"Comparison of Criseyde /Cressida in Chaucer’s *Troilus and Criseyde* and Shakespeare’s *Troilus and Cressida*“

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1. Topic and Introduction

This term paper will deal with one of the main characters of two different versions of the story of *Troilus and Criseyde* or *Troilus and Cressida*, written by Geoffrey Chaucer in 1358 and by William Shakespeare in about 1603. The topic, action and main characters of the story were firstly taken by Boccaccio under the name “Il Filostrato”. At first, Boccaccio’s story was taken by Chaucer who used it as a source for his remake of it. Later on Shakespeare got his inspiration from Chaucer’s work and for the first time in the history of *Troilus and Criseyde* made a play of it. Both writers added some specific character traits to the individual characters and changed register, tone and style according to their attitude towards the story and the effect it should have on the reader.

On this background this term paper will focus on the female main character of both works and compare its handling by Chaucer and Shakespeare. In the Chaucer story the character is named “Criseyde”, while she is named “Cressida” in the Shakespeare play. This slight difference in name will be held upright during this term paper to distinguish the two women and avoid confusion. The main dissimilarity between Criseyde and Cressida is there character on the whole. While Chaucer describes Criseyde as a fearful and easy to manipulate person, Shakespeare creates a much more self-confident woman, which is somehow closer to Boccaccio’s original character. This fundamental difference is shown throughout the whole text mainly in Criseyde’s / Cressida’s dialogues with other characters of the story. This term paper will look on the women’s behaviour to their beloved Troilus and their uncle Pandarus, as well as on the most striking moments of divergence and show a sample analysis of one scene before a conclusion will be given at the end. The attempt of this essay is to show that both women, although they have the same roles in the stories, express very different characters and that this divergence has a strong influence on the effect of the two stories on the whole.

2. Criseyde / Cressida and Pandarus

With regard to the female main character of the story it is of great importance to see the circumstances that surround it. In Criseyde’s / Cressida’s case it is basically her uncle who is in deep contact with her and so relates to an implicit characterisation of his niece. Through his words and actions does the reader get to know more about Criseyde than he could ever learn from her parts of the action itself. It is this one of Chaucer’s stylistic means that helps to develop Criseyde’s character as the story goes on. Arthur Mizener summarises:

Chaucer’s method of characterisation is, […], essentially static: a character is presented, that is, shown as made up of certain characteristics such as pity or generosity; and then, by the events of the story, it is placed in various circumstances in which it always acts in accord with these characteristics. ¹.

Both works see Criseyde / Cressida as a niece of Pandarus but in fact the relationships of both characters with their uncle Pandarus differ a lot from each other. This relationship mostly takes place in the beginning to the middle of the text, afterwards the relationship with Troilus and his beloved gains weight over the niece-uncle relationship. In Chaucer’s story the reader gets to know a fearful Criseyde who is worried about her future in Troy after her father’s desert to the Greeks. She is

introduced by Chaucer as “his daughter, which that was in great penance, for of hire lif she was ful sore in drede/…/wel neigh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere”\(^2\). Furthermore her living conditions are described. The reader learns that Criseyde is of high rank, a widow and especially her beauty is emphasised strongly. The image that Chaucer gives is, according to Windeatt a “heroine of a romance, a beautiful lady in need of gallant protection”\(^3\). Shakespeare already differs in this early beginning because Criseyde is not introduced by a narrator but by her uncle who characterises her not as clearly as the Chaucer narrator does. His description is rather influenced by his own opinion and he strongly focuses on her outer appearance. While Criseyde is introduced not in connection with Troilus, Cressida’s introduction already shows Pandarus’ intention to marry her off to Troilus, so the Shakespeare text is even more direct than the Chaucer text.

