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“THE DOUBLE SORWE OF TROILUS”: EXPERIMENTATION OF THE CHIVALRIC AND TRAGIC GENRES IN CHAUCER AND SHAKESPEARE

by

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SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

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Introduction

The tumulus tale of Troilus and his lover Cressida has left readers intrigued in renditions written by both Geoffrey Chaucer and William Shakespeare due to their subversive nature of the authors' chosen generic forms. Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* challenges the expectations and limitations of the narrative of the chivalric romance. Shakespeare took the story and turned *Troilus and Cressida* into one of his famous "problem plays" by challenging his audience's expectations of the tragic genre.

Both Chaucer and Shakespeare's adaptations of the classic Greek story have been classified as tragedies, but the subversive nature of the pieces warrants further exploration and explanation of the involvement of tragedy in the narrative. Critics have asserted that the two *Troilus* pieces cannot be confined to just one genre, most calling the story a historical-comical-tragedy. (Bevington, 4) However, history restrains the story to its tragic demise and audiences of Chaucer and Shakespeare were aware of the story's classical sources when reading these adaptations. Both texts are a study in behavior, and specifically how Troilus' behavior influences Criseyde/Cressida's reactions and how that informs Chaucer's interpretations and criticisms of chivalry and Shakespeare's experimentation with the tragedy. Chaucer's Troilus is expected to fulfill the role of the ideal chivalric lover, but his obsession with absolute fidelity in relation to Criseyde's attempts at self-preservation during the Trojan War ends in death and disaster, a conclusion unprecedented in the chivalric romance genre. Shakespeare's Troilus approaches love like a warrior. The chivalric codes of war are absolute and unwavering, and Troilus' attempt to fulfill the role of the chivalric warrior leads to the performance of a love with Cressida that is apathetic and unemotional and reduces her to a possession. The tragedy of Cressida’s betrayal in the end falls flat because Troilus’ loyalties lie first to the war and then to Cressida. Shakespeare lays out the groundwork for a compelling tragedy but tosses it aside for an unsatisfactory ending that suggests his interest in experimentation with the genre of tragedy.

In this thesis, I endeavor to draw attention to the ways in which both Chaucer and Shakespeare use the conventions of the chivalric romance and tragedy to play with the imbalances in the central relationship of Troilus and Criseyde/Cressida in the story. These imbalances are the source of experimentation in both texts that allows Chaucer to imbue tragedy in the chivalric romance and allow Shakespeare to undermine tragedy itself.

“Litel myn tragedie”: Tragedy in Chaucer’s Chivalric Romance

Within the medieval tradition, Troilus was regarded as the paragon of the ideal chivalric lover, a trope that Chaucer would have been well aware of when writing his rendition. Chivalric romance was a literary genre of high culture that had been popular among the nobility and upper class in medieval Europe. Early stories of chivalric romance relied on heavy usage of marvelous themes most often dealing with magic, elements of love, and frequent interweaving storylines, setting the genre apart from its epic predecessors. (Huizinga, 354) While early forms were written in verse, often in accordance to strict restrictions with meter and rhyme, later iterations by the 15th century saw chivalric romances in prose as well as verse. (Huizinga, 354) Chivalric romance almost exclusively followed a knight on his quest, whether it be to save a maiden in distress, search for the Holy Grail, or defend one’s honor. (Burnley, 140-146) In fact, the etymology of chivalry comes from the Old French *chevalerie* and the Medieval Latin *caballarius*, which means horseman. (Hoad, 74) Chivalric romance became a record of how knights and nobility should behave, and writers like Chrétien de Troyes, Marie de France, and Guillaume de Lorris used the form to also criticize the social order that followers of chivalry boasted about but ultimately failed to adhere to. (Burnley, ix) Chrétien also revolutionized the genre by introducing the concept of courtly love in his poem of Lancelot and Guinevere in “The Knight of the Cart”, and since then illicit love affairs became commonplace in the chivalric genre. (Kibler, 2-3) When Chaucer took Boccaccio’s *Il Filostrato* and medievalized it into his *Troilus*, he implemented his current literary style of chivalric romance and emphasized themes of courtly love. (Lewis, 454) The ideal chivalric knight archetype became the model for Troilus.

Like his predecessors, Chaucer recognizes the shortcomings of chivalry, however unlike previous tales of chivalric romance, Chaucer utilizes the critical capacity of the chivalric romance back onto itself by implementing the tragic form onto the narrative. The expectations of the chivalric romance have become unrealistic and includes tropes that are impossible to meet. Previous iterations of chivalric heroes had flaws and could not adhere completely to the expectations of chivalry, but they suffered no consequences. Chrétien's Lancelot pursued his illicit affair with Queen Guinevere while she was still married to King Arthur, rescued her from captivity, consummated the affair, defeated her kidnapper, and was still able to return to Camelot with barely a scratch on him, as if the whole poem had never happened. As the genre evolved with time, chivalric heroes began to understand their flaws and the impossible expectations of chivalry. Chaucer's presumed contemporary, the anonymous Gawain Poet, showed a change of behavior in his hero, Gawain, by having him display shame for his deceitful actions earlier in the poem in Bertalik's palace. However, when his actions are brought to light, Bertalik himself professes Gawain to be "the fautlest freke that ever on fote yede." (Armitage, 2363) Even upon his return to Camelot, the other Knights of the Round table absolve him of any blame and Gawain ends with very little consequence for his shortcomings. (Armitage, 2480-2530) Chaucer chooses to put his hero through the consequences of his inadequacy as a true chivalric lover. He breaks away from the chivalric lover that Chrétien had fashioned when writing "The Knight of the Cart", and in doing so also breaks away from the expectations his contemporary readers would have had about the chivalric hero. Chaucer is criticizing the tendency of the chivalric genre to allow their heroes to live with little consequence by showing that Troilus is striving to meet the unrealistic expectations of the perfect chivalric lover, and in failing to do so, invokes tragedy.

