Diomedes, in the course of which Cressida bestowes upon him the sleeve given by Troilus as a love token. After the fighting is renewed, Troilus announced the death of Hector to Aeneas and the Trojans, and vows to avenge him. Troilus already realized the complete faithlessness of Cressida and repulsed Pandarus, who with an obscene speech by way of epilogue brings the play to an end.¹

Shakespeare was only analyzing life when he created an earnest philosophical treatise of the universal human passions in a corrupt society. He was not blaspheming courtly love, but lust, greed and selfishness. A solid point of departure for the interpretation of this Troilus and Cressida story, which, if founded in traditional material, is to inquire, first of all, what its theme would have meant to an Elizabethan audience. This story had a strong direct appeal for simple men, and was designed to provide entertainment for the ignorant as well as the educated in Chaucer's time. For once Shakespeare's undramatic

1. Lawrence, W. W., Shakespeare's Problem Comedies, p. 139

characters were unsuitable for the stage; his drama might have been composed for some special crowd, possibly one of the Inns of Court; but more probably in some private home for a sophisticated group. The outstanding question is, why such a drama which pictures such complete horror in regard to romantic love should be presented to 'court life' when that 'court' loved to affect and practice submission to chivalric convention. The common people, who had always jeered the courtly convention, grew to honor them less and less. Though they like good stories, they reserved a right to interpret them for themselves. And by Shakespeare's time *Troilus and Cressida* were firmly established. Only an unhappy ending was possible. The theme of the separation of the lovers, with the heartbreak for the one and bad faith for the other had no violence done to it, since Shakespeare did not end it.

Since this tale was incomparably the most popular love story of the earlier sixteenth century, Shakespeare would have been familiar with these two lovers if he had never read a line of Chaucer, Caxton, Chapman or Lydgate, because of the numberless contemporary references, allusions and dramatic retellings. We feel, however, that he did read everything available.

His sources in full may be summarized as:

1. The History of the Destruction of Troye, by Raoul le Fevre as printed by Caxton.
2. Chapman's Illiad.
3. Lydgate's Troy Book.
4. Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde.

It is only fair to mention the printing that had come into existence and bore so much influence on the literary world. William Caxton, having settled in Flanders, came in contact with French literature and it was for the sake of its diffusion that he devoted his energies to translations and printing. The French version of the Trojan War, written by Raoul le Fevre, was the first book that Caxton printed, in modest English, which he aimed for the comprehension of clerks and gentlemen. This History was far removed from the classic figures of Homer. The story of Troilus and 'Breseyda' was told with such brevity that it bore no weight on the evolution of their rapidly changing characteristics. Pandarus was not mentioned at all. Shakespeare might have known the Elizabethan version of Caxton's Troy Book newly corrected by R. Pinson.¹

Shakespeare left nothing to tell us what his first reaction was when reading Chapman's Iliad, but he must have read it copiously. Since 1598 Chapman's Iliad, the direct opposite of Caxton in the construction of life at Troy, was available. Concerning Troilus he says:

Priam says, O me, accursed man, all
 my good sons are gone, my light the
 shades Cimmerian
 Have swallowed from me. I have lost....
 Troilus, that ready knight at arms
 That made his field repair
 Ever so prompt and joyfully....²

The character of Cressida can be accounted for only in the girl, Briseis. Chapman translates:

1. Legouis and Cazamain, The History of English Literature, p. 200
 2. Chapman, George, The Iliad, Book XXIV

Since Phoebus needs will force from me Chryseis,
 she shall go; My ships and friends shall waft her
 home; but I will imitate so His pleasure that
 mine own shall take, in person, from thy tent
 Bright-cheeked Briseis.¹
 Atreus' son the swift ship launched and caused to
 come aboard Fair-cheeked Briseis.She sad,
 and scarce for grief could go, Her love all friends
 forsook and went for anger....