It is also fact that Cressida’s part of the dialogues is extremely higher than the speech acts in Chaucer’s texts which underlines Cressida’s stronger self-confidence. In Chaucer’s story Criseyde does not speak directly to anyone else until the second book, verse 1724. Before that her part of the action is either summarised by the narrator, shown as thoughts or dreams but never as direct speech until that point. This supports the thesis that Criseyde is much more passive than her Shakespearean counterpart of Cressida. Criseyde does not influence the action, nor does she tell anybody about her thoughts or feelings. She is led by Pandarus and does not counter speak. The reader never gets any explanation for her behaviour and it is up to him whether she is obedient because of her female role, accepting her uncle’s authority, worried about her future in Troy or because she is just a highly naive person. In contrast to that shows Cressida a strong own will as soon as Pandarus tries to convince her of Troilus’ virtues “birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood, learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality”\(^4\) (p. 720, ll. 249-250). She counter speaks her uncle to this tempting description in order to “to defend [her] wiles…to defend [her] honesty…..to defend [her] beauty”\(^5\). Knot concludes: “cynical Cressida wants to be more cynical than her uncle”\(^6\). In comparison to Criseyde, Cressida does not seem very fearful or worried but instead she mocks her uncle by twisting his statements and using plays on words, like for example “If you love an addle egg as well as you love an idle head you would eat chickens i’th’ shell”. That means that Chaucer’s Criseyde seems to the reader a weak, silent, passive character and according to that is not allowed to have a great speech part while Shakespeare creates an active Cressida, who strongly announces her opinion and defends it in rich rhetorical dialogues with Pandarus.

The defending of her own will is a major character trait of Cressida. It is so strongly developed that Cressida sometimes even acts exaggeratedly and nearly against her own will, just to displease her uncle. When he announces Troilus and asks her repeatedly to “mark Troilus above the rest”\(^7\) she answers: “There is among the Greeks Achilles, a better man than Troilus”\(^8\), although she admits to the reader that Troilus pleases her more than her uncle can praise him. But nevertheless it remains unclear to the reader

\(^5\) Shakespeare. p. 720, ll. 256-258
\(^7\) Shakespeare. p. 719, ll. 129-130
\(^8\) Shakespeare. p. 719, l. 179-180
\(^9\) Shakespeare. p. 720, l. 243-244
how earnest Cressida’s love to Troilus is because she never seems to be true no matter whom she speaks to.

In contrast to that shows Chaucer an obedient woman who does what her uncle demands from her. Criseyde fully accepts Pandarus as her guardian, since her father is no longer there. She never questions his decisions, not even after he kisses her after her first night with Troilus, which is not acceptable between an uncle and his niece and in Windeatt’s opinion “raises questions about her state of mind”\(^{10}\). But Cressida has also kept a little bit of her devotion towards her uncle as it is shown by Criseyde because during the first meeting with Troilus Cressida’s uncle gains control over her. But this scene will be looked at in detail in chapter 5. For the moment it is important to keep in mind the Shakespeare’s Cressida keeps some character traits from the Chaucer Criseyde but in general has changed into the direction of a feministic woman who lives her life as she wants to as far as it is possible.

3. Criseyde / Cressida and Troilus

The relationship of Troilus and Cressida is almost ambiguous because of Cressida’s character. On the one hand they symbolise the lovers that Chaucer created but on the other hand Cressida seems to be almost calculating and distanced to Troilus. Like Criseyde she does blush when they meet but only a few moments later she tells Troilus very directly and straightforward about her feelings and thoughts as an independent woman. The key sentence in her dialogue with Troilus may be “I wished myself a man”\(^{11}\) which expresses most powerful what Cressida’s imagination of a good life is. Like men she wants to be independent, free, strong, deciding in her own will and safe. She cannot accept to be a woman in danger who needs the help of a man. Maybe therefore Shakespeare’s Cressida cannot be as emotionally bound as Chaucer’s Criseyde.