The implementation of tragedy in chivalric romance itself is experimental. The Middle Ages saw an amplification of models for the valorization of suffering such as the Crusades, the chivalric orders, spectacular punishment, the melancholy of the courtly lover etc. (Fradenburg, 93) Particularly, the rhetoric and loss of characteristic of the warrior culture in medieval aristocracy would have been a particular concern during the time Chaucer was writing *Troilus*. (Fradenburg, 93) The standard medieval definition of tragedy that Chaucer would have been aware of comes from *Catholicon* of Johannes Januensis.

> Tragedy differs from comedy because comedy contains the deeds of private men; tragedy of kings and magnates. Also, the comic is described in the low style, tragedy in the high style. Also, comedy begins with sad things, and ends with happy ones. Tragedy is the opposite.
> (Strohm, 348)

In accordance to this definition, Chaucer's *Troilus* can indeed be considered tragic and its implementation is not just in the nature of the tale, but a deliberate choice made to push the bounds of the chivalric romance. By opening the narrative with the passage introducing how the "the double sorwe of Troilus" went "fro wo to wele, and after out of joie" (I. 1, 4), Chaucer informs his readers that he is well aware of the story's tragic history and sets up an anticipation out of the arching structure of the narrative in rise and fall. (Windeatt, 154) He also refers to the story as a 'litel myn tragedye' in its closing and sets it in juxtaposition with the idea of 'comedye', suggesting his interests in the new generic associations, to which his own rewriting of the Troilus story might attain as well as a spirit of experimentation that the poem possesses. This can be seen especially at how Chaucer defines tragedy in his other works. Chaucer has strict definitions of tragedy in line for himself in *The Monk's Tale*.

> Tragedie is to seyn a certeyn storie
> ….
> Of hym that stood in greet prosperitee,
> And is yfallen out of heigh degree
> Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.
> (1973-1977)

Likewise, Chaucer on *Boece* translates without elaboration, the definition of tragedy as an abrupt change of fortune. (Windeatt, 154) The differences between the *Troilus* narrative and the kinds of tragedy represented by Chaucer's *Monk's Tale* make it difficult to adequately explain *Troilus*.

While tragedy is not associated with the chivalric romance, there is no way to separate the chivalric from the tragic in this poem. The tragedy of Troilus is private and emotional rather than an outward political tragedy or material loss of a ruler's downfall. Chaucer's presentation of the private emotion as the driver of the story centers the convention of the chivalric lover as the producer of tragedy in that he presents the inward compulsions of Troilus as being taken to the extreme. Focusing on the inward and emotional as a trope of the genre, Chaucer sets it up against the other convention of chivalry, the military hero, and dismisses it almost to its entirety.

> But how this town com to destruccion
> Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle,
> For it were a long disgression
> Fro my matere, and yow to long to dwelle.
> (I. 141-144)

Instead, he directs any readers interested in the history of the Trojan War to read the works of Omer, Dares, or Dite (I. 145-147) Although Troilus’ princely rank and martial career are part of the setting of the poem at the siege of Troy, the poem’s primary focus is on the hero’s career as a lover and on his emotional rise and fall. In *Troilus* the nature of the hero’s real loss is inward. The overemphasis of the chivalric lover vastly outweighs the chivalric soldier that Chaucer dismisses in order to achieve the tragedy that was laid out for him. Chaucer has imbibed the objective and theoretical structure and recognizable formal conventions of tragedy by focusing on the idealistic chivalric lover trope to an extreme level in order to create a realistic tragic chivalric romance.

“’Tis but the chance of war”: Chivalry Undermining Shakespeare’s Tragedy

The story of *Troilus* lived through a number of renditions after Chaucer before Shakespeare got his hands on it. Shakespeare would have been quite familiar with the generic conventions of the chivalric romance from hearing the stories growing up. The medieval romance genre, although considered ancient by Shakespeare’s time, was part of the foundation of stories that made up the general knowledge of the time. (Cooper) They had become a source of folk tales and lower brow entertainment in conjunction with the demise of chivalry in the nobility. (Cooper) *Troilus and Cressida* in particular, allowed Shakespeare to test the bounds of the generic conventions of tragedy through the implementation of chivalry. Having had written *Romeo and Juliet* six years prior to *Troilus*, Shakespeare and his audience were no strangers to the tragic woes of star-crossed lovers. *Troilus* employs some of the same tropes used in *Romeo and Juliet* to convey tragedy, but whereas in *Romeo and Juliet*, their fate is tragic and poignant, in *Troilus and Cressida*, the characters reluctantly go through the motions with a self-conscious, heightened awareness of their inability to move outside the prescribed roles that Fortune and literary tradition have allocated to them. (McInnis, 39) The play itself is difficult to fit in any of Shakespeare’s previous categories—comedy, history, tragedy, and romance—because it has so many elements from all four. If anything of a consensus can be made about Shakespeare’s *Troilus*, is that it is an experimental play that needs to be read inclusively, rather than being forced to fit into one genre. (Helton, 130) While critics can implore others to analyze the text in an open-ended fashion, unbound to any preconceived generic notions, the defensive and uneasy language of the Prologue is a stark contrast from Shakespeare’s light-hearted plays, and instead falls in line with his darker tragedies. Describing the prince's blood as 'chafed' and the setting as "fraught with the ministers and instruments / Of cruel war" (I. 1-5) does not set up a happy tale. The Prologue even describes itself as "armed, but not in confidence" and at the end of its delivery tells the audience to "Like or find fault; do as your pleasures are; / Now good or bad, 'tis but the chance of war." (I. 30-31) Recognizing that Shakespeare did not intend for this to purely be a tragedy, the history of the story must still be taken into account and the similar tragic devices used in *Troilus* and *Romeo and Juliet* asks us to keep conventions of the tragic genre in mind. Therefore, defining Shakespearean tragedy in terms of *Troilus* is difficult simply because *Troilus* itself is not a play that is made for one definition. If we are to define Shakespearean tragedy, tragedy ending with death and comedy ending with marriage, then *Troilus* fits the bill of conventional Shakespearean tragedy. However, it is not a complete tragedy, or even a complete play if we compare it to Shakespeare's other works because the ending provides no restoration of power or conclusion. Pandarus' final lines bequeathing his diseases to the audience mid-battle offer little satisfaction as an ending. Shakespeare may have experimented with this type of ending more subtly in *Romeo and Juliet* with Friar Lawrence's hasty final address, but the narrative was still complete. In *Troilus*, Shakespeare offers no satisfying end or information about Troilus' fate, leaving the narrative and the play incomplete. This 'special tragedy' as Joyce Carol Oates states, works within the usual framework of the tragic genre that audiences are familiar with but refuses to relinquish a sense of finality in the piece because of the ways in which the narrative lends itself to chivalry as a means to undermine the resolution of tragedy. (1966-1967)

