

**Tied in *Lusty Leese*:
Animalization and Agency in *Troilus and Criseyde***

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Abstract

Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is a tale fraught with ambiguity, and particularly so concerning issues of gender, agency, and free will. Critical readings often focus on depicting TC as Chaucer's didactic portrayal of a flawed and transitory humanity, with Troilus's death and transcendence taken as the primary lens through which to seek final meaning in the poem. However, I argue that Chaucer's use of natural tropes, vocabulary, and artistry also reveal that the poem, before it reaches its transcendental ending, indicts not only the mortal world at large but more specifically the at-times misogynist conventions of the genre itself. Specifically, contrasting Criseyde's self-perception against the starker realities of her social position reveals that while she imagines herself as "unteyd in lusty leese" (II.752), it is an illusory agency which collapses in the face of the real *lusty leese*—the masculine master narrative which strips away her agency in service of a "hunt" fraught with violence. In this paper I therefore look especially at the vocabulary of *lusty leese* and *muwe* employed by both Criseyde and the narrator. This wording, combined with the subversive use of both traditional and inverted natural tropes (especially the love-as-hunting trope) reveals that Criseyde's *estat*, despite her belief that it grants her independence, necessarily circumscribes her into a role that the genre has predetermined: that of a female love-object who may only exercise illusory agency when it serves the pleasure of the over-arching masculine narrative. Through this paper I hope to explore ways that Criseyde may be included in conversations on natural and philosophical elements of *Troilus and Criseyde*.

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INTRODUCTION

The story that comes down to us by way of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is the same story as Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, and it is also not. B. A. Windeatt, in "The 'Troilus' as Translation," writes of the complicated process of "trans-valuation" and "in-eching" that drove Chaucer's substantial and ambitious reworking of Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* into the Middle English classic *Troilus and Criseyde*. The changes Chaucer makes, Windeatt explains, are notable for their "cumulative effects" (5), with particular regard to character development and "the private life of the individual" (10). While many of Chaucer's alleged "translations" (or what I would prefer, after Windeatt, to call "transvaluations") are striking, perhaps none is more so than the changes he has wrought in resuscitating Boccaccio's Criseida into the body of Criseyde, a character of much deeper characterization and complexity than her literary predecessor, evidenced in no small part by the large body of criticism she has been able to sustain through her allegedly ambiguous intentions, driving forces, and her ultimate disappearance from the text. Criseyde's fate is the same as Criseida's: both are forced to take exodus from their Trojan homes into the camp of the Greeks in exchange for Antenor, tragically ironic in that both we and medieval readers know that Antenor ultimately compromises the city; both remain encamped despite promises to return; both shift loyalty from her Trojan lover to Diomedes; and both are condemned. The path that Chaucer's much-changed narrative leads us down, however, is a much changed one: the somewhat stiff characters of Boccaccio's text move with breath and life and fluidity; the details of the world come to vivid life, as when Criseyde listens to her niece, Antigone, as she sings and dances in the garden; and, perhaps most tellingly, the descriptive and narrative artistry stretches with playfully employed tropes, artistry, and allusions which add great depth to the story—and an often very dark depth at that.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the implications of the changes Chaucer has wrought in this story that is at once romance, tragedy, and history. Particularly of interest here are those changes that raise questions of gender, agency, and authorship—and how they are woven together in a secondary, subliminal narrative which both employs lexical, connotative mastery as Chaucer flexes the muscles of the nascent English vernacular and also uses natural imagery, tropes, and allusions to draw a parallel between the circumscribed spaces of the human social world and enclosed animal spaces. This “natural” sub-narrative ultimately reveals not only Criseyde’s lack of agency but also the circumscriptive effects of the genre on both character and author.

Framework and Methodology

While my interests are in the historical value of Chaucer’s work and the historical contexts of his authorship and his character which necessarily influenced both, my methodologies also reflect a modern interest in theories of ideology, subjectivity, and agency, for I believe that Chaucer created his characters and especially Criseyde with the power to speak to us across centuries and carry with them important questions about our individual subjectivity and our social (and love) relations.

I am attempting, in part, to follow in the footsteps of those critics such as Elizabeth Fowler, who calls not only for more rigorous methods for studying medieval characterization but also for doing so by taking into account the influence of these characters and works on both medieval and modern readers, and what each set brought and continues to bring to their reception of works and what they say about social ideas. As Fowler explains it, using the example of the sexuality of the Pardoner in *The Canterbury Tales*, “The important point for interpretation... is that for Chaucer’s living readers the modern category determines how sexuality is understood;

therefore, any analysis we make of medieval sexuality must be accountable to both medieval and modern categories of the person, explaining medieval social persons through our own” (71). This dual approach, historical and yet theoretically modern, thus allows us to apply vocabulary which did not yet exist to medieval texts in order to see how authors such as Chaucer grappled with questions of identity, gender, love, and society in ways just as important as modern authors who explore them, such as John Gardner or Theresa Hak Kyung Cha. Indeed, the latter, in her text *Dictee*, which pushes the boundaries of what it means to be an author, to craft characters, and even what constitutes a novel, speaks of History (capitalized by her to indicate perhaps its ideological weight) in ways that I find especially compelling when applied to explorations of how and why authors comply with, or, as I shall argue Chaucer does in *Troilus and Criseyde*, deviate from, mandates of their genres and the strategies of their predecessors:

This document is transmitted through, by the same means, the same channel without distinction the content is delivered in the same style: the word....The response is precoded to perform predictably however passively possible. Neutralized to achieve the no-response, to make absorb, to submit to the uni-directional correspondance [sic]. Why resurrect it all now. From the Past. History, the old wound...To name it now so as not to repeat history in oblivion. To extract each fragment by each fragment from the word from the image another word another image the reply that will not repeat history in oblivion.

(Cha 33)

In this passage, Cha critiques the ways that “History” itself, from a historiographical perspective especially, tends to function as an arm of ideology, glossing over the “wounds” of past conflict to maintain the status quo. The goal of “resurrecting” and retelling such history for Cha thus becomes to counteract this whitewashing of violence—to make possible the allocation of blame,

but also to make possible positive movement away from such tragic scenes. While Cha in this instance reflects specifically on Japan's colonization of Korea, the theme of History and its violence pervades her book in many forms and has equally important applications to any questions of violence, be it physical and literal or the more symbolic violence that is of interest to feminist theory, for example. What tropes and stories, then, continue for decades or even centuries, "wounding," accidentally or not, characters or the social roles or even genders they represent? How is Criseyde and medieval woman, for instance, "wounded" in Chaucer's source materials, and how, whether we choose to recognize or even laud him for these attempts or not, might he be making efforts, through his somewhat subversive "natural" subnarrative in *TC*, to make manifest social and generic (i.e., pertaining to genre) questions about which he himself is ambivalent? What "fragments" does he "extract" from Boccaccio (or his fictional "Lollius")?

While here I am, of course, hinting at theoretical social concepts of interpellation and authorial resistance of orthodoxy, I do not mean this anachronistically; I am not suggesting that the genre functions directly or aggressively, with intention by its authors or patrons or readership, as a sort of "repressive ideology" in the vein Althusser, for instance, describes. Rather, its effects that I am concerned with here are more insidious, manifesting only as texts make them do so. Nor would I (or could I) argue that Chaucer, when taking up his pen to compose *Troilus and Criseyde*, consciously condemned Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* or any of his other source materials as manifestations of a specific vein of ideology with which he wishes to battle as such. But I do believe that as an author who both playfully experiments with social issues and authorial authority and who more seriously critiques his contemporary society, he may well have found himself reading and analyzing works such as Boccaccio's with both entertainment and ambivalence when it comes to issues of gender, tropal artistry, authorial

authority, and the extent to which an author does or does not have to follow the modes and evaluations of society offered by his literary predecessors.

To return for a moment to Fowler, who argues that characters must be understood as configurations of “social persons” (roles such as “nun” or “widow” or “knight,” for instance), the goal of such an application is to explore how “the space of art...measures up to the ghostly real and imagined spaces invoked by social persons and their topoi,” for in art, “we see artists struggle with the configurations of established social structures, remapping the world according to their own arguments” (22). I thus strive to use this frame of questioning, looking particularly at Criseyde’s circumscription and lack of agency in relation to that of Chaucer’s as well as to the philosophical concerns of free will versus predestination (perhaps another exploration of agency and freewill) as they are linked together by the natural sub-narrative which persists throughout the text. This is done in three chapters.

Applications

In the first chapter, I consider in-depth what it means that Criseyde pictures herself as “unteyd in lusty leese” (2.753), both in terms of her own agency and the gendered, concentric realms of circumscription in the story. I consider theories of gendered space and movement such as historian Barbara A. Hanawalt’s, who writes in “At the Margin of Women’s Space in Medieval Europe” that “when [women] stepped out of their physical space, they were carrying an additional connotation of marginality....women could not depart from a defined physical space without arousing more suspicion than men would in similar circumstances” (3). In addition, I consider this together with theories of agency and characterization. Elizabeth Fowler explores the latter in her pivotal text *Literary Character*, arguing that characters are made up of groupings of “social persons” into one (literary) “body.” As she explains it, “Social persons are

models of the person, familiar concepts of social being that attain currency through common use” (Fowler 2). The grouping of various social persons into one character is then important for analyzing texts because “the difficulty we experience in sorting out the degree of attribution in each case causes us to feel a density in the character, no matter which judgment we make. Social persons are, by definition, simple and thin; positioned among a number of them, a character takes on complexity and weight. The process of reading begins with recognition and moves quickly to deliberation” (Fowler 9). What “social persons,” then, does Criseyde embody? Widow? Wealthy woman? Daughter of a traitor? Lover? And how, bearing these significations, is Criseyde circumscribed within the *lusty leese*?

Equally important to an exploration of these questions is also the concept of *habitus*, employed recently by several medieval critics, including Fowler, but taken from the theoretical works of authors such as Pierre Bourdieu. Habitus, according to Fowler, “refer[s] to [the] shaped disposition of the body, brought about by frequent practices and functioning...Habitus...is a kind of glue that helps fit the body to the social person” (11). In studying this, behaviors become important, for “actions bind a character to a topos through the habitus appropriate to the social person” (Fowler 13). How, then, does Fowler’s theory of social persons and the ways they mold characters through the reenactment of behaviors appropriate to them mesh with both Hanawalt’s discussion of movement, marginality, and transgression, and, most importantly, with the fact the Criseyde ultimately becomes unable to dictate the terms of her own movement as *Troilus and Criseyde* progresses? Does Criseyde’s forced movement from Troy to the Greek camp in particular violate the habitus which has molded her for us as a character? And how much control over these events—and over herself—does Criseyde really have?

The first chapter thus primarily considers Criseyde's agency and circumscription. It is necessary, however, to pause at the former term. While the term "agency" is ubiquitous in criticism, its meaning as used in each appearance is less so. Most basically, it is an individual's ability to take action unfettered. Fowler argues that "agency is a primary aspect of social bonds, for it is central to the circulation and practice of power among individual human beings and society" (99). Looking at philosophy, scholar Robert Paul Resch, annotating Pierre Bourdieu, explains that "*habitus*...enables agents to generate an infinity of practices adapting to endlessly changing situations without ever being constituted as a monolithic set of rules, rituals, or principles" (217). But for the purpose of this project, we should not confuse one who "acts" as an "agent" with one who therefore has agency, for this sublates legal and social definitions. In contrast, in attempting to look at how Chaucer may have revised Criseida into Criseyde in order to make manifest her pre-circumscription by the genre and to offer sympathy, the latter is what primarily concerns me. While at one point in her work Fowler speaks of "the feminine...as an expression of 'pure' agency, agency without intentionality," she does so by employing the legal definitions of "agent" and "agency," in order to explore *Langland's* own perception of both, and not to define "agency" as a working tool to be applied to all readings. While scholars such as Sashi Nair follow suit in taking such observations as proving that "the fact that a subject's agency could be legally divorced from her intention (where agency would appear to require some kind of intentionality in order to exist) dramatically locates agency in historically specific discourses" (38), in this project, I mean agency in the philosophical and social sense, and not in the legal—the ability of Criseyde to act upon her intentions is precisely what concerns me.

Interestingly, many of the textual episodes in *Troilus and Criseyde* which lead to the questions above are framed in *TC* itself through Criseyde's own private debates early in the

story, in which she invokes natural references in describing herself (such as when she envisions the *lusty leese*, or “pleasant pasture”). A fuller analysis of this natural imagery throughout *TC* is thus the subject of my second chapter. Indeed, the *lusty leese* is but one instance of the complex natural backdrop woven into the tale which emerges to the readers through the mouths of the characters themselves. What, for instance, is the relationship between the *lusty leese* which Criseyde articulates and the *mewe* which the narrator envisions her stepping out of to greet Troilus? Furthermore, how do these two “animalized” spaces, the *leese* and the *mewe*, relate to the variety of animal images and allusions to metamorphosed humans which Chaucer speckles his narrative backdrop with? Are they meant, perhaps, to demonstrate that indeed humans effectively have just as little control over the *habitus* which dictates their actions and fates as animals do in the natural world? The answers may have important implications concerning the nature of love and power dynamics between the sexes, especially considering the violent connotations of many of these allusions. As Fowler writes, “characterization is complexly woven into many formal features of literature and not accomplished by verbal portraiture alone, for nearly all the details and structures of texts are capable of contributing to characterization” (16). How, then, do the natural images, tropes, and allusions which Chaucer employs in *Troilus and Criseyde* contribute to Criseyde’s characterization, and more specifically, to telling the story of her lack of agency and circumscription?

Why, finally, does Chaucer rely on nature to delineate the extent of Criseyde’s agency and to show that her perceived freedom is incorporeal? The answers, perhaps, lie in how he subtly ties in Criseyde’s own tragic story and the fetters on her agency to the constraints he himself feels, both of which manifest symbolically in the discussions on free will versus predestination which occur in the latter half of *Troilus and Criseyde*. Chaucer’s narrative

reversals of the love-as-hunting trope (as when Criseyde, and not Troilus, is described as a falcon) seem to do nothing to change Criseyde's fate from that in his source material, perhaps revealing ways that the genre itself—and the demands of popular reception—constrain authorial creativity. In an earlier scene describing Troilus's momentary happiness (after a victory in a skirmish against the Greeks and while awaiting a response from Criseyde concerning his pursuit of her), Chaucer writes, “may nought destourbed be / that shal bityden of necessitee” (2.622-23). This philosophy perhaps also applies significantly both to Criseyde's fate and to the burdens on an author to provide to his audience a tale which complies with the demands of the genre. Thus, if his playfulness with natural tropes ultimately proves to be infertile for creating a new sympathy for Criseyde, it perhaps relates to his philosophical interest in free will versus predestination.

To return for a moment to theoretical vocabulary, using Bourdieu's terms, the question becomes this: does Chaucer create a natural, “heterodoxic” sub-narrative in *Troilus and Criseyde* not only to make manifest Criseyde's lack of agency and pre-circumscription by the genre itself, but also to express more broadly a profound ambivalence against genre as “orthodoxy,” thus making *Troilus and Criseyde* a work manifesting an author's resistance to the interpellation of the genre and literary history? My hope is that in exploring this question, this project will begin to identify ways that Criseyde may be analyzed in a broader sense and in critical realms which often focus either solely on Troilus or on all of humanity lumped together and which thereby overlook the symbolic violence inherent in Criseyde's pre-circumscription. I hope to explore instead the ways that Chaucer's text displays equally careful crafting of Criseyde, her character, and her own *sorwe* at the same time that it exposes the genre-imposed restraints on authorial

creativity and the imbalance of power dynamics between genders in the tropes and social spaces which constitute the world of *Troilus and Criseyde*.

Chapter One:

Criseyde Tied in Lusty Leese

The narrator's ambiguity in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* bids readers to participate in the tale by assessing characters and plot developments for themselves. All too often, however, Criseyde's individual tragedy disappears into readings which see *Troilus and Criseyde* as Chaucer's didactic portrayal of a flawed and transitory humanity, with Troilus's death and transcendence taken as the primary lens through which to seek final meaning in the poem.¹ Unfortunately, such analyses accidentally elide the ways that both individual characters and the genre as a whole are revealed as participants in a pattern of behavior which denies Criseyde the very agency that she claims. Feminist critics such as Louise O. Fradenburg have thus responded by examining Criseyde's historical contexts and the "occlusion of violence" in the genre (600).²

¹. For example, Sheila Delany argues in "Techniques of Alienation" that Chaucer attempts to alienate readers in order to teach a "rigorous Augustinian doctrine" (488). Additionally, Samuel Schuman in "The Circle of Nature" sees the characters as "trapped, as they are trapped in the city, by their animal natures," "[their] love...doomed by the...cycle of nature" (106-107). Both of these analyses will be further explore in my second chapter.

². Fradenburg ultimately raises the possibility that Chaucer attempts to reveal and critique this occlusion, but herself seems ambivalent toward the "undecidability" of the narrative (601-2). See in contrast Valerie Ross, who argues in "Believing Cassandra" that Chaucer utilizes "parodic subversion" (339) to link himself "metonymically" to Criseyde and to "dramatiz[e] ...her increasing agency" (349).

Contrasting Criseyde's perception of herself as "unteyd in lusty leese" (II.752)³ against the starker realities of her social position also helps rectify this elision, for her agency collapses in the face of the real *lusty leese*—the masculine master narrative of the tale itself—as her *estat*, though she believes it to grant her freedom, necessarily circumscribes her into a role predetermined by historical and literary conventions concerning the medieval woman. Particularly in comparison to Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, in Chaucer's hands, Criseyde's circumscription as a love-object who may only exercise illusory agency when it serves the pleasure of the over-arching narrative becomes painfully evident in ways that help garner sympathy for her. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, as Chaucer's revised Criseyde moves through the social spaces of her story, we therefore see her strive time and again both to rectify her own situation (adamantly believing that she *can* do so) and to retain in others' eyes the "social persons" (Fowler 2) which make her identity functional within the social network in which she lives in. However, as plot developments increasingly show that control of her own movements and fate is not her own on the level of both master narrative and social structure, the very nature of the social rank she embodies (formed for us *through* these "social persons") becomes increasingly mismatched to her settings.

In recent decades especially, criticism has flourished regarding not only Troilus's end in *TC* but also Criseyde's, with various theories offered to explain why Troilus transcends while Criseyde is condemned. Jennifer Goodman, for example, argues that Chaucer employs an

³. All in-text citations of *Troilus and Criseyde* are taken from Stephen A. Barney's edition. I generally employ the abbreviations *TC* and *Fil* for *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Il Filostrato* throughout. All quotations of *Il Filostrato* in modern English, unless specifically noted, are from N. R. Haveley's edition, with parenthetical citations denoting page numbers.

Aristotelian natural philosophy in *TC* which assumes that “nature was destiny. Our natures draw us to natural destinations. These ‘natural places’ are our destinies” (419). While she adds that within this predetermined schema, “our choices are our own” (419), she argues that Troilus and Criseyde ultimately separate because “they have natural places to which they are drawn” (419). For Goodman, these (philosophically) natural destinies seem manifested primarily through the chief traits of the characters—thus, for her, Troilus’s “immobility” throughout the story is due to the location of his “natural place,” Troy, for “he is fated to remain a loyal Trojan knight until he dies in his city’s defence. When seen as loyalty,...his immobility is admirable...[;] only after his death is he capable of motion” (Goodman 420). In contrast, Goodman argues that “when Chaucer calls Criseyde ‘tendre herted, slydyng of corage,’ he describes her natural motion, her dynamics...When Criseyde looks in turn to her uncle Pandarus, to Troilus, and in the end to Diomedes as protectors, she is only continuing along her initial trajectory” (419-420). Thus, in this analyses, while it is Troilus’s “natural place” or destiny to be immobile and loyal until death, it is Criseyde’s destiny that her “Wish to stay in one position is doomed to be frustrated” (421). In conclusion, Goodman explains that “seeing God as the natural place and ultimate destiny of creatures made in his image is all the reader needs to make sense of the conclusion of Chaucer’s poem” (423).

However, such a reading, while intriguing in light of other narrative comments in *TC* about freewill and predestination, seems to rely on a supposition that the author “sides” (as subsequently we, too, must) with Troilus over Criseyde. Furthermore, it takes as expected that Criseyde will betray Troilus, for it assumes that her actions are simply “natural” without exploring how social realities might in fact conspire to produce such seemingly philosophical “destinies.” Without such differentiation between the natural (as Goodman uses the term) and the

social, the “natural movement” of such an analysis itself shifts back toward the implications of some earlier criticism that Criseyde deserves blame for flaws in her character or even for her failure to *know* her own character due to her eventual acceptance of Diomedes over Troilus. B. A. Windeatt, for instance, seems to suspect Criseyde’s intentions when he argues that “the tendency...to cast her as...a beautiful lady in need of gallant protection, invites a view of her not always easy to square with the perceptive, shrewdly knowing, and self-assured woman that Criseyde always shows herself to be in other parts of the text” (284). He concludes that “she shows a limited self-knowledge” when she vows to return to Troy (285), thus criticizing Criseyde for what he apparently views as a weakness, rather than pointing out her naivety about the restrictive realities of the world around her.

Even more sympathetic analyses which begin to recognize Criseyde’s diminishing agency, such as Beryl Rowland’s, critique character and not circumstances. In *Blind Beasts*, Rowland importantly points out that Criseyde “is imaged as the victim of the predator, viewed by Pandarus as a deer to be driven into the hunting station of the bowman (II.1534) and by Diomedes as a fish to be hooked (V.777)” (108). She also notes Chaucer’s interest in issues of control, citing both his use of the horse-and-rider motif with Troilus and the changes Criseyde undergoes.⁴ As she explains, “once Criseyde congratulated herself that she stood ‘unteyd in lusty leese,’” but by the end of the poem, “Diomedes’s hand is on her bridle” (136). These important points, however, become somewhat lost in her overarching argument that Chaucer uses animal

⁴. Rowland argues that “the horse and rider figure illustrates that principle underlying the poem—the instability of the human condition” (135). More specifically, she explains that “As [Troilus] stands at the gates of Troy he thinks of Phaethon, the rider who lost control of his horse in the heavens...and he fears that the celestial disaster will recur” (136).

imagery “to illustrate some unattractive aspect of humanity” (21), and along these lines, she seems to critique Criseyde when she writes, “she is self-deceived. She regards her father as the wolf, but thinks she can outwit him in dissimulation. Yet she has shown herself lamb-like from the beginning, passive, fearful of injury” (108). Rowland, much like Windeatt, seems to fault Criseyde for underestimating her own *weakness* rather than pointing out that her real self-deception results from her blindness to the pre-determined limits on her own agency. Thus, while Rowland points out “the large number of trapping, snaring and hunting images” (54), she also includes criticism of a “lack” in her character. Based on such analyses, it would seem that we have but little choice to accept from the very beginning Troilus’s moral superiority over Criseyde’s, a potentially artificial dichotomy and choice which may not be as present in the text itself.