Chapman's version of Diomed reads thus:

Then Pallas to Tydides Diomed
 Gave strength and courage....
 Upon his head
 And shield she caused a constant flame to play,
 Like to the autumnal star that shines in heaven
Such light she caused to beam upon his crest
 And shoulders....²

Probably the most important character which Shakespeare inheri-
 ted from Chapman was Thersites, who is described in this manner:

Thersites....clamorous of tongue
 Kept brawling. He, with many insolent words,
 Was wont to seek unseemly strife with kings,
 of the multitude
 Who come to Ilium, none so base as he,
 Squint-eyed, with one lame foot, and on his back
 A lump....
 His head was sharp, and over it the hairs
 Were thinly scattered. Hateful to the chiefs
 he would often
 Revile them.³

Shakespeare's development of classical material suffered the
 same fate as others; the dignity of a heroic civilization was
 sacrificed to the taste of a romantic age. In the Iliad, these
 characters represent the outcome of the imagination of the
 noblest people of the Mediterranean shores. They are bright,
 reverential fantasies born in the warm sun under a deep blue sky.

1. Chapman, *The Iliad*, Book I, Lines 104-187
2. *ibid.*, Book V, Lines 1-10
3. *ibid.*, Book II, Line 265

From Shakespeare they step forth travestied by the gloom and bitterness of a great poet of a Northern Race, civilized by Christianity, not by culture.¹

There is yet another, John Lydgate, who discovered he had the power of versification while in a monastery, and undertook the translation of Guido's Historie Trojane,² at the command of King Henry the Fifth. While it was dull and intolerably tedious, in an age barren of great poetry his work was highly valued. The notable points consist in vivid presentation of psychological motives, descriptions of nature and artificial features. Its intense popularity showed it has qualities that appealed to the mediaeval mind. The absence of a Greek atmosphere was a marked virtue to the English. Lydgate, however, condensed the reference made to Cressida and begged his readers to substitute Chaucer in those passages. Therefore, the only reason for dwelling upon his history is because of the fact that Shakespeare depended largely on his version for much of his material for his play of Troilus and Cressida. It was in this version that Shakespeare found the sharpest rebuke concerning women. Guido,³ as we know, specialized in bitter irony concerning Cressida's sex. Lydgate

1. Lawrence, W. W., op. cit., Pg. 201

2. Lydgate Troy Book, Ed. from the best MMS. Intro. notes and glossary by Henry Berger. Ph.B.(Yale)
Ph.B.(Munich)
Side notes by Dr. Furnrval. London Early
Eng. Text Society. Wryden House 43 Serrard
Street Sohew 1906. Library of Congress,
Washington, D. C.

3. Lydgate's Troy Book: "Woman can never appear beautiful enough to suit them," Bk. I, L. 1843; "Will not be content with one man," Bk. I, L. 1879; "Deceitful," Bk. I, L. 2072; "Easily lay aside their sorrow," Bk. II, L. 4071; "False," Bk. III, L. 4377.

inserts Guido's satire, and then offers his own contradictory feelings.¹

Chaucer and Shakespeare have much in common. When Shakespeare came of age the one great name of literature in England was Chaucer. However diverse the form of their greatest works, yet in spirit there is a remarkable likeness and sympathy. Their genius differs rather in degree than in kind. Troilus and Criseyde may be considered fundamentally the play of Chaucer's defeated lovers, whose sad finish could not be romantically glorified as a moral victory, and it perhaps appealed to Shakespeare who may have lost his joy in too successful people.

Shakespeare is not unlike Chaucer in his basic plan of the love story. Instead of "a double sorrow," he provides two distinct movements with which to secure his technical perfection. The first movement has to do with the divine passion that has been excited in the heart of the lovers. Troilus is first introduced, young and impulsive. He has met fair Cressida and is desperately consumed with the sacred flame. Every duty or purpose is swallowed up in his whirlpool of passion. He places the value of Love above that of War. Dormant desire has been awakened by the discovery of Cressida, so sensuous, and so alluring. She becomes a symbol of this desire, and she in turn becomes the

1. "I, John Lydgate, say that for one bad woman there are one hundred good ones." Bk. III, L. 4361

image which serves as a bond to mind and soul. He sees his own soul reflected in this woman whom he loves, and seems to awake to selfknowledge by seeing her. He has had dignity; he was a man of action; he was a warrior. Honor and ambition called him to the field. But now passion has him in its firmest grasp. This is the first triumph of Love. When Troilus first betrays what love has done to him, saying:

...I am weaker than a woman's tear,
Tamer than sleep, fonder than ignorance,
Less valiant than the virgin in the night,
And skillless as unpractis'd infancy.¹

he shows how a strong man may suffer from passion as from a disease. Thus we meet him, the soul of intuition, being loyal to the dictates of such a nature at all hazards. He tries to analyze this new and potent reality that is overwhelming him in terms of intellect and philosophy.