Leaving tragedy to the mercy of the war is possible because of Shakespeare's focus on the militaristic convention of chivalry. By the time *Troilus* landed on Shakespeare's desk, the chivalric romance, as Chaucer knew it, was dead. Shakespeare's Troilus was not the lover that Chaucer had cultivated. Rather, he offers a significant departure in tone from Chaucer, which critics explain comes from the *Troilus* lovers' representation after Chaucer, particularly in Robert Henryson's *The Testament of Cressid*. (McInnis, 35) Critics also attribute the darker, Machiavellian take on chivalry and its practice during war to the failed rebellion by Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex and the publication of Chapman's Homer (McInnis, 36). Shakespeare's emphasis on the chivalric warrior prevents Troilus from achieving the equilibrium of a tragic hero, especially one as ascribed to the history of the chivalric genre as much as Troilus is. However, rather than ensuring the completion of the story's poetic justice, Shakespeare utilizes this imbalance to unsettle the tragedy that had been predetermined by previous adaptations. Unlike Chaucer's overemphasis on Troilus as a chivalric lover, Shakespeare's Troilus' exaggerated performance of the hyper masculine chivalric warrior leaves little room for the romantic, which is evident from the nature of Troilus and Cressida's relationship. Shakespeare's treatment of Troilus' love is cynical in the sense that the act of love is merely a performance, rather than an emotion that Chaucer's Troilus so adamantly feels. (Lombardo, 199) Shakespeare's Troilus is not Romeo and will never be able to be absolutely devoted to love in the same way because of his loyalties to his warrior status. By placing Troilus in the position of a warrior only "second to Hector", the greatest Trojan of them all, Shakespeare is able to break away from the language that glorifies war and display the futility of it all through Troilus' lack of love in his relationship with Cressida.

"So thenk I n'am but ded, withoute more": Tragedy of Chivalric Fidelity

Following in the footsteps of the pioneers of the chivalric romance and courtly love with the likes of Chrétien de Troyes and Marie de France, Chaucer was well aware of the expectations of chivalry that his readers held when approaching *Troilus and Criseyde*. Writing in a time where the readers were accepting and enticed by contradictions in the genre, Chaucer had the good fortune of being able to experiment with the expectations that chivalry granted its male characters through his characterization of Troilus. (Lewis, 56) Chaucer changed his source material, Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, and effectively "medievalized" it by making Troilus an archetype of the perfect medieval lover. (Lewis, 56) However, by placing Troilus within the same vein of chivalric lovers such as Lancelot and Tristan, Chaucer has given readers something to expect from Troilus. Troilus now has to live up to the same expectations that were surpassed by those before him in a poem whose goal is to display the very impossibility of those expectations.

From the start, Troilus is introduced to readers as a chivalric hero fallen in love in typical chivalric fashion, by setting his eyes upon a fair maiden.

> So ferde it by this fierse and proude knyght:
> Though he a worthy kynges sone were,
> And wende nothing hadde had swich might
> Ayeyns his wille that shuld his herte stere,
> Yet with a look his herte wex a-fere,
> That he that now was moost in pride above,
> Wax sodeynly moost subgit unto love.
> (I. 225-231)

The trope of falling in love from afar is nothing new, as Chrétien also employed the same technique with Lancelot. (214) Chaucer also takes another page from Chrétien's book at Troilus' first blatantly chivalric performance by employing the motif of gazing at one’s lover through a window. After Pandarus introduces the idea of Troilus’ love to Criseyde, she determines his capacity as a chivalric lover while watching him return from a battle on horseback from her window.

> This Troilus sat on his baye steede
> Al armed, save his hed, ful richely;
> And wownded was his hors, and gan to blede,
> On which he rood a pas ful softely.
> But swich a knightly dighte trewely
> As was on hym, was nought, withouten faille,
> To loke on Mars, that god is of bataille.
> (II. 624-630)

The performance of chivalry is obvious, but already intriguing because of the “wownded” state of Troilus’ horse, indicating from the start that Troilus will not be able to fulfill the role of chivalry that the narrative has set for him. The dilemma that comes from calling Troilus a chivalric lover is already apparent in his lack of understanding the ritualistic way the game of love is played. Troilus is introduced as being uninterested in love, and scoffs at those who are in love. “God woot, she slepeth softe / For love of the, whan thow turnest ful ofte!” (I. 195-196) Later in the text, when he is writing Criseyde a letter at the insistence of Pandarus, he worries he will come off as innocent and begs for Pandarus’ help in writing. (II. 445-450) Even as the story progresses, Troilus does not improve in the act of courtship, as one would expect of him as a knightly figure. He is utterly distraught at the end of Book Two when he’s learned he will be meeting Criseyde in person for “the firste tyme he shulde hire preye / Of love; O myghty God, what shal he seye?” (II. 1756-1757) and in the moments leading up to the lovemaking scene, when Criseyde pledges herself to Troilus.

> …wax neither quyk ne ded,
> Ne myghte o word for shame to it seye,
> Although men sholde smyten of his hed.