The attachment of Criseyde / Cressida and Troilus is also shown by the means of communication they use. Of course both women do have a large verbal contact to Troilus which leads to body contact, but before and afterwards, the communication between Criseyde and Troilus seems more evaluated than the communication between Cressida and Troilus. Criseyde and her lover keep in touch through several letters and even if they do not write to each other they have meaningful dreams. This means they are in verbal, physical and even mental contact, while Cressida neither dreams about Troilus, nor do they exchange letters. This could be seen as a loss of communication between the lovers but maybe this change has its roots in the genre of the dramatic play. In a drama dreams of certain characters are hard to realise on stage and the content of the letters can better be replaced by a dramatic monologue or aside. So the different handling of written and “metaphysical” communication between Criseyde / Cressida and Troilus should be noticed but not over interpreted.

Kott sees Cressida’s role in the love story somehow similar to Criseyde’s role but gives a stronger emphasise on irony. The essence of Cressida’s character he draws from her actions in relation to Troilus is: “She is bitter and ironic. She is passionate, afraid of her passion and ashamed to admit it. She is even more afraid of her feelings. She distrusts herself”\(^{12}\). This description – apart from the point Kott makes for irony – could be seen as suiting for both, Criseyde and Cressida, but when Kott goes on, he says that

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\(^{10}\) Windeatt. p. 281

\(^{11}\) Shakespeare. p. 731, l. 124

\(^{12}\) Kott. p. 147
“She defend herself by irony [...] passionate Cressida is the first to provoke a kiss”\textsuperscript{13}. At this point it becomes pretty clear that in Criseyde’s case passion, fear and self distrust to admit feelings are in the foreground but that in Cressida’s case these virtues are overthrown by bitterness and irony. It is this slight change in tone that makes the great difference in the two love stories by Shakespeare and Chaucer.

One could even say that the two figures of Criseyde / Cressida show all the accentuation of the two stories because in Kindlers Lexikon\textsuperscript{14} it is argued that Pandarus and Troilus symbolise “amour fou” and “armour courtois” and in the middle of both stands Criseyde / Cressida. That might mean that Chaucer’s Criseyde could be seen as slightly more related to the “amour courtois” and so she shows “am schärffsten die Brüchigkeit des höfischen Liebesideals”\textsuperscript{15}, while Shakespeare’s Cressida prefers an “armour fol” and does not care so much about the values that are indicated by “coutois” such as honour, reliability, truth and so on. But these ideas are hard to prove so that they can only be given in this short way in this essay. It is only for sure that the fact that Criseyde is a widow is of great importance for the romance with Troilus. Even in Chaucer’s medieval time did widows have some privileges in contrast to other women. They enjoyed slightly more freedom and were allowed to own land\textsuperscript{16}. These privileges are not enough for Criseyde to live a life without her uncle’s guidance but at least they give her some freedom that “would be quite lost as soon as she married”\textsuperscript{17}. This idea of calculating the protection of her husband against her freedom because of her widowness could be seen as an argument that Criseyde, like Cressida, plays her role in the world of men to get some favours and not that she is so naive to follow her uncle without any personal will.

4. The Three Key Scenes in Comparison

After the first chapters have given an overview over Criseyde’s /Cressida’s attitude and behaviour toward her uncle Pandarus and her lover Troilus, this chapter will focus on the three main scenes of the story and compare Criseyde’s / Cressida’s role and character expression in them. Those scenes are the first meeting of Criseyde / Cressida and Troilus, the senate’s decision on the delivery of Criseyde / Cressida to the Greeks and finally Criseyde’s / Cressida’s betrayal of Troilus.

4.1 Criseyde /Cressida meets Troilus

This is the scene in which both characters have most in common and are at the same time most different. The starting point is pretty much the same because Pandarus arranges the meeting and even directly after the first view of each other Criseyde and Cressida behave nearly in the same way. Both women are ashamed, nervous but also curious of what will happen. Both act according to their situation very shy and womanly. Even Cressida’s self-confidence is gone for the moment, so that Kott’s statement – “it is at this point that she loses all her self-confidence, becomes