Even more tantalizing is an analysis which combines Goodman’s theory of “natural destiny” and “movement” with three additional considerations: theories of characterization; theories of repeated social behavior (Bourdieu’s *habitus*) within ideological networks; and historical theories about the restrictions on medieval women’s literal movements (as dictated by their social position). A paragon of the first of these categories, Elizabeth Fowler’s important book *Literary Character* explores how “real” social persons (such as “the knight,” “the nun,” or “the wife”) accumulate into the body of any one character in a text, and how the audience’s perceptions of that character (and his or her social position) can change as different “social persons” are emphasized. For the third of these categories, I will rely especially on an application of historian Barbara Hanawalt’s theories of women’s movement and transgressivity, which applies particularly here in light of Criseyde’s eventual literal movement at the end of *TC* and the

subsequent, oft-repeated condemnation in literary history of the choices she makes after this *unchosen* movement.

Such additional considerations support Goodman's theory of "natural destiny" by attempting to explore *why* her "fate" is what it is. A combined application of these theories reveals that while Criseyde sees herself as "untied in a pleasant pasture," the narrative shows that the ideology of the master narrative ties, or circumscribes, her into a particular space and role in Troy that she must ultimately swap for another in the Greek camp. Subsequently, she is forced to shift her social context but expected to maintain her social roles within the over-arching masculinized narrative. This need for re-stabilization is evidenced particularly by her acceptance of Diomedes—a change of *habitus* which she is stigmatized for but the necessity of which (that she must seek protection from a new male power-figure) she does not choose. In essence, what is acceptable behavior for her in her private home spaces (i.e., the *habitus* of a wealthy widow) becomes an mismatched *habitus*/social-space combination once she is forced to go to the camp of the Greeks by the Trojan parliament in exchange for Antenor: in Troy, she can maintain a social status both as a respected "widow" and a "lover" because the social space of the former grants her a degree of privacy and protection, while in the Greek camp she cannot because she must sacrifice privacy *for* protection. Criseyde's characterization and the depiction of the social network she must navigate thus reveal the circumscriptive effects of the human world, which Chaucer also parallels with images of enclosed animal spaces and natural imagery, as I shall explore in the next chapter.

In exploring these complex issues, it is particularly the differences between Boccaccio's vision of Criseida in *Il Filostrato* and Chaucer's vision of Criseyde in *Troilus and Criseyde* that manifest the concentric, gendered nature of the social realms which make up the world of the

narrative. Literary theorist Catherine Belsey argues that in a deconstructive analysis of any text, what is important is “the process of its production...[;] the aim is to locate the point of contradiction within the text, the point at which it transgresses the limits within which it is constructed, breaks free of the constraints imposed by its own realist form” (54). While Belsey here speaks of the contradiction within a single text, *TC* read in conjunction with the *Filostrato* has equally fruitful possibilities for difference and contradiction. Taken together, the two texts can be analyzed as distinct “generations” of the same “literary family,” so to speak, insofar as both are versions of an ongoing and oft-recycled tale. They offer a tantalizing opportunity to search for the “point of contradiction” and the “breaking free of imposed constraints” within the genre itself, as manifested by one individual author writing consciously against his source material.

To speak of “genre” in the context of *TC*, however, is of course a difficult task, as it occupies in fact a range of medieval genres: romance, tragedy, and history. Christine Chism refers to *TC* as “a poem that tests the conventions of romance amidst the exigencies of tragic history” (64). But just as searching for the point of contradiction within “the text” is possible by looking at the *Filostrato* and *TC* as in many ways one “evolving” text, approaching all three of these genres together is also fascinating. This is particularly so in light of Criseyde’s character, for whom romance is ultimately tragic because of both literary and historical social realities binding the medieval woman to a restricted range of possibilities.

The significance of *TC*’s multi-genrenality has been noted by others. Norm Klassen, for example, writes of the narrative “doublings” that occur throughout *TC* and that offer complexity of meaning. He begins by looking at the opening phrase, “the double sorwe of Troilus,” but looks also at the “double” goals of *TC* as both romance and tragedy, arguing that “Chaucer both

works with such a division and at the same time insists upon their mutual interdependence” (157). The invention is not Chaucer’s, Klassen argues, because the intermingling of romance and tragedy is also present in Chaucer’s Ovidian precedents (166). Moreover, Chaucer’s employment of both, he argues, is a deliberate strategy used to show the complex possibilities that exist within “a compressed space,” a technique that Klassen also notes in the works of Julian of Norwich and Langland (172-173). The strategy, he adds, is shown in part by the progression of the love affair itself, which he observes as playing out in spaces which are “little,” such as Pandarus’s “litel closet” or the crowded Palladium scene (171).⁵

⁵. Klassen adds that this theme is further reinforced in phrases such as “litel myn tragedye” throughout the text (171). The effect, according to Klassen, is to “balanc[e] emotional involvement with detachment” (169). As one point of evidence of this, Klassen points to the line in the consummation scene in which Pandarus, still in the room, “makes a face ‘As for to looke upon an olde romaunce’” (170; III.980). He argues that

the narrator does not say whether he has a book in hand, but in the context romance is supposed to mean something other than love, in effect a focus for Pandarus other than the love affair being conducted right before his eyes. Like the term ‘tragedie’, the term ‘romaunce’ can be used to signify distance and objectivity. (170)

However, in this particular example, this reading would seem to hinge on the reader’s positioning as in line with Troilus and Criseyde’s potential positioning; it assumes that the line is meant to show us Pandarus’s attempt to appear objective as the affair is conducted before his eyes, whereas it might also function to reveal how strangely vicarious his pleasure is in his niece’s love affair. In other words, this point of evidence might signal very deep emotional involvement just as much as it might signal an attempt at detachment.

The term “romance” alone has a number of other complex significations as well. Chism argues that the ways a text violates “generic anticipations” makes it especially compelling to readers and especially full of possibilities. One of these ways for Chism is that it leads us to “grapple with the acculturations of class, gender, sexuality, and raceRomance’s focus on identity and performance thus becomes a way of purveying to wider audiences not just the ideals and issues embraced by the aristocracy, but the capacity to investigate self-determination itself, and thus to imagine wider, better polities” (60-61). Echoing Belsey’s call to find the “point of contradiction within the text” (54), Chism thus argues that a crucial part of analyzing romance is locating “tension—between the smoothness of the formulaic style and the problematic figures of juxtapositions it is able to intimate,” for “it is at these moments of tension that we can trace the ways romances interrogate the social worlds they depict and implicate their readers” (Chism 63).

In a comparison of *Il Filostrato* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, then, it is precisely Chaucer’s changes to the depictions of class and gender in characterization that act as fruitful “moments of tension” for the critic, as they simultaneously reinforce and question (by making more visible their implications) the politics and conventions of the genre itself (as history, tragedy, but primarily “romance”). As one of their primary effects, the differences create and put on display a chasm between Criseyde’s articulation of freedom and the reality of her social and generic circumscription. Characterization, however, does not occur strictly in a vacuum, even in the sometimes fantastical romance genre. On the one hand, Auerbach argues that “where it [romance] depicts reality, it depicts merely the colorful surface,” acknowledging that “it does contain a class ethics which as such claimed and indeed attained acceptance and validity in this real and earthly world” (136). On the other hand, Criseyde and other characters do in part echo

social realities which give them greater significance to their audiences, and in this regard, Elizabeth Fowler's theory of characters as multiple social persons is particularly useful.

To recall my overview of Fowler in the preceding introduction, "social persons are, by definition, simple and thin; positioned among a number of them, a character takes on complexity and weight" (Fowler 9). But while the character composed of multiple social persons is fictional, each category of social person itself is rooted to an extent in reality, a "paradigmatic representation of personhood that has evolved historically among the institutions of social life" (2). Fowler cites as an example the description of the Knight in *The Canterbury Tales*: as a man on horseback, he is a "crusader" and a "romance knight" (6); as a knight as its own category, he is a man of "chivalric ideal" and a "victor" (6) but also a "feudal retainer" and even a "mercenary soldier" (7); he is also both a "pilgrim" and a "crusader" (9). Any one category is somewhat flat, static, but the combination allows for a deeper characterization that also creates the potential for contradiction and tension in combination with other aspects of the text. Likewise, Criseyde, we shall see, embodies many social persons simultaneously, persons that are quite often in tension. She is a widow; a wealthy woman; an abandoned daughter; a daughter of a traitor, a position which, according to Josephine Koster, requires that she "must seem humble and not fail to appear at community gatherings such as the temple service, lest she be thought even more unreliable" (81);⁶ and, of course, a lover.

⁶. Koster adds later in her article that "even when visiting a relative, a woman must take extra care for her reputation: observance of the rules of social etiquette is particularly important to a woman whose father violated them by his treachery" (87).

These categories of social persons can also be seen as cogs in the machinery that is the masculine master-narrative on an ideological level. In this regard, Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* is particularly enlightening. As Bourdieu defines it,

The habitus, the durably installed generative principle of regulated improvisations, produces practices which tend to reproduce the regularities immanent in the objective conditions of the production of the generative principle, while adjusting to the demands inscribed as objective potentialities in the situation, as defined by the cognitive and motivating structures making up the habitus. (78)

As later explained more simplistically by Webb et al., it is “the way in which individuals ‘become themselves’—develop attitudes and dispositions—and...the ways in which those individuals engage in practice” (xii). By attempting to comply with certain social ideals and categories, subjects also comply with and thereby continually reproduce—and make manifest—those categories. Thus, while in Bourdieuan theory the “state apparatus” is not as prominent in an almost conspiratorial sense as in the theories of, say, Althusser, focusing as he does in particular on repeated behaviors of individuals, it would seem that *habitus* can nevertheless be seen as the manifested evidence of (one of the) acts of interpellation which ideology enacts on its subjects. Indeed, Bourdieu writes that “every established order tends to produce...the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (164), and habitus is a powerful tool in this method of production.

In Fowler's theory of characterization, *habitus* thus becomes “the glue that helps fit the body to the social person” (11), for “the habitus is the human being socialized—the shapeless, fleshy mass that has been licked into the bear cub by its mother” (12). Fowler further explains that “the habitus is formed in part by the institutional context of our lives,” by which she perhaps

means “institutional” on an ideological level; in the case of *TC*, this might mean, for instance, the relation of one’s social position to, say, the nobility (symbolized in this text especially by Hector) and other machines of power, like the Trojan parliament. Fowler goes on to explain that habitus is also formed “in part by a psychological and aesthetic process of deliberate bodily postures and movements” (12); thus, “actions bind a character to a topos through the habitus appropriate to the social person” (13). But if this is the case, what happens when one’s actions are ineffective—or, rather, when one’s actions are determined by an outside entity? We do indeed see Criseyde regulating her own postures, both figuratively and literally (an example of the latter being her behavior and literal movements at the Palladian festival, which I will explore below), in an effort to bind *herself* to the social person she wishes to continue to be. But ultimately, such efforts are ineffective, for they can do nothing to stave off the events which lead to her forced expulsion from Troilus and Troy. In such cases of forced action, what are the implications of the action on that person’s “social persons”—does it change despite their efforts to maintain it? And does the complex of meaning that arises from that combination of social persons, for the readers, ultimately change their perception of that character, particularly if the location of the enactment of these social persons and *habitus* changes?

This theory of *habitus* and social persons, in which characters follow the actions (“go through the motions,” so to speak) which are both appropriate to and evidence of their social person(s), is not so different from theories of subjectivity and interpellation such as Lacan’s and Althusser’s. Belsey explains of these that “if it is to participate in the society into which it is born, to be able to act deliberately within the social formation, the child must enter into the symbolic order” (48). However, the entry into this “symbolic order”—what we might call here

Criseyde's social network and how it fits into the overarching systems of power in Troy—is not actively, nor consciously, done. Instead,

ideology suppresses the role of language in the construction of the subject. As a result, people “recognize” (misrecognize) themselves in the ways in which ideology “interpellates” them, or in other words, addresses them as subjects, calls them by their names, and in turns ‘recognizes’ their autonomy. As a result, they “work by themselves” ..., they “willing” adopt the subject-positions necessary to their participation in the social formation. (Belsey 49)

In other words, the subject's (in this case, Criseyde's) subordinate position to the “social formation,” which we perhaps see symbolized by the power figures of Troy, such as Hector (as I will explore below), should not be read as a deliberate scheme to “ensnare” Criseyde, per say; likewise, Criseyde's continued unawareness of the extent to which she is entrenched in this system too should not be read as a failure on her part to “know herself,” as has been implied by some critics.⁷ To an extent, even Hector has been interpellated into his role under this theory. But the resulting implications on Criseyde's agency and her ability to truly exercise it effectively (versus her perception of doing so) paint a much more circumscribed picture for her than for Hector. Thus, the combination of these theories—of *habitus* or repeated actions as the evidence

⁷. B. A. Windeatt argues that when Criseyde later vows to Troilus that she will leave the camp of the Greeks and return to Troy to see him, “she shows a limited self-knowledge” (285); whereas I would argue that her “limited” knowledge is not concerning the weight of her fear or the lightness of any loyalty, as Windeatt seems to imply, but rather an (arguably impossible) knowledge of the extent to which she has been interpellated and, more so, the extent to which this interpellation restricts her possibilities.

of and simultaneously the participation in the “social formation”—is particularly applicable to Criseyde, for when she first appears in Chaucer’s tale, it is in the very act of performing such behaviors.

It is perhaps the roles of “wealthy widow” and “lover” and their requisite *habitus* of behaviors that we see most at work in the characterization of Criseyde in *TC*, and the latter certainly is one of the most discussed in criticism—particularly as judgments arise as to whether or not she lives up to the ideal of “the (female) lover” or if she betrays the role as well as Troilus. But even before she adopts the *habitus* of a “lover” as part of her character, when we first meet Criseyde in the text, she is a character in crisis. Even as we learn what social persons define her character “as is,” removed from forces external to herself (i.e., “wealthy widow”—a “person” ironically resulting even in itself because of external forces), her overall social network has been destabilized by the treason of her father. Indeed, from these opening passages to other incidents in the text, many of Criseyde’s actions throughout can be seen as the *habitus* of the social person of the “beautiful endangered lady,” a common motif of the romance genre (Chism 57).

In both *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Il Filostrato*, Criseyde is unwittingly left in danger after her father, Calkas, abandons Troy and defects to the Greeks, leaving the city in secrecy. In both versions of the story, Criseyde, fearing that the public’s anger over this treason will extend into anger towards her, brings her case before Prince Hector to beg for clemency. It is an action significant for a number of reasons. The reader gathers that Criseyde’s family is relatively well known and respected before this moment—Calkas was “a lord of gret auctorite” in Chaucer’s version, “a great devyn” (I.65-66), and later evidence (of Criseyde’s physical comforts and home) would indicate that she is fairly well off materially and socially (as would her Uncle Pandarus’s friendship with Prince Troilus). While the story is set in Troy, it is thus easy to

imagine Criseyde as a typical lady of leisure in a medieval romance, belonging to a noble (or at least wealthy) family. Her father's treason, however, shatters all this as the social person of "daughter of traitor" is thrust suddenly into her primary persons of "wealthy widow" and "noble lady." Her social network, in essence, has been destabilized, even as her character (especially for her *fellow* characters, the people of Troy, in the text) has changed in signification.

Given these considerations, Criseyde's appeal to Hector for clemency can be seen as evidence, on the one hand, of her attempts to (re)enter the "symbolic order" after the actions of her father threaten to remove her from being "a full member of the family and of society," to borrow Belsey's ideological terminology (48). It is also evidence, on the other hand, both of how she believes she "works by herself" (Belsey 49) and of how she demonstrates and reinforces the theory that the interpellated individual "'willingly' adopts the subject-positions necessary to their participation in the social formation" (Belsey 49), as we shall see from the way her initial fear and sense of danger continues to resonate in her actions (her *habitus*), social and physical, as the tale progresses.

Where the former is concerned, a heightened anxiety for personal attack is particularly evident in Chaucer's version of the passage when compared to Boccaccio's. While the latter simply writes that "many people were almost inclined to go and set fire to his [Calkas's] house" (25), the rumor-mongers of Troy in Chaucer's version are so irate that they "casten to be wroken / On hym that falsly hadde his feith so broken, / And seyden he and al his kyn at-ones / Ben worthi for to brennen, fel and bones" (I.88-91). The reworked passage thus places greater emphasis on how Calkas's new primary "social-person" identity of a traitor has also tainted how Criseyde is perceived, a grievous danger which only the seemingly ultimate non-traitor, Hector,

can remedy. It is only through his blessing that Criseyde can avoid to “falsly ben apeired / Thorough wikked tonges” (I.38-39).

Interestingly, in Chaucer’s revision, it is in this scene in which Criseyde acts as a supplicant before Hector, the ultimate patriarchal authority in Troy after his father Priam (and therefore a figurehead of the overarching narrative of masculine valorization and heroics behind *TC*) that the basis of Criseyde’s fear seems to be acknowledged more so than in Boccaccio’s original version. Both Hectors begin with a similar promise: Boccaccio’s pledges, “you may remain in Troy, safe, happy and untroubled for as long as you wish” (25), and Chaucer’s that “ye yourself in joie / Dwelleth with us, whil yow good list, in Troie” (I.118-119). Both also vow quite similarly that “al th’onour that men may don yow have, / As ferforth as youre fader dwelled here, / Ye shul have” (I.120-122). Importantly, however, Chaucer’s Hector adds to this promise of honor an additional vow that Boccaccio’s does not: “and youre body shal men save, / As fer as I may ought enquire or here” (I.122-123). By vowing to protect her body specifically, Hector seems to lend credence to the rumor that the public finds her fit, as kin to Calkas, “to brennen, fel and bones.” Chaucer’s revision of the exchange thus heightens the sense of what is at stake in Hector’s promise—and later, when the promise is broken, heightens the sense of betrayal, as I shall explore.

In addition to the peculiarities of this added promise and its implications, the scene can also be interpreted as one instance in which Criseyde believes she “works by herself,” to return to Belsey’s theory that the interpellated individual “‘willingly’ adopts the subject-positions necessary to their participation in the social formation” (Belsey 49). Believing in her own power to take some kind of action to save herself, Criseyde submits to the highest authority she can imagine. In so doing, she adopts the subject position of the supplicant, ironically confirming that

she is part of the system in which masculine action determines female fate. To consider it even more grimly, Louise O. Fradenburg sees the scene as evidence of Criseyde's "wish...for life, or to put it another way, for a life free of the threat of violence, but since the figure who grants this wish does so through his possession of a superior power of violence...the appeal is for a life figured as free of the threat of death, but only by gift of the other, and therefore as not free at all" (604). In other words, by submitting herself to Hector, Criseyde on a larger scale submits herself to the very cycle that threatens her to begin with. As Fradenburg explains, "the power of death gives meaning to, makes possible, the life of the feminine chivalric subject; and her appeal inscribes her as desiring the intervention of the male subject, as consenting to the loss of the meaning of her history, even as his desire defines her" (604-5). Criseyde's personhood becomes protected by Hector, but symbolically, it is threatened by the very fact that it can only continue through his chosen benevolence.

It is this cycle which demands female submission to the masculine meta-narratives of violence which Fradenburg sees as inherent in *TC*, and, thus, while she surmises that perhaps "the undecidability of Chaucer's text [is] designed not just to occlude violence but to make us 'see' its occlusion" (601), she ultimately hesitates to laud Chaucer for any proto-feminist tendencies. As she explains it, later in the story, "Criseyde's lines about women's woe hint at that narrative paradigm wherein the coincidence of rescuer and tormentor in the same person turns the feminine subject's affect—her 'wo'—into body: she is language-less, somatized, and figured as the source of her own unpleasure" (606). In essence, she argues that because Chaucer himself seems to tread the line between "rescuer and tormentor" (and that Criseyde is still described as in "need of rescue" overall), his work should be taken with a grain of salt.

There is a possibility, however, that this is precisely what Chaucer is attempting to put on display and thereby critique. Fradenburg submits as part of her overall argument that the scene of supplication is “one of the two moments in *Troilus and Criseyde* that *does not seem in any way to ironize the genre* of chivalric romance—the other being Hector’s intervention, also a refusal of ignoble exchange” (604, emphasis added), thereby seeming to imply that it is a scene that Chaucer himself does not critique in his sources. However, a hint of irony of the very sort that Fradenburg condemns the scene for lacking can be read in the line cited above—the added vow. With this vow unique to *TC*, in which Hector swears that men will “save her body,” Chaucer perhaps attempts to critique the process of submission and subjection, for it is a vow later broken when her body itself is cast out of Troy. Thus, while I would agree with Fradenburg wholeheartedly that this is “the scene of [Criseyde’s] entry into the ideality of chivalric culture” (604), and, indeed, with almost all her deft readings of the subtexts of violence throughout *TC*, there is perhaps more possibility that this scene also marks the author’s resistance to the misogyny of his source materials (a concept which I shall explore more thoroughly in the final chapter) when he reveals the vows of the principal masculine authority to be hallow.

For the time being, however, Hector’s promise seems to an extent to restabilize Criseyde’s damaged social network. After Hector’s promise of protection, she returns home, and as time passes, “in hire hous she abood with swich meyne / As til hire honour neded was to holde; / And whil she was dwellynge in that cite, / Kepte hir estate, and both of yonge and olde / Ful wel beloved, and wel men of hire told” (I.126-131). She has come a far cry, it seems, from the threat which both she and Hector perceived, that she might be burned out of wrath against her father, and she seems again to be beloved and spoken well of. The danger, however, continues to be fresh in her mind. So, too, continue her attempts to take matters into her own hands in

maintaining her social position—even while she still does not realize that such “working by herself” only confirms her into the ideological system and meta-narrative that is the very source of her greatest danger.

We next see Criseyde at the Palladian festival. It appears to be one of the main religious and social events of the city, drawing crowds of illustrious men and women: “to the temple, in al hir beste wise, / In general ther wente many a wight / ...And namely, so many a lusty knight, / So many a lady fresh and mayden bright, / Ful wel arrayed, both meeste, mene, and leste” (I.162-167). It is a scene, therefore, which puts on display the social bonds that make the city tick; they attend “in general,” in groups or “as one body” (“general, *in ~*,” Davis) confirming both the social bonds between them (much like a group of friends gathering for a picnic today confirm their friendship in the act) and between their group and the city (much like, say, that same modern group of picnicking friends would by doing so at, for example, the National Mall on the Fourth of July). Criseyde, too, attends, “in widewes habit blak; but natheles, / Right as oure firste letter is now an A, / In beaute first so stood she, makeles” (I.170-172). It is of course this scene which in many ways makes the rest of the story possible, for it is here that Troilus is “shot” by the God of Love and then in turn falls in love with Criseyde upon first sight of her (or, at least, first sight of her in this scene—whether or not he has ever seen her before is not addressed, though it seems a likely possibility, given that Troilus seems to be already on friendly terms with her uncle Pandarus and that her family seems to be relatively prominent).