> But Lord, so he wex sodeynliche red,
> And sire his lessoun, that he wende konne
> To preyen hire, is thorugh his wit ironne.
> (III. 79-84)

His inexperience becomes comical to the point of farce, especially leading up to the lovemaking scene where he promptly passes out and cannot be revived even as Pandarus is stripping him of his clothes and Criseyde is speaking her commitment to him in his ears in hopes of some sort of response. (III. 1100-1120) Criseyde even criticizes him, “Is this a mannes game? / What, Troilus, wol ye do thus for shame?” (III. 1126-1127) At this point, Troilus has established himself as completely incompetent in love, both physically and emotionally even as the reader has placed him in the position of chivalric lover. Green argues that it is Troilus’ strong emotion and genuine feeling that leaves him inarticulate and inadequate as a chivalric lover. And yet, Chaucer keeps insisting that Troilus fulfill the very role he is not qualified for. Troilus follows the formula of deprecating Love’s power in an effort to disguise his own new emotion. “In nouncerteyn ben alle youre observaunces, / But it a sely fewe pointes be; / Ne no thing asketh so gret atendaunces / As doth youre lay.” (I, 337-340) Similar sentiments occur in Chrétien’s Lancelot, so the trope is nothing new, however, unlike other chivalric knights, Troilus seems to disparage against the ritualistic aspect of love and the experiences and expectations that come with the act of wooing someone because he doesn’t understand it, nor does he consider it to be important up until then. (Taylor, 70) He was quite content to wallow in self-pity and longing and would’ve done so forever if Pandarus had not intervened. (I. 1037-1050)

The quality that sets Troilus apart from the rest of chivalry’s lovers is his code of absolute and complete fidelity and his downfall is his strict adherence to his code.

(Green, 213) While fidelity is a constant theme in chivalric romance, it is a trait typically associated with the maiden. Troilus' emphasis of fidelity solidifies the idea that his commitment to Criseyde is permanent. So we cannot be too surprised when Troilus faints fully clothed on his bed after hearing of Criseyde's alleged betrayal. She subverted his expectations of fidelity and his social reflexes are woefully inadequate to form a response proper in his eyes. As Green states, "He has been left alone to play a part in a game which he no longer understands." (212) He plays the lover with such literal mindedness and tries to take on the role of a perfect lover that Chaucer has set up in readers' minds for him to fulfill, that it prevents him from adapting to his circumstances and developing from the impact of his experiences.

If this were purely a chivalric romance then perhaps Troilus' steadfast faithfulness and love would have been enough to constitute a happy ending. However, set during the Trojan War, Chaucer's implementation of medieval chivalry, especially that of Troilus' unbending code of fidelity, is doomed because he is unable to adapt to the ever-changing situations around him. Troilus does not change or develop through his experiences; instead he continues to attempt the characteristics of the ideal chivalric lover that Chaucer has established for him. We as readers do not get to see Troilus's character develop through his experiences, mostly because we as readers do not see the influences of war on Troilus in the narrative that Chaucer chooses to tell. Chaucer's Troilus is a lover in the middle of a war throughout the entire story, which is evident in the way that Chaucer utilizes, or doesn't utilize, the setting of the Trojan War. The war itself isn't even mentioned unless it furthers the romantic plot, the most prominent moments being when Criseyde watches Troilus ride back into Troy after a battle and the agreement to trade Criseyde to the Greeks for another warrior. Troilus proposes to run away with Criseyde from Troy, disregarding the political consequence that may occur as well as any personal loss of chivalric honor.

> For which, with humble, trewe, and pitous herte,
> A thousand tymes mercy I yow preye;
> So rueth on myn aspre peynes smerte,
> And doth somewhat as that I shal yow seye,
> And lat us stele awey bitwixe us tweye;
> And thynk that folie is, whan man may chese,
> For accident his substaunce ay to lese.
> (IV, 1499-1505)

His attachment to Criseyde and his duty to be her perfect lover is so strong, that he cannot imagine living without her and tells her, “And if ye gon, as I have told yow yore, / So thenk I n’am but ded, withoute more.” (IV, 1497-1498) From this exchange, it’s also evident that Troilus has completely disregarded that the Trojan War was started because Paris ran away with Helen, and is now asking to do the same. Criseyde is the one who must remind Troilus that if they were to run away, the consequences would be severe, and “afterward ful soore it wol us rewe.” (IV. 1531) Troilus’s unwillingness to adapt to the situation because he has cemented himself into the role of the perfect lover, with all of the expectations that arise with it, puts him in a precarious position in the narrative, one that is not stable enough for Criseyde to commit to in the tumulus environment of the Trojan War.