\textsuperscript{13}Kott. p. 147
\textsuperscript{17}Aers. ebd.
affectionate, blushing and shy” – is suitable for both women. So one could say that Chaucer and Shakespeare agree at this point of the story which introduces the love affair. It seems as if a shy, passive and blushing woman were necessary for the beginning of a romantic night and that Cressida’s independent and self-confident character would have destroyed the love affair right from the beginning on. So the untypical behaviour of Cressida does not really fit into the pattern of her character but nevertheless is this irregularity essential for the initiation of the romance. One could also argue that Cressida pretends her shyness and the role of the naive and obedient woman but there are no clear proves in the text. It is far later that she regains her self-confidence, sarcasm and irony when she tries to leave the scene. The attempt to leave is much more direct in Shakespeare’s story because Cressida speaks out very clearly what she thinks and why she wants to leave while Chaucer’s Criseyde is convinced by her uncle’s arguments that are easy to false prove. The question is once more if Criseyde is so much more naive than Cressida or if she is the more talented actress of the two women who knows how to play her role to gain the best for her. So together with Walter the reader could agree that the relation to Troilus shows Criseyde / Cressida “als rätselhaftes Konglomerat aus verschiedenartigsten Impulsen”. Which of these impulses are expressed more or less is dependent on the woman and the context, which is the interaction with Pandarus and Troilus. Basically both women want the same and do the same and both of them are fully aware that “to survive in this society the isolated woman needs to make use of her sexuality” but they do it in a different way. Nevertheless lead both ways lead to the night with Troilus, so that the main effect of the story is kept, although the end is foreshadowed clearer through Cressida’s character rather than through Criseyde’s behaviour.

4.2 Criseyde’s /Cressida’s Role in the War

The war between Troy and the Greeks does not seem to be the predominant topic of the story, but more as a background for the love story and the development it takes. Only on this background can Criseyde express all her fears and only on this background she is forced to leave her beloved. And it is also only due to this background that Troilus is able to find the heroic death he wants to die. So one could conclude with Rossiter that “Troilus and Cressida never was a play about the Ancient Greeks” but only about the two main characters, Troilus and especially Criseyde / Cressida. The role of Cressida has changed slightly but importantly from Criseyde’s role in the war. She is still an object of the Greeks’ demand of an exchange against Troy prisoners of war, like for example Antenor. But Shakespeare changed the role of the demanding man from Criseyde’s father Calchas to Diomedes which gives a stronger emphasis on the lover affair that develops between them. It means that Diomedes is already interested in Cressida and therefore demands her hand which is more straight forward than is the development of the love affair between Criseyde and Diomedes which could have happened by chance but was not planned from the beginning on. But it also means that Cressida is fully aware of what will happen to her on the Greek side and that she is ready to take the risk. The way she accepts her part seems to be quite dry and down to

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18 Kott. p. 147
19 Walter. p. 316
20 Aers. p. 132
earth because she only says “I must then to the Grecians”\textsuperscript{22}. This could either be seen as a hint that Cressida’s character is more dominant in Chaucer’s play and more likely to risk something or as a foreshadowing element of the ending in which Cressida leaves Troilus willingly. However, Shakespeare’s change, that Cressida is not only to be exchanged against Antenor but also to be married to Diomedes gives emphasis to all changes in her character traits and heightens the dramaturgy of the play.

4.3 Criseyde / Cressida betrays Troilus

Cressida’s betrayal of Troilus is more direct and according to her character colder than Criseyde’s misdeed. Neither is it announced by dreams or hints, nor is it explained afterwards. The time until Cressida gives in to Diomedes is incomparable shorter than Criseyde’s hesitation, maybe a plays allows not so much room for long preparations of the climax. Nevertheless is the betrayal a central point of the story, if not the most important one. On this point in the love story, both authors give strong emphasis to their female main characters’ personalities. Chaucer underlines Criseyde’s helplessness, fear, doubt, bad conscience, pity and weakness, while Shakespeare brings into the foreground Cressida’s directness, cold heartedness, flightiness and superficiality. Both of them take the two characters as symbols for women in general but Chaucer uses Criseyde as a negative example who sees herself excluded from the world of faithful women, which Cressida’s character is considered as the usual way of womanly behaviour. But finally the effect that both characters have on Troilus is the same because they make him feel desperate, sad, almost depressive and ready to die in the war. So both writers show two women who handle the same situation completely different but in the end come to the same result.