Shakespeare makes the most masterful defense of Troilus when he says:

The youngest of Priam, a True Knight;
Not yet mature, yet matchless; firm of word,
Speaking in deeds and deedless in his tongue;
Not soon provok'd, nor being provok'd soon calm's;
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 impure thought with breath.
....but he in heat of action
Is more vindicative than jealous love.
They call him Troilus....²

He scorns 'reason' saying:

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene I, Lines 9-12
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene V, Lines 95-112

He says:

I am giddy, expectation whirls me round.
 The imaginary relish is so sweet
 That it enchants my sense.
 What will it be
 When that the watery palate tastes indeed
 Love's thrice-repured nectar? death, I fear me,
 Swounding 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;....¹

Here Shakespeare gives us what is most natural in the play, free of all irony, a rendering of sensation sharpened to the vanishing point. How unlike Cressida and her designing 'wind so short.'² Lurking between these groups of self revelation, Shakespeare has skillfully inserted through Troilus' own speeches hints of his chivalrous and tender regard concerning this love that has seized him:

My heart beats thicker than a fev'rous pulse;
 And all my powers do their bestowing lose,
 Like vassalage at unawares encountering
 The eye of majesty.³

Profound affection is alone worthy of the name of love. Troilus possessed such an affection, passionate indeed, swollen with the merging of youthful instinct and youthful fancy and glowing with the radiance of hope newly risen. Lurking in these vivid speeches, Shakespeare deftly inserts Troilus' expression of fear that love's reality is a thing so essentially beyond the capacity of his mind that its great enchantment will make it break. This fear brings

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Lines 16-22
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Line 30
3. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Lines 36-39

on a dull agony at being thwarted inwardly by his innate sense of his own human limitations. He is half conscious of the fact that his love is destined to disaster in the world of flesh; that it is a spiritual thing and too delicate to survive the temporal symbols of actuality. He is nursing a desire that is irrational; he is trying to make infinite a thing which is subjected to the rational limitations of human possibilities. He says:

This is the monstrosity in love,
lady, that the will is infinite,
and the execution confined; that
the desire is boundless and the act
a slave to limit.¹

Reaching the height of their love, which lasted but one night, Troilus accepted the morning in much the same way, as did Romeo, spoken in magic dawn-imagery so rich in poetic form,

O Cressida! but that the busy day,
Wak'd by the lark, hath rous'd the ribal crows,
And dreaming night will hide our joys no longer....²

After the fiery imaginations of Troilus' love-thoughts, he meets Cressida in the flesh, and is embarrassed. He seems never at ease, in all the course of his love. His desire is that romantic love be perfectly bodied in symbols of the physical, throughout a life time. This may be the desire of all who love passionately, but no finite symbols can contain such an experience through the stretch of years:

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Line 87

2. Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene II, Line 79

O that I thought it could be in a woman
 As, if it can, I will presume in you
 To feed for aye her lamp and flames of love;
 To keep her constancy in plight and youth,
 Outliving beauty's outward, with a mind
 That doth renew swifter than blood decays!
 Or that persuasion could but thus convince me,
 That my integrity and truth to you
 Might be affronted with the match and weight
 Of such a winnow'd purity in love;
 How were I then uplifted! but, alas!
 I am as true as truth's simplicity
 And simpler than the infancy of truth.¹

He pledged himself by saying:

True swains in love shall in the world to come
 Approve their truths by Troilus:....²

The second movement portrays Troilus passing through his season of doubt. He feels the oncoming desertion. He senses that Cressida will be unable to resist the grace and flattery of her Grecian lover. For the first time he has a real and honest reason for complaining against the difficulties and limitations of love. When he is finally forced to give Cressida over to the Greeks, his words become a near-sacrificial ceremony:

I'll bring her to the Grecian presently;
 And to his hand when I deliver her,
 Think it an altar, and thy brother Troilus a priest,
 There offering to it his heart.³

Coming into his own, in warrior terms, he fearlessly staked his life for Cressid's safety, saying to Diomedes:

If e'er thou stand at mercy of my sword,
 Name Cressid, and thy life shall be as safe
 as Priam is in Ilion.⁴