Like Troilus, Criseyde’s characterization also falls in line with the chivalric tropes set forth for women in the genre, however it’s the exact expectation of her role as the chivalric feminine that elicits an expectation of fidelity within the readers because of the traditions of the chivalric romance. The scene of her entry places her in the position that most all of chivalric women are placed, waiting to be rescued. However, unlike predecessors like Guinevere, Criseyde is content with doing the rescue herself. Criseyde is prepared, through the fact of her father's abandonment, for the desire to provide a damsel to rescue in the "aventure" of chivalric romance for the masculine chivalric subject. (Fradenburg, 103) Criseyde's own quick acceptance of Troilus also falls in line with the traditions of chivalric romance in establishing a romantic interest between two characters. Even after Pandarus presents his case for Troilus, Criseyde only accepts Troilus as a potential candidate after she sees him perform chivalry from her window. (II. 624-630) She accepts him immediately after this show, and the narrator even comments on this. "This was a sodeyn love; how myght it be / That she so lightly loved Troilus / Right for the firste syghte, ye, parde?" (II. 667-669) However, Criseyde's own acceptance of Troilus as her chivalric hero is fraught with tension and contradiction, complicating the very nature of the chivalric romance. Yes, Criseyde has the option of availing herself to a knight for protection—especially after her father betrayed her and the Trojans in favor of the Greeks—but Troilus does not fulfill that role for her. Criseyde more enamored with the chivalric ideal that Troilus could be rather than Troilus himself, which can be seen in her interactions with him. Louise O. Fradenburg draws attention to the matter of consent in Chaucer's *Troilus* in a way that goes against the narrative of chivalric romance. (103) Consent was never in question with Chrétien's Lancelot and Guinevere because their love was made explicit and absolute. Criseyde's loyalty to Troilus, however, rests on what he can realistically provide for her in the environment that they're in. Her character is one of self-preservation, both a conscious and manipulative effort through the careful calculation of coyness, egocentricity, self-pity, self-deception, fear, and passivity. (Delany, 85) In the context of Criseyde's position, these traits are understandable. Fradenburg pays close attention to the lovemaking scene as an integral moment in which Criseyde displays her lack of commitment to Troilus. The lovemaking scene does an excellent job of displaying Troilus' own inadequacy in filling the role of a chivalric lover while also drawing attention to the ways in which Criseyde did not fully pledge to Troilus in all her fidelity. "The consummation scene is written to produce an ambiguity that cannot be resolved through interpretation. We cannot decide whether Criseyde has consented or not." (Fradenburg, 99) Criseyde's participation in the consummation was not one of eagerness as it was in Boccaccio's version. (Fradenburg, 102) While Fradenburg suggests that the ambiguity of her full consent in this scene indicates the poem's fixation on sexual violence, it can also indicate the moment in which Criseyde realizes that Troilus cannot provide her with the protection she need, which can be seen earlier in Criseyde's chastising of Troilus "Is this a mannes game? / What, Troilus, wol ye do thus for shame?" (III. 1126-1127) Criseyde's acceptance of her sentence to the Greek camp in exchange for Antenor only further solidifies her belief that Troilus cannot provide for her. While Troilus professes his heartbreak at the council's decision to trade her to the Greeks for Antenor, Criseyde recognizes that Troilus can do little to protect her and understands that her chances for protection are better elsewhere, which is why she does not protest the exchange. Running away, like Troilus suggests, would not solve anything.

> We may wel stele awey, as ye devyse,
> And gynden swich unthrifty weyes newe,
> But afterward ful soore it wol us rewe.
> And helpe me God so at my mooste need,
> As causeless ye suffren al this drede!
> (IV. 1529-1533)

Criseyde's disappointment is painfully obvious, especially after witnessing her calculations about whether or not her agency as a widowed woman is worth sacrificing for the protection of a man in Book Two.

Diomede, the Greek warrior that Criseyde allegedly betrays Troilus for, on the other hand, presents Criseyde with exactly what she needs. When comparing Troilus to Diomede, the difference between the two lovers is explicit. Criseyde has to prompt Troilus into giving her a better account of himself than he has managed to do so far, ""Now thane thus, quod she, / " I wolde hym preye to telle me the fyn of his entente. / Yet wist I nevere wel what that he mente"" (III. 124-126) to which Troilus responded by launching into three stanzas about his intentions, but only at her insistence. Diomede needs no prompting, and instead immediately professed his intentions to her upon her arrival to the Greek camp.

> For treweliche he swor hire as a knyght
> That ther nas thyng whith which he myghte hire plese,
> That he nolde don his peyne, and al his might
> To don it, for to don hire herte an ese;
> And preyede hire she wolde hire sorwe apese.
> (V. 113-117)

He continues on and swears to her as a knight to be her friend and asks her to command him to do anything that pleases her. The difference between Diomede in this scene and Troilus is incredibly potent and aligns with Green's argument that skilled love talking demands a certain ironic detachment. He quotes Guillame de Lorris, who said "strong emotions and genuine feeling render a man inarticulate, and only the "faus amant" can "content lor verve"—say one thing and think another. (Green, 535) Diomede offers Criseyde exactly what she needs, protection in a hostile foreign environment, something

Troilus and his faithfulness could no longer provide for her. Troilus' "bright dream of human love," as Donaldson calls it, is not enough to invoke security for Criseyde. (480) Even though Troilus' feelings may be genuine, his ineptitude as a chivalric hero, specifically as a chivalric lover, ultimately stirs the circumstances that lead to Criseyde's betrayal and the resulting tragedy of the narrative.

“Will you walk in, my lord?”: Shakespeare’s Performative Sham of Love

While Chaucer excludes the influences of the Trojan War from his narrative to draw attention to the chivalric imbalance in his Troilus, Shakespeare embraces it fully. Shakespeare’s Troilus embodies the ideal of the chivalric Trojan warrior rather than that of a chivalric lover. By representing the action firmly within the restrains of the rules of war, Shakespeare has set an expectation for Troilus revolving around the stakes of the war for the Trojans. This Troilus does not have the ability to be a chivalric lover because he is already committed to the war. Soft qualities such as pity, compassion, and gentleness that we associate with the chivalric lover cannot exist in the chivalric warrior. Strong, fierce, and implacable protectiveness is the sole association of warrior men in this world. (Bevington, 33) The imbalance that existed in Chaucer’s Troilus to implement tragedy no longer applies here. While the play follows Shakespeare’s typical tragic structure, Troilus’ inability to commit to an absolute love with Cressida creates a performance of love, rather than a true love.