The scene’s importance, however, is not confined merely to it as the place of their meeting (the nuances of which I will explore more specifically in my next chapter). Koster argues that the scene also serves as proof of Criseyde’s sociality: “While much criticism of the poem focuses on Criseyde’s isolation and fear, from the beginning Chaucer shows her interacting

with other people in social spaces appropriate to her *estate*” (Koster 80). This is part of Koster’s overall argument that Criseyde’s “environment, her physical surroundings, her behavioral patterns, and her social interactions” can help explain her behavior (which she argues makes it “more understandable—if perhaps, still as unforgiveable,” 79). The significance, Koster argues, is that these considerations make readings of *TC* which treat Criseyde as “isolated and governed by fear” less credible (80). But while the scene certainly *does* show Criseyde attempting to maintain her *estat* publically, social participation should not necessarily be mistaken as fearlessness, and the description of Criseyde’s actions in this scene—again, slightly (but importantly) different than the description in *Il Fil*—offer several possible readings for the motivations behind them—fear being a compelling one.

Before we see Troilus seeing Criseyde, we see her ourselves; the narrator (in both *TC* and *Il Fil*) describes her as she stands alone, watching the festival. But while Boccaccio writes that Criseida “lent more radiance to the great festival than did any other lady, as she stood very close to the doorway with a dignified, cheerful and modest bearing” (26), Chaucer’s Criseyde seems to be equally beautiful but less cheerful. While “hire goodly lokyng gladed al the prees” (I.173), at the same time she chooses to stand “full lowe and stille alone, / Byhynden other folk, in litel brede, / And neigh the dore, ay under shames drede,” though with “ful assured lokyng and manere” (178-182). Thus, while Criseida and Criseyde share a very similar moment soon after this in which “she had drawn her mantle away from her face, thus making more room for herself and keeping the crowd at some distance...disdainfully, as if to say: ‘They shall not stand here’” (27), in Boccaccio’s version, this act seems to be primarily due to her personality. In contrast, in Chaucer’s version (which becomes, “‘What, may I nat stonden here?’” I.292), the added reminder that she has a reason to fear how others perceive her makes this appear as also an effort

to reestablish her social network, perhaps revealing her belief in the power of her own actions to affect her fate. It is also, interestingly, a very physical act, of the kind which Fowler might call a “deliberate bodily posture” (12) and which helps “bind a character to a topos” (13). In this instance, the possible topoi are several, but none has particularly positive implications for her agency, for most significantly, she acts (in terms of habit, not pretense) in ways that show how much the part of the “endangered lady” characterologically delineates her; she (unwittingly) “‘willingly’ adopts the subject-positions necessary to [her] participation in the social formation”—a subject-position which has already conceded much of its agency as it necessitates a constant search for protection (Belsey 49)⁸.

In contrast, however, Koster reads this scene (and the physical movement in particular) as “a show of humility and voluntary segregation,” arguing that “her humble ways are clearly a pose, since even the besotted Troilus notes that her ‘chere’ ‘somedel deignous was’” (81). Indeed, her presence at the festival may well be a pose; as Koster later argues, “Criseyde knows she must, for the sake of her reputation, be seen by others...to prevent the kind of gossip and speculation that could damage her social standing” (81). However, whether or not this pose is a reflection of true humility or not is more ambiguous. Koster seems to read Criseyde’s expression of disdain as proof that her appearing to be “under shames dread” is also (in addition to her presence itself) only for show.⁹ However, the two feelings are not necessarily mutually exclusive

⁸. Similarly, Sashi Nair argues in ““O brotel wele of mannes joie unstable!”” that “if [Criseyde] is never as committed to romance as Troilus, it is because her desire is always tempered by fear for her physical safety or reputation” (45).

⁹. Koster adds,

in terms of earnestness, for disdain can equally be used as a mask to hide fear from others; or, on the other hand, such disdain could equally be driven by anger at her situation as a whole—particularly, that her father’s treason has put her into a position in which she must strive to seek protection. It is indeed quite difficult to determine resolutely whether her actions can be seen as simply a show, driven entirely by fear, or a mix of both (the most convincing interpretation in my opinion). But what can be confirmed is that this is yet another instance of the liberties Chaucer takes with Boccaccio’s text as he revises it.

Thus, in some ways, Koster is right—the subject of Criseyde’s fear itself has certainly not been overlooked. Some have called it her primary characteristic, while others, such as Sheila Delany, have contended that it is an entirely manipulative façade which we are to feel repelled by.¹⁰ The *causes* for such fear, however, have been less addressed, which is why it is so important to continue to study in-depth the implications of those very situations Koster raises

‘Somdel deignous’ tells us and Chaucer’s contemporary audience a great deal about Criseyde’s *habitus*: as a politically suspect person she must seem humble and not fail to appear at community gatherings such as the temple service, lest she be thought even more unreliable; as the daughter of a traitor, she cannot flaunt her status as a woman ‘well at ese’ lest she be thought to have profited from her father’s treason. But at the same time, she projects an air of aristocratic hauteur that warns off those who might challenge her right to appear in public. She is every inch a lady, negotiating the very difficult balance that protects her social position and her public persona...She must manage her large household and control its behavior, while maintaining her place in the social circles to which her rank entitles her. (81)

¹⁰. See “Techniques of Alienation in *Troilus and Criseyde*,” especially 494-495.

here: that Criseyde is a “daughter of a traitor”; that she must “maintain her place in the social circles to which her rank entitles her” (81), for the effects of *not* doing so would imply more than just a fall from a high social standing to a middling one, for instance; and that the threat of being “brennen, fel and bones,” by which we are first introduced to Criseyde (and again, it is a very specific physical threat absent in the *Fil*) has staying power. Thus, it is quite true that “her political savvy in seeking and receiving the public protection of Ector [sic] reinforces the impression that Criseyde is awake on all counts, very much aware of the traps that surround her” (Koster 81);¹¹ but the need to use such savvy in the first place is equally important to consider, and so, too, is that while Criseyde indeed seems “aware of the traps,” she appears to be *unaware* that her attempts to control her fate and avoid them have few chances to be anything but futile.

Thus, we see Criseyde in the book as embodying the “social persons” of not merely a “wealthy widow” but also “daughter of a traitor” before we see her as a “lover” (though this of course has already been previewed by the opening lines of the tale). As these “social persons”—particularly, as the *combination* of these two specific “persons”—she retains her faith in her ability to control her own fate, taking actions which she believes will help her to protect herself and to retain her status. When her transition to “a lover” occurs later in the story (or, perhaps,

¹¹. Nair takes this argument a step further, arguing that Criseyde has learned both that other humans will fail her and that Fortune’s wheel will inevitable deal a blow to everyone. The result of this lesson, Nair argues, is that Criseyde puts the upmost importance in protecting herself, so that by the end, while “it may be noble to die for love,...Criseyde’s faith in human emotions has been compromised by many men (including Troilus) so such a decision, and the abandonment of self that it requires, is never a possibility within the terms of her characterization” (49).

when she adds the “social person” of “lover” to her particular characterological combination, as of course the first two aspects are still present), Criseyde continues to emphasize her faith in her own agency, which she believes to be a primary characteristic growing out of her social status itself. Her statements about her own independence in Book II in particular showcase her self-perception—but also how far it is from the reality of her circumscribed situation.

When Criseyde first learns of Troilus’s love for her through Pandarus, her own uncle and Troilus’s friend, part of her initial reaction to Pandarus involves her repetition of an acknowledgement of danger much like that which she articulates by begging Hector for clemency in the above scenes. Hearing Pandarus’s explanation—which involves a threat that if she does not return Troilus’s love, he will kill himself in anguish and Pandarus will be forced to follow suit in guilt—Criseyde is not pleased. More specifically, she weeps: “she began to breste a-wepe anon, And seyde, ‘Allas, for wo! Why nere I deed?’” (II.407-408). After some more explanation from Pandarus, she turns to him and “with a sorrowful sik she sayde thrie, / ‘A, Lord! What me is tid a sory chaunce! / For myn estat lith in a jupartie, / And ek myn emes lif is in balaunce’” (I.463-466). She acknowledges the threat which perhaps Pandarus had most hoped would be effective—that he might die if she does not “help”—but not without first reacting to the threat to her own person or, more literally, to her own “social person.”¹²

¹². When she later thinks of these matters by herself, she further explains the perceived threat as such: “‘wel woot I my kynges sone is he, / And sith he hath to se me swich delit, / If I wolde outreliche his sighte flee, / Peraunter he myghte have me in dispit, / Thorough whicch I myghte stoned in worse plit. / Now were I wis, me hate to purchase, / Withouten need, ther I may stoned in grace?’” (II.708-714).

Widowhood of course required a certain *habitus*, so to speak—a certain set of actions which confirm to others subconsciously that one is a “good widow,” complying with social ideals of chastity, among others. Any public knowledge of an affair would of course counteract this perception of her, and Troilus, it must be surmised, is of course a “public” person as a prince and martial hero of Troy. Interestingly, however, what gives her comfort comes from within—her confidence that her actions can rectify the situation, for she goes on to declare (still in the presence of Pandarus) that “natheles, with Goddes governaunce, / I shal so doon, myn honours shal I kepe, / And ek his life’—and stynte for to wepe” (II.463-469). It is her faith in her own ability to navigate treacherous waters that allows her to cease weeping. Her awareness of the ways her social rank is again in jeopardy is matched therefore by her confidence in the efficacy of her own remedial actions; but, as we shall see, their efficacy can only be temporary and situational, applying possibly to certain sub-narratives of the story such as this one but not at all to the master narrative which drives *TC* as a whole.

It is shortly after this scene that Criseyde, at last alone, sits down and “every word gan up and down to wynde” (II.301)—a process during which we are offered a compelling soliloquy in which she reflects rather bluntly on her very social person and *estat*, and what agreeing to loving Troilus might mean to them. As evidenced by the changes to conversations and narrative description seen up to this point, one of the most repeated techniques employed by Chaucer in his revision of *Il Filostrato* is the alteration of both the interior and exterior dialogue of the characters, particularly as they weigh the decisions that appear to be available to them. The scene at hand here comes primarily from Boccaccio’s stanzas 69 and 73 in Part II of the *Fil*, becoming lines 750-763 in Book II of *TC*. Boccaccio’s Criseida and Chaucer’s Criseyde share many similarities in these lines, but the changes that Chaucer fashions have profound significance.

Chaucer's changes in these lines create room for empathy for Criseyde—chiefly because she still cannot perceive that she is in effect agentless, a “predestined” victim whose interests are secondary to those of the masculine master narrative (both of the narrative of the tale itself and of the traditional trajectories of the masculine romantic and epic genres which mold Chaucer's sources and his own authoring, which I will explore further in my third chapter). Indeed, more specifically, the lines which follow in this scene prove that Criseyde does indeed “misrecognize” herself ideologically, or, rather, that she misrecognizes her position as a woman circumscribed by an ideology which makes her dependent on the clemency of men, for she continues to believe that she can take control.

In *Il Fil*, Criseida begins with an “objective” description of herself as “young, good-looking, attractive and happy,” and also emphasizes her wealth and popularity (38). These descriptions, particularly in comparison to Chaucer's transformation of them, seem to serve two purposes. On the one hand, they reinforce Boccaccio's development of her vanity, which he begins early in *Il Fil* with his initial portrait of her as “so angelically beautiful to behold that she did not seem to be a mortal being” (25), a description also employed by Chaucer. This in fact continues throughout *Il Fil*, as when Criseida thinks to herself as she grieves over her separation from Troilo, “and now my precious beauty is being consumed by grief and pain” (82). This development of Criseida's vanity ultimately supports Boccaccio's final argument about the dangers of loving young women, for he phrases his moralizing at the end of *Il Fil* in terms of women's vanity: “A young woman is both inconstant and eager for many lovers, and prizes her beauty more than her mirror warrants. She is full of vanity about her youthfulness, and the more attractive and desirable it is the more she prides herself upon it” (101). On the other hand, this emphasis upon Criseida's vanity by Boccaccio also serves to highlight her acknowledgment of

her place in the broader community—particularly her comment that she is “well-beloved” and that she is “at peace with the world” (38). Such “objective” descriptions necessarily imply an audience as they move beyond a simple “mirroring” of herself—she is these things in relation to *others*, as they also see her. She lives therefore “quietly” but not entirely in seclusion, aware of her belovedness and therefore of her interaction with a broader community.

Chaucer, however, strips almost all these self-descriptions away in his reworking of the episode. If Boccaccio’s Criseida acknowledges a quiet place for herself within the community, Chaucer’s Criseyde takes almost the opposite approach. While she recognizes the importance of restabilizing her social network, as described above (so that she is not seen primarily as “daughter of a traitor”), she continues to believe at this point that her own agency is the main force controlling her life. It is interesting to note that the character’s circumscription may in fact be a reflect of her author’s own feelings of circumscription, so to speak (as shall become the subject of my third chapter). Morton Bloomfield, in “Distance and Predestination,” writes that Chaucer “is throughout most of the poem a victim of...historical determinism” (469), and by the end of *Troilus and Criseyde* (TC), it seems that Criseyde herself is “predestined,” her interests secondary to those of the masculine master narrative. Here, however, as her love affair is about to start, she perceives herself as individualistically positioned apart from the greater community, proclaiming, “I am myn owene woman, wel at ese— / I thank it God—as after myn estat, / Right young, and stonde unteyd in lusty leese, / Withouten jalousie or swich debat” (II.750-3). While “estat” connotes “social position” (“estat”), including as we have seen the position of a “widow” and a “wealthy noblewoman,” for Criseyde, *because* she is a wealthy widow, her home seems in part a physical manifestation of her more figurative *estat*, possession of which might enhance her feeling of “ese.” “Myn estat” thus seems to be a status of refuge imbued with a

sense of private space—something she “owenes” along with her sense of self—and which she imagines allows her to stand “unteyd in lusty leese.” She thus bases her subjectivity on her “estat,” which is both figuratively her “condition” and literally the private space which grants it; as Josephine Koster explains, “She resides in a *paleis*, a luxurious dwelling, with a *meyne*, an entourage, which helps to maintain her *honour*—her reputation—and her *estat*—her social status” (80).

After establishing herself as thus “unteyd,” Criseyde further reveals her belief in her own independence, exclaiming, “‘Shal noon housbonde seyn to me “Check mat!” / For either they ben ful of jalousie, / Or maisterfull, or loven novelrie” (754-6). This disinterest in marriage is not an invention of Chaucer’s, though he adds the colorful analogy to chess. Criseida expresses similar thoughts when she says “‘now is no time for a husband— / and even if it were, to keep one’s freedom / is much the wiser course” (II.73). On the surface, both express the same sentiment. Chaucer, however, takes Criseida’s vague and rather spontaneous statement about freedom and situates it in Criseyde’s deep-rooted belief in her own agency as an independent woman. While for Criseida “liberty” comes up only as she considers how it might be encroached upon by a husband, for Criseyde, liberty is fundamental to her understanding of herself and frames her entire discussion.

As the parallel passages progress, there is a slight but continual difference between *Il Fil* and *TC*. In *Il Fil*, Criseida adds a resolution to keep the affair a secret, saying, “‘I shall be discreet and keep my desire so hidden that it shall never be known that I have ever had love in my heart” (II.69). Chaucer’s Criseyde, however, again reveals her perception of her own agency as she thinks, “‘And though that I *myn* herte sette at reste / Upon this knyght, that is the worthieste, / And kepe alwey *myn* honour and *myn* name, / By alle right, it may do me no shame”

(760-3, emphasis added). Her consistent use of the possessive personal pronoun demonstrates her certainty that her *herte*, her *honour*, and her *name* are all *hers* to control. To borrow B. A. Windeatt's terminology, Criseyde's consistent use of the possessive personal pronoun demonstrates the "touches of frantic vehemence" (9) that Chaucer has "in-ched" into the story, and in this case reinforces her sense of control over the situation. Throughout these passages Chaucer thus revises a somewhat superficial Criseida who recognizes a larger community into Criseyde, a woman who, when considering her potential love life, feels impelled to establish first the distinction between herself and what is *hers* from any larger communal context. Thus, while she is shown attempting to maintain her *estat* and restabilize her social network, as explored above, she still perceives a sense of separation from it: in her own view, she stands "unteyd." To her, the answers to her own questions—"To what fyn lyve I thus? Shal I nat love, in cas if that me leste?" (757-8)—thus lie in her sense of self-ownership, for if she can keep her honor and name, she can determine her own *fyn*—or so she seems to believe.

This characterization adds a sense of tragic irony to Criseyde's fate in *TC*. Self-assured as she is, as Windeatt explains in the introduction to his edition of *TC*, "the private life of the individual...has to be won from a surrounding society" (10). We have already seen Criseyde "win" her private life once, by asking Hector to save it from the damage wrought by her father's treason and from the damage the angry crowds wish to do against her in retaliation. But while those scenes and those in which she continues to express fear and awareness of danger seem to show her awareness of her need for protection, the passages here reveal that, nevertheless, her greatest faith is in her own actions and her own *estat*. The irony is that the danger never really goes away, for the framework that created it of course persists—the Trojan war itself and the masculine story of valor it is most interested in telling. Hector's vow of (specifically *physical*)

protection and his invitation to “dwelleth with us, whil yow good list” (I.119) are both ultimately revoked, for though Hector initially protests the later exchange of Criseyde for Antenor, “the noyse of the peple” intercedes (IV.183), and parliament overrides him. What chance, then, does Criseyde have at successfully exercising the agency she articulates in Book II if even Hector, the ultimate martial hero of the story, is powerless to argue against the society from which each character must “win” their “private life?”

Criseyde’s circumscription is further manifested by the connotation of her own words. “Lusty,” for example, hints at the masculinity of the world which Criseyde occupies. While “lusty leese” can literally be translated as “pleasant pasture,” “lusty” by itself seems most often to have been used as a modifier for either neutral objects or male characters, in the sense of “vigorous” or “gallant”—thus we have the “lusty knight” or the “lusty bachelor” (“lusty,” Davis).¹³ “Leese” is likewise carefully nuanced. “Pasture” is the common translation, and this phrasing might create an image of a pleasant meadow in which Criseyde seems free to roam as she *lestes* (“leese,” Davis). Chaucer, however, has *not* described it as a “medewe”—it is a *leese*, an enclosed pasture for domesticated animals under the proprietorship of an outside agent. Overall, the effect is that Criseyde’s positive assessment of her *estat* blinds her to the ways that the larger *lusty leese* in fact creates and then subsumes it. What seems an independent act of refuge can become only a retreat further *into* this overarching masculine structure. The chasm between Criseyde’s beliefs and her reality thus contributes significantly to the deepening of the concentric realms of society and agency within *TC*, the most encompassing of which is

¹³. See also “lusti somer floures” by Gower and “lustie freshe singing” by Lydgate. Sixteenth-century examples show more “androgynous” use, but earlier examples seem used primarily in conjunction with males or objects, not women (“lusty,” OED).

necessarily masculine, but the smallest of which is precisely the *estat* by which Criseyde defines herself.¹⁴

Ultimately, it is tragically ironic but not surprising that Criseyde so “misrecognizes” herself, or, rather, the true nature of her relationships and where she stands in her overall social network. The ability to succeed for as long as she does in maintaining her status, through her own actions and even literal movements, is in part due to this misrecognition; as Belsey explains, “Within the existing ideology it appears ‘obvious’ that people are autonomous individuals, possessed of subjectivity or consciousness which is the source of their beliefs and actions” (47). To Criseyde, it is “obvious” that she stands *unteyd in lusty leese* because her social rank, chiefly as a wealthy widow, would appear to make it so—she has property and a household, a room of her own in which to think. She thus embraces this *estat*, and acts continually as though it grants her the power to control her own fate, as we see when she takes it upon herself to beg Hector for mercy or to appear in public venues, despite her fear, in order to assure the other actors of her social network that she continues to participate appropriately. The “misrecognition,” however, is that this *estat* is the one made for her by the very “social formation” which puts her in jeopardy at the beginning (and, arguably, also at the end) of the story.

¹⁴. Similarly, Nair argues that Criseyde on the whole demonstrates a “misinterpretation of Boethian philosophy” (in which overestimates her own abilities and underestimates the role of Fate in said philosophy) which “adds to the impression that she is exercising agency within the bounds of social constraints. That is, these constraints may cloud her capacity to fully understand the machinations of Fortune, but they add to the complexity of her characterization” (49, original emphasis).

As becomes painfully clear by the parliament's trading of her for Antenor, Criseyde as a character does not exist in a vacuum. She is none of her "social persons" by herself—alone, she is not the daughter of a traitor, nor a lover, nor a wealthy widow; all these positions are not only relative to others but also dependent on each other, particularly because, in terms of historical reality, a character (or "real" equivalent woman) like Criseyde's most basic "social person" has already been determined to a large extent by biology. As Fowler notes, "Social persons, as we shall see throughout this book, depend not only upon their contexts of topoi and institutions, but also upon their positions in networks of social relationships" (14). Despite her inability to acknowledge this fully (as explored above), Criseyde is a dependent within a complicated patriarchal web of social relations. While adamant, when articulating her own private ruminations on love, that she stands apart, separated from social judgment and able to control her own *fyn*, closer analysis of the very roles she embraces manifest the ways that she is in fact an über-"social person." She is made to depend upon not only her own male relatives but also Hector and even Troy at large, and she later must depend on Diomedes—and her agency is thereby restricted by this network as she must function within it.

This reality of Criseyde's is not merely fictional despite her own status as such. Indeed, to return again to Fowler, the medieval view of female agency itself (though articulated differently, as Fowler explores through Langland's allegorical depiction of Mede in *Piers Plowman*) was almost similar to that of a legal executor, insofar as a wife, for instance, "is the agent who represents agency, despite the fact that the principal dominates. In such a relation, the feminine can be seen as an expression of 'pure' agency, agency without intentionality" (Fowler 111). In other words, action may belong to the female "agent," but the impetus and decision behind the action is limited to whom she represents—the masculine "social persons" and

institutions (literal and literary) which create her social realities. As result, she believes herself to be “untied” when in fact this is an “untied-ness” already determined—already circumscribed within certain limits of execution; in effect, her *habitus* itself has already been predetermined. Criseyde may insert herself into the Palladian scene in order to save her reputation and *estat*, but when she is traded for Antenor, she may not simply say “no” in order to do the same.

In addition, Criseyde’s repeated articulation of her belief in her “untied-ness” connects to *habitus* in other ways. I have already considered her as “wealthy widow,” “noble lady,” “beautiful endangered lady,” and “lover,” but in her repeated adamancy about her own agency (an agency which we see is unrealized), she is also, on a larger meta-level, enacting the *habitus* of the circumscribed medieval woman. This is particularly evident when her case is considered in light of historical theories on female transgressivity and movement—or, in other terms, on movement as a specific aspect of *habitus* that is transgressive for some social persons and not for others.