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Lines 165-177
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene III, Line 7
3. Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene III, Lines 7-10
4. Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene IV, Lines 114-117

It is a turning point in the life of the young champion of Troy when he sees Cressida, who has heretofore been for him, all purity and passion, giving lips and hand to Diomedes beneath the torch lights of the Greek camp. Happily, Troilus has by his side worldly-wisdom incarnate in the person of Ulysses, and yet the pierce of death could not be sharper. The love tragedy is here anticipated. Troilus has put his faith in the love of one woman, in one love experience and expects it to stand the test of time and reason. As he watches Cressida's inconstancy he literally doubts his senses. Herein we meet the moral problem of the play:

....this is, and is not, Cressid.
Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven
strong as heaven itself;
 The bonds of heaven are slipp'd, dissolv'd, and loos'd;
 And with another knot, five-finger-tied,
 The fractions of her faith,
 Are bound in Diomed....
 If beauty have a soul, this is not she;
 If soul guide vows, if vows be sanctimony,
 If sanctimony be the gods' delight,
 If there be rule in unity itself,
 This is not she. O madness....¹

He cannot love her faithlessness, yet he loves his imaged Cressida; he holds fast to his love vision which has become fixed in his soul to eternity. Herein lies the tragedy of Troilus' love. He finds only one hope if he is to keep his sanity intact. His great passion had driven out his valor and warriorship. Now he returns to his first allegiance and fights like the furious animal of Benoit's. He has suddenly become a

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Scene II, Lines 134-157

man, stirred by this bitter lesson, for the work of a man. He shows the same willpower which has been the substance and basis of his entire existence. It braces up his pride and determination, and carries him safely past all lingering fondness and miserable regrets, and rushes him into noble duties where he can work off his heartache.

In the light of the history of the love story, the remarkable thing is that Shakespeare deals with Cressida so mildly. He seemed to have no apparent bitterness toward her, and he does not punish her as did Henryson or Heywood; he does not make her the wholly contemptible creature of the University Wits; not the miserable leprosy stricken beggar of Dekker and Chettle. Shakespeare's Cressida is not Chaucer's pleasant little widow with a sliding heart, but a finished woman who can declare her love with an eloquence almost worthy of Juliet herself, and then prove poetry a lie, by offering herself strumpet fashion to the man nearest at hand. She was somewhat tainted from the first and was conscious of the great stigma that Destiny had in store for her. But the greatest change of all was that she became more analytic in language. Her slightest emotion is subject to the most penetrating intellectual analysis. The profoundest questions of her fate are discussed and dissected.

In Shakespeare's England, courtship was not a prolonged and romantic affair, and the female figure was insignificant. Among the motives that made men fall in love, personal beauty was the supreme. No other author has portrayed the bewitching power of

beauty to inspire love as Shakespeare. He deftly leaves to our imagination the utter loveliness of Cressida, by referring to the overwhelming impression it makes on those who see her. None but Shakespeare can shadow one female character in such infinite variety. In spite of all the criticism concerning his own attitude when he wrote this strange drama, he is beyond comparison in the way he dramatizes Cressida. First, he lets us see how divine a thing a woman may be when imaged in the heart of her lover. Through the romantic language of Troilus, Shakespeare stimulates the imagination to a kindred sympathy. We get her beauty only through her effect on Troilus.

Her eyes, her hair, her cheek, her gait, her voice;
 Handlest in thy discourse, O! that her hand
 In whose comparison all whites are ink....¹

In the severest contrast, then, do we find Ulysses' bold and ugly comment. When she reaches the Greek camp he sums her up in a few significant lines which say everything; Shakespeare again challenges the imagination by his masterful suggestion,

Fie, fie upon her!
 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.
 If these encounterers, so glib of tongue,
 That give a coasting welcome ere it comes,
 And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
 To every tickling reader, act them down
 For sluttish spoils of opportunity
 And daughters of the game.²

She could never be recognized so incapable of fidelity, so

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene I, Lines 58-61
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene V, Lines 53-62

anxious to get her pleasure by pleasing, so coldly intellectual. Although Shakespeare has written of her as a wanton who betrays the womanly beauty of her sex, he throws such a glamor about her as she acknowledges her weakness that one cannot call her vicious. It seems that it is with a kind of a cruelty that Shakespeare so deliberately and so patiently sets Cressida to unfolding herself before us. She gives more or less a key to her nature 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 speak I know not what.¹