But it is not possible to say that the change of the character has no effect on the text as a whole because it is just the effect on Troilus that has not changed so much but it has changed the tone of the story. Criseyde’s character, including her explicit self accuse, let her seem sympathetic to the reader, although she has just betrayed the man who loved her. According to Kaufmann it is this “disabused love we call tragic”\textsuperscript{23}. So in some way she is a tragic hero like Troilus, too, because she could not stand misfortunate influences. In contrast to that Cressida’s character might affect the reader in an unfavourable way for Cressida. If the text is not read with a feministic view on it, Cressida’s character resembles the image of a “bad woman”. By accusing other women to be like her, Cressida reinforces the disguise of the reader. All this shows that Shakespeare’s changes of Criseyde’s / Cressida’s character have not so much an influence on the inner structure of the text but on the outer reception of the character of Criseyde / Cressida. Cressida’s character seems not as miraculous and frightened as Criseyde’s but nevertheless does she seems to be torn between the wish to stay with Troilus and the readiness to leave him. She does not see love as anything unstable or unreal in general but nevertheless does she not want to fight for it but is ready to give it up easily. That is why Walter concludes: “die Gespaltenheit der Figur wird … besonders deutlich, da eine nähere Begründung des Umschwungs unterbleibt”\textsuperscript{24}. There is no explanation for Cressida’s individual behaviour but only the general statement about the nature of women. This generalisation leads away from Cressida’s individual character to a more generalised view on women in Shakespeare’s time.

\textsuperscript{22} Shakespeare. p. 737, l. 53
\textsuperscript{24} Walter. p. 316
The reasons for changing character or tones are various. According to Walter and Rossiter, these changes affecting the Shakespeare play happened because the play “was written for a specific time and for a special audience, [...] young, critical, discontented minds”\(^{25}\). Only this allows a writer to change attitudes of characters, so that he can be sure that his play will be successful and understood. So the changes in Shakespeare’s play are not only related to the poet’s taste but also strongly to the social and political circumstances. These changes are exemplified in the character of Cressida and her attitude towards men, especially the betrayal of Troilus. In Shakespeare’s time it was not so much necessary for a woman to be protected by her relatives although women were not as emancipated as they are nowadays. But the tendency to a self-confident woman who has her own will – even if hidden behind a simulated obedience – was already there and was already allowed to be shown in plays. It is to assume that in both times women had a will on their own but it was not possible to express womanly independence from men in a story in Chaucer’s time. So the Cressida of Shakespeare’s play is adapted to Shakespeare’s time and so are her betrayal of Troilus and her thoughts about it which will be analysed in the next chapter.

5. Sample Analysis of Criseyde’s / Cressida’s Reaction to her Betrayal of Troilus

In this chapter there will be a closer look on Criseyde’s / Cressida’s self-reflection on her betrayal of Troilus with Diomedes. This time there will be a detailed analysis of a specific scene, namely after Criseyde / Cressida has given in to Diomedes. The relevant passages of the story are on the left side Chaucer, Book V, p. 162, ll. 1051-1064 and on the right side Shakespeare Act 5, Scene 5.1, p. 743 ll. 81-84 and p. 744 ll. 109-114.

\(^{25}\) Rossiter. p. 100
But trewely, the storie telleth us,
Ther made nevere woman moore wo
Than she, whan that she falsed Troilus.
She sayde. “Allas! for now is clene ago
My name of trouthe in love, for evermo!
For I have falsed oon the gentileste
That evere was, and oon the worthieste!
“Allas! of me, unto the worldes ende,
Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende
O, rolled shal I ben on many tonge!
Thoroughout the world my belle shal be ronge!
And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.
Allas, that swich a cas me sholde falle!