Shakespeare has already established the play’s tragedy with the prologue, and history had cemented Troilus’ demise many times over by the time Shakespeare tosses his hat into the ring. He wastes no time setting up the story, and instead drops his audience in the middle of the action, introducing Troilus as the already love-struck hero. However, unlike those who came before him, this Troilus’ comparison of the passion of love to war is akin to a complaint of the nuisance of being in love, rather than an agony of pleasure. Love is a debilitating ‘battle’ in his heart, forcing him incapable of keeping himself in check. (1.1. 1-5) Troilus also seems to be afraid of love, calling it a weakness. He describes himself as ‘weak as a woman’s tear’, comparing himself in his state of longing to the skilled Greek warriors he would be facing. When Aeneus asked him why he wasn't on the battlefield, Troilus responded "Because not there" and then criticized himself for giving a 'womanish' answer. (1.1. 103-104) He dislikes how his love for Cressida affects his actions as a warrior and prevents him from being in battle, clearly listing how his priorities are ordered and how his actions throughout the rest of the play reflect that. Cressida's introduction to the audience mirrors this as well. Unlike Chaucer's Criseyde, who is never truly presented as promiscuous, Cressida enters with flirtation as her paramour. Upon her introduction, she is conversing wittily with her male servant Alexander and later in the scene with Pandarus. Her wit is on full display. When Alexander asserts that Ajax is reputed to be "a very man *per se,* / And stands alone", she responds with "So do all men, unless they are drunk, sick, or have no legs." (1.2. 15-18) Bevington claims that to Cressida, men are "a mass of contradictions, attractive sometimes but potentially dangerous, strong in weakness, part of the *comédie humaine*." (49) The coy maiden associated with fidelity is nowhere to be seen. Cressida's verbal dominance blatantly sets up her character as betrayer from the very beginning. In doing so, the love-story of Troilus and Cressida takes on an air of performativity and almost seems like a sham; as if Shakespeare sees no possibility for the lovers to ever share an emotional and authentic romance. Cressida is doomed to betray Troilus before the play even begins, and Shakespeare's characterization of the two only further solidifies the ending, and in doing so every interaction of theirs seems less emotional. By establishing Troilus' character as a warrior and Cressida's character as a promiscuous woman, Shakespeare ensures the tragedy that his audience expects, but because of the sham-like quality of their love, the tragic ending that Shakespeare devises purposefully falls short.

Troilus' placement as a warrior, rather than a lover, diminishes the tragic elements of his and Cressida's love-story. Unlike Chaucer's Troilus, he does not need anyone to navigate the game of love for him, rather he does not think too much about it in the same way Chaucer's Troilus did. This Troilus knows exactly how the game works and even acknowledges that he must win over Pandarus in order to gain access to Cressida.

> But Pandarurs – O gods, how do you plague me!
> I cannot come to Cressid but by Pandar,
> And he's as tetchy to be wooed to woo
> As she is stubborn-chaste against all suit.
> (1.1 90-93)

His lack of true love and commitment to Cressida can be seen in his concern, not by how Cressida will view him, but by how he must uphold the expectations of performance that is required of a man. Troilus's hesitation and awkwardness in the bedroom scene is not necessarily due to inexperience and the naïve pressure to be the ideal chivalric lover, rather his insecurities focus on physical performance. Troilus has no problem being physically intimate with Cressida. In fact, he dreams about it. During the lead up to Cressida's arrival, Troilus is possessed by dark and sensually indulgent images of the immanent sexual encounter, hoping to "wallow in the lily-beds / Proposed for the deservers'." (3.2. 11-12) The idea that Troilus somehow deserves the physical body of Cressida leaves little room for tender emotions of mutual sympathy and commitment. (Farnham, 257-259) The possessive mentality he has over Cressida before he even consummates his relationship with her reflects more of a mindset based on conquest rather than love. However, Shakespeare's Troilus is not immune to the awkwardness of sex that has been associated with his character in previous iterations. When Cressida finally does enter the bedchamber, Troilus's cannot contain himself. "My heart beats thicker than a feverous pulse, / And all my powers do their bestowing lose, / Like vassalage at unawares encount'ring / The eye of majesty." (3.2. 33-36) Speechless at first, his abashed behavior diminishes as he becomes more fascinated with sex as a performative validation of male achievement. He chastises the "monstrosity in love that the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit" purely associated the act of sex with its physical existence. (3.2. 77-80) The idea of sex as conquest, rather than an intimate activity done with the woman he supposedly loves, diminishes the conviction of Troilus' feelings for Cressida. Rather, it further exacerbates Troilus' conquest driven mindset of a warrior. Cressida's involvement in the bedding scene only drives love's performative nature forward. Her first words to Troilus in person, when they meet before they are bedded, are "Will you walk in, my lord?" (3.2 59) This manner of speaking aligns with the clever quips she displays with Alexander, since the expression is, according to Bevington, too close to what one might expect a prostitute would say when inviting her client upstairs. (49) Even before meeting Troilus, her sudden and extreme love for him comes across as farcical. After her back and forth with Pandarus about Troilus' worthiness of her, to which she profusely denies, she immediately professes her true thoughts upon Pandarus' exit.

> Words, vows gifts, tears and love's full sacrifice
> He offers in another's enterprise;
> But more in Troilus thousandfold I see
> Than in the glass of Pandar's praise be.

> Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing;
> Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.
> That she beloved knows naught this knows not this:
> Men prize the thing ungained more than it is.
> (1.2 273-280)

Cressida seems to recognize the warrior's—and by extension, Troilus'—conquest driven mindset about love. She also acknowledges that while she is yet to be gained, the power remains with her. What is intriguing is that, even though Cressida tells herself to hold off on accepting Troilus' advances, she ends up confiding her inner feelings to him as the play unfolds. Shakespeare's Cressida does not have to contend with the ineptitude of Chaucer's Troilus because chivalry is not the problem in this piece. Rather, it is Troilus' commitment to the war. Cressida knows that Troilus can provide for her what she needs in order to remain safe, and confides in him her fears of losing autonomy by giving herself over to him as a lover. To surrender herself in that way would make her vulnerable, not just to the events of the war, but also to Troilus' own inclinations. (Bevington, 52) She acknowledges this inconstancy before she beds Troilus. "They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform, vowing more than the perfection of ten and discharging less than the tenth part of one." (3.2 81-84) With this understanding, her confidence in Troilus makes little sense, and comes across as weak. Cressida even chastises herself later, feeling a rueful sense of regret. "Why have I blabbed? Who shall be true to us / When we are so unsecret to ourselves?" (3.2 120-121) Even though she understands that Troilus may not remain true to the vows he professes, her willingness to trust Troilus will remain with her in itself becomes part of the performance of love that drives the tragedy forward, while simultaneously undermining the tragedy itself because of how Shakespeare laid out their respective roles for them.