By these terms, it would seem that Criseyde’s “movement” throughout the tale is two-fold: her figurative “movement” between social persons (for instance, between “wealthy widow” to “lover”) and the actions (and sometimes literal, physical movements) required of this; and her literal movement at the end of the tale from the city of Troy to the Greek camp. At the beginning of Book IV, we learn that Calkas desires for his daughter now to be sent to him, as he foresees that “the tyme is faste by That fire and flaumbe on al the town shal sprede, / And thus shal Troie torned to ashen dede” (IV.117-119). The Greeks therefore propose that Criseyde be swapped for Antenor, who has earlier been taken prisoner by them. Immediately, the turn of events recalls the earlier promises of Hector—that Criseyde may dwell with them happily in Troy as long as she desires and, furthermore, that men will protect her “body.” He does now

attempt to hold to this, arguing “sobrely” that “‘she nys no prisonere...we usen here no wommen for to selle’” (IV.179-182). Interestingly, however, it is “the people” of Troy who insist. Their primary interests being the success of the war—symbolizing perhaps the primary interest of the narrative itself in a tale of masculine heroics—they quickly protest that there is no reason to refuse the offer: “The noyse of the peple up stirte thane at ones, / As breme as blasé of straw iset on-fire; / ... ‘Ector,’ quod they, ‘what goost may yow enspyre / This womman thus to shilde and don us leese / Daun Antenor...we han need to folk, as men may se. He is ek oon the grettest of this town’” (IV.183-192). Thus it is decided by the people themselves; the very social network that Criseyde has struggled to maintain her *estat* within suddenly rejects her from it, and this time, she cannot save herself from this fate through postures or actions, for it is not because she is suspected as possibly as traitorous as her father, for example, that she is expelled. The reasons are much more simple and complicated at once—her best service to the masculine master-narrative of war is to now be a “prisoner”—ironically by treating her as one themselves. The emphasis is of Chaucer’s making; Hector’s resistance to the trade and the demands of the people, which sparks “breme as blasé of straw iset on-fire,” thereby recalling their original desire to “brennen” all of Calkas’s kin, “fel and bonse” (I.90-91), is entirely absent from Boccaccio’s *Filostrato*.

With this emphasis on the force of the people, it seems that there is little to be done: “It was for nought; it moste ben and sholde, / For substaunce of the parlement it wolde” (IV.216-217). Later, when Criseyde is ready to depart, the narrator adds, “Ful sorwfully she sighte, and seyde ‘Allas!’ / But forth she moot, for aught that may betide; / There is non other remedie in this cas” (V.58-60). One must wonder, however, as to the implications this movement (the movement itself, before any action is taken on her part) will have on how Criseyde is perceived.

She is accompanied to the gates by Troilus and a large retinue of knights. Once Antenor is released by the Greeks, Troilus and the company leave Criseyde with Diomedes, who then “ledde hire by the bridel” to the camp. The symbolism of *how* Criseyde is moved here has been noted by critic Beryl Rowland. As she explains, “once Criseyde congratulated herself that she stood ‘unteyd in lusty leese,’” but by the end of the poem, “Diomedes’s hand is on her bridle” (136). The line throws dramatic light on the ways that Criseyde has in fact been “tied”—or bridled—in “lusty leese” all along. Her movement, however, is much more than just ironic. For if Criseyde’s world, as we have seen, depends on deliberate public appearances to maintain her rank, on the one hand, and secretive actions to be both a lover and a wealthy widow of high *estat*, on the other hand, the trade throws all of these behaviors—these *habitus* which so far she has carefully balanced to maintain her social network and *estat* as she desires—into chaos.

More specifically, to step out of the story itself into the meta-narrative level, Criseyde’s movement would seem to violate the *habitus* which has so far molded her for us as character. This consideration may go far in adding to explanations of why Criseyde is so condemned in general (as, for example, by Boccaccio himself in his version) and by later authors (such as Henryson, who finds it necessary to punish her quite physically). Historian Barbara A. Hanawalt, in “At the Margin of Women’s Space in Medieval Europe,” argues that historically, the primary determiner of whether or not particular women (of a particular social status) were “transgressive” depended less on their occupations, as has been traditionally argued, and more so on whether or not women crossed outside the “bounds of prescribed space” into marginal space (3). Specifically, Hanawalt argues that the restrictions on movement itself, or “actual physical

constraints,” are more important than occupation and characterization (4).¹⁵ Thus, she contrasts the spaces of “honorable women” with those of the marginalized, explaining that their “marginalized” status came from “wander[ing] outside the confines” of the honorable women, and that therefore “one factor in reaching a definition of marginality of women was gender-prescribed space and the fate of women at its boundaries (17).

We have already seen Criseyde at work maintaining her *estat* (or so she believes) within these spaces deemed acceptable for her: at the Palladian, where, as Koster notes, a woman of her rank would have been expected to appear, as well as within her own home. These are the spaces in which her *estat* can thrive, in which she manages to once again become “ful wel biloved” (I.131) after recovering from the damage done by her father’s treason. What, then, occurs when she is forced to leave this space? In this instance, it would seem, the choice which brings her into transgressivity is not made by her—she is forced from her home to a place where she physically

¹⁵. Part of this physical constraint, she explains, is manifest in medieval women’s clothing, for it ensured a continuation of the “privacy of their own space” which “both limited a view of them and their view of the outside world” (8). She explains that this philosophy was also evident in “the language of spiritual virginity,” which was “couched in terms of private space and its loss in terms of exposure in public space” (8). Women, she points out, must be chaperoned outside their own spaces, as Chaucer’s Prioress is (13), while, conversely, women who were “spatially confined,” such as Julian of Norwich, were seen as benign as they did not “preach or live outside strictly controlled space” (13). Thus, she argues conversely that the Wife of Bath is ridiculed by other characters because she “marginalizes” herself (and, while Hanawalt does not extend the analogy, one wonders if this might also explain some of the ridicule Margery Kempe experiences).

cannot participate in the actions which we have seen her doing so far. Before she can do anything else herself, this movement would therefore seem to paint her as already condemned. The subsequent choices she makes are therefore already restricted in possibility, for while Hector (and then Troilus) played the primary role of “protector” to Criseyde’s “endangered lady,” Criseyde must enter a new social network in the Greek camp. As Hanawalt explains, “women who strayed from their designated space might be subject to sexual assault because they were neither under the protection of a responsible male nor were they in their accustomed space” (16). For Criseyde, then, submitting herself to a new male protector, now Diomedes, is a move to help ensure not merely her social but also physical safety.

Hanawalt’s discussion of marginality and transgression of approved space therefore has several interesting applications to an analysis of Criseyde’s agency in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Most importantly, her theories seem to reveal that Criseyde’s “fall” is in large part predetermined by the plot events which happen completely beyond her control, thus both revealing her lack of agency but, interestingly, also the ways that the narrative itself empathizes with Criseyde through showing that her condemnation results from events beyond her control or the effect of the decisions she makes. We have already seen how the narrative “interpellates” Criseyde as an “endangered lady” from the beginning of the tale and requires her to assume the position of a supplicant seeking protection; and, in this case, the protection which she eventually chooses to seek (through Diomedes) is only made necessary because of the ruptures to her social network that the very system which condemns her has wrought.

By the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, the many changes that Chaucer has made to the text he revises accumulate to the effect of manifesting not only the chasm between Criseyde’s self-perception and reality in terms of agency but also the very reality of the ideological system

which both creates her (in terms of the genre itself) and dictates the movements which lead to her condemnation (in terms of the plot developments). Complex issues of characterization, subjectivity, movement, and transgression therefore combine to deal her a deadly blow—issues which Chaucer seems especially to highlight and make evident in ways that Boccaccio does not. Thus, while Fradenburg argues that “inside Troy, inside those private Trojan spaces in which love is pursued, the potential for violence against Criseyde is brought before us even as it is made to disappear” (598), in some ways, the “potential for violence” is otherwise shown through the dark implications of the social network in which we see Criseyde made subordinate to masculine concerns. In addition, as I shall explore in the next chapter, the circumscription of the social network manifested here by close analysis of the words, gestures, and movements Chaucer has added to the story are further reinforced by a parallel use of natural and animal imagery which reveals this human social world to be analogous in many ways to the domesticated animal world—thus further highlighting, allegorically, the ways in which Criseyde is made a “beautiful endangered lady” (Chism 57) through such animal imagery.

Chapter Two:

The Nature of the *Lusty Leese*

While an exploration of Criseyde's beliefs, actions, and social network reveals that Chaucer's revisions of *Il Filostrato* manifest her circumscription within the narrative, changes to characterization and the cogs of social machinery are but one way Chaucer's text offers a more sympathetic picture of Criseyde by showing how situations beyond her own control affect the choices available to her. Indeed, the lexical connotations of Criseyde's declaration of her independence and her vision of herself standing "unteyd in lusty leese" (II.752) presage not only circumscription but also other ways that nature will be used to show this on a subtler but even more vivid level. Ultimately, this "natural sub-narrative," so to speak, combines with and complements the revelations of the true nature of Criseyde's social position and network, both working towards a depiction of the mortal world as circumscribed, or predestined, as much by man's actions as by divine "Fate."

As part of her theory of characters as social-persons patchworks, Elizabeth Fowler writes that "each *ghostly social person* brings with it values, standards of evaluation, a configuration of attributes, a sense of possible actions and plots, [and] an orientation toward social institutions" (72, emphasis added). While I have already discussed the "sense of possible actions and plots" and the nature of the social institutions (the real *lusty leese* or masculine narrative in which Criseyde exists ontologically in her own world and fictionally in the genre), the natural sub-narrative woven throughout *TC* also raises the possibility that there are even more social persons at work behind the composition of Criseyde, and they are indeed quite "ghostly." As L. O. Fradenburg has written, one of the most disturbing details in *TC* is the "intertextual haunting" of the "voice of the survivor" in moments in which Criseyde is involved in intimate activities—

particularly so, as she argues and as I will explore more fully, in the case of Chaucer's allusions to the Greek and Roman myth of the sisters Procne and Philomela in the early books as Troilus and Criseyde's love affair gradually comes to fruition (particularly through the interventions of Pandarus). In the classical tale, Philomela is raped by Tereus, the husband of her sister Procne, who subsequently also mutilates her tongue. The story then follows Procne's eventual discovery of the crime and the two sisters' attempted revenge upon him, after which the gods change each into birds: Procne into a swallow, Philomela into a nightingale, and Tereus into a hoopoe.¹⁶ The story in itself is thoroughly disturbing in terms of violence done both symbolically and physically to Philomela, but considering it in comparison to Criseyde's tale and its eventual outcome further foreshadows the decline of Criseyde's agency. This use of an old story to help develop a new one is particularly effective. As Fowler explains in terms of character formation specifically,

The fragmentary details are taken from their places in old patterns of signification and, like a collage, evoke those patterns synecdochically in order to help us reassemble meaning in a new figure. The spatially incoherent conglomeration made by the newly collected fragments—a shape projected by the text—alternates in our minds with the outlines of figures remembered in the allusions of the details....It is as if the attempt to conjure a body by reciting words has the effect of raising a dozen ghosts. (70)

¹⁶. Translator David Raeburn notes after "swallow" the designation of which sister becomes which bird in this translation and his amendment of Ovid's text: "In Greek literature Procne is changed to the nightingale and Philomela to the swallow; but in the Roman poets it is usually the other way round. Ovid does not specify which sister becomes which bird and may thus be cleverly exploiting the mythological confusion" (64849, note for Book 6, lines 668-9).

While Fowler does not specifically reference Chaucer's use of the Philomela myth and how it influences readings of Criseyde, the words are amazingly applicable: the "newly collected fragments" (not used by Boccaccio), their own weight already saturated with significance, illuminate the story of Criseyde's predetermined lack of agency by raising "a dozen ghosts" of other women whose agency (and often physical person) is assaulted.

Ultimately, this artistic choice to parallel Criseyde's story to Philomela's through the nightingale is but one way that various instances of natural artistry and tropes, though "fragments" by themselves, combine into an important "conglomeration" which adds important depth to discussions of Criseyde. Thus, the nature of Criseyde's social institutions as circumscriptive is further reinforced by paralleling them subtly to domesticated animal spaces and herself to such a domesticated animal within it—or, even more significantly, she is at other times symbolically portrayed as a hunted animal. The implications are thus twofold: humans, and especially females made into love-objects, are revealed by Chaucer's artistic techniques in *TC* to be no more "free" than their animal counterparts, on the one hand, and, on the other, human actions—not solely the machinations of "Fate"—are shown to be responsible for some of this "domestication." Thus, through nature, Chaucer gives us hints about Criseyde's circumscription that she herself does not perceive, for her *habitus*, or actions which establish and confirm her status as a "wealthy widow," "daughter of a traitor," and now most significantly as "lover," is shown to be hauntingly similar to that of both domesticated and hunted animals.¹⁷

¹⁷. The animal discussion in this chapter in particular is the culmination of ideas which I originally began exploring in 2012 in shorter term papers, combined with more in-depth study and analysis of animal imagery, and related secondary scholarship, in *TC*.

While in criticism natural and animal imagery does not seem to be discussed as widely in the context of *Troilus and Criseyde* as it is in the context of some of the *Canterbury Tales* or other of Chaucer's works, some scholarship has analyzed elements of *TC* in this light or as part of a larger discussion of Chaucer's use of such imagery across his oeuvre at large. For example, Caitlin Quinn-Lang, in her article "The Augury of Thise Fowles': Treacherous Birds in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," noting the allusion to nightingale-Philomela and other avian images, argues that

Chaucer makes approximately two dozen references to birds in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

With the exception of Criseyde's dream of the eagle, however, most of these bird references have received little attention. One reason for this lack of attention is that birds in *Troilus and Criseyde* are often seen as merely acting within the traditions assigned to them in courtly love literature. (38)

Unfortunately, in such "natural" scholarship, even among scholars who more sympathetically describe Criseyde's victimization and entrapment, there seems to be a tendency to conclude with either Troilus-centric readings or general observations of Chaucer's didactic take on mortality. Quinn-Lang, for instance, focuses on an indictment of love as generally dangerous and painful, at times pointing out how ominous some of these allusions are for Criseyde but on the whole without exploring how Criseyde specifically is shown to be a victim in such cases. Likewise, as noted in my first chapter, Beryl Rowland in *Blind Beasts* importantly points out that Criseyde is frequently made the object of predatory animal imagery (108), but does so to the end, in part, of critiquing Criseyde for not recognizing how her own fear limits her. Her argument thus importantly demonstrates elements of Criseyde's circumscription as evidenced by natural

imagery, but does not entirely explore the potential causes behind this circumscription even while it seems to imply that better self-knowledge on Criseyde's part might change her fate.

Similarly, Samuel Schuman in "The Circle of Nature" further expands the depiction of Criseyde as "trapped" and "hunted" by arguing that Criseyde is a "besieged lady" symbolized by Troy itself, evidenced, as Schuman argues, by the content of Criseyde's dream as her love affair with Troilus begins (103). Several of Schuman's points begin to redress the limitations of scholarship such as Rowland's, but ultimately his argument, after he notes a reversal of "entrapment" between Criseyde (having left Troy) and Troilus (104), leads him to conclude that "the reader is guided...from a concern with the earthly affairs of two young lovers to a point from which earthly affairs themselves—as a general class—are judged and, ultimately, rejected as unimportant" (111). The implication that Criseyde is no longer "trapped" simply because she has left Troy is troublesome enough, given her continued inability to dictate her own movement and Diomedes's immediate advances on her, as I have already explored; while she is not "trapped" in Troy, literally, she is still symbolically as trapped as ever by the very nature of her social persons. But more significantly, Schuman, like others, accidentally elides the more specific indictment that Chaucer makes of the violent connotations of the masculine romance genre in his concluding observation of a generalized condemnation of "mortals" as a group.

Though Schuman argues that Chaucer demonstrates that "those who opt for the things of the world—such as sensual, earthly love—are doomed by its imprisoning circularity" (109), a closer look at the various ways Chaucer employs animal imagery throughout *TC* reveals that he is censuring much more than just "earthly love." What plagues Criseyde is not simply the pitfalls of love but the nature of the real *lusty leese* in which she stands—a masculine narrative full of violent conventions. An application of Fradenburg's indictment of the "occlusion of violence"

against women in the romance genre thus reveals its accidental presence in scholarship as well when the important implications of such violence become whitewashed by broader statements which see *all* of the mortal realm as flawed—that is, unequal “crimes” are considered on equal footing and the sentences therefore become incongruous with the violations. It is thus into this scholarly history that I wish to propose that a reading of the natural imagery in *TC* combined with a reading of the nuances of Criseyde’s social network and circumscription is particularly fruitful for understanding how Chaucer aligns himself more sympathetically with Criseyde (than, say, Boccaccio or later authors such as Henryson do) by revealing how she is predestined by the master narrative to be agentless—and, therefore, in a sense, always already violated.¹⁸ In particular, Chaucer carefully indicts this nature of the master narrative by both employing subversive animal imagery which reveals the violence inherent in the love-as-hunting trope by *inverting* it and by revealing the dubiousness of Troilus’s invocations of Jove.

To explain this further, it is important for me to pause for a moment to explain how my method of reading this natural and animal symbolism differs slightly from earlier scholarship. In order to avoid the whitewashing which accidentally occludes the ways Criseyde is shown as wronged, which results in part from condemning *all* mortality as degrading and flawed, it is important too to see nature and animal symbolism itself as more than just degrading and flawed.

¹⁸. Recall my qualification in Chapter 1 that this is not necessarily on a conscious level by the characters; while Fradenburg, for instance, comes close to accusing Troilus of rape in her analysis of the “consummation scene,” for instance, I am less interested here in proving such accusations and more interested in the overall signification of *allusions* to such violence and how it shows Criseyde as constantly literally and symbolically threatened and, therefore, sympathetic.

My method here differs in particular, for the purposes of this project, from those such as Sheila Delany's in "Techniques of Alienation in *Troilus and Criseyde*." In this article, Delany posits that Chaucer employs techniques to alienate the readers from characters as a general group in order to pave the way for acceptance of "the rigorous Augustinian doctrine...in the so-called 'epilogue'" (488). Delany explains this as asking "crucial questions" in the text (491). In this respect, she joins the history of critics who emphasize the necessity of transcendence, concluding that "if we sympathize with [Criseyde] or Troilus by the end of the poem it is despite Chaucer's best efforts to disengage us" (492). In the case of Troilus in particular, she argues that Chaucer enacts this goal of alienation by satirizing him via animal imagery.¹⁹

The specific incidents which Delany points to certainly do seem to alienate us from Troilus. More specifically, they seem either to critique him individually as a failed masculine hero of the romance genre or, more significantly for my own project, to critique the romance genre itself by taking Troilus as its symbolic representative. For instance, she in particular points out similes which have the effect of ridiculing Troilus even before the love affair truly begins and which are "at odds with, and belittl[e], his own professions of noble motives and good intentions" (492). Her examples include when Troilus appears "as proud as a peacock" (1.210) just before he is "shot" by Love; when he is described as "as needy of control as Bayard the horse" (1.218-24); and finally when he is targeted by Love and metaphorically "trapped like a bird" (1.353). In light of these, Delany argues that "all this suggests the animal nature of Troilus and of mankind: that aspect of his nature which he willfully ignores but which is forcefully brought home to us" (492). In this regard in particular, alienation is certainly an important effect

¹⁹. I will explore her arguments for how Criseyde is alienated later in this chapter in conjunction with a more detailed discussion of the importance of the Philomela myth in *TC*.

of some of Chaucer's strategies. However, I would add that this is within limits, or, rather, that the object of this alienation may at times be more specific than Delany's broad condemnation of love and mortality. More specifically, while Delany argues that in *TC* animals are used to satirize characters and therefore alienate readers by making them see characters' flaws, those very flaws importantly are not just static flaws of personality in isolation but also manifest in relationships and interactions—the social networks discussed in the previous chapter.

Furthermore, and more importantly to my project in this chapter in particular, animal and nature metaphors do not have to be seen as derogatory in order to be understood as somehow didactic. While this may well be part of Chaucer's overall project, I would hesitate to limit it to a conclusion akin to "human beings are like animals and therefore damned." Evidence of animal similes sometimes used in such a derogatory manner do not necessitate that *all* such imagery must be analyzed this way. Rather, the stories told by animal imagery or metamorphosis stories like Philomela's can also *enlighten* the human condition, or, in the case of domestication imagery, *condemn* humans (separate from animals) by aligning those who are circumscribed (like Criseyde) with equally "victimized" animals. Therefore, the dynamic is not important only because a particular character is "just as low as" an animal by themselves; even more important is how these characters treat each other, literally or symbolically. Within these "animalized" symbolic relationships, some characters are revealed to treat others like a "proprietor" treats a "domesticated" (or live-stock) animal, or, even worse, to treat them (Criseyde specifically) as animalized prey. Without such consideration, causes of female circumscription become blamed solely on "Fate" or divine predestination, without a consideration that some characters, and female love-objects specifically, are predestined as much by *human free will* itself—the intentional actions of other characters or the nature of their patriarchal social networks—as by

anything else. My method in what follows thus differentiates from one like Delaney's which posits that humans are compared to animals for the sole purpose of condemning said humans and mortality as no more than base or bestial. Such readings are quite compelling, but limiting the interpretation of animal and natural artistry and allusions to this leaves out this subtle circumscriptive angle which is so important to Criseyde *specifically*.

In an attempt to consider broader possibilities of the meanings behind natural and animal imagery, I instead try to adopt in what follows an approach more akin to that utilized by Susan Crane in her recent book *Animal Encounters*, in which she argues that "the animal's trace, even when faint, is revelatory" (171). Throughout her analyses Crane explores the importance of the plurality of possible meanings behind animal appearances in medieval literature and hunting treatises. She thus critiques scholarly tendencies to focus on only anthropomorphically didactic analyses of animals, writing that "literary scholars sometimes seem to forget the animal, lured by how cogently the lion king and the preaching fox can comment on human behavior...I seek instead to redirect attention from the animal trope's noisy human tenor back to its obscure furry vehicle" (1). While she is most often concerned with the significance of literal human-animal interaction and cohabitation, these too may nevertheless have symbolic meaning; thus, her method is to "look for moments when textual representation is porous to experience—when the somatic texture of embodied animal encounters leaves an imprint on artful language" (5). Such imprint, as she later argues, can be seen in how (medieval) scholars and authors write about animal encounters. Thus, of hunting treatises (which I will explore more fully below), she writes that the hunting "hounds subordination reinforces the hunt's mimesis of a social and natural hierarchy. On the other hand, ...the integration of hounds and hunters in the task of hunting is so thorough that humans are in some ways not distinct from, and not distinctly superior to, the

hounds” (112). In other words, humans and animals can co-inform each other while bearing important symbolic and ideological significance.

It is both this symbolic or mimetic function and the notion that humans do not have to be read as necessarily superior to animals that I most wish to apply to natural and animal imagery in *TC*. One of the first arguments Crane makes in support of her own overall thesis also shines important light on the first sort of “animalization” in *Troilus and Criseyde* that I will discuss in this chapter: Criseyde’s “animalization” as a domesticated animal (the second kind being her “animalization” as a hunted animal). Crane considers first the case of a ninth-century Old Irish poem “Pangur Bán,” which compares human scholarly work to the work of a house cat hunting mice. The poet writes that “I and Pangur Bán, each of us two at his special art: / his mind is at hunting (mice), my own mind is in my special art,” and concludes with the lines, “He [Pangur] himself is the master of the work which he does every day: / while I am at my own work, (which is) to bring difficulty to clearness” (qtd. in Crane 15). Crane explains that the poem shows that human and cat “both are capable of focusing so intently at their work as to produce a kind of elation, a ‘joyous’ state of concentration that they share,” though she qualifies that this is “a small, precisely observed equivalence between them” done “only within the sharply observed specifics of their separate tasks” (16).

From this (albeit quite early) example, we can see that human-animal comparisons are not restricted only to meanings which “degrade” the former to the level of the latter; rather, the comparison can even reveal something to be admired in the latter, and can set humans and animals on somewhat equivalent terms. Likewise, while scholars such as Delany have posited that such degrading terms are the primary meaning behind animal allusions/metaphors in *TC*, there is also the possibility of seeing these instances as equivalencies which then in turn show a

different kind of degradation: they critique the social institutions and ideologies for their circumscription of especially female “love-objects” by first exposing their treatment of women as domesticated or hunted animals. Thus, while Delany’s specific argument about Troilus in particular has applications, the difference perhaps lies in when animal imagery is used in straightforward similes linked fairly bluntly with specific descriptors—Love decides to target “as proud a pekok” as Troilus (1.210), as Delany cites (492)—versus when it is used in more subtly allusive and lexically connotative (and ongoing) similes and metaphors.

An approach such as Crane’s thus opens up a range of possibilities for analyzing animal and natural imagery, and, importantly, this must still be done in terms of considering relationships and social networks, not just the specific animals (or “animalized” humans) in isolation. To return to the “Panguar Bán” example once more, Crane explains that “the domesticated cat well exemplifies...that domestication is ‘a symbiosis that needs at least two partners, and it is simplistic to view it from the side of one of the partners alone’” (21). While Crane here is of course writing literally about animals’ and humans’ participation in the process of domestication, applying this theory of “domestication” allegorically to Criseyde’s situation yields results shockingly similar to the theories of Fowler, Belsey, and others regarding “willing participation” in interpellation by patriarchal ideologies which strip agency from female characters.

I will first consider Criseyde’s metaphorical “animalization” into a domesticated animal, made evident in particular by the connotations of her own words in the very same passage which also ironically reveals her blindness to the circumscriptive effects of the very social network which she struggles to maintain. To recall my previous argument, when Criseyde declares herself to “stonde unteyd in lusty leese,” the last phrase in particular, *lusty leese*, is rife with meaning.

Translatable into “pleasant pasture” (with the former word in Middle English having especially masculine, though non-sexual, applications as a descriptor), the *lusty leese* can in a sense be seen as symbolically representative of the master narrative which entraps Criseyde into the role of an agentless victim from the beginning.

Interestingly, while the term “lusty” reveals the masculinity of the master narrative in which Criseyde is “tied,” the natural word “leese” presages the ways her circumscription continues to be revealed by the natural artistry used throughout *TC*. To return for a brief moment to Crane’s arguments, “literary approaches can also recover traces of animal presence, not by treating language as if it were a transparent window on the real, but by concentrating on the peculiar obscurities and revelations inherent in turns of phrase, narrative strategies, and formal conventions” (5). One such fascinating “turn of phrase” is the appearance of another word potentially laden with symbolic significance: *muwe*, which means “coop,” as in housing for birds (“muwe”). As important as *leese* on the level of symbolic natural sub-narrative, this word, I shall argue, makes an appearance in a way that when considered in combination with Chaucer’s additional use of an “inverted” version of the traditional love-as-hunting trope further highlights the depth of Criseyde’s circumscription.²⁰

The use of the love-as-hunting motif has of course been noted in scholarship. Karla Taylor, in “Proverbs and the Authentication of Convention,” argues that Chaucer reveals the instability of the language of love in part through his use of “love as the hunt” (548). She first points out Criseyde’s objectification by explaining that “men pursue Criseyde without much

²⁰. A more traditional version of the love-as-hunting trope occurs, for example, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, in which Gawain’s interactions with the lady of the Castle de Hautdesert are paralleled with Bertilak’s hunting scenes.

regard for her desire and fears, and [that] she responds like a chased animal, postponing the inevitable for as long as possible” (547). Moving beyond Criseyde, however, she also points out that Troilus “is a bird of prey, a noble falcon who catches his victim,” and Diomedes likewise “recalls the convention of love as hunt” when he ponders “how he may best...into his net Criseydes herte bryne...to fisshen hire, he leyde out hook and line” (V.774-7, qtd. in Taylor 548). Taylor therefore argues that “the hunt seems embedded in the prehistory of the poem” but concludes that when Diomedes and Troilus are both figured as “hunters,” the similarity “casts a shadow of mutability on the stability Troilus is thought to guarantee” (548). Thus, one of Taylor’s goals is to examine how the love-as-hunting trope undercuts the sincerity of Troilus (and Diomedes). It is in this way, she explains, that Chaucer “expresses a profoundly ambivalent attitude toward conventional love language” (548) and “in a sense exorcises his devil by exposing it” (550). In another sense, however, Chaucer also exposes a *different* devil through his animal imagery: the stripping of female agency conventional in his genre and thus the very “occlusion of violence” of which Fradenburg speaks (601).

Though I am ultimately interested in how Chaucer uses both inverted and traditional versions of this trope to show Criseyde’s “domestication,” *TC* begins with the former when the God of Love shoots Troilus (I.204-210). Continuing the subject/object chain, while Troilus is first the God of Love’s object, Criseyde then becomes Troilus’s: now “struck” by Love, Troilus’s glance “upon cas bifel that thorough a route / His eye precede, and so depe it wente, / Til on Criseyde it smot, and there it stente” (I.270-3). From that moment Criseyde becomes like an animal in his line of shot, as demonstrated by his interest in the “pure wise of hire mevyng,” as a hunter might carefully track his prey (I.285). Chaucer’s wording also provides support for this early instance of Criseyde’s “animalization” when she is described as “nevere lasse mannyssh in

semynge” (I.284). This seems partially a playful double-negative used to convey that Criseyde is the paragon of womanly beauty—but *mannyssh* can also be taken literally, meaning “human” (“mannish”). Alone, this description thus seems to imply that Criseyde possesses a “pretermortal” beauty, but combined with the objectification which occurs as Troilus “falls in love” and his almost marksman-like interest in her movement, the words seem to “animalize” her as she becomes the male’s “love object.”

In this opening scene, the seemingly playful but conventional use of the hunting trope in fact hints at darker depths. These more disturbing connotations become increasingly evident as the story progresses—and especially as the trope continually demands the refashioning of the female as an animalized love object to be captured by her “bird of prey” lover, as I will explore in the next section of this chapter. This has been well documented by critics such as Fradenburg, who looks at the violent and disturbing “intertextual haunting” of the Procne and Philomela myth (600) as alluded to in Troilus and Criseyde’s “consummation scene,” and Caitlin Quinn-Lang, who argues that Chaucer’s use of bird imagery in conjunction with allusions to Ovidian myth “echo[es] a theme of treacherous and sorrowful love” (38).²¹ Investigating the use of this trope

²¹. Quinn-Lang argues that *TC* condemns love generally for its ill-fated, “dubious” tendencies (46). However, her examples also reveal a *sub-condemnation* of violence toward females. The consequence of the loss of this distinction in such analyses seems to be the sweeping of the disturbing mess of potential sexual violence under the rug of the woes of humanity at large. In contrast, see Patricia Clare Ingham’s arguments in “Chaucer’s Haunted Aesthetics” that in terms of love and sexual violence in *TC*, “references from nature do not reassure” (239). She cites especially the images in the “consummation” scene (239), such as the

throughout *TC*—and theoretically in other works as well—thus exposes especially the violence inherent in generic depictions of love.

But in addition to this opening traditional employment of the trope, a comprehensive look at Chaucer's inversion of it and his other subversive uses of natural artistry—and Pandarus's later symbolic disavowal of them all through his rejection of bird-signs—even further supports the work critics such as Fradenburg have begun in analyzing the extent of Criseyde's circumscription. On the one hand, this inverted form of the trope too can have playful uses. In Book One, for example, after Troilus has been "shot" by Love's arrow, he feels that "love bigan his fetheres so to lyme" (I.353). The statement is ironic: Troilus, who up until now has been spending his time at the festival mocking others in love, now feels himself "caught" by the same feeling. Likewise, much later in Book Three, when Pandarus is attempting to set up Troilus and Criseyde's first physically romantic rendezvous, he declares to Troilus, "'For I ful well shal shape youre comynge; / And eseth there youre hertes right ynought; / And lat se which of yow shal bere the belle / To speke of love aright!'"—therewith he lough— / 'For ther have ye a leiser for to telle'" (III.196-200 pp155). Editor Stephen Barney explains that "to 'bear the bell' probably meant to win the prize, but possibly meant to lead the flock as a bellwether" (155fn2), a reading which gains likelihood in light of the other animal puns and imagery Chaucer relies on throughout. In this instance, Pandarus seems to say this in apparent jest, implying that Criseyde may be in more control of their relationship than Troilus, a reversal of the usual gender roles.

However, this joking passage is but one instance of an on-the-whole much more serious trend in which "animalized" role-reversal has dire implications particularly for Criseyde—for it

description of Troilus and Criseyde intertwined like trees, explaining that it recalls the story of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne (239).

is only “in jest” that she can have agency. Significantly, Chaucer uses such “animalization” and role-reversal to reveal that while Criseyde professes an ability to control her own *fyn*, she is in fact “tied,” allowed to perceive agency only in service to the pleasure of the patriarchy that the *lusty leese* symbolizes. This artistic move by Chaucer thus especially reveals in *TC* not merely a condemnation of earthly love but an exposure, *before* the infamous call for transcendence with which the tale concludes, of that love’s dire implications: for the issue at the heart of *Criseyde*’s share of tragedy in the *lusty leese* is one of perceived control foiled by pre-denied agency.

In Book III, Criseyde appears to Troilus from her window as he passes by with his hunting retinue, emerging “As fressh as faukoun comen out of *muwe*” (III.1784, emphasis added). This unusual inversion of the hunting motif on the one hand seems to imply that Criseyde, and not Troilus, might control their “hunt.”²² The line is important, however, not only in how it seems to imply gendered role reversal, but also in that it “animalizes” Criseyde once again. Both the inversion and animalization recalls her earlier proclamation of her own independence: that she stands untied in *lusty leese*. The connotations of *leese* and *muwe* when compared to each other in particular have important functions. In this case, *muwe* here throws into doubt once more the true extent of her own agency, for importantly, a *muwe* is a “pen (for a hawk)” or a “coop (for poultry)” —much like the *leese* is a “pasture” for livestock (“mewe”). Thus, while this inversion at first glance seems to imply simply that it is Criseyde and not Troilus

²². Analyses of these inversions often concern the emphasis of character flaws. Quinn-Lang reads this as a sign of inconstancy, citing Marvin Mudrick’s explanation that Criseyde, “like the unpredictable falcon, ‘has been and remains dangerous, possibly inconstant’ and ‘not quite subduable’” (41-2). See also Mudrick 94.

doing the real “hunting” in the relationship,²³ it also serves to align the *muwe* to the *leese*, reinforcing Criseyde’s circumscription as almost inexorable, natural—even while the symbolic animalization of Criseyde as a *domesticated* animal indicates that this circumscription, “natural” though it may seem, is in fact man-made. Although Criseyde perceives herself as her “owene woman,” her “estat” is little more than a *muwe* itself, set within the *lusty leese*, her position in society pre-circumscribed with clear limitations on her agency.

The trope’s animalization of Criseyde as an en-*muwed* sporting falcon—not a wild one—is further reinforced when the narrator describes the incident as one which recurs after Troilus’s hunting expeditions. We learn that in general “tyme of trewe, on haukyng wolde he ride,” and that upon his return Criseyde appears “ful ofte” to him (III.1779-85). Just as Troilus’s own hunting falcon has presumably been taken from its real *muwe* for the hunt, so too Criseyde emerges from her *muwe* in service of her hunter’s pleasure. She functions again as a visual love-object for him, even as she is figured ironically as a bird of prey like the one which perhaps perches on Troilus’s arm as he gazes up at her. By inverting the love-as-hunting motif here and figuring Criseyde in her own *muwe*, Chaucer thus makes apparent that her agency, like the actual hunting falcon’s, is hardly her own. While the ontological falcon’s hunt is the manifestation of her desire for prey and is yet controlled by her falconer, Criseyde-as-falcon’s symbolic hunt if likewise seen as a manifestation of desire (for Troilus) also serves a purpose *beyond* those personal desires, brought forth and shaped by the masculine concerns of the genre. The inversion

²³. See Delany’s argument that although Criseyde is described as a *sely larke* and Troilus a *sperhawk*, Troilus’s fainting episode, after which “Criseyde has had to take the physical initiative,” implies an inversion which ultimately “destroy[s] the conventional romance” and “exposes the deficiencies of human reality” (493).

thus refashions the sense of ease and independence she articulates earlier into little more than a mirage bestowed by an *estat* ultimately at the mercy of the larger *lusty leese*—the masculine master narrative which defines the genre and in which the love-as-hunting trope is at work in the first place.

A similar inversion of the animalized hunter/prey dichotomy appears yet again in Book IV, in an equally disturbing statement out of the mouth of Pandarus. The scene occurs shortly after Criseyde has been traded by the Trojan parliament for Antenor, who had been captured as a prisoner of war by the Greeks. In an attempt to comfort Troilus over Criseyde's departure, Pandarus explains that he can simply choose a new lover: "If oon kan synge, an other kan wel daunce; / ... Ech for his vertu holden is for deere, / Both heroner and faucoun for ryvere" (IV.409-13). While the significance of the gendered relationships in this passage—that women are beasts used for the pleasure of a male hunter—has been astutely noted by critics such as Quinn-Lang (42), also crucially important is that this is Pandarus's pronouncement. The passage highlights the questionability of his actions toward his niece, whom he sees perhaps as no more than a *faucoun* for sport. Moreover, it also connects directly to when Criseyde is figured as a domesticated falcon or, ironically, mentions a *muwe* without realizing she is in one. The amalgamation further reinforces the notion that she is a bird of *sport*, allowed to perceive agency primarily for the benefit of her falconers. Thus, while in an earlier passage Pandarus jokingly tells Troilus to calm down and "don thy hood" (II.954), it is *Criseyde* who wears the real hood.²⁴

²⁴. Barney explains that "The phrase *don thyn hood* is of uncertain sense: keep your shirt on! be at ease! prepare for bed! get ready to go (to sleep!)" (111fn7). Given the many references to birds, especially tamed birds of prey, throughout *TC*, however, perhaps the "hood" could be a hood used to keep a hunting bird from becoming overstimulated by simulating night.

While critics have argued that the inversions highlight her inconstancy, or simply that the image of Troilus as the heroic predatory bird is “not sustained” (Rowland 80), the inversions also powerfully demonstrate that for the men who control the *lusty leese*, Criseyde can only farcically hold power.

Furthermore, this “domestication” of Criseyde into a metaphorical animal with only illusory agency takes on additional meaning when considered alongside the results of domesticating actual animals. According to Susan Crane, gradual domestication of real animals, like cats, results in an animal “more calm, sociable, and tolerant of humans, not because they are individually tamed...but because their genetic code has shifted to make them more kittenlike...Natural selection, evolutionary changes brought about by environmental conditions rather than human intentions, produced a cat that could exploit human environments by producing a permanently juvenile cat” (22). While Crane here is of course writing about the literal domestication of wild cats into housecats over time, the core idea, that conditions can bring about evolutionary changes resulting in a more compliant subject, can be applied to Criseyde’s situation if a less literal and more allegorical approach is used to analyze the workings of natural images in the text. To jump ahead several centuries, this literal theory of adaptation gains social implications in twentieth-century naturalism and its idea that humans are determined by natural law but also by habit. While on the one hand it may seem anachronistic to apply such a term to medieval literature, the comparison helps show how the natural sub-narrative in *TC* can function as a social and critical allegory. In such an allegory, the symbols become the animalized images, and the thing represented by them becomes the social laws of the

(Rowland 80). If this is the case, it only further reemphasizes Pandarus’s role as the master manipulator of both Troilus and Criseyde.

patriarchal genre. Such laws condition subjects, over time, to evolve naturally into “willing participants” who assume roles that they both feel that they choose but which are predestined by the master narrative. Consider again as well the previously discussed social theories of subjectivity, ideology, and interpellation. As already discussed in my first chapter, Criseyde’s supplication to Hector for clemency in Book I demonstrates in many ways how she “willingly” (but sub-consciously) adopts the subject-position of the tropal “damsel in distress”; she becomes “doomed to repeat her reliance on the ambiguities of male ‘protection’” (Fradenburg 601). In terms of animalization, it can likewise be extrapolated that instances where others describe her as a bird of prey, even if taken at face value, are merely the “deliberate bodily posture[s]” (Fowler 12) of a social role which requires the appearance of agency when in fact there is very little.

Thus, while critics such as Delany have questions about certain instances in *Troilus and Criseyde* which seem to show Criseyde “hunting” (metaphorically in control of the love affair), even if Criseyde so perceives *herself* in these situations, such misperception is not at all uncommon for an individual so interpellated. Just as an actual animal domesticated over time becomes increasingly “kittenlike” or “calm, sociable, and tolerant of humans” (Crane 22), so too an interpellated individual “adopt[s] the subject-positions necessary to their participation in the social formation” (Belsey 49); for Criseyde, it seems, the issue is that the genre has evolved in such a way to necessitate the assumption of this arguably “kittenlike” subject position dependent on (and at the mercy of) patriarchal figures.

While these surprising similarities between Crane’s theories of domestication and cohabitation and Belsey’s theories of interpellation and willing participation are of course to a large extent coincidental in their similarity, the fact that the interpellated individual and the hunted animal can be spoken of in such similar terms, combined with the examples of Criseyde’s

“animalization” as a domesticated animal in *TC*, further informs an understanding of the extent of her circumscription and how it occurs. In *TC*, the combination thus points the finger of blame not just at a flawed mortal world or transitory earthly love in general, but rather more specifically at the social environmental conditions which are produced by human intentions, subconscious as they may be.

Criseyde’s belief in her own agency, however, persists even as the evidence of her circumscription mounts. After parliament demands she be traded for Antenor and sent to the Greeks, she attempts to persuade Troilus that she ““shal not so ben hid in muwe, / That... Ye shal ful wel al myn estat yheere” (IV.1310-14). Ironically, much in the same way that she declares her independence in Book I by using a term which in fact manifests her circumscription (declaring herself to “stonde unteyd in lusty leese”), her very insistence of her agency here is articulated in a term which elsewhere has revealed this agency to be illusory. Criseyde’s lexical choices have the effect of demonstrating just how deeply determined she has become by the social roles and bodily postures she has had to adopt.

As significant as these inversions are in revealing Criseyde’s agency to be illusory, the traditional hunting trope can be made equally telling when followed beyond its initial playful uses, as discussed previously, and the intertwining of these two themes (Criseyde as both “domesticated” and “hunted” animal) further depicts the ways that Criseyde has been pre-determined by the master narrative. The significance of the love-as-hunting trope when employed traditionally (in terms of the gendered roles of the man as “hunter” and woman as “prey”) becomes particularly telling in light of the historical symbolism behind literal hunting. In “The Noble Hunt as a Ritual Practice,” the fourth chapter of her book *Animal Encounters*, Susan Crane examines three different historical hunting treatises written in the fourteenth to early

fifteenth centuries in order to analyze the symbolism of both the hunt itself and of the human-animal interactions within it (particularly with hunting hounds but also the hunted animals, such as boars). Most importantly to the discussion of the master narrative's "animalization" of Criseyde in *TC*, Crane argues that the elaborately arranged hunt of real medieval aristocracy is "puzzling in its inefficiency" and can be seen as serving a greater purpose than simply procuring meat. More importantly, Crane explains that "the hunt à force is a ritual process" (7) which "uses the strategies of secular ritual to affirm the rightness of a single social and natural order headed by the aristocracy" (103). This argument is grounded in her position that "the ritual potential resides at [the] intersection of beliefs and performance, when gestures are understood to be heavy with meaning, and actions to be codified repetitions as well as responses to a present circumstance" (102). Once again, the similarities between Crane's hunting theory and theories of subjectivity are striking. Put another way, hunting, with its own "performance" and its "actions" which are "codified repetitions" all "heavy with meaning," has its own *habitus*, enactment of which both puts on display for others and reinforces the social status of the hunter as the dominant social actor.

Further similarities manifest between Crane's theory of hunting symbolism and Erich Auerbach's theory of the purpose of the romance genre. As an "ideologically charged event" (Crane 104), hunting can be interpreted as "a mimetic ritual designed to celebrate and perpetuate noble authority...[;] the ritualization of hunting *endorses and validates* noble skill, superiority, and governance. It sets up a performance space in which nobility mimes its own myth of itself" (Crane 107). Such ritual, Crane adds, can be seen as "intent on affirming and celebrating the identity of a group and its core values" (106), an observation strikingly similar to Auerbach's argument that romance's purpose is "a self-portrayal of feudal knighthood with its mores and

ideals” (131) and therefore “self-realization” (134).²⁵ In such a symbolic system, the primary subject “affirmed” within this “core group” becomes the male subject: the knight in love or in war, the only two themes “worthy” for such a subject, according to Auerbach (140). The romance tale, with its male subject as the metaphorical hunter, becomes a performance of “the unforced will to renew [courtly virtues] by constant and tireless practice and proving” (134); failure to do so means that the knight “would lose himself and no longer be a knight” (140). It is both in “the hunt” and in the genre at large, then, that the principal male must prove his valor through his own *habitus*, through repetition of expected “knightly” actions.

This *habitus* and its resulting social person of the “worthy knight” can occur in a vacuum no more than Criseyde’s own social persons, as previously explored, can. But while Criseyde’s social person necessitates supplication, the social person of Troilus (or Hector) is both “protector” and “hunter” and, therefore, requires the subordinated social person of others to maintain this status. Thus, Criseyde’s own roles as a “lover” but also as the “daughter of a traitor” and therefore “suppliant” become conflated, as her *habitus* serves Troilus’s (or Diomedes, or Hector’s) own *habitus*. The male proves himself against the female (what Fradenburg would call “a heroization of suffering *for*,” 590), and, in the cause of Chaucer’s revisions to the story, this

²⁵. Auerbach clarifies that this “self-realization” should not be mistaken for realism: “In the courtly romance the functional, the historically real aspects of class are passed over....Where it depicts reality, it depicts merely the colorful surface” (136). This “colorful surface,” however, is fraught with meanings as important as those behind the ritualized hunt, because both serve to both put on display and reinforce a certain social order. Thus, while the genre does not depict “reality” as such, “it does contain a class ethics which as such claimed and indeed attained acceptance and validity in this real and earthly world” (136).

relationship becomes conflated with the ways that the hunter proves himself against the hunted: Criseyde as a “domesticated animal” is made to also “willingly” adopt the *habitus* of the “hunted animal,” a process made manifest in *TC* through the natural subnarrative which reveals her circumscription and her victimization as prey in order to make manifest and indict this social network for the readers.²⁶

Thus, Criseyde must be considered as not only a “domesticated” animal but also as a “hunted animal” to understand more fully Chaucer’s natural sub-narrative. While we have already seen that Criseyde is “animalized” in a sense when Troilus is first shot by Love’s arrow and then himself watches huntsman-like the “pure wise of hire mevyng” (I.285), her animalization as *prey* becomes clearer when her story becomes conflated with that of Philomela’s, by way of an allusion to her mythic sister Procne.