Following the keynote of Shakespeare's interpretation, Cressida continues in the same vein. She must have been sincere when she swore her faithfulness, saying:

If I be false, or swerve a hair from truth,
When time is old and hath forgot itself,
...yet let memory,
From false to false, among false maids in love
Upbraid my falsehood! when they have said 'as
false....as Cressid!²

Cressida seems so pure, so intense, and so openly sincere. However, little by little, scene after scene, she develops until she brings about her own exposure. To be so feminine and yet so vile, so much a woman with all her pretty tricks, and so old in the craft of angling for hearts. In reality she had no looser views than those gay fashionable ladies with the languid airs.

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act II, Scene II, Lines 155-159

2. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Lines 191-204

Shakespeare knew all too well such types as 'Lady Cressida.' She is an intellectual coquette, not a criminal.

One of the three things women like best in men is high lineage, and Shakespeare reveals the pathos of an ambitious woman reaching vainly after nobility, with a wistful sincerity which is aware of its lack of strength. Another departure from the customary scheme in love matters is the fact that Cressida is not capable of a supreme devotion to one individual. Loyalty to one is not her principle. This sounds like Boccaccio. Nearly all of Shakespeare's women fall in love at first sight, and usually make the first advances. There is Juliet, the world's lover, who says, "Dost thou love me?" to inquire if Romeo's purpose is marriage.¹ Miranda says, "I wouldn't wish any companion in the world but you."² Olivia says, "I love thee so that nothing can my passion hide."³ And Desdemona gives Othello a hint..."She wish's that heaven had made her such a man; she thank'd me. And bade me if I had a friend that lov'd her, I should but teach him how to tell my story, And that would woo her."⁴ Portia leaves little to Bassanio's imagination.⁵ Shakespeare was mirroring life as he knew it. Now Cressida who subordinates her love to her cool understanding and her sensuous schemes refuses the absolute surrender. Shakespeare draws her character with a sting-

1. Romeo and Juliet, Act II, Scene II, Line 90
2. The Tempest, Act III, Scene I, Lines 48-66
3. Twelfth-Night, Act III, Scene I, Lines 161-166
4. Othello, Act I, Scene III, Lines 163-166
5. Merchant of Venice, Act III, Scene II, L

ing evidence of experience and disillusionment. Early in the play she gives the key to her own character when in reply to Pandarus' perplexed inquiry "one knows not at what word you lie," she answers, "Upon my wit to defend my wiles, upon my secrecy to defend my honesty."¹ Her intelligence tells her that men continue ardent so long as she says 'No.'

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:....²

As she lets her eye lead her mind with a pure intellectual grasp, she acts with the composure of one who knows the weakness of a man in love. Shakespeare makes a fundamental distinction between the two lovers. The man resigns himself to love: it is his complete sacrifice. The woman subordinates her love to her understanding and her scheming. She refuses the absolute surrender to one. That is not the controlling impulse of her nature. Although Shakespeare portrays her intellectually magnificent, he contrasts her spiritual fear with Troilus' assumed faith, saying:

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

Cr:-Blind fear, that seeing reason leads,
finds safer footing than blind reason
stumbling without fear: to fear the
worse oft cures the worse.

Tr:-O! let my lady apprehend no fear: in all
Cupid's pageant there is presented no
monster.³

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene II, Line 283
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene II, Lines 313-318
3. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Lines 72-80

She does speak most nobly, soliloquy fashion, when realizing her impending exchange, and soliloquies tell the truth:

.....O you gods divine!
 Make Cressid's name the very crown of falsehood
 If ever she leave Troilus! Time, force, and death,
 Do to this body what extreemes you can;
 But the strong base and building of my love
 Is at the very center of the earth,
 Drawing all things to it,.....¹

In contrast, then, in so short a time, her final soliloquy voices her cold, prosaic acceptance of her own intellectual limitations when she complains:

Troilus, farewell! one eye yet looks on thee,
 But with my poor heart the other eye doth see.
 Ah! poor our sex; this fault in us I find,
 That error of our eye directs our mind.
 What error leads must err. O! then conclude
 Minds sway'd by eyes are full of turpitude.²

Thus Shakespeare leaves her, still obsessed with her desire for analysis. She is a masterpiece of intellect, but fails to arouse any sympathy or consideration anywhere, from anyone.