Troilus' loyalties are blatantly exposed in the actions and decisions he makes about Cressida, which are always in the context of the war. He resembles the rest of the warriors in his possessive and objectifying view of women. When Cressida is traded for Antenor, Troilus does not protest its injustice, or a lack of consultation, merely asking "Is it concluded so?" and upon receiving confirmation, says, "How my achievements mock me!" (4.2 68-71) He recognizes that the men of Troy have made what he sees as a necessary choice, even if it doesn't align with his personal wishes and accepts it right away. The opportunity to recover Antenor is too good to be missed, and it's well wroth the trade of a valued warrior in exchange for a woman, even with a sense of how he is mocked by his achievements, having 'achieved' Cressida. The choice to use the word 'achievement' in relation to Cressida re-emphasizes sexual conquest and female possessiveness that diminishes his relationship with Cressida. Ironically, Troilus is forced to relinquish Cressida for the betterment of the war, which is something he opposed when the council debated returning Helen (2.2. 146-162). In keeping Helen, Troilus realizes that the cost is losing Cressida. Troilus knows his duty. His public sense of honor as a Trojan warrior among his men does not allow for hesitation. His perspective is incessantly male. He scarcely bothers to consult Cressida's feelings or predicament. Unlike Chaucer's Troilus, who begs Criseyde to steal away with him and considers asking Priam to let him keep her, Shakespeare's Troilus informs Cressida that she has no choice other than to go to the Greek side. Even though Cressida asks four times if she must leave, Troilus responded that she must go all four times. (4.4. 29-54)

Troilus' betrayal by Cressida can, in fact, be linked back to his insistence that Cressida leave. Her betrayal makes much more sense when put in conjunction with her immediate commitment to Troilus earlier in the play if we are to view Cressida's actions as one of self-preservation. Troilus has shown Cressida her fears and how to consider the infidelity of their relationship and in doing so, has made Cressida realize that Troilus will not be able to help her anymore. By abandoning Cressida to her fate in the Greek camp, Troilus has left her vulnerable and unprotected in an environment dominated by sex-hungry, war-torn men. Her silence in Act 4 Scene 5 when she first enters the Greek camp with Diomede is indicative of her realization. Much like earlier in the play, Cressida is calculating her surroundings and determining how to act in order to best ensure her self-preservation. By allowing Agamemnon, Nestor, Achilles, and Patroclus kiss her without her consent, she was able to observe the Greek soldiers' interactions with one another. (4.5 17-30) When Patroclus cannot resist the opportunity to joke at Menelaus' expense, Cressida sees her chance at exercising some sort of control over herself by showing she too can play the game that men play.

> PATROCLUS
> The first was Menelaus' kiss; this, mine.
> Patroclus kisses you [*He kisses her again*.]
> MENELAUS O, this is trim!
> PATROCLUS
> Paris and I kiss evermore for him.
> MENELAUS
> I'll have my kiss, sir. – Lady, by your leave.
> CRESSIDA
> In kissing, do you render or receive?
> MENELAUS
> Both take and give.
> CRESSIDA I'll make my match to live,
> The kiss you take is better than you give;
> Therefore no kiss.
> (4.5 32-40)

Cressida acts out Helen’s role in this jest because that is what she is expected to do. Later in the scene, when she taunts Ulysses, his fierce rebuttal delineates the coquettish role that she is now expected to play. Moreover, she understands where her place must be when Diomede insists upon having her as his whore. Cressida yields to Diomede out of fear, rather than love, even going so far as to try to snatch the sleeve Troilus gifted her earlier in the play back from Diomede and tries to tell him that she is promised to another, though she does not name him in case he is put in danger. (5.2 72-87) It almost feels like a sham to have Cressida condemn herself for her predicament, blaming her heart and mind for its inconstancy. (5.2 113-115) The tragedy in this is potent, but the structure of the story does not end with Cressida’s tragedy. Troilus is the one the audience waits in anticipation for because he is the one whose actions ensure the existence of the tragedy. All of Troilus’ actions are determined by the context of war, making his love for Cressida seem less than sincere, and in doing so he has cemented the narrative of Cressida’s foretold betrayal.

"True as Troilus, False as Cressid": The Endings of *Troilus*

Both Chaucer and Shakespeare made conscious choices with their Troiluses and in doing so, resulted in the story's tragedy. However, though both stories end in tragedy, they accomplish different things. Chaucer's Troilus, being confined to the genre of chivalric romance as an inexperienced lover, cannot provide the safety that Criseyde needs because he is too busy trying to be a chivalric lover. Shakespeare's Troilus remains staunch in his chivalric honor as a warrior of Troy, second to Hector, and puts his duty as a warrior above his role of lover and cannot show Cressida the devotion she needs to ensure that Troilus will be able to keep her safe. While chivalry in Chaucer's Troilus ensures the tragedy as a means of creating realistic consequences in chivalric romance, the war and Troilus' fidelity to his soldiers and the outcome of the war undermines Shakespeare's tragedy. Chaucer and Shakespeare's intentions at experimentation with the chivalric romance and tragic genres respectively come to fruition in the final scenes of their stories when Troilus realizes and comes to term with Criseyde/Cressida's betrayal and his response.