Cressida:
O all you gods! O pretty pretty pledge!
Thy master now lies thinking on his bed
Of thee and me and sighs and takes my glove
And gives memorial dainty kisses to it –
[…]
Troilus, farewell. One eye yet looks on thee,
But with my heart the other eye doth see.
Ah, poor our sex! This fault in us I find:
The error of our eye directs our mind.
What error leads must err. O then conclude:
Minds swayed are full of turpitude.

These two excerpts of the texts show what Criseyde / Cressida thinks about and shortly after she betrayed Troilus with Diomedes. Criseyde on her part is sad and ashamed of her love to Diomedes and accuses herself of being unfaithful to her former lover. She sees her change in mind as a treachery to Troilus and love as a whole because she feels damned by all (faithful) women who stick to their lovers. She is highly aware of her weakness and fears the consequences of it, namely a future in shame.

Cressida on the contrary is not as shameful as Criseyde. Directly before Diomedes seals their love to each other by a kiss she thinks of Troilus but only feels pity for him, neither shame nor the wish to get back to him and the next moment she says “farewell” to him. It seems as if Cressida regrets a little bit that she could not keep the love to Troilus but that she is not too sad to have changed her mind and now loves Diomedes. Furthermore she thinks this a natural behaviour of all women who are overwhelmed by out appearances and not able to withstand male temptation. So Cressida considers her betrayal a general fault of women and does not take it personally. By that opinion she somehow finds an excuse for herself because she considers her own volatility as something basic in a woman’s nature and therefore not as a bad individual trait of her own character.

Comparing the two reactions to each other it is obvious that Criseyde suffers more from her behaviour than Cressida. Even her tone is more regretful than Cressida’s. Her speech is loaded with the vowel “o” as well as with exclamation marks which make her speech more sombre and emotional. Form and content show how upset she is but also how helpless she feels. Once more Chaucer underlines her passiveness because she is led by her emotions which do not go together with her idea of truth and honour. Cressida on her part is more analytical and colder in her speech. She is not so emotional as her Chaucer counterpart because the only feelings she expresses are a bit of pity for Troilus and a general regret for womanhood as being fickle which is expressed by the use of plural forms (“us”, “we”) when she speaks about the faults she committed. All this shows that Cressida’s character is expressed as contrary to the medieval predominating idea of “the heavenly woman desperately on her knees in a totally subordinate role before the all-powerful men”26.

The directness of Cressida is underlined by the fact that Shakespeare lets Troilus overhear her conversation with Diomedes and therefore can be sure about the end of her love to him. Afterwards Cressida is not mentioned in the play any longer, so that she

26 Aers. p. 132
leaves the action with the most important one of her decisions. One could say that Cressida decided to leave Troilus for another man by her own will and even if she does not know it shows her decision to him as consequently as she accepted her character. In contrast to that Criseyde’s role goes one in the story and Troilus gets to know her betrayal indirectly by a dream, a letter and his things which Criseyde gave to Diomedes. So the Chaucer story seems a bit softer in the end but Criseyde’s character weaker than ever. She is not able to tell Troilus about her decision but keeps on telling him that she is about to return to him. So somehow Criseyde cannot accept herself as clearly as Cressida does. These two versions of Criseyde’s / Cressida’s character are to be found again in the end of the stories because in Chaucer’s version Troilus is reconciled with everything while in Shakespeare’s text Troilus is unable to accept what he saw and cannot cope with it. So as the character of Cressida becomes hard in comparison to Criseyde so does the end become more irreconcilable. This shows how important the character of a main figure of the text is for the tone of a story on the whole. Even slight changes in tone, register and the action can have a deep influence on the effect of the story on the reader.