Having need of a solo chorus and a character who could clown,³ Shakespeare accepted Pandarus who had grown up with the Troilus and Cressida love story. He was merely the type of a person that the Elizabethans were accustomed to see about the streets.⁴ Shakespeare saw in him a good part for a comedian and made of him an elderly lecher.⁵ Shakespeare's attitude toward Pandarus is very clear and very normal. He reveals his

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene II, Lines 106-112
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Scene II, Lines 104-109
3. Moulton, Richard A., Shakespeare as a Dramatic Thinker, p. 362
4. Rollins, H. E., P.M.L.A., Vol. XXXII, p. 423
5. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene I, Lines 73-76

own role in the play by saying:

Go to, a bargain made; seal it, seal it;
I'll be thy witness. Here I hold your
hand, here my cousin's. If ever you prove
false one to another, since I have taken
such pains to bring you together, let all
pitiful goers-between be called to the
world's end after my name; call them all
Pandars; let all constant men be Troiluses
all false women Cressids, and all broker-
between Pandars:¹

Following the fashion of the classics, the chorus tells of the all important truths that need to be known. Pandarus though kindly and sympathetic, has lost his friendly humor and has grown abrupt. Shakespeare makes him find great amusement in playing spy and go-between, a character very true to court men of Shakespeare's time; who were clever enough to get along, witty enough to be endured, but base and shameless. He is always ready to assist, to appraise and to degrade, by his coarse comments. Fearing the audience might miss the calculating passion of Cressida, he constantly utters comments which even in Elizabethan days were not acceptable. Though he grows sympathetic with Troilus and impatient with Cressida, he scores the world and its poor appreciation of friendly service. He says:

O world! world! world! thus is the poor
agent despised. O traitors and bawds,
how earnestly are you set a-work, and how
ill requited! why should our endeavour
be so loved, and the performance so loathed?²

Another clown and chorus, Thersites by name, who ages ago left a hint that his being would be pressed into dramatic ser-

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act III, Scene II, Lines 216-212

2. Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Scene X, Lines 37-40

vice, comes to the front. He always tells the truth. He is called a core of envy, a rascal, a cur, railing knave, a very filthy fellow.¹ He hates mankind universally; it so warps his mind that he hurls sweeping satire wholesale. The common curse of mankind is folly, lechery, pride, stupidity. This is Thersites' vision of human activity. Although he makes others look ridiculous he too is deformed and absurd. He boasts of it, saying:

I am a bastard too; I love bastards.²

His critical intellect without the touch of intuition, faith and mercy is self-contradictory and deformed. We partly approve of his opinions without countenancing his manners. Mankind and their loves are most successfully satirized. He is cynicism incarnate. His critical intellect measures man by intellectual standards; he sees folly everywhere. He finds no wisdom in mankind's activity. He is blind to man's nobility. Naturally, if values of beauty, love, goodness and honor be taken from one's viewpoint, that which remains will coincide with Thersites' idea of mankind. Troilus he calls a "young Trojan ass who loved the whore."³ Diomed he calls a "dissembling varlet,"⁴ and Cressida he calls a "drab."⁵ His function is to defile with the foulness of his own imagination all that humanity holds high and sacred.

1. Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Scene I, Lines 4-8
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Scene VII, Line 17
3. Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Scene IV, Line 7
4. Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene IV, Lines 3-6
5. Troilus and Cressida, Act V, Scene I, Line 107

Thus he projects his soul into war and revenge against the Greeks who stand as a symbol for his hate. Shakespeare makes no concession to theatrical effects, but the confusion at the close makes a very definite impression of the misery which comes of loving a worthless woman.

The characters and the things they do set forth in a curiously consistent sequence a feeling of uncertainty. The Prologue first voices this theme:

Now expectation, tickling, skittish spirits,
On one and other side, Trojan and Greek,
Sets all on hazards....
Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are;
Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war.¹

Pandarus leaves matters in an uncertain state, saying:

I will leave all as I found it.²

Troilus, too, is uncertain when he pleads in bewilderment,

Tell me Apollo, for my Daphne's sake,
What Cressid is, what Pandar, what we?³

Cressida nurses a vital faith in the powers of uncertainty when she reveals her inner self thus:

Men prize the thing ungained, more than it is.⁴

Troilus was uncertain of Cressida's love; Cressida was uncertain of herself. Shakespeare portrayed intrigues in number; nobility and wantonness, secret bliss and open quarrels, love and hate, all to end in a flat, uncertain finale. But Life settles nothing, therefore, Shakespeare fills his play, after all, in full

1. Troilus and Cressida, Prologue, Lines 20-30
2. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene I, Line 93
3. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene I, Line 104
4. Troilus and Cressida, Act I, Scene I, Line 313

accord with facts of human experience, and makes no one heroic.

Because of these many uncertainties, it may easily be considered a problem play. The essential characteristic of a problem play is that a perplexing and distressing complication in human life is presented in a spirit of high seriousness.¹ The theme is handled so as to arouse not merely interest or excitement or pity or amusement, but to probe the complicated interrelations of character and action in a situation admitting of different ethical interpretations. The problem is one of conduct. This term is particularly useful to apply to those productions which clearly do not fall into the tragic group, and yet are too serious and analytic to be comedy. Shakespeare was interested in the complication of the action of these two lovers; he pays direct attention to the development of Cressida's intrigue, but impatient of the solution, he stops all action abruptly.

1. Harrison, John S., op. cit., Butler University, 1936.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A brief survey of these several adaptations of the Troilus and Cressida love story will demonstrate the fact that not only have the different authors of the different eras and different influences created poetic forms as a dwelling place for their imaginative genius, but that each succeeding writer treated his inherited patterns as mere framework upon which to base his own standards. Therefore, we find the accumulation of the Troilus and Cressida literature that evolves from the first known story to Shakespeare's own drama forms an unbroken, if somewhat distorted, relationship. Therefore, he had a world much larger than that of Elizabeth's to dominate him, and this world influenced his ethics, his philosophy, his art and his intuition, at least to some extent.

When Benoit, the Frenchman, undertook his Roman de Troie he found in one of his legends a brave and handsome prince, but fancy free. He also found a definitely winsome maiden without a lover. By introducing the element of love between these two characters, Benoit greatly increased the interest in the young prince, brought the maiden into more vital relation to the story of Troy, and embellished his poem with the episode of Troilus and 'Briseida'; an episode all the more alluring for its incompleteness.

Then came Guido with a great literary ambition, who contributed nothing to this new love story, except to offer sting-

ing rebukes unto womankind in general.

From this fragmentary love story as created by Benoit and abridged by Guido, Boccaccio, the Italian, developed the complete unified and polished poem, Il Filostrato. This completeness Boccaccio obtained partly by a skillful use of suggestions from the episodes of Achilles and Polyxena in Benoit's poem, partly without any doubt from the suggestions, characterizations and descriptions of his own vivid experience which was so fresh in his own mind.

When Chaucer, the Englishman, composed his poem he used his direct source, Il Filostrato, with the utmost freedom. At times he translated with literal accuracy, at times he expanded freely, and again, he deliberately added new incidents and new episodes, giving to the rather smooth and quiet narrative, the liveliness and complexity of a drama. Here and there he adapted bits of Benoit and Guido that Boccaccio had omitted. More important than his additions were his changes in his characters. In the maturity of Pandarus, and his blunted perceptions of right and wrong, Chaucer makes a complete change. Although he does not particularly change the character of Troilus, he does, however, give him a charm of humility that we do not feel in the colorless hero of Boccaccio. Naturally, Chaucer's most interesting change of characterization is in the transformation of the impulsive wanton, Criseida, into the dignified, modest, intuitive yet yielding Criseyde. Boccaccio's character needs no analysis; she is simply a sensuous creature. Chaucer's is so complex and elusive

she almost defies such a process.

Henryson, the Scotchman, could not accept the finish that his beloved Chaucer gave to his poem, so he gave vent to his rugged ethics in his own version of the story. He, perhaps, made Troilus more nobly dramatic in his overwhelming grief, but he reduced Cressida to the deepest humiliation that any stern-minded moralist could conceive.

Contrary to the experience of those who wrote before his day, Shakespeare found the traditional material not too yielding and flexible which he could mould at his own conception. By this time it was trammelled by rigid fact. He reflects in the legend profoundly universal philosophy in dramatic and poetic terms. He champions, not only Troy, but the fine values of humanity fighting against the power of cynicism. He is in the midst of a purely metaphysical world, and his drama becomes a reflective creation.

It is most improbable that Shakespeare knew the old Benoit poem, but by a native intuition he restored the story to dramatic consistency from which it was wrested by Boccaccio and Chaucer. His Troilus is more akin to that of Benoit's than either the wan lover of Boccaccio's or the young blooded knight of Chaucer. But if the original Briseida is more akin to Shakespeare's Cressida than either of the intervening characters, it is only in the same way as the vanity and the fickleness of a village beauty may be said to resemble the deep dissimulation, the splendid sensuousness and the keen wits of some corrupt and

brilliant woman of the world. Diomedes is not the Diomede of Benoit, distracted and speechless with love; he is only indifferent and petulant, and makes a most unknighly suitor. No especial sympathy seems to be aroused for these two Shakespearian lovers, while those of Benoit and Chaucer not only arouse, but maintain one's compassion and leniency. This perhaps is so because Troilus and Cressida is more analytic in language and dramatic meaning than any other work of Shakespeare. The drama is tense with intellectual complexity and naturally requires intellectual interpretation. The two lovers think hard and deep. Troilus' slightest love experience is subjected to piercing intellectual analysis. His soul-consuming passion is laid bare to a critical examination that can prove any endeavor meaningless, any end illogical and any hope an illusion. Cressida, the intellectual, coolly lays her plans, consistent in her inconstancy, and seems to be on the winning side. This view of emotion and reason in serious conflict can never hold readers spellbound, even though the poetry is superb and the ardent desires are couched in terms of enchantment.

There is, naturally, a relationship between Shakespeare and his sources, but they cannot be considered a 'cause' for his drama. It is true that he did need personalities, plots and words, for without these he would have been speechless, but the real source of Troilus and Cressida is the 'supreme erotic imagination of the poet (Shakespeare) which finds companionship in

the old world romance.¹ For the sake of humanity he had to lose himself in the contemplation of this actual story of the lovers, so that he could find himself able to philosophize with some earthly attachment. He, no doubt, saw the drama laid out as a vast area, and his personages intimately fused with this space, making the matter of framework more a matter of 'spatial-imagery' than a matter of time-sequences.

Caroline Spurgeon has discovered that within this 'great play'² of philosophy, Shakespeare has lavished the greatest number of lovely images that he ever bestowed on any one drama.³ The subject seemed to stir in his imagination a vast array of little word pictures which he used to illustrate, illuminate and embellish the deep philosophy which he was offering, and by means of these images he gave quality, he created atmosphere, and he conveyed emotion in a way that no cold, concise description could do. But these images do more than transform the experiences of Life into an unreal world of gleaming beauty; they tell us that Shakespeare must have had at some time experiences that made these images mean something to himself and by them one may gain both a fresh light on his much discussed drama, and a better understanding of the man himself.

Regardless of the fact that there are some who find only pessimism,⁴ ridicule,⁵ wantonness⁶ and puzzles⁷, one could not

1. Knight, G. Wilson, The Wheel of Fire, p. 9
2. Spurgeon, Caroline, Shakespeare's Imagery, p. 176
3. *ibid.*, Chart No. VII shows there are 42 images of food, drink, sickness, disease and medicine alone.
4. Lawrence, W. W., Studies in Shakespeare, p. 188
5. Boas, F. S., Shakespeare and His Predecessors, p. 373
6. Deighton, K., Intro. to Arden Shakespeare, p. 191
7. Wendell, Barrett, A Study in Elizabethan Literature, p. 271

find it possible to interpret Troilus and Cressida in any better terms than Appleton Morgan who said:

From a literary and philosophical standpoint, Troilus and Cressida is one of the most magnificent compositions, not only in English literature, but in the glorious gallery of Shakespeare.¹

Therefore, the purpose of the examination of Shakespeare's drama has been satisfied. We have found that he only employed the old tale as it had been established by his predecessors; that he made great poetry out of an inferior and a complex philosophy of life; that he had something to say that was over and above verbal beauty; and finally, during the process of his interpretation he merged so much into the characters he analysed that he was able to dramatize them in the light of their own nature.

1. Morgan, Appleton, Intro. Bankside Shakespeare, p. 3.

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