The first reference to this mythic tale of sexual violence and metamorphoses occurs after Pandarus, having learned that Troilus is love-sick for Criseyde (Pandarus’s own niece), throws himself into the role of go-between with abandon. As Pandarus sleeps in bed,

The swalowe Proigne, with a sorrowful lay,

²⁶. While I am extending Crane’s theory to a symbolic reading of Criseyde, it is important to note that in terms of the literal hunt, Crane not only explains that this hunting shows “how completely the hunting party can understand and manipulate its natural world” but also qualifies that “ ‘control’ entails an *informed mastery* of the natural world, not just its violent domination”; in the case of hunting with hounds, she says, “it is the remarkable accessibility of the hounds, not their subordinate status but the degree to which humans can communicate with them and hunt in their company, that guarantees their prominence in this social ritual about knowing and interacting with animals” (115, original emphasis).

Whan morwen com, gan make hire waymentyng
 Whi she forshapen was; and evere lay
 Pandare abedde, half in a slomberynge,
 Til she so neigh hym made hire cheterynge
 How Tereus gan forth hire suster take,
 That with the noyse of hire he gan awake,
 And gan to calle, and dresse hym up to ryse,
 Remembryng hym his errand was to done
 From Troilus, and ek his grete emprise.” (II. 64-73)

After being so awakened, he departs to go plead Troilus’s case to his niece. Especially important here is that Procne’s (Proigne’s) call not only wakes Pandarus but leads to him rising and “remembering his errand”—to attempt to persuade his own niece to enter a relationship with Troilus. The “swallow Procne” does not merely sing any song, however; her song tells of “how Tereus gan forth hire suster take,” her sister being Philomela and the “taking” ending with Philomela’s rape and mutilation.

In the version written by Ovid in *The Metamorphoses*, this sexual violence is incredibly graphic and brutal. In the story, Procne, having married Tereus, begins to miss her sister Philomela, and sends Tereus to bring her back for a visit. On the way back with her, however, Tereus instead leads her into a cottage in the woods and assaults her. Her violation is abject; as Tereus rapes her, Ovid describes her as crying out for her family with fear like a lamb for slaughter:

atque ibi pallentem trepidamque et cuncta timentem
 et iam cum lacrimis, ubi sit germana, rogantem

includit fassusque nefas et virginem et unam
 vi superat frustra clamato saepe parente,
 saepe sorore sua, magnis super omnia divis.
 illa *tremet velut agna pavens*, quae *saucia* cani
 ore *excussa* lupi nondum sibi tuta videtur,
 utque *Columba* suo madefactis sanguine plumis
 horret adhuc *avidosue* timet, quibus haeserat, *ungues* (522-530, emphasis added).²⁷

(“and there, pale and trembling and all fear, begging with tears to know where her sister was, he shut her up. Then, openly confessing his horrid purpose, he violated her, just a weak girl and all alone, vainly calling, often on her father, often on her sister, but most of all upon the great gods. She *trembled like a frightened lamb*, which, *torn* and cast aside by a grey wolf, cannot yet believe that it is safe; and *like a dove which, with its blood all smeared* over its plumage, still palpitates with fright, still fears those *greedy claws* that have pierced it,” 325, emphasis added.)²⁸

The depiction invokes in particular a hunter/prey dichotomy, with Philomela described as a “frightened lamb” (*agna pavens*) which is “torn” (*saucia*) or a bloody dove (*Columba suo madefactis sanguine*) caught in “greedy claws” (*avidosue...ungues*). If this were not already

²⁷. All Latin quotes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* are from the Capps et. al. edition, G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1925.

²⁸. The English translation in this passage is quoted from Frank Justus Miller’s facing-page translation in The Loeb Classical Library edition, with numbers indicating pages instead of lines.

shocking enough, when she begins to condemn him for raping her and threatens to tell, Tereus cuts off her tongue, after which he “is said to have worked his lustful will again and again upon the poor mangled form” (327)” (*saepe sua lacerum repetisse libidine corpus*, 562). Ultimately, Philomela and her sister Procne have their (gruesome) revenge upon Tereus for this crime. In a twist recalling the story of Atreus, Procne kills her and Tereus’s son and serves him as dinner to Tereus. After discovering this, Tereus begins to chase after the women, who are transformed into birds as he himself is likewise transformed soon after. Ovid writes as Procne and Philomela flee from him, “As they fly from him you would think that the bodies of the two Athenians were poised on wings: they were poised on wings! One flies to the woods, the other rises to the roof” (335) (*corpora Cecropidum pennis pendere putares: / pendebant pennis. quarum petit altera silvas, / altera tecta subit*, 667-674). Tereus himself also becomes a bird, embodying his warlike anger: “Upon his head a stiff crest appears, and a huge beak stands forth instead of his long sword. He is the hoopoe, with the look of one armed for war” (335) (*Prominent inmodicum pro longa cuspidē rostrum; / Nomen epops volucris, facies armata videtur*, 673-4).

Given the nature of the story, this allusion to Philomela by way of her sister Procne, the swallow singing outside Pandarus’s window, sheds particularly disturbing light on Pandarus’s actions and intentions. What he remembers after being awakened by Procne’s song, after all, is that he is meant to “bring” Criseyde to Troilus, in a way. The sudden intrusion of the reminder that Philomela’s own “bringing” resulted in rape, by way of Procne’s almost Fury-like warning song (insofar as the Furies condemn in particularly criminals who violate their own kin) thus has the effect of making Pandarus’s intentions toward his niece dubious at best; his ultimate alignment, it seems, will be in serving Troilus, not in protecting his niece. Thus, when Pandarus later tries to convince Criseyde to “think wel that this is no gaude;...I am thyn em; the shame

were to me, / As wel as the, if that I sholde assente / Thorough myn abet that he thyn honour shente” (II.351-57), we already have considerable reason to see him as less than honest.²⁹

While Pandarus’s intentions are made dubious by the way Procne’s song of kin-violating-kin reminds him to soften up Criseyde for Troilus’s advances, Criseyde receives a visit from a bird of the same type that the violated Philomela becomes. Though Chaucer does not name the bird specifically as Philomela here, and in fact genders it as male, as Fradenburg points out (599), its appearance in this scene, given the allusion to Procne earlier in the book, seems important. Criseyde, having now heard from her Uncle Pandarus of Troilus’s desire for her, begins to sleep. As she does, “a nyghtyngale, upon a cedre grene, / Under the chamber wal ther as she ley, / Ful loude song ayein the moone shene, / Peraunter in his brides wise a lay / Of love, that made hire herte fressh and gay” (III.918-22). While the words here in isolation seem to create a pleasant scene, the use of a nightingale here should remind readers of the *previous reminder* lines ago that while the swallow is Procne, the nightingale is the raped Philomela.

²⁹. For a stark contrast to this reading, see Marvin Mudrick’s “Chaucer’s Nightingales.”

Mudrick’s analysis centers on the characters’ use of myth as a “screen against [their] anxieties and ...an index to them” (90). In reading this particular episode, he grants to Pandarus a degree of sensitivity by arguing that the incident occurs because of Pandarus’s guilt, the song “invad[ing] [his] dream to protect him...with the generalization that love...is cruel and ruinous” (90). In Criseyde’s case, he argues that “her particular bird, singing with its customary loveliness impervious to human crises, comes to her not out of the myth it shares with its sister the swallow...but out of the deferential orchestra that nature provides for lovers” (91). The birds, having served the purposes of the individual characters, “go on singing somewhere nevertheless, intact and unheard” (92).

Of this scene, Fradenburg further argues that the allusion here is significant as, once lulled asleep by this song, Criseyde has a dream of an “eagle who painlessly rips out her heart and leaves his behind,” arguing that it is “a simultaneous evocation and denial of violence” (599).³⁰ The passages leading up to the love scene, Fradenburg concludes, are “thus marked by a series of allusions to invasive violence and rape” (599). While she adds the additional argument that this fact’s “importance is nonetheless rendered completely ambiguous” (599), when considered in light of the previous instances of animalization and social circumscription made manifest by Chaucer in the ways already explored above, it would seem that these allusions are not so ambiguous as to be inaccessible.³¹

³⁰. For more (and widely varying) analyses of the eagle dream, which I leave largely untouched here as it has been so thoroughly explored by others, see also Ross 348-352 and Rowland 79-80.

³¹. Overall, Fradenburg hesitates to laud Chaucer for what she reads as only his *potential* purposeful uncovering and critiquing of the violence of his genre. She begins by criticizing literature in general for participation in “the heroization of suffering *for*,” seeing it as “one of the chief means of occluding the history of suffering and its relation to the history of violence” (590, original emphasis). This is an occlusion which she argues allowed “the aristocracy of the later Middle Ages” to keep the “implications [of suffering] from posing radical questions” (595). She then posits that Chaucer in *TC* specifically has perhaps crafted Criseyde as “bearer of a valued ability to mourn in a way that...permits survival, without celebrating renunciation and legitimating violence” (595). Ultimately, Fradenburg entertains the idea that perhaps “the undecidability of Chaucer’s text [is] designed not just to occlude violence but to make us ‘see’ its occlusion” (601), but stops short of crediting Chaucer with

Indeed, along these lines, scholar Patricia Ingham Clare counters Fradenburg by arguing that Chaucer throughout *TC* uses “equivocation, ambiguity, and troping” to “hel[p] us reconsider trauma and its representation as a literary act” (234). In regards to this particular scene, she argues that Procne’s song, heard earlier by Pandarus, is a “displaced voice from the wound” (of her sister) which signals “the collapse between subject and other. The wound swerves, moving toward its next victim” (236). Of the eagle dream which later results from Criseyde’s “hearing” this “wounded sister,” Ingham posits that it functions as “an artifact of Philomela’s violence and violence transformed” (238). Like Fradenburg, Ingham too muses that “the possibility of trauma, or rape, of silencing” is raised and then cut off (238), but adds an argument for the importance of considering how, through other “references from nature” and additional episodes, the story puts both “erasures” *and* trauma on display simultaneously. Thus, Ingham concludes that “the poignant rhetorical beauty of trauma...able to activate...the traumatic structure that constitutes...desire...can also and nonetheless prove enabling for an ethical sensibility that seeks to register history’s dangerous memory, its preoccupation with...its ‘process of forgetting’” (241). In this light, Chaucer’s use of natural and animal artistry to demonstrate Criseyde’s circumscription might itself be a manifestation of his own authorial “ethical sensibility.” By using the natural sub-narrative as an interlocutor, Chaucer can thus retroactively accuse versions like *Il Filostrato* of both “forgetting” or erasing the trauma done to Criseyde and of instead placing the blame on her without exploring how utterly pre-determined her story is.

After these scenes Pandarus’s attempts as a go-between ultimately find success, but tellingly, the scene in which Troilus and Criseyde physically enact their love contains another

this, dissatisfied that his “narrators...look on, but change nothing, and so perhaps can be said neither to do violence nor to prevent it, neither to hurt nor to rescue” (602).

natural allusion which symbolically parallels the male and female lovers to a hunting bird and its prey, respectively. While this dichotomy utilizes different birds than the previous story of Procne and Philomela, the relationship it depicts of the man and woman as “hunter” and “hunted” is similarly disturbing, particularly as it is evoked here in a love scene. Troilus, having been secretly brought into the bedroom where Criseyde is sleeping (in Pandarus’s house, where she is staying that night), takes her close in his arms. The narrator remarks, “What myghte or may the sely lark seye, / Whan that the sperhawk hath it in his foot?.../ Criseyde, which that felte hire thus itake, / As written clerkes in hire bokes olde, / Right as an aspes left she gan to quake, / Whan she hym felte hire in his armes folde” (III.1191-92; 1198-1201). Thus, as their love scene commences, Criseyde is once again “animalized” as a hunted bird caught by her bird-of-prey lover, in stark contrast to the scenes where she herself is depicted as a domesticized bird of prey. The intrusion of such metaphorical violence into the scene thus reveals again the genre’s betrayal of its female protagonists; as Sashi Nair remarks, of both the *sely lark* lines and her trembling, “Criseyde reveals the discontinuities between [the romance genre] and her social reality” (45). The love scene, it seems, reveals the true nature of her *habitus* and the primary social person it results in: a “lover,” yes, and a “wealthy widow,” certainly, but also, once again, a “beautiful endangered lady,” made so symbolically even in moments of intimacy.³²

³². In contrast, Mudrick reads the *sely lark* passage and the nightingale lines as mere simile for a Criseyde, who, like a nightingale (Mudrick conflates the two here), is “pointlessly ‘abashed’ by the harmless usual sounds of the night but recovering its confidence to sing out, “throw[s] off at last her fear of love and open[s] her heart to her lover” (93). Mudrick broaches the possibilities of other meanings of this imagery, but falls short of exploring their violent implications, concluding that Chaucer’s “respect for a diversity of appearances” is really a

This link between the sely-lark/spearhawk dichotomy and the Philomela/Tereus dichotomy through similar relationships, though with different birds, becomes even further reinforced a few lines later, as Fradenburg also points out, when Criseyde is compared to a nightingale. Still embraced by Troilus, Criseyde “as the newe abaysed nyghtyngale, / That stynteth first whan she bygynneth to synge, / ...and after siker doth hite vois out rynges, / Right so Criseyde, whan hire drede stente, / Opned hire herte and tolde hym hire entente” (III.1233-39). As Fradenburg argues, “It is well known that Chaucer in effect brought out Criseyde’s consent as *a problem*”(603); and indeed, in a scene where natural allusions already give us pause for consideration as to how much control Criseyde really has, this renewed association of Criseyde with a bird which not only might be hunted by larger birds of prey but which more specifically again recalls the violated Philomela continues to disturb and question the degree of agency Criseyde has.

It is worth noting that the scene can be read as troubling without being read literally as rape. Some criticism has done the latter; Fradenburg, for example, argues that “the specter of rape is raised by Troilus himself” when he says “‘Now yeldeth yow, for other bote is non!’” (599; III.1208). However, given the ways that Criseyde is socially predestined, made a “willing subject” long before this encounter, the issue of consent also far precedes this specific scene. Thus, without being seen as literal rape in the moment, it nevertheless disturbs because it would

“perpetual grace of judgment which will not take...one aspect for the thing itself, or ignore the final isolation...of the human spirit” (93-4). Ironically, Mudrick’s interest in reading in *TC* an isolation of the characters, and of the readers from them, seems to result in an *over-isolation* of the repeated Philomela allusions, a decontextualization that obscures how they work in conjunction with each other.

seem that such a relationship in general can be expressed only in terms of “the hunter” and the “hunted.”³³ To put it another way, consent under duress does not negate an act as a crime, but even if Criseyde does not actively feel duress, this does not erase what we have already seen: that she has been interpellated as an “endangered lady” (Chism 57) who must submit to a patriarchal master-narrative which demands that one of her social roles be a “lover.”

Along with placing the issue of consent much earlier than just this scene itself, it is equally important to avoid analyzing these scenes and the various instances of animalization in isolation from each other, for it is by aggregate that they tell the story of Criseyde’s tragedy. Considered apart, things such as Criseyde’s trembling in the love scene can be seen as merely *performance* of fear, the “damsel-in-distress” (or “fearful virgin”) role used as a type of seduction, as Delany, for instance, argues.³⁴ Such isolation, however, overlooks the fact that

³³. As Fradenburg herself later amends, “Troilus and Criseyde discover here that ‘sexual violence is not merely an unhappy accident that might be avoided, but is a destiny written into the very premises of socially constructed reality’ ...though not in such a way as to become ‘aware’ of their circumstances” (600). She quotes here Winkler, John J. “The Education of Chloe: Erotic Protocols and Prior Violence.” *Rape and Representation*. 15-34. (25).

³⁴. Delany sees the scene as a performance not of the violence inherent in sexual relationships within a patriarchal master-narrative, but rather as a performance by Criseyde, which becomes part of Delany’s overall argument that Chaucer attempts to alienate the readers from the characters so that they accept the importance of transcending both love and the mortal real. Whereas in Troilus’s case she argues that this is done primarily through derogatory animal simile, in Criseyde’s case she argues that it is role-reversal (literal, not symbolic), with Criseyde’s taking charge of the love affair, that leads to alienation. Delany points out

although Criseyde indeed adopts “deliberate bodily posture[s]” (Fowler 12) at times, repeated themes in *TC* such as the natural sub-narrative and the threat that Criseyde shall be “brennen, fel and bones” (I. 91) show that her fear is on the whole very well-grounded.³⁵

While such isolated readings risk sharing with Criseyde a misperception that there is no real danger, critics such as Caitlin Quinn-Lang come closer to identifying the disturbing connotations of the natural sub-narrative, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Even here, however, caution is needed, for while Quinn-Lang points out that Chaucer’s use of bird imagery in conjunction with allusions to Ovidian myth “echo[es] a theme of treacherous and

that shortly before the *sely lark* lines, Troilus has fainted from fear of rejection, leading her to argue, in stark contrast to Fradenburg or Ingham, that “by the time we come to the conventional image of pursuer and prey we wonder who is the hawk and who the *sely lark*. Since Chaucer’s management of the narrative has virtually destroyed the conventional romance (and social!) sex-role allocation, the image is exposed as rigid and trite; simultaneously, it exposes the deficiencies of human reality” (493). Thus, Delany condemns what she sees in Criseyde as a “milking” of fear as no more than a “flirtatious feminine strategy” (494). In this reading, it seems, Criseyde as the *sely lark* is only a turn of phrase overruled by what she sees as a woman in (real) control, flexing her agency through her flirtatiousness and sexuality.

³⁵. Fradenburg argues that this threat “is no fantasy of pagan barbarism...As Gravdal remarks of medieval French law: ‘Slow to protect and quick to punish, this society gives every sign that it values female life less than male’” (596-97).

sorrowful love” (38),³⁶ the main object of her accusation of treachery is primarily love itself and not the individual players. Thus, she remarks of the passage when Criseyde falls asleep to the nightingale’s song that it “sings not only of love’s bliss, but of the dangers of love and of its transitory nature, two themes which will figure prominently in Troilus’s and Criseyde’s relationship” (40). While in agreement, I would add that it is equally important to consider that *within* this negative view of transitory love is an indictment of patriarchal love in particular. Love may well be doomed to agony, but the lesson need not necessarily be limited to one which *only* stresses the importance of rejecting the mortal (and lover’s) realm as one which is laced with pitfalls and sorrow and therefore must be transcended. Thus, while Quinn-Lang concludes that through bird imagery in particular, “Chaucer is able to allude subtly to the misfortune awaiting *the lovers* in *Troilus and Crisedye* in specific and to the dubious nature of temporal love

³⁶. For instance, Quinn-Lang acutely notes the importance particularly of the bird and Philomela allusions I have explored above. For example, she argues that “when the gentle nightingale of love’s tradition is juxtaposed with the tale of its mythic counterpart, the ravished Philomela, the song of love it sings to Criseyde takes on a decidedly disquieting note” (38). Likewise, she notes that “that Pandarus should be awakened by Procne’s tale of kindred betrayal, rape, mutilation, and murder serves as both a negative omen for the lovers and as a reflection on Pandarus’s own lack of ethics regarding his blood-relative, Criseyde” (38). In yet another example, she also considers when Criseyde falls asleep to the nightingale’s song, arguing that “the nightingale which sings to Criseyde of love and who influences her on Troilus’s behalf also has a dark side. The nightingale sings not only of love’s bliss, but of the dangers of love and of its transitory nature, two themes which will figure prominently in Troilus’s and Criseyde’s relationship” (40)

in general” (46, emphasis added), an even more specific indictment of the patriarchal master-narrative’s repeated circumscription of the female as an endangered love-object can be found *within* this “generality.” While observations such as Quinn-Lang’s are thus very important, an analysis which takes into consideration the natural sub-narrative but limits its search to only general warnings against love has a similar effect of not exploring the sub-narrative at all: like Delany’s interpretation of animal imagery as derogatory, the “sins” of the patriarchal master-narrative against Criseyde *specifically* become lost when the entire world or love in general is taken as the ultimate object of Chaucer’s indictment.

Thus, if the full significance of the animal imagery and vocabulary with its own natural and circumscriptive connotations is to be explored, the manifold instances that have already revealed Criseyde to in fact be a subject interpellated into “willingly” adopting such an agency-less subject position must not be forgotten. Most importantly for this discussion, the “animalization” of Criseyde as the prey in the love-as-hunting trope must be considered *specifically* in terms of seeing Criseyde *as* such a victim and not merely generally that “love hurts.” This is particularly so because, just as the episodes which describe Criseyde as a “domesticated” animal serve to show us that her agency is only illusory (in the same way that her position as a “wealthy widow” merely grants her an “independence” which in fact *depends* on the protection of patriarchal figureheads such as Hector), Criseyde’s depiction as a “hunted” animal when the trope is employed traditionally reveals that she has only the “choice” of submitting to potential violence. Enactment of this “choice” simply solidifies her own position as an “endangered lady” (Chism 57) and her male lover’s position as the dominant lover and hunter.

This conflation is particularly evident in yet another instance of animalization leading to violence done against the female figured as a love-object to be “hunted.” In addition to the

scenes already explored, equally troubling are the invocations Chaucer writes into the mouth of Troilus, which indict the traditional role of the male pursuer not only by undercutting his heroism but also by revealing that Troilus's intentions may be as dubious as Pandarus's.³⁷ Before the "consummation scene" containing both the *sely lark* line and the renewed association of Criseyde with the nightingale/Philomela, Troilus prays to Venus for help—a move certainly not atypical or unexpected in this genre, but the *content* of his prayer becomes questionable under examination. He praises Venus, noting that "Ye Joves first to thilke effects glade, /...Comeveden, and amorous him made /...And in a thousand forms down hym sente" (III.15-20). While the proem might seem a typical invocation of Love, fitting for a "love story," Jove's "romantic history" includes a litany of sexual assaults. As Barney explains, "Among the *thousand forms* Jupiter assumed for his rapes of human women are those of a bull to Europa, a golden shower to Danae, a swan to Leda" (149fn6, original emphasis).

What does it mean, then, that the book which contains both the consummation scene and the scene in which Pandarus "his arm al sodeynly...thriste / Under Criseyde's nekke, and at the last hire kyste" (III.1574-5) begins with a reference to Jove's metamorphosed rapes? The purpose perhaps is to remind readers again of the rhetoric of violence behind seemingly benign conventions, as is done with the careful deployment of the love-as-hunting trope and other animalization. The effect only increases when the invocation is repeated moments before the sexual encounter. This time, Troilus calls upon Jove directly, exclaiming, "'O Jove ek, for the love of faire Europe, / The which in forme of bole away thow feette, / Now help!'" (III.722-3).³⁸

³⁷. See again Delany's argument that Chaucer uses animal similes to undercut Troilus (492).

³⁸. Though here I am focusing in particular on the Jove-bull reference and Troilus's repeated conflation with the bull, the remainder of this invocation is equally disturbing in terms of

Thus, the passage clearly references Jove's "love" for Europa, but it is a love in which Europa is made powerless by his abduction and rape of her. The association between Troilus and Jove-as-bull persists into Book IV, when Troilus, grieved that Criseyde must leave Troy, "right as the wylde *bole* bygynneþ sprynge, / Now her, now ther, idarted to the herte" (IV.239-40, emphasis added). The Jove-bull invocations thus function much like the allusions to the Philomela myth, revealing Criseyde's lack of agency through stark comparison to her would-be lover as he invokes and embodies a deity who in mythology often plays the part of a divine rapist.

The Jove-bull invocations thus combine with Criseyde's tragically false view of herself as *unteyd in lusty leese*; with inversions of the hunting trope to reinforce her "enmuwement"; and with the figuring of her as a hunted (and violated) animal. The effect is already staggering, and yet, towards the end of *TC*, another bird makes an appearance. Fretting over Criseyde's return to Troy, Troilus reports to Pandarus that "'wele I fele, by my maladie / And by my dremes now and yore ago, / Al certeynly that I mot nedes dye. / The owl eek, which that hette Escaphilo, / Hath after me shright al thise nyghtes two'" (V.316-20). The owl is an ominous bird portending death; as Barney explains, "in the *Legend of Good Women* Chaucer writes that the owl *prophete is of wo and of myschaunce*" (329fn6, original emphasis).

The warning is often interpreted as exclusively applicable to Troilus,³⁹ but this is perhaps the result of a misperception shared by Troilus and his readers. All that is really known is what

divine rape. It continues: "'O Mars, thow with thi bloody cope, / For love of Cipris, thow me nought ne lette! / O Phebus, think whan Dane hireselven shette / Under the bark, and laurer wax for drede; Yet for hire love, I help now at this nede!'" (III.722-28).

³⁹. Rowland argues that "Troilus is correct in interpreting it as a foreboding of evil despite

Pandarus' contention" (38). Quinn-Lang agrees, noting a connection between the owl and the

Troilus reports: he has heard an owl shrieking and assumes that it cries to him. The owl, however, could function equally as a messenger to Criseyde. Quinn-Lang argues that the reference to “Escaphilo” (Ascalaphus) recalls the story of Proserpina (Persephone). She notes a parallel between Criseyde and Proserpina, and argues that the abduction of the latter by Hades is but yet another allusion to “unnatural” and ill-fated love (45-6). The implication, however, is perhaps even more specific than just that their love is doomed. In the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid explains that Proserpina’s mother pleads with Jove to arrange her return. He agrees, on the condition that ““in the lower-world no food has as yet touched her lips”” (275; *nullos contigit illic / ore cibos*, 531-2). However,

the girl had already broken her fast, and while, simple child that she was, she wandered in the trim gardens, she had plucked a purple pomegranate hanging from a bending bough, and peeling off the yellowish rind, she had eaten seven of the seeds. (275)

ieiunia virgo / solverat et, cultis dum simplex errat in hortis, / poeniceum curva decerpserat arbore pomum / sumptaque pallenti septem de cortice grana / presserate ore suo (534-38)

Ascalaphus reveals this, dooming her to remain. In revenge, she “changed the informer into an ill-omened bird...he has become a loathsome bird, prophet of woe, the slothful screech-owl, a bird of evil omen to men” (275-77; *fecit avem...venturi nuntia luctus, / ignavus bubo, dirum mortalibus omen*, 543; 549-50). The story thus illustrates Proserpina’s loss of agency—her only option is to take revenge upon the man who ensures her stay. While she is allowed to return for a few months each year, she can do so neither permanently nor on her own terms—her *fyn*, so to

Furies: both were present during Procne and Tereus’s consummation (46), and therefore there is a parallel between their cursing of the couple and of Troilus (43).

speak, has been irrevocably altered by events which are set in motion by a storyline which privileges male lust over female agency. The owl's ominous screeching therefore applies *especially* to Criseyde as a warning of her entrapment: just as Proserpina cannot return permanently from the underworld, neither can Criseyde from the Greek camp.

The owl thus joins the other ominous natural imagery that reappears throughout *TC*. Their combined implications are even further revealed unwittingly by Pandarus—but perhaps quite intentionally for Chaucer—when he vehemently rejects the significance of both the owl and Troilus's boar-dream:

Wel worthe of dremes ay thise olde wives,
And treweliche ek augurye of thise fowles,
For fere of which men wenen lese here lyves,
As revenes qualm, or shrichyng of thise owles.

To trowen on it bothe fals and foul is. (V.379-83)

Quinn-Lang accurately notes that “the image of the owl as the harbinger of death's tidings is too deeply rooted in Classical literature and superstition for Troilus to take any comfort from Pandarus's arguments” (43), but the implications are even greater—Pandarus is more than just unconvincing. Just as the narrative reversals in *TC* force the readers to rethink what they have read, so Chaucer now asks his readers to do exactly what Pandarus tells Troilus *not* to do: to reconsider the darker allegations the natural sub-narrative makes of the inherent circumscription and violence in the genre's traditional tropes. Chaucer thus reveals that when Pandarus attempts to occlude the significance of animal imagery, he also attempts, as he does with his “falcon” Troilus, to “hood” the *readers*—but if he is believed, it is Criseyde who will remain “hooded” in scholarship.

Through Pandarus, Chaucer thus brings the reader to consider again near the end of *TC* the ways that the natural sub-narrative signifies Criseyde's circumscription within her own *muwe*, first in Troy and then in the Greek camp, for the self-assurance which she continues to articulate cannot square with the reality of this "*lusty leese*." But this revelation of the misogyny inherent in the story which has come down to Chaucer does not, in the end, change the course of the plot—Criseyde never returns to Troy; seems to pledge herself to Diomedes; and Troilus suffers almost martyr-like, dying and finally transcending the mortal realm. This does not, however, necessitate that Chaucer's experiment with natural subversions be read as a failure. Perhaps, even, it *must* fail to save Criseyde from the fate that Boccaccio sets out and authors like Henryson later inflate, for in doing so it further reveals the inexorability of the misogynistic circumscription which "snares" her into her role of animalized love-object. She is caught by the dictates of the meta-narrative which has given birth to her in much the same way that the men in the story itself—Pandarus, Troilus, and Diomedes—continually attempt to ensnare her in their love schemes. It is also because of this failure that in critical analyses of *TC* a medium can be found between scholars like Fradenburg who seem ambivalent at best about how Chaucer "makes us 'see' [violence's] occlusion" (601) and scholars who read his version of Criseyde much more idealistically,⁴⁰ for in both using and subverting traditional artistry, he can both produce a tale likely to be popularly received and critique that very tale at the same time.

In addition, the failure of the natural sub-narrative to change Criseyde's fate further allows Chaucer's unique version of the story to overwhelm the reader with a sense of determinism—but it is a determinism which is *human* as well as divine. As much as "Fate" and "Fortune" are evoked repeatedly in the story, it is equally the employment of *human* free will

⁴⁰. See again Valerie Ross's argument in "Believing Cassandra" (note 2 above).

and how it circumscribes others which disturbs. As Fradenburg posits, “If the question of engendered consent to violence impels the narrative of *Troilus and Criseyde*, then one of the crucial things that does the work of psychoanalysis in this poem is precisely the poem’s reconsideration of the motifs of courtly love” (602). Both nature and the social order would appear of course to be “natural”—not made or tainted by man, but made rather by god, and therefore “predestined,” set, unchangeable. But, by “reconsidering” the “motifs of courtly love” particularly through a natural sub-narrative which further manifests Criseyde’s social circumscription, the object of “reconsideration” might be made even broader—for by couching such a debate on the complex issue of free will versus predestination in such terminology, Chaucer may be attempting to work out, “under cover,” the ways he himself is circumscribed as an author, as I shall explore in my final chapter.

Chapter Three:

Free Will and Determination in the *Lusty Leese*

The true extent of Criseyde's predestination begins to manifest in the latter half of *Troilus and Criseyde* as things fall apart for the lovers. After the treason of Calkas which opens the story and which leaves Criseyde to assume the subject position of the "beautiful endangered lady" in constant need of protection, the Trojan war crouches in the background for much of the action as the love affair progresses. While it resonates greatly in Criseyde's actions, as discussed in my first chapter, and while it is mentioned as a backdrop to the actions of the lovers on occasion (such as when we learn that it is in "time of truce" that Troilus goes hunting), it is not until Book IV that the war again invades the story. When it does, the incompatibility of Criseyde's various social persons, until now carefully balanced, comes to the fore—and, particularly, the role of "lover" as her central social identity can no longer hold. Once parliament overrides Hector's objections and approves the trade of Criseyde for Antenor, the previous clues in the narrative as to Criseyde's social circumscription accrue and manifest in the few choices left to her. Once in the Greek camp, the fears which have already driven her social-person balancing act are simply relocated and redefined, and the source of potential protection (and threat) now becomes Diomedes. The end, though aesthetically lengthy with pathos, comes chronologically relatively quickly. After writing a final letter to Troilus, Criseyde fades from the text, and not long after, Troilus throws himself into battle in his grief and dies, ultimately transcending the mortal realm to the eighth sphere of heaven. The narrator advises his readers to "thynketh al nys but a faire, / This world that passeth soone as floures faire" (V.1840-1841), and the final lines are in prayer: "So make us, Jesus, for this mercy, digne, / For love of mayde and moder thyn benigne. / Amen" (V.1868-70).

Perhaps because it is Troilus and this prayer on which the narrator focuses at the very end of the tale, criticism too has been often concerned with exploring the ways other elements of the narrative support this call for transcendence, often in a Troilus-centric way. However, just before this ending is an equally important passage concerning Criseyde. Worried that his female readers will be angry with him for his depiction of Criseyde, the narrator beseeches “that for that gilt she [female readers] be nat wroth with me. / Ye may hire gilt in other bokes se” (V.1775-76). While this line alone may seem simply to write off the problem on Chaucer’s sources, further explication comes in the next stanza when he says, “N’y sey nat this al oonly for thise men, / But moost for *wommen that bitraised be / Thorugh false folk*—God yeve hem sorwe, amen!— / That with hire grete wit and subtitle / Bytraise yow. And this comveveth me / To speke, and in effect yow alle I preye, / *Beth war of men*, and herkneth what I seye!” (V.1779-85, emphasis added). Thus, before the seemingly masculine-centric ending comes a strong warning *to women* about the betrayal by “false folk,” specifically “men,” which importantly can be taken either generally or in a gendered sense.

Thus, though Troilus rises above the mortal world and laughs, Criseyde perhaps is so “betrayed” by the actions of men that she is doomed like Persephone to remain, in contrast, below. With a consideration of Criseyde’s “endangered” status, as discussed above, already in mind, the warning may seem obvious. Criseyde has certainly been betrayed not only by Hector, who had vowed that her “body shal men save” (I.122), but also by the parliament which overrides him, a turn of events itself described like a betrayal. The narrator points out first that “the noyse of peple up stirte thane at ones” to demand approval of the exchange, and then laments that “cloude of error let hem to discerne / What best is” (V.200-1). Importantly, he adds as well that because of their demands, “Criseyde, which that nevere dide hem scathe, / Shal now

no lenger in hire blisse bathe” (V.207-8)—they “wrong,” or betray, her despite she herself never having done them wrong.

The question, then, becomes this: why, if Chaucer’s narrator acknowledges that Criseyde is “guilty” (as least according to “other books”), does he likewise include a gendered warning about the betrayal of men, particularly applicable to Criseyde’s specific experiences as seen in my first two chapters, just before the Troilus-centric (and religious) ending? And why, furthermore, is the natural sub-narrative used as a metaphorical vehicle to demonstrate further the reason such a warning is needed? Why, essentially, does he not change Criseyde’s fate?

It is impossible, perhaps, to come to any one answer; to do so might in fact violate the author’s intentional ambiguity and apparent delight in calling readers to judge events for themselves. It is possible, however, to come to one possible answer by considering in conjunction three things: Criseyde’s narrative (as explored above); Chaucer’s own authorial anxiety; and the larger debates over free will and determinism which also have a dominant role in the story. By expressing Criseyde as so generically determined and thus perhaps indicting the master narrative which has come down to him, Chaucer might himself be resisting *authorial* determinism. In doing so, he utilizes subversive tropes to critique both the genre and philosophical claims that humans are without free will, all while couching theological controversy in natural terms—for it is human (and particularly masculine) “free will,” metaphorically expressed through natural imagery in particular within *TC*, which shapes the milieu of both Criseyde’s and his own world, and his own authorial free will which makes debate possible.

In this endeavor, animalization and spatial words with natural connotations such as *leese* and *mewe* function in many ways like literary artifacts which, rediscovered and uniquely

employed, add new light to an old story. The implications are particularly social, both within the frame of *TC* itself (for the characters) and for Chaucer's contemporary world as well. To return again to the Bourdieu-ian terminology deployed in both my introduction and first chapter, if Chaucer's source material is taken as a kind of orthodoxic force, Chaucer's many revisions which manifest Criseyde's circumscription (particularly in comparison to Boccaccio's rather blunt misogyny) function in a way as heterodox resistance to this particular vein of literary history. Christine Chism's arguments about the romance genre are likewise applicable when she writes that its "formulaic style helps give the idea of social convention in these romances an abiding force, but that does not mean that those conventions are not questionable.... Oftentimes romances will push their conventions... to the point of complete incredulity in order to implicate readers in their own acceptance and provoke questions" (62). Put another way, Chaucer's unique employment of nature and animal tropes resists and interrogates not only the tropes themselves, but also the genre which they help sustain, and the authors and audiences that utilize or enjoy them.

In particular, while until now I have explored how this resistance manifests especially in the portrayal of Criseyde's milieu and circumstances, it also manifests in the many added narrative lines and character monologues directly concerning free will, predestination (or divine determinism), and the tension between the two. While I ultimately contend that the two are not completely dichotomous (as would critics such as Sashi Nair, who I will explore further below), pausing to explore how exactly Chaucer has added this debate into his revisions of the story is important for understanding how it also relates to Criseyde's portrayal.

One of the many changes Chaucer makes to *Il Filostrato* is the added recurrence of events or dialogue touching on the issue of how much free will humankind has if it is predestined

by an omniscient and omnipotent God. Even in the opening Palladium scene, he changes the order of events which lead to Troiolo/Troilus falling in love. In *Il Filostrato*, the narrative stresses Troiolo's evaluative decision-making process. The narrator declares that Troiolo, having mocked others who are visibly in love at the festival, will be "pierced...more deeply than any of the others" by Love (27). Indeed, "it so happened that his wandering glance pierced through the throng and fixed upon the place where the lovely Criseida, in dark clothing beneath a white veil, was standing among the other ladies" (27). He is pleased first with her mannerism, for "with one arm she had drawn her mantle away from her face, thus making more room for herself and keeping the crowd at some distance," and then her looks, "which he thought worth far more praise than any of the others; and he took the greatest pleasure in gazing past the rest to look at her bright eyes and angelic face" (27). Thus, Troiolo seems to first notice, then deliberately look over and evaluate, Criseyde, finding himself increasingly pleased with her. The action may be initiated by Love, but Troiolo at least feels some degree of agency as he surveys her. The narrator concludes that "he who shortly before had been so wisely censuring others did not perceive that Love lurked with his arrows within the beams of those lovely eyes...and he did not notice the arrow that flew towards his heart until the very moment it struck him" (27). Thus it is that after the festival, "he did not leave it as freely and cheerfully as he had entered, but he left it pensively and more deeply in love than he had believed possible" (27).

In contrast, when Chaucer's Troilus is shot by the God of Love, the effects seem to be out of his control. The narrator first laments that "This Troilus is clomben on the staire, / And litel weneth that he moot descenden; / But alday failleth thing that fooles wenden" (I.215-17). So shot, he "wax sodeynly moost subgit unto love," even though he had "wende nothing hadde had swich mygth / Ayeyns his wille that shuld his herte sterve" (I.227-28). Thus, despite his own will,

Troilus appears to be initiated into love (and ultimately lovesickness), and as discussed in my second chapter, his own gaze eventually lands on Criseyde as she becomes his love object.

But while this opening scene would seem to imply that there is no free will, or at least that it is limited, seeing how Troilus appears to be so inevitably determined by the God of Love's arrow, elsewhere in *TC* the issue is more problematic. At times, in fact, the changes to the story seem to imply that Chaucer writes into the story a belief that some of what humankind blames on "Fate" is the result of the execution of *human free will*, consequences of which we ignore or would rather not admit. For instance, Chaucer does not maintain all of Boccaccio's references to fate. To return yet again to the early scene of "love at first sight," there is a seemingly important omission of Fate in Chaucer's description of the festival. It is a small difference; while Boccaccio writes that "the Trojan elders arranged for the *ill-fated Palladium* to be paid its customary honours; and this festival was one that ladies and knights also gladly attended" (26, emphasis added), Chaucer writes simply that "to the temple, in al hire beste wise, / In general ther went many wight, / To herkennen of Palladions servyce" (I.162-164). It seems curious at first that Chaucer would remove this ominous descriptor, emphasize as he does (more so than Boccaccio) tragedy in his tale, as well as philosophical issues of free will versus predestination. A possible reason, however, might be that Chaucer puts more stock in the power of free will than his predecessors. While one can assume that Boccaccio might refer to the Palladian as "ill-fated" because it is the later theft of the palladian by Odysseus and Diomedes that ensures the downfall of the city (Barney 235fn4). More importantly, in some versions, it is the Trojan Antenor, the very same who in this tale is traded for Criseyde, who allows them into the city. Simply referring to it as "ill-fated," however, occludes the cause of this turn of event by couching it in a divine plan. By removing the descriptor "ill-fated" in his version, Chaucer perhaps refuses to accept that

this turn of events is simply “fated” by a higher power, subtly implying instead that it results directly from man’s exercise of free will.

The debate of the degree of humans free will within a divine plan more straightforwardly comes to the fore in Book IV, when Troilus, grieving in a temple over Criseyde’s impending departure, declares his belief that ““forsight of divine purveyaunce / Hath seyn alwey me to forgon Criseyde, / Syn God seeth every thyng, out of douuance, / And hem disponyth, thorough his ordinaunce, / In hire merites sothly for to be, / As they shul comen by predestyne”” (961-66). Thus, at the outset of his monologue, Troilus declares first that his sorrow must have already been fated by divine predestination. However, he quickly becomes confused, for in the next stanza, he outlines the debate as such: “But natheles, allas, whom shal I leeve? / For ther ben grete clerkes many oon / That destine thorough arguments preve; / And some men seyn that nedely there is noon / But that fre chois is yeven us everychon”” (IV.967-71). The debate is thus essentially this: does divine omnipotence cancel out free will? Does free will dominate? Or is there some middle ground in which free will can operate with a divine plan?

It is a debate in which both Troilus and Chaucer himself, through his revisions and narrative strategies in *TC*, seem to take part. Troilus’s ambivalence on the topic, on the one hand, expresses itself in his subsequent debate over causality, determinism, and free will. Struggling with “wheither that the prescience of God is / The certeyn cause of the necessite / Of thynges that to comen ben, parde, / Or if necessite of thyng comynge / Be cause certeyn of the purveyinge”” (IV.1011-15), Troilus gives as an example a man sitting in a chair. On the one hand, he muses, if you see a man sitting in a chair and deem that he is, in fact, sitting in a chair, you would certainly be correct (IV.1024-26). The crux for Troilus is what impels the sitting. For him, both the sitting and the observation of the sitting are predestined mutually (“by necessite”) (IV.1034-36), so that

while the man doesn't necessarily sit *because* he is observed to be sitting by others, the necessity of the sitting and the subsequent observation are the same. Thus, he concludes that free will is destroyed, for "bihoveth it nedfully / That thing to come be purveyde, trewely, / Or ells, thynges that purveyed be, / That they bitiden by necessite" (IV.1054-59). In other words, because God "purveys" all, events must be predestined by God, as it is an "abusioun...to seyn / That fallyng of the thynges temporal / Is cause of Goddes prescience eternal" (IV.1060-62). Troilus accepts that free will is largely precluded by divine predestination, as canon declares that God foresees all and that it would be heretical to suggest that what God foresees depends on human free will.

On the other hand, for Chaucer, the debate additionally manifests in the many ways that his portrayal of Criseyde's milieu exposes what all is occluded when divine predestination takes the blame. While the text itself seems to predestine Criseyde when the narrator explains that he will write of "the double sorwes... / Of Troilus in lovyng of Criseyde, / And how that she forsook hym er she deyde" (I.54-6), the ways Chaucer portrays her circumscription leading up to this fate complicates a determinist view such as Troilus's by revealing that the predestination is the result of human action and not only divine will.

Thus, overall Chaucer interrogates dichotomous views of free will and predestination by articulating the tensions between them through these scenes and monologues. Such a debate, however, was of course not simply literary in Chaucer's time, and given the contemporary fusion of religion and politics, was perhaps not so lightly done, as the debate was also important theologically and as participation in it could have important ramifications especially for a public figure. In a historical context, physical punishment of heresy, such as the continental example of Marguerite Porete, demonstrated all too well the effect of transgressing limits of authority,

especially when it concerned preaching. It is understandable, then, that any public figures, including authors, might hesitate to articulate a point of view on a topic such as predestination.

A combination of this religious anxiety and more secular authorial anxiety works its way into many lines in *Troilus and Criseyde* from early in the story. In the opening lines of Book II, for instance, this anxiety can be seen in two ways. For one, the narrator couches his story in the authority of history. Invoking Cleo, the muse of history, the narrator declares that “Me nedeth here noon other art to use. / Forwhi to every love I me excuse, / That of no sentiment I this endite, / But out of Latyn in my tonge it write” (II. 11-14). Secondly, he adds that as this is “history,” he is not to be blamed if it does not sit well with his audience, explaining that “Wherefore I nyl have neither thank ne blame / Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely, / Disblameth me if any word be lame, / For as myn auctour seyde, so sey I” (II.15-18). Chaucer’s narrator here portrays himself as a dutiful reporter, so faithful to history that he is willing to sacrifice aesthetic and audience satisfaction for accuracy.

On the one hand, Chaucer’s narrators are famously playful and tongue-in-cheek with the use of such seemingly blunt statements. The meaning, however, transcends jest, for so using the protection of the “Latin tongue” and its history paves the way for him to deviate repeatedly from his sources in regard to not only plot or even critique of generic master narratives, but also, and more riskily, to insert his own take on theological debates concerning predestination. By firstly and repeatedly claiming the authority of history and then deviating from it, Chaucer thus paves the way for his own authorial freedom to explore such controversy for himself, all while “couching” the nuances of this debate in the terms of the natural sub-narrative. Such veiling of

his arguments ultimately allows a “safer” exploration of theological topics by manipulating the romance genre instead of drafting a blunter philosophical treatise.⁴¹

However, while this debate on the one hand sounds strictly theological, it also has secular connotations which function on two levels. This is at the level of the story itself, seen in the ways that the topic of free will ties into Chaucer’s exploration of Criseyde’s agency, networks, and circumscription. The second level in turn becomes the meta-level of *authorship*, in which Chaucer expresses the anxiety of authority and resists rote regurgitation of literary precedents. In other words, adding a subversive natural sub-narrative into the story can be seen as an attempt to resist the genre’s interpellation of authors (through the pressure of authority) in a way that itself shows exercising of (authorial) free will. By thus manifesting and revealing Criseyde’s circumscription—leaving her fate unchanged but revealing how it is brought about by others and showing how the masculine master narrative thus strips of her of agency—Chaucer aligns himself with his character to reveal and critique such circumscription.⁴²

⁴¹. See also Chism’s argument that romance is a particularly effective vehicle for such exploration. She writes that romance’s

mythic, estranged, ‘once-upon-a-time’ mode of telling can actually provide ways of coming to grips with difficult cultural problems—monarchial acquisitiveness, legal corruption, the insecurities of representation and display, commercialism, aristocratic feud—from *safer or more elucidating distances*....The genre serves audiences who need simultaneously to be reassured by the traditional and gripped by the urgent and imminent. (57, emphasis added)

⁴². Valerie Ross, in “Believing Cassandra,” likewise argues that Chaucer aligns himself with Criseyde, but Ross does so by claiming that Chaucer *imbues* her *with* agency, whereas I argue

Similarly, in “When *Remedia Amoris* Fails,” James Palmer explores the intersection of this theological debate and the portrayal of lovesickness and its potential cures in *Troilus and Criseyde*. He argues that through his careful use of “medical” cures for love-sickness in *TC* when it comes to Troilus, Chaucer is able to supplement a larger goal of proving to his readers the importance of believing in one’s own free will (versus subscribing solely to the notion of Fate or determinism). Palmer begins by tracing the history of the treatment of “lovesickness” as a literal “disease,” looking at medical and other authors such as Ovid, Galen, and Constantine the African. Through this history, Palmer notes an evolution of two main approaches to “curing” it: one which takes a more “materialist/determinist” approach through cures such as intercourse, eating, or drinking wine and which “assume[s]...that the patient is out of control of his own destiny,” and another approach which reinforces the idea of “free will,” insofar as such cures

that he does so by sympathetically portraying her as circumscribed by her milieu. In addition, Sashi Nair, who I explore more fully below, argues that

it is possible to locate the moments at which Chaucer’s manipulations of Boccaccio’s text create the impression of Criseyde’s agency, but this is not where interpretation ends; rather it is vitally important that Criseyde’s agency is situated both as that which is constructed by the author, and as the ‘effect’ of that construction, where the latter is grounded in the knowledge brought to bear upon the text by the reader. (40)

Finally, Fradenburg also notes a potential alignment, but more broadly between the threats leveled at Criseyde and the dangers of Chaucer’s contemporary England itself. She explains that “there was a great fear of invasion (Allmand 9, 11)—a fear of perforation which seems, in Chaucer’s poem, to be displaced onto Criseyde in the form of her anxieties, her ambiguous loyalties, her uncertain nationality, the general fragility of her borders” (598).

involve choosing actively to change one's mood by participating in "storytelling...[,] conversing with friends...and listening to music" (305).⁴³ In essence, the difference concerns "treating symptoms" in the former case versus "curing" in the second case, wherein the "treatment" approach assumes that the causal situation itself is unchangeable, and the "curing" approach in contrast "emphasize[s] human reason over bodily functions, thereby encouraging the exercise of the will in ethical ways" (293).

Keeping in mind both this dualistic distinction and his additional observation that in *TC* the languages of love and religion become conflated in the mouths of Troilus and Pandarus especially (304), Palmer argues that by showing both that "materialist/determinist" cures (i.e., intercourse with Criseyde) fail Troilus and that he refuses to attempt any other cures, Chaucer proves that "a male character's understanding of his own determinism is misguided, and that courtly love and its conventions are 'fiction, or literally lies'" (309). He thus concludes both that the nature of lovesickness and the failure of its proposed cures in *TC* are important to discussions of Chaucer's interests in free will vs. determinism throughout the tale as a whole, as "medieval texts about lovesickness are, among other things, literary debates that take a philosophical or

⁴³. Palmer explains in more detail that "Psychological cures such as storytelling, employing moral exempla, conversing with friends, and listening to music can stress free will. Somatic cures including coitus, eating, and wine consumption assume determinism or that the patient is out of control of his own destiny—an assumption that can only contribute to a patient's already developed sense of determinism and passivity 'constructed' through metaphor" (305).

religious stand on the issues of free will and determinism” (293), and that this exploration indicts the romance genre.⁴⁴

Palmer thus demonstrates that the theological debate on free will and determinism can manifest in the more secular form of a debate about lovesickness and cures. Likewise, as another secular manifestation of Chaucer’s views on this debate, I would add that *TC* also critiques other authors for failing to show that it is human free will and not just “Fate” which itself does damage. Just as not acknowledging Chaucer’s experiment with the failures of materialist lovesickness cures precludes an understanding of the way he indicts his own male protagonists’

⁴⁴. Similarly, Colin Fewer in “The Second Nature: *Habitus* as Ideology in the *Ars amatoria* and *Troilus and Criseyde*” also argues that Chaucer attempts to show the importance of individuals recognizing the power of their own free will. Fewer’s argument more directly invokes the concept of *habitus*, noting that though the term itself is anachronistic, medieval writers relied on a similar “language of ethics and philosophy” in order to represent “institutions” and “subjectivity” (317). In particular, he notes the influence of Ovid on Chaucer and other medieval writers, explaining that “for medieval readers already sensitized to the concept of *habitus*, Ovid’s work represented an open invitation to rethink identity and social relations as effects of *habitus*” (322). In more specific regard to the debate on free will versus predestination, Fewer argues that Pandarus becomes Chaucer’s mouthpiece for propounding free will, in that he repeatedly attempt to convince Troilus of the power of *habitus* “to shape and reshape the subject and the subject’s relations with the social sphere” (328). More specifically, Fewer writes that Pandarus does so in order to attempt to make Troilus’s love work within the social sphere which they occupy, for Troilus’s lovesickness is “antithetical to the social economy of Troy” (329).

lack of personal responsibility, as Palmer argues, not acknowledging the function of the natural sub-narrative and how it also speaks to issues of free will versus determinism has similar implications. In this case, the danger of not doing so is a potential failure to understand the ways that specifically human mortal institutions and social networks are what lead to most of Criseyde's determinism. However, Palmer himself unfortunately does not extend this exploration to Criseyde. Remarking on Troilus's stubborn refusal to attempt anything but materialist cures for his lovesickness, Palmer comments that "whereas Troilus remains faithful to his choices, Criseyde does not" (307), moving on in the next sentence to talk about Troilus's transcendence and arguing that "the ending affirms the greater goodness of Christian love" (307).

The remark is both interesting and frustrating. On the one hand, he adds that "the emphasis on psychological cures such as *remedia amoris* later in *Troilus and Criseyde* points out how stories about women can be an effective way to cure male lovesickness" (307) and that, by alienating a lovesick man from his female love object, "misogynist literature could, therefore, serve as a cure for the lovesick male" (308). Furthermore, Palmer seems to see *TC* itself as misogynist (perhaps because of the unexplained observation that Criseyde is not "faithful" to her choices).⁴⁵ But, if we consider the ways that Criseyde's circumscription is made more evident in

⁴⁵. Palmer explains additionally that

while *The Legend of Good Women* appears on the surface to be a specific palinode that retracts the misogynist message of *Troilus and Criseyde*, read ironically it can actually befall the women it attempts to praise... The misogynist debate attests to the ways authors sometimes rejected materialism and determinism in love. Authors could opt instead for psychological cures for the health of both the body and soul, since these cures encourage belief in free will and discouraged determinism in love. (308)

TC than in *Il Filostrato* in conjunction with Palmer's theories, there is more possibility for both including Criseyde in the philosophical conversations and for seeing *TC* as, while perhaps not entirely free of misogyny itself, at least attempting to *critique* the misogyny of its sources. Just as Chaucer may well be showing that Troilus is failed by lovesickness cures that assume determinism and refuse to acknowledge free will, he may likewise be flexing his own *authorial* "free will" by showing, in the case of Troilus, the personal danger of not acknowledging one's own free will (leading to death from lovesickness). In the case of *Criseyde*, on the other hand, he likewise shows the personal dangers (to her) of authors and audiences not acknowledging society's free will, for in *TC* her determinism is constructed not only by divine fate but also by the master narrative and the social milieu of the story itself.

Fortunately, a recent trend in Criseyde-specific scholarship is exactly this exploration of how Criseyde can and should be included in such philosophical analyses. Such projects can in turn be used to support the broader argument that one of Chaucer's goals in crafting a more sympathetic portrayal of Criseyde is to open up the range of issues that such philosophical and theological debates can apply to (in order to open up as well the range of responsibility). In one such example of recent criticism, Sashi Nair in "'O brotel wele of mannes joie unstable!': Gender and Philosophy in *Troilus and Criseyde*" explains that the complexity of Criseyde's characterization, especially as she functions as a representative of Boethian philosophy through her frequent pragmatism and belief in Fortune's inevitable downturn, tends to be left out of critical, and especially philosophical, discussions of *TC*. In particular, Nair argues that "Criseyde mobilises Boethian philosophy in order to negotiate the pressures upon her" (35), citing as

“Boethian” the way Criseyde “knows that happiness is transitory” and thus “constantly weighs up her options” (41).⁴⁶

To further define her own use of “agency” in the rest of the article, Nair cites, as I too have done, Fowler’s theory of social persons in *Literary Character*, arguing that “Criseyde’s agency can be understood as the ‘personification’ of ‘bonds’ governing the agency of the vulnerable widow and romantic heroine who is forced to negotiate a range of social roles according to a particular version of Boethian philosophy,” but notes also that Criseyde, “as a fictional character...is also subject to Chaucer’s agency” (38). From here, Nair argues that Criseyde exercises this agency to navigate “generic and social pressures” with a Boethian pragmatism, aware that “happiness is transitory” (41). She adds, however, that the evidence of Criseyde’s agency⁴⁷ becomes lost as Chaucer attempts to show that “generic expectations of the

⁴⁶. As an example of this “weighing,” Nair cites the scene “when she is deciding whether to give her love to Troilus” and “first examines the potential social consequences of such a relationship” (41).

⁴⁷. At times, Nair’s arguments about Criseyde’s agency seem to contradict themselves somewhat—towards the beginning of her article, she seems to depend on Fowler’s work to argue that agency is in a way the result of social restrictions on characters (Fowler’s “agency without intentionality,” or the options available to character under social and generic pressures, 38)—and yet she also seems to argue by the end that these very pressures (*especially* the “generic”) undo Criseyde’s agency as a character. In addition, while the beginning of her article mentions the importance of understanding Criseyde’s agency within *Chaucer’s* own agency as an author, a full discussion of Chaucer’s authorial agency seems to be missing.

tragic romance come to take precedence over the intricacies of characterization” (51). Doing so, Nair argues, allows Chaucer to “foreground[d] the constraints of Criseyde’s position and, by implication, the position of all women who are at the mercy of men, and gestures toward the incompatibility of the romance genre and the ‘real’ lives of women” (37). In other words, Nair sees as the ultimate goal of this characterization Chaucer’s desire to show the disconnect between generic fantasy and real life and perhaps, to take her argument a step further, to critique the genre for this setup.

Important to note is that while Nair argues that criticism should recognize that the way Criseyde utilizes Boethian pragmatism to navigate her way through the maze of social restrictions upon her is a manifestation of her agency, she also points out that Criseyde overestimates the power of this agency, with which assertion I would agree.⁴⁸ Nair concludes that the poem ultimately demonstrates that while Criseyde “is subject to gendered and generic limitations that relegate her to the less sophisticated realm of unreliable womanhood and tragic romance” (56), she should not be so relegated in criticism, for “the philosophical Criseyde cannot be separated from ‘Criseyde the woman’ (and all the social implications of her womanhood), and her often transgressive subjective agency provides insight into Chaucer’s conception of femininity” (56).

Nair’s article thus makes a strong argument about the importance of analyzing Criseyde’s complexity in her own right and in doing so in conversations that she has traditionally been

⁴⁸. For example, Nair writes that Criseyde’s own “astute appraisal of her situation falls short of what is necessary,” referring to Criseyde’s declaration of her independence in Book II, for “Criseyde is not now and will never be her ‘owene womman,” citing the ways her own father, Hector, Pandarus and even Troilus fail her (55).

excluded from. Using a similar vein of thinking, while Nair is concerned primarily with Criseyde's inclusion in critical discussions of the influence of Boethian philosophy on *TC*, her reasoning can likewise be extended to advocate for the importance of looking at Criseyde in critical arguments about the medieval debate on predestination and free will, as Nair herself notes that "Criseyde inhabits a story which is always anticipating her infidelity" (45).

Part of this extension again involves exploring the link the author creates between himself and his character in order to express more fully his personal views about free will and predestination. While I have already explored the pressures of authorial authority and the similarities between this anxiety of circumscription and the ways he portrays Criseyde as circumscribed, another sympathetic link between author and character manifests in Chaucer's word choices and his narrator's ambivalence elsewhere in the text. In these, he in many ways seems to cast himself as almost as "enmewed" as Criseyde. Just as Criseyde's *estat* seems to grant independence but ultimately ensures her circumscription, so too Chaucer, as both an author revising source materials and as a man whose life enters the public sphere through his political positions and ties, perhaps finds his own *estat* both cultivating and restricting his authorial creativity. While Chaucer has been critiqued for not defending Criseyde more clearly,⁴⁹ a closer

⁴⁹. Fradenburg critiques Chaucer's ambiguity as "in part designed to protect the delectation of invasive violence" and as "talismanic for the masculine chivalric subject" (600-1). Similarly, Patricia Clare Ingham argues that "voicing the wound might continue rather than repair the fact of wounding" (238), but additionally suggests that "the poignant rhetorical beauty of trauma....can also....prove enabling for an ethical sensibility that seeks to register history's dangerous memory" (241). I would propose a mixed approach, for Chaucer's ambiguity might be "talismanic" for the *author*, who as an artist hopes for the popular success of his "litel bok"

look at his narrative ambiguity and *entent* offers partial justification for the subtle, but nevertheless powerful, narrative cues about the sexual violence and circumscription painted into the natural backdrop of the story.

As seen in Pandarus's dream disavowal, ambiguity and reversal tend to lead the reader to consider exactly what seems to be dismissed—and the narrator's addresses in Book III are no different. To return to natural imagery once more, it is particularly in the stanza containing the infamous *sely lark* line which perhaps includes the beginnings of an explanation:

What myghte or may the sely larke seye,
 Whan that the sperhauk hath it in his foot?
 I kan namore; but of *this ilke tweye*—
 To whom this tale sucre be or soot—
 Though that I tarie a yer, somtyme *I moot*,
 After *myn auctour*, tellen hire gladnesse,
 As wel as I have told *hire* hevynesse. (III.1191-97, emphasis added)

The stanza as a whole demonstrates well the levels of ambiguity at work. On one level, the narrator recognizes that eventually he must get around to telling of the pleasures of *thise ilke tweye*, as the genre (here represented by *myn auctor*) demands. On the other hand, the pause in which he writes *to whom this tale sucre be or soot*, while most obviously addressing the audience, could also take as object *thise ilke tweye*, expanding the possibility that it is not just Troilus's but also Criseyde's *soot*.

(V.1786), as he attempts an “enabling” of “voicing.” As Fradenburg herself writes,

“Chaucer’s own career...was not one in which heroism was easily affordable” (601).

The pronouns in the last two lines also take on potential for double meaning.⁵⁰ With *hire* meaning “their,” the wording could be explicitly meant to convey Criseyde’s inclusion in *both* these states—*gladnesse* and *hevynesse*. The tale starts on the notes of Troilus’s “double sadness,” but with such inclusive wording here and with the natural sub-narrative, Chaucer perhaps tries to write into his version of the story a recognition of the tragedy of her status as a “bearer of a valued ability to mourn” (Fradenburg 595) and a woman whose *gladnesse* cannot be referred to without also writing about her *hevynesse* (“hire”). For the sake of the romantic convention, the *hevynesse* must be temporarily put aside, but for Chaucer, also following the conventions of tragedy, it cannot disappear. The inclusion once more of a potential allusion to rape in the *lark* and *sperhawk* lines in the very same stanza thus implies that Chaucer attempts to reveal that violence is often “occluded” but nevertheless present—especially as he does so once again through carefully worded natural imagery.

The lines just after this passage use similar ambiguity with good *entent* when considered as a whole: “Criseyde, which that felte hire thus itake, / As written clerkes in hire bokes olde, / Right as an aspes leef she gan to quake” (III.1198-1200). As before, natural imagery again signals the importance of the narrative description, for the middle line could be taken to interpret either the preceding line *or* the line following it, in which she trembles perhaps with fear. Particularly if we consider the latter pairing of the second and third lines, they could likewise be a deliberate recognition by Chaucer of the violence inherent in the story he revises out of *bokes olde*, a reading which becomes even more compelling considering that it is just before this scene that he reveals Troilus’s alignment with the rapacious Jove-bull.

⁵⁰. See Karla Taylor’s discussion of Chaucer’s “double meanings” (542); “semantic slippage” (542); and anxious “modesty” about the impermanence of language (551).

All this in turn gives added significance to a final stanza, easily interpreted as mere participation in the conventional modesty trope but in fact functioning like those that precede it.⁵¹ Chaucer writes, “if that ich, at Loves reverence, / Have any word in eched for the beste, / Doth therewithal right as youreselven leste. / For *myne words*, heere and every part, / I speke hem all *under correccioun* / Of yow that felyng han in loves art” (III.1328-33, emphasis added). The narrator here again admits the constraints upon him: that all his “words” are written with the knowledge that they may prompt further *correccion* if they are deemed unsatisfactory by those *that felyng han in loves art*—those who are “sympathetic” (as glossed by Barney, 193) in matters of love, yes, but also perhaps those who expect a conventional romance, which by this point Chaucer, with all his unconventional animal imagery, clearly has not provided.⁵² Chaucer thus

⁵¹. For more on Chaucer’s “pretended inferiority complex,” see Donaldson 475.

⁵². Jensen Charity in “Spaces of Authority: *Troilus and Criseyde* and *The Canterbury Tales*” also sees Chaucer playing with authority in a number of ways, evidenced in part through ambiguous passage such as this. First, Jensen argues that Chaucer “present[s] himself as uninitiated into the world of love” to make himself “exempt from the taint implicit in any love connection” (284). But furthermore, Jensen adds that he also “steps back to create a space where the audience has freedom to accept, reject, or even change what he has said” (285), citing the lines in Book III where Chaucer claims to be writing “*undr correccioun Of yow that felyng han in loves art*” (III.1332-3). More significantly, Jensen sees Chaucer as increasing his authority both by *equating* himself with “divine authority” (through his “parallel use of *I* and *the* and *I* and *thou* in the introduction when invoking Thesiphone, 285) and also drawing on it to back himself as a historian himself (in his invocations to Cleo) (286).

carefully imbeds his own explanation of why, pervasive as his subversive animal imagery is, his almost feminist critique of the story he is revising is not less ambiguous and more direct—all the while relying persistently on natural imagery to tell the story of Criseyde’s circumscription—and to vocalize his opinions on the importance of acknowledging free will and its impact—as fully and safely as he can.

Jensen also relates this Chaucer’s overall treatment of Criseyde, writing that these strategies enable Chaucer to present Criseyde in an untraditional manner, with less condemnation than *Guide delle Colonne* (speaking of Briseida) or Boccaccio. “Chaucer sidesteps the issue by saying, ‘Men seyn,—I not—’ that she yaf him hire herte,” Jensen quotes, arguing that this “dismissal of information not only leaves him room to treat Criseyde in an original way and save his own reputation as a morally reliable author, but it also shows him negotiating a boundary between personal, present authority and the collective authority of the past” (290).

Conclusion

Chaucer's "modesty" throughout *TC* goes beyond the trope, expressing more than an author's mere humility. On the one hand, it enables him to apologize to readers who have unexpectedly discovered unconventionally revealed violence. In another way, however, it also functions as a symbolic "apology" to Criseyde as to why he has not done more to defend her: he has imbedded as much of an indictment as he can into words written *under correccioun*, relying primarily on artistry which constructs a natural sub-narrative sympathetically aligning author and character.

It is not just fictional character but real life character, then, which influences texts. As Fowler writes, "Character...is built out of a collection of details, fragments that are traceable to their lexical or iconographical locations in one or more sphere of culture. Understanding the source materials of character allows us to explain how powerfully referential it is and how it can reflect upon and assess a society's institutions and ideals" (34). Given this statement, and the exploration in my first and second chapters of how Chaucer has carefully crafted a Criseyde whose attitudes, social characterization, and surrounding artistic backdrop all deviate from his own source material in ways that seem minor individually but which add great depth to the story in general and Criseyde's circumscription, the question must continually be asked as to *why* these particular changes have been wrought and reinforced the way that they have. Put another way, the project thus becomes to explore how these particular sets of changes can be read in comparison with other major themes in the story—primarily the philosophical tension between free will and predestination which exists throughout *TC*—for it would seem that perhaps for Chaucer, to deny the force and impact of human free will, couched within a divine plan as it may be, is to preclude indictment, blame, and, ultimately, new narrative approaches. Not

acknowledging free will risks not only precluding Criseyde from important conversation on *TC*, which is of course about both *Troilus* and *Criseyde*, but also risks delimiting too narrowly the complexities of Chaucer's philosophical explorations and goals in his work, despite their varied and rich manifestations.

This is not to say that this is the only or right way to read Criseyde; indeed, the critical disagreements which continue to rage about her speak to the magnitude of what Chaucer wrought as he revised Boccaccio's *Criseida*. As Fowler points out, "if no one finds a representation of person convincing or meaningful, it fades away and never attains the paradigmatic, conventional status that qualifies a figure to be a social person" (27). Criseyde certainly is nowhere near fading away from scholarship; her characterization, while evoking a wide array of reactions, continues to evoke those reactions centuries after her time, both in literature (such as that by Henryson or Shakespeare) and criticism. By continually endeavoring to explore the implications of Criseyde's characterization and actions as broadly as *Troilus*'s, fresh light can continue to be shed on the *double sorwe* of both *Troilus* and *Criseyde*.

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Vita

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