In chivalric romance, true betrayal like that of Criseyde is unheard of, which is why in the end Troilus has a difficult time accepting Criseyde's infidelity. After Criseyde does not return to Troy on their agreed upon date, Troilus sends her letters, to which Criseyde responds and reveals that she is scared and cannot meet Troilus again (as he has willed her), fearing to tell him why not, in case the letter is intercepted. (V. 1590–1631) Chaucer's Troilus lacks the verification of betrayal that Shakespeare's Troilus has witnessed, and because of this, he cannot believe Criseyde's infidelity. And because of the nature of the chivalric romance, neither can the reader. The lack of concrete verification allows readers to hope, like Troilus, that Criseyde has remained faithful. The truth of Criseyde's new lover only slowly dawns on him when he reviews the letter. "This Troilus thoughte al straunge, / Whan he it saugh and sorwfullich he sighte; / Hym thoughte it lik a kalendes of change." (V. 1632–34) The narrator explains that because Troilus is in love and cannot fathom the notion that Criseyde would even consider infidelity, he is reluctant to believe the truth. Only after Troilus sees Diomede wearing Criseyde's brooch on his collar in battle does Troilus truly believe that Criseyde has betrayed him. Troilus' acceptance of the betrayal solidifies the tragedy within the chivalric romance for Chaucer's readers. Troilus' death at the end of the poem harkens back to the type of closure Chaucer's readers would recognize in the chivalric romance, but rather than having two lovers unite in death like in Beroul's *Tristan* or a reformed knight returned to court in Gawain, Troilus laughs at human misery from heaven, having experienced the consequences of the realities of love and war and learned from them.

In Shakespeare's play, Troilus persuades Ulysses to help him sneak into the Greek camp, and Cressida's betrayal is actually witnessed firsthand by Troilus (5.2). There is no firsthand direct evidence of betrayal in Chaucer. Instead, Chaucer's Troilus waits anxiously for Criseyde's letters until one night he dreams that a wild boar kisses Criseyde. The wild boar, symbolizing Diomede, is a divine revelation of Criseyde's betrayal and it fully convinces Troilus that "[s]he ellis-where hath now here herte apayed [satisfied]" (V. 1249). The visual proof offered in this scene is entirely of Shakespeare's devising. The very nature of Shakespeare's tragedy needs a visual verification that Cressida has betrayed Troilus, not because the audience cannot believe it, but because the nature of Shakespeare's tragedy calls for the dramatization of the betrayal. Whereas the gradual realization of Criseyde's infidelity dawns on Troilus by degrees in Chaucer, the compression of Cressida's betrayal into the single moment in Shakespeare's scene instantly disillusions Troilus of his perception of Cressida's fidelity, extinguishing any possibility of illusory hope. There is no tragic irony here. Shakespeare's Troilus has irrefutable proof of Cressida's betrayal, and Shakespeare does not allow her a chance to redeem herself by giving her any further appearances in the play. Thus, when Troilus receives a letter from Cressida, it only further enrages him and concludes that Cressida is "false, false, false!" (5.2.177). The events conform to the generic pattern of tragedy, but Shakespeare's continuous implementation of the sham performance of love between Troilus and Cressida throughout the play resolves in an ending in which events are so clearly fated that the tragedy of Troilus' death would provide very little sustenance to audience members in the same way Chaucer did. Rather, Shakespeare's undermining of tragedy occurs even while he follows its generic pattern right up until the very end. Unlike Chaucer's Troilus, Shakespeare's Troilus does not get the satisfaction of clarity in the end. His is a fate unresolved, and yet resolved at the same time. Joyce Carol Oates states that Troilus is unable to achieve the equilibrium of a tragic hero despite his learning experiences, because he remains a human being who belongs to a banal world where love is compared to food and cooking and sublimity cannot be achieved. He ends the play in the same state he began, charging off into a war he is fated to lose. Rushing off after Diomede in the final scene of the play finalizes his death, but also leaves the audience bereft of any tragic satisfaction that Shakespeare performs so well in his traditional tragedies.

Conclusion

Both Chaucer and Shakespeare saw the potential for generic experimentation with *Troilus* and produced two vastly different tragedies from the same story while providing critical commentary on the nature of chivalric romance and tragedy. A simple shift in Troilus’ priorities produced distinctive effects in the narrative and subverted the expectations of the authors’ audiences.

The genre of chivalric romance has allowed their heroes to come away in one piece, regardless of their flaws and inability to match the expectations of the genre. Lancelot commits adultery and betrays his king by having an affair with Guinevere, but still returns to Camelot after rescuing the Queen and is celebrated for his achievements. Sir Gawain is exalted as the pinnacle example of a true knight even after having been shamed for his deception earlier in the poem. The chivalric hero may learn and grow from their experiences, but the consequences are minimal if any. The expectation of Chaucer’s Troilus to fulfill the role of the chivalric lover remains incomplete because of Troilus’ ineptitude at love. And yet, Chaucer still manages to implement the tropes and style of the chivalric romance successfully, while also presenting realistic consequences that imbue tragedy in the chivalric narrative. Tragedy’s function in *Troilus and Criseyde* is not just one driven by plot, but also serves as the source of experimentation within the genre of chivalric romance.

On the other hand, the display of the warrior’s unwavering loyalty in Shakespeare’s Troilus results in an unconvincing performance of love with Cressida that is neither absolute nor emotional. The tragedy that Shakespeare so diligently sets out throughout the narrative is purposefully made to fall flat because of the lack of love in the central relationship of the play. Troilus' faithfulness remains to the outcome of the war and not to Cressida, which spurs her betrayal. However, in doing so Shakespeare made the betrayal predictable and loses its tragic irony because Troilus' priorities are first to the war and then to Cressida. In Shakespeare's other tragedies, poetic justice is served. Audiences of *Hamlet* are given the satisfaction of witnessing Claudius' death. Othello's realization of his own manipulation is performed on the stage in full display. Troilus' resolution remains "never staled with the stage". Shakespeare does not give his audience the satisfaction of a tragic ending for Troilus, as the results of his final battle are implied but never physically realized on the stage like in Shakespeare's conventional tragedies. The tragedy is present, but the resolution remains incomplete.

Both authors demonstrated not only chivalric romance and tragedy operate within a text, but also how individual tropes in the genres can be manipulated to evoke different reactions. Altering the role of Troilus in both adaptations provided the source for generic experimentation, but ultimately it was the genre itself that provided its own undoing, exhibiting just how easily the conventions of a genre can fall apart. The true "double sorwe" of Chaucer and Shakespeare's *Troilus* is not necessarily of the narrative's characters, but of their readers who will never receive the satisfaction of witnessing a truly chivalric or a truly tragic Troilus.

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