It is also the form of a drama that gives certain emphasis to the ending because it is somehow more dense that Chaucer’s story, which Chapman calls “unsuitable for dramatic presentation”\(^\text{27}\). The form which Shakespeare chose to present the story brings certain changes with it. By the transformation from a pure book story onto the stage, the story loses its narrator and therefore an important source of Criseyde’s / Cressida’s characterisation. The narrator in Chaucer’s story knows a lot about the characters’ feelings, thoughts and dreams and tells the reader about it. This it not possible on stage and therefore the auctorial characterisation of Criseyde through the narrator had to be replaced by something else: the explicit and implicit characterisation of Cressida herself. It is not only due to her coldness and directness that she speaks out nearly all of her thoughts but it is abundantly necessary because she had to compensate the loss of the narrator. So the changes analysed above are on the one hand necessary for the development of the character itself but on the other hand also dependent on the change of genre.

6. Conclusion

The attempt of this essay has been to show that Shakespeare and Chaucer have adjusted to their character of Cressida / Criseyde according to their ideas of the story and the way they planned to develop the main problem: “the contradiction between the aristocratic love conventions in which woman was an exalted and powerful figure, and the social reality in which she was a totally subordinate being to be used, manipulated and taught obedience”\(^\text{28}\). The changes made by Chaucer and Shakespeare are different in their nature and in their strength. They are expressed most directly through the relationships the women have to other men, be it Pandarus or Troilus. Those changes affect the whole story as well as single scenes, as the sample analysis in 5 has shown. For those reasons Criseyde / Cressida have often been in the centre of interest of many researches because they are decisive for the tone and effect of the story on the reader. For Ian Gordon Criseyde’s character is so prominent and strongly foregrounded that he says that “as a person, Criseyde steals the picture from Troilus, partly because of the


\(^{28}\) Aers. p. 134
teasing enigma her behaviour seems to present, and partly because she is depicted more realistically, especially in her scenes with Pandarus”\textsuperscript{29}. That is why Windeatt concludes of Criseyde that “as a medieval lady she has been schooled to wish to please, and Criseyde is characteristically concerned to conform with whatever the person she is with expects her to be, although, by trying to please everyone, she eventually loses everything”\textsuperscript{30}.

The accentuation of the female main character is strongly dependant on the time of the writers. While Chaucer lived in medieval times, Shakespeare’s time was about 300 years later and ideas had changed. For Chaucer it was modern and common to create a lady which acts in a “curtois” way of living even if the events that take place are against her will. She moves in the socially determined way of living and accepts her fate as a woman. On the contrary is Shakespeare tempted to create a female character that is adapted to his time, which is far away from the “höfische Minnetradition” of Chaucer’s time. Walter summarises Cressida’s part as follows:

\begin{quote}

in einer Gesellschaft, in der die Liebe einerseits mit romantischen Beteuerungen verklärt, andererseits mit wenig romantischen Vorstellungen des Kaufhandels und des Marktwerts assoziiert wird, passt sich Cressida des geltenden Normen an, wenn sie zu Koketterie, witziger Unverbindlichkeit und Rollenspiel greift. Sie versucht sich auf diese Weise in einer korrumpierten Umgebung einen Rest von Unabhängigkeit zu bewahren.\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

That means that both women are bound to the society they live in. Criseyde on her part is more focused on her personal fate and very frightened and fearful while Cressida tries to solve her problems by self-confidence and wit. This change is essential because Shakespeare’s play was written in another time than Chaucer’s story where values and attitudes had changed. To conclude on could say that both characters are based on the same source and idea, namely a woman in love and war, but Chaucer and Shakespeare treated her role quite differently. Vocabulary, style, register and tone changed according to the different circumstances and intentions. Because of all those dissimilarities between the two female characters, one has to come to the conclusion like Troilus: “This is and is not Cressid”\textsuperscript{32}.

\textsuperscript{29} Ian Gordon. \textit{The Double Sorrow of Troilus}. Clarendon Press: Oxford. 1970. p. 113
\textsuperscript{30} Windeatt. p. 286
\textsuperscript{31} Walter. Band 15. p. 315
\textsuperscript{32} Shakespeare. p. 744, l. 149
Bibliography:

primary reading


secondary reading:


