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Love Imagery in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie*,
John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Contents

Introduction		1
Chapter 1	Patterns of Unrequited Love in Benoît's <i>Roman de Troie</i>	13
Chapter 2	Patterns of Mutual Love in Benoît's <i>Roman de Troie</i>	66
Chapter 3	Gower Retells the Troy Story	117
Chapter 4	Chaucer Retells the Troy Story	176
Afterword		205
Bibliography		207

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This thesis examines the imagery of love as it is depicted in three medieval versions of the story of Troy. The result is an attempt to determine to what extent Benoît, Gower, and Chaucer use love motifs and language to distinguish between the gendered experiences of the passion and to what extent love, as it is expressed by the various characters of both sexes, is considered to be the motivational force behind the events at Troy.

A distinctive feature of Benoît's *Roman de Troie* is the attention it gives to the love stories that comprise it, not only the story of Paris and Helen, but also the stories of Jason and Medea, of Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes, and of Achilles and Polyxena. A close analysis of the poem reveals a variety of recurring images and vocabulary relating to the experience and expression of erotic love. Benoît clearly views the women in these stories not just as objects of the passions of their male lovers, but as subject to passions of their own.

In his *Confessio Amantis*, John Gower restructures the story of Troy around other tales of love and kingship which exemplify the same sin. By presenting the history of Troy out of sequence, by eliminating some of the traditional imagery and

language, and by developing his own unique set of images and vocabulary, he effectively disassociates the love episodes from the war narrative. The love stories of Jason and Medea and of Paris and Helen become *exempla* of the sin of avarice, connected not so much by parallels in plot, but by similarities in the love experience of the main characters.

Unlike the other two versions of the story of Troy, Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* focusses on a single, self-contained fragment of the story. In contrast to the language and imagery associated with the male characters of the poem, the patterns of vocabulary and images affiliated with Criseyde reveal her to be a figure motivated more by a concern for honour and the passion of fear, than by love.

Introduction

The Latin West had little, or no, knowledge of Homer's *Iliad* until the fourteenth century, when in 1354, according to tradition, the Italian writer Petrarch was sent a manuscript of the poem from Constantinople. Consequently, medieval versions of the Troy story were essentially derived from two pseudo-historical accounts of the events, Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia* and Dictys Cretensis' *Ephemeridos belli troiani* (c. sixth and fourth centuries A.D. respectively, although they claim to antedate Homer as first-hand accounts of the Trojan War). As the distribution of manuscripts attests, both histories enjoyed considerable popularity in northern Europe, especially in France and Britain.¹ Although each late classical author briefly discusses the love relationships of some of the main characters, namely Paris and Helen and Achilles and Polyxena, neither examines in detail the love experience of the individual and the effects erotic passion have on the events at Troy. It is not until the twelfth century in France that such an examination of the Troy story develops.

¹ For further details regarding the transmission of Homer's works to Europe and the influence of Dares' and Dictys' chronicles, see John A. Scott's *Homer and his Influence* (New York: Copper Square Publishers, 1963).

Dating from sometime between 1165 and 1170, Benoît de Sainte-Maure's Old French poem, *Le Roman de Troie*, widely popularized the story of Troy.² A distinctive feature of Benoît's version of the Troy story is the attention it gives to the love stories that comprise it, not only the story of Paris and Helen, but also the stories of Jason and Medea, Troilus and Briseida, Diomedes and Briseida, and Achilles and Polyxena.³ Like Ovid in the *Heroides* and in parts of the *Metamorphoses* and like Virgil in Book IV of the *Aeneid*, Benoît views the women in these stories not just as objects of the passions of their male lovers, but as subject to passions of their own. Moreover, he follows his French contemporaries, like the author of the *Roman d'Eneas*, in giving these women the opportunity to speak at length about their own passions and about the stories in which they are involved. Although he is undoubtedly influenced by a renewed interest in the twelfth century in the poetry of Ovid, Benoît does not simply retell the Ovidian versions of the love-stories that comprise the story of Troy, but recreates them, particularly in terms of vocabulary and imagery, and makes them entirely his own.

The *Roman de Troie* has drawn little critical attention in comparison to other members of the *romans d'antiquité* tradition, particularly the *Eneas*. Few scholars have

² The dating of the *Roman de Troie* is discussed by Léopold Constans in the introduction to his edition of the poem (Paris: Librairie de Firmin Didot, 1904-12): VI, 182; although Constans dates the poem between 1155 and 1160, recent critics, such as Emmanuèle Baumgartner ["Repères," *Le Roman de Troie* (Paris: Union Générale d'Éditions, 1987): 11-13], give a later date of sometime between 1165 and 1170.

³ Throughout this study, I will follow the spelling of names of classical figures as found in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, ed. N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard, 2nd ed. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1970), regardless of whether the character is found in a classical or medieval text.

examined the poem as a narrative whole,⁴ and, until recently, many have preferred to focus on Benoît's text as a source rather than as a literary creation in itself in order to understand how later authors have adapted and altered the material of the *Roman de Troie* for their own purposes. This tendency to study selected passages and episodes has concentrated exclusively on the major love-narratives, especially the story of Briseida, Diomedes, and Troilus, which has generated the most interest because the tale is wholly original to Benoît and is the ultimate source for Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*.⁵ The individual stories of Jason and Medea and of Paris and Helen have attracted considerably less attention⁶ and that of Achilles and Polyxena almost none at

⁴ R.M. Lumiansky, "Structural Unity in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*," *Romania* 79 (1958): 410-24; Alfred Adler, "*Militia et Amor* in the *Roman de Troie*," *Romanische Forschungen* 72 (1960): 14-29; Inez Hansen, *Zwischen Epos und höfischem Roman: Die Frauengestalten im Trojaroman des Benoît de Sainte-Maure* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1971); Jones, *The Theme of Love in the Romans d'Antiquité*, vol. 5 of *Dissertation Series* (London: Modern Humanities Research Association, 1972); J.L. Levenson, "The Narrative Format of Benoît's *Roman de Troie*," *Romania* 100 (1979): 54-70; Aimé Petit, *Naissances du Roman: Les techniques littéraires dans les romans antiques du XII^e siècle* (Lille: University of Lille, 1985); Penny Eley, "Author and Audience in the *Roman de Troie*," *Courtly Literature: Culture and Context*, ed. Keith Busby and Erik Kooper (Amsterdam: J Benjamins Publishing Co., 1990): 179-90; Udo Schöning, *Thebanroman, Eneasroman, Trojaroman: Studien zur Rezeption der Antike in der französischen Literatur des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1991); and Barbara Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition of the Roman Antique* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

⁵ Such studies include Karl Young's *The Origin and Development of the Story of Troilus and Criseyde* (London: Kegan Paul, 1908; rpt. New York, 1968); R.M. Lumiansky's "The Story of Troilus and Briseida According to Benoît and Guido," *Speculum* 29 (1954): 727-33; Gretchen B. Mieszkowski's "The Reputation of Criseyde 1155-1500," *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 43 (1971): 71-153; and the brief introduction to R.K. Gordon's *The Story of Troilus as Told by Benoît de Sainte-Maure, Giovanni Boccaccio, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Robert Henryson* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1934; rpt. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

⁶ For Jason and Medea, see Joel N. Feimer's "The Figure of Medea in Medieval Literature: A Thematic Metamorphosis," Diss., CUNY, 1983, and his essay "Jason and Medea in Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Le Roman de Troie*: Classical Theme and Medieval Context,"

all.⁷ This fragmentation of the text has done Benoît a significant disservice. By presenting episodes from the *Roman de Troie* in isolation and out of context, critics have failed to recognize the polyphonic interplay of voices throughout the poem. The voices of Briseida, Diomedes, and Troilus compete not only with each other, but also with the voices of other lovers in the earlier love narrative of Jason and Medea, in the continuing love narrative of Paris and Helen, and in the concurrent love narrative of Achilles and Polyxena. And these contesting voices, in turn, compete with those of other characters in the many battle episodes and parliamentary deliberations to create a tension and, at times, a dissonance in the poem. Despite the occasional intrusion of the authorial voice, the *Roman de Troie* remains in many respects an elusive text. Are the individual love-narratives indeed the main focus of the poem as critics seem to believe? What is the meaning of "*fine amor*" as it is applied by Benoît to the disparate amatory episodes? And how can one reconcile the presentation of the love shared by Paris and Helen as "ideal" when Helen is guilty of conduct similar to Briseida's own? It is only in very recent years that scholars, such as Inez Hansen, Udo Schöning, and Barbara Nolan, have begun to address these questions and others by examining all four major amatory tales in relation to one another and to the poem as a whole.

The *Roman de Troie* has long been recognized as an important immediate

Voices in Translation: The Authority of Olde Bookes in Medieval Literature, ed. Deborah M. Sinnreich-Levi and Gale Sigal (New York: AMS, 1992): 35-51; for Helen and Paris, see Margaret J. Ehrhart's *The Judgment of the Trojan Prince Paris in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

⁷ R.M. Lumiansky presents a brief overview of all four of the major love narratives, including that of Achilles and Polyxena, in his essay "Structural Unity in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*."

source for John Gower's treatment of the episodes from the Troy story in the *Confessio Amantis* (late fourteenth century) and as an ultimate source for Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* (late fourteenth century).⁸ My principal consideration in this study is the imagery associated with love, especially the kind of love which was characterized in many medieval treatments as irrational passion, as it is presented in these three versions of the Troy story written for the English court over a period of two hundred years. I wish to understand to what extent the different authors use the vocabulary patterns and recurring motifs of love to distinguish between the male and female experiences of the passion and to what extent love, as it is expressed by the various characters of both sexes, is considered to be the motivational force behind the events at Troy.⁹ Such a study follows on the work begun by Rosemarie Jones in her monograph *The Theme of Love in the Romans d'Antiquité*, in which she includes a glossary of words and expressions used in the love relationships in all the *romans d'antiquité*. Consequently, my analyses, with perhaps the exception of my discussion of Benoît's purpose in creating the story of Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes, remain very much within the literary domain and do not move in the direction of using literature to read the life experience of historical women, as R. Howard Bloch has recently

⁸ The dating of these two Middle English poems remains fairly general: for a discussion of the date of the *Confessio Amantis*, see G.C. Macaulay's comments in the introduction to his edition of the poem [*Confessio Amantis, The English Works of John Gower*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900): xxi-xxviii]; for a discussion of the date of *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Stephen A. Barney's notes for the standard edition of the poem [*The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987): 1020].

⁹ By "language" or "vocabulary," I am referring to the individual word or semantic field used to express a concept; by "imagery" or "motif," I am referring to the figurative expression of a concept using words which, out of context, would not necessarily have the same meaning.

attempted.¹⁰ My approach is more along the lines of E. Jane Burns' interests,¹¹ without the overt feminist theory but with attention given as much to the male love experience as to the female.¹²

¹⁰ *Medieval Misogyny and the Invention of Western Romantic Love* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991).

¹¹ *Bodytalk: When Women Speak in Old French Literature, New Cultural Studies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993).

¹² To facilitate my examination of the vocabulary patterns and imagery used by Benoît, Gower, and Chaucer, I have made considerable use of a computer analysis program, *TACT* (Textual Analysis Computing Tools), which has been developed at the Centre for Computing in the Humanities at the University of Toronto. *TACT* is specifically designed for text-retrieval and analysis of literary works, allowing the user to determine occurrences, patterns, and combinations of words or word-strings. The output can take a variety of forms, including simple text, distribution graphs, type-token statistics, or listings of ranked collocates. I have, however, followed a fairly conservative approach in my use of *TACT*, generally avoiding the statistical analyses in favour of the more traditional concordancing features of the software. My reasons for doing so are fairly simple. Since both Benoît's *Roman de Troie* and, to a lesser extent, Gower's *Confessio Amantis* remain largely unexplored texts, I found that running just the concordancing features of *TACT* provided me with a wealth of material. Benoît's poem, in particular, has benefited from this approach since, at over 30,000 octosyllabic lines in length and with no printed concordance available, it is a formidable work to negotiate in its entirety. Although a printed concordance is available for Gower's poem, past use has indicated a variety of inaccuracies and errors, most likely the result of employing an imperfect electronic edition of the primary text to compile the concordance data. My other reason for refraining from the intensive use of computerized statistical analysis is the question of the place of such analyses in literary criticism. While many thought-provoking and interesting studies using statistics on literature have appeared in recent years, I remain as yet undecided as to the full extent of the value gained by such approaches. I am also rather wary of these analyses since, at times, humanists lack the skill and knowledge to interpret accurately the statistical data which results from computer applications to literary texts. My more modest application of *TACT* will, hopefully, avoid such criticisms of my study as well as demonstrate how the computer can be used for linguistic and thematic analyses in a way which is accessible even to the most computer illiterate. I would like to emphasize that the vocabulary patterns and imagery discussed in this study were not predetermined by either the computer or myself. Computer applications in the humanities cannot be performed successfully or reliably without considerable human interface with the text. Therefore, I began with a close reading of each poem, selecting by eye those words or motifs which I believed to repeat throughout the work in any significant way. I did not necessarily come up with the same list for each poem, but I did crosscheck the patterns of vocabulary and images of a particular text against the other two to ensure that human error had not influenced my choice. Close reading of the primary sources was also essential for ensuring that all occurrences of images and motifs, in particular, were

Beginning with Benoît's *Roman de Troie*, I have divided the love experience into two general categories: unrequited and requited love. Chapter One focusses on the unrequited love relationships of Jason and Medea and of Achilles and Polyxena, the major love narratives which frame the Trojan war. Their love stories present unrequited love from gendered perspectives, Medea's love for Jason and Achilles' love for Polyxena. By examining the recurring motifs of the eye,¹³ ear, heart, fire, and game-playing as they are associated with love, the reader discovers that the men in these stories, regardless of whether they are the lover or the beloved, objectify women, albeit for entirely different reasons. Jason needs only Medea's knowledge to win the Golden Fleece and, therefore, submits temporarily to her will in order to gain his objective. Achilles perceives Polyxena as a visual image rather than a woman and, therefore, submits temporarily to her family's will in order to obtain her. Ironically, he acquires exactly what he so desperately desires, for she literally becomes a silent effigy for him.

Chapter Two turns to the love narratives in the *Roman de Troie* which present the mutual love experience. Once again, Benoît uses the motifs of the eye, ear, heart, and fire to describe the love experience of Paris and Helen and of Troilus, Briseida, and

determined. A computer can only read strings of characters, be they words or phrases; it cannot recognize a metaphorical expression for a word or concept, unless the user instructs it to do so. Therefore, the individual user must ascertain that "eye" or "heart" can be voiced in ways other than the single semantic field expressed here. Not only must he or she define the various parts of speech used to communicate the notion of "eye" or "heart," he or she must also identify the symbolic locutions, such as "subtle streams" or "beating breast," which represent these same concepts.

¹³ Throughout this study, I will use the term "gaze" in reference to the eye. Although I employ "gaze" in its general meaning rather than in its narrow Lacanian sense, I do not mean to preclude consideration of the Lacanian use of the term.

Diomedes. However, the love relationship of Paris and Helen proves rather enigmatic in its brevity and noticeable silences. Although their love is clearly mutual, its development and actual experience are less easy to determine. Benoît is surprisingly silent with respect to a number of issues in the affair, especially the role of Menelaus and Helen's past relationship with him. His few criticisms of Helen are evasive and presented in a manner which leaves the reader uncertain as to whether or not his comments are, in fact, critical. As a result, Paris and Helen are seemingly idealized by Benoît in a surprising departure from the other love narratives. Instead, Benoît turns his criticism on the apparently original character of Briseida, castigating her extensively for behaviour similar to Helen's own.¹⁴ Both women are shown to be preoccupied with honour and social status, even when in the throes of desire, while the men are depicted as single-minded in the pursuit of the beloved. Benoît presents mutual love, like unrequited love, as possessing a potentially devastating influence on all who fall within its sphere. Thus, Paris and Helen's relationship destroys Troy, while Briseida and Diomedes' destroys her good name and their potential happiness after the war. I also address the question of Benoît's creation of the Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes story from the perspective of historical context.

In Chapter Three, I discuss Gower's adaptation of Benoît's poem for the *Confessio Amantis*. In the poem, John Gower effectively dismantles the traditional narrative sequence of the Troy story. He neither recounts the Trojan myth in its entirety as a chronological sequence of events as does Benoît nor develops in full a single, self-

¹⁴ Benoît is the first author to write of the love relationship of Briseida, Troilus, and Diomedes and is generally accepted as the originator of the story.

contained fragment of the story as does Chaucer; rather, Gower retells select episodes from the story of Troy and scatters them in an anachronistic order throughout his poem. This violation of chronology is not unique to the Troy story, for Gower treats other sources in a similar fashion. The *exempla* told to Amans by Genius are drawn largely from classical and medieval anthologies of stories on common themes, most notably from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.¹⁵ However, many of these works also fulfill a secondary purpose as historical narratives of an age or civilization; as such, they have a chronology of their own, but one which Gower seldom chooses to follow.¹⁶ Although the story of Troy is primarily a self-contained history, under Benoît it has already become more like a collection of stories told against the backdrop of the Trojan war. Under Gower, the history is transformed further into individual tales which are categorized according to the sin each best represents. Thus, in the *Confessio Amantis*, the Troy stories are no longer woven intrinsically to one another, but rather to other tales of love and kingship which exemplify the same sin.

Gower also alters and develops new motifs and vocabulary for presenting the

¹⁵ A few *exempla*, such as the tale of Ahab and Micaiah (VII.2527-2694) and the story of Gideon (VII.3627-3806), are drawn from biblical sources, but these *exempla* appear mainly in Book VII and focus on the theme of kingship to which Book VII is devoted.

¹⁶ In his opening lines, Ovid states clearly that the *Metamorphoses* is primarily a collection of stories on bodies changing form; however, as such, it is also a history of the world as he knows it:

In nova fert animus mutatas dicere formas
 corpora; di, coeptis (nam vos mutastis et illas)
 adspirate meis primaque ab origine mundi
 ad mea perpetuum deducite tempora carmen! (*Met.* 1-4)
 [My mind proposes to speak of bodies transformed into new forms;
 o gods, since you have also transformed such things,
 breathe life into my undertaking and draw forth
 my uninterrupted song, from the origins of the world to my own time.]

love relationships of Jason and Medea and of Paris and Helen in particular. References to the eye, ear, privacy, and the motif of predator and prey are traced in each story. Both relationships are depicted as examples of mutual love, a significant departure from Benoît's version of the Jason and Medea story. However, Gower is less interested in the far-reaching consequences of the love experience than in the love experience itself. Despite the fact that each beloved reciprocates the feelings of desire expressed by the lover, women are generally objectified by their male lovers and made passive. The male, in contrast, is depicted as the aggressor and is thus transformed into a predatory being who, even when in love, can reduce the female to a mere possession. As a result, it is usually the man who sins more grievously in love than the woman.

Finally, I discuss Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* in Chapter Four. This version of the Troy story presents neither the epic panorama of Benoît's *Roman de Troie* nor the anachronistic juxtapositioning of fragments of Gower's *Confessio Amantis*. Instead, Chaucer focusses on a single, self-contained amatory episode, set within the frame of the Trojan war, but not dominated by it. As Chaucer tells his reader, his purpose is not to recount the details of Troy's destruction:

But how this town com to destruccion
 Ne falleth naught to purpos me to telle,
 For it were a long digression
 From my matere, and yow to longe to dwelle.¹⁷

Thus Troilus and Criseyde's story is told against the backdrop of the war setting rather

¹⁷ Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, *The Riverside Chaucer*, Book I, lines 141-44.

than woven intrinsically into the war narrative itself. Chaucer's account of their relationship becomes, in a very real sense, the metaphorical retelling of the fall of Troy. The tragic conclusion of Troilus and Criseyde's love affair mirrors the fate of the city, for both Troilus, or "little Troy," and Troy are lost on account of a woman. Significantly, Chaucer does not choose an episode of classical origins for his poem, but rather turns to a love story that finds its source in Benoît's *Roman de Troie* and its fullest realization in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il filostrato*. However, the purpose of this chapter is not to argue Chaucer's debt to either text; certainly, considerable critical attention has already been paid by Chaucerians to the influence of both authors, particularly Boccaccio.¹⁸ I will, instead, examine some of the principal recurring motifs and vocabulary patterns relating to Troilus' and Criseyde's love experiences, namely the eye and heart. In addition, I will focus on the many references to fear and isolation which characterize Criseyde with the intention of determining the extent to which Chaucer presents gendered experiences of erotic love.¹⁹

¹⁸ Chaucer's use of Benoît is discussed in George Lyman Kittredge's *The Date of Chaucer's Troilus and Other Chaucer Matters* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1909) and Elizabeth Salter's "Troilus and Criseyde: Poet and Narrator," *Acts of Interpretation: The Text in its Contexts 700-1600*, ed. Mary J. Carruthers and Elizabeth D. Kirk (Norman, OK: Pilgrim Books, 1982): 289-29. For a detailed comparison of *Troilus and Criseyde* and *Il filostrato*, see C.S. Lewis, "What Chaucer Really Did to *Il filostrato*," *Essays & Studies* 17 (1932): 56-75; Sanford B. Meech, *Design in Chaucer's "Troilus"* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1959); H.M. Cummings, *The Indebtedness of Chaucer's Works to the Italian Works of Boccaccio* (1916; rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1965).

¹⁹ Given the substantial number of critical studies focussing on Troilus, Criseyde, and their love relationship, I will not discuss in detail those patterns that have been the subject of other learned and extensive studies; these include the motifs of "game" discussed by Richard Firth Green in "Troilus and the Game of Love," *The Chaucer Review* 13 (1979): 201-220, and of "lovesickness" discussed by Mary F. Wack in "Memory and Love in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," Ph.D., Cornell University, 1982. Instead, I have chosen imagery and language patterns which have been overlooked or to which I feel that I can provide a substantial

My purpose, therefore, is to determine literary constructions of passion in these three medieval versions of the story of Troy. The extent to which these constructions present gendered versions of the experience and expression of love is also significant. Thus all three poems play a pivotal role, not only in the transmission and reinterpretation of the Troy story in the middle ages, but also as foundational statements of the role of passion, particularly female passion, in influencing the course of history. Of these passions, the strongest and most fundamental is erotic desire.²⁰

contribution.

²⁰ All textual translations in this study are my own, unless noted otherwise.

Chapter One

"Qui tres bien est d'amor espris,
Il n'a en sei sen ne reison"¹

Patterns of Unrequited Love in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*

Like Dares, Benoît introduces his Troy story with the adventures of Jason and the Golden Fleece. It is a highly suitable beginning to a retelling of the Trojan war for several reasons: the Greek hero's struggle in an eastern land for a glittering prize created by the gods prefigures the Greek army's battle in an eastern city for the return of a female prize awarded by a goddess; and Jason's journey to reach the Fleece involves a hostile encounter between the Greeks and the Trojan king, Laomedon, a confrontation which results directly in the first destruction of Troy and ultimately in the Trojan war.² However, Benoît expands considerably upon Dares' brief description of

¹ "Whosoever is fully enflamed by love possesses neither judgement nor reason" [Benoît de Sainte-Maure, *Le Roman de Troie*, ed. Léopold Constans, lines 18458-9; I would like to thank Ross G. Arthur, Patricia J. Eberle, and Robert A. Taylor for their advice and comments on my translations from Old French].

² For Dares, the Greeks' hostile encounter with Laomedon is more important than the actual quest for the Golden Fleece; he devotes an entire passage to the confrontation between the Greeks and the Trojan messenger, but only refers to the winning of the Fleece in passing: *navim conscenderunt et a terra recesserunt, Colchis profecti sunt, pellem abstulerunt, domum reversi sunt.* [The Greeks boarded their ship and retreated from the Trojan shore; they set out for Colchis; they stole the Fleece; they returned home.] [Dares Phrygius, *De excidio Troiae historia*, ed. Ferdinand Meister (Leipzig:Teubner, 1873), II]

the episode and includes the love relationship of Jason and Medea, thereby creating a completely new dimension to the story's function as an introduction to the Trojan war. By incorporating the details of Jason's amatory adventures on Colchis, Benoît draws the theme of love and its role in the story of Troy to the foreground. Thus Jason and Medea's love affair unfolds against the battle for the Golden Fleece just as the relationships of Paris and Helen, of Briseida, Troilus, and Diomedes, and of Achilles and Polyxena develop against the background of the Trojan war.

These amatory episodes do not stand alongside the war narrative, separate and apart, but are intrinsically woven into it, reasserting their presence throughout the poem during the many battle sequences and truces.³ In such a way, the struggles between the lovers, Greek and Trojan, become more than a mere microcosm for the Trojan war; they also illustrate the profound influence that love, specifically erotic love, has on the events at Troy. The story of Jason and Medea, as the first of the love stories and the only one told in a continuous narrative, also functions as a kind of model for the love experience in the *Roman de Troie*. It is the story of unrequited love and, as such, finds its closest parallel in the tale of Achilles and Polyxena. However, the language and imagery of erotic love which Benoît introduces with this first love narrative will become the basis for all the other love episodes, regardless of whether they tell of unrequited love or not. Although Benoît uses recurring motifs, such as the eye, ear, heart, fire, and game-playing, and language to describe the love experience for both men and

³ R.M. Lumiansky makes a similar point when he argues that the love stories of the *Roman de Troie* are fused to the war narrative and, as such, should not be separated from it ("Structural Unity in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*," 411 and 424).

women, he clearly distinguishes between the gendered experiences of passion. In this chapter, I will trace the dominant images and vocabulary of erotic love as they relate specifically to unrequited love and determine the differences between the love experiences of Medea and Achilles. In doing so, I will also consider the role that the *foci* of Medea's and Achilles' passions play in the love experience, especially Jason, who projects the appearance, although not the reality, of a lover.

Benoît first mentions Jason and Medea in the *résumé* to his poem. They are not described as lovers, but rather defined in terms of their personal attributes which lead to the winning of the Golden Fleece:

Adonc vos redirai après
 Coment Jason e Herculès,
 Par engin e par traïson,
 Alerent querre la Toïson;
 Com Medea par son saveir
 La lor fist conquerre e aveir (155-60).

[Next I will recount
 How Jason and Hercules,
 By skill and by treachery,
 Went to seek the Fleece;
 How Medea by her knowledge
 Caused them to conquer and possess it.]

Thus Jason is immediately associated with "*engin*" and "*traïson*" while Medea is identified with "*saveir*," qualities which Benoît will develop fully in the tale itself. However, this introductory passage is also important for what it does *not* say. Benoît makes no mention of Jason and Medea's love relationship, nor does he define the two lovers in terms of one another. Instead, Jason and his fellow Greek adventurer, Hercules, are directly associated with deceit and betrayal. Jason's only connection with

Medea in this passage is in terms of the prize he seeks and which she will help him win, namely the Golden Fleece. However, the Fleece is more than just the means by which Jason and Medea are initially brought together. Jason's desire to win the Fleece will become the stimulus for their love affair; his attainment of it will become the catalyst for their ultimate destruction. Significantly, Benoît does not depict Medea in the passage as an object of love, but as a tool, similar to Jason's "*engin*" and "*traïson*," for achieving the Fleece. That Medea should be defined by her "*saveir*" rather than by her love is appropriate, for it is her knowledge that Jason seeks, not her devotion.

Benoît's use of Ovid for his version of the love affair between Jason and Medea has long been recognized and well documented.⁴ Nevertheless, he does more than simply "borrow" details from the *Metamorphoses* and *Heroides* in order to augment his account; instead, he rearranges and reinterprets episodes in order to create a new perspective on the story, one which presents Medea more sympathetically than his Ovidian sources. Our first view of Medea is not as a barbarian witch tormented by her passion,⁵ but as a regal and civilized woman, well educated in the arts of magic. Upon being summoned by her father to appear in court, she pauses to dress in her finest clothing as befits her rank (1231-36). She is also, as Benoît hastens to reveal, a sorceress of considerable skill:

⁴ Ovidian influences on the tale were first noted by Léopold Constans in his edition of the *Roman de Troie* (Vol. VI, 236); Rosemarie Jones has documented the parallel passages between the *Metamorphoses* and the story of Jason and Medea as found in the *Roman de Troie* (43).

⁵ Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. William S. Anderson (Leipzig: Teubner, 1977), Book VII, lines 9-88.

Trop est cele de grant saveir:
 Mout sot d'engin e de maistrie,
 De conjure e de sorcerie;
 Es arz ot tant s'entente mise
 Que trop par ert sage e aprise;
 Astronomie e nigromance
 Sot tote par cuer dès enfance;
 D'arz saveit tant e de conjure,
 De cler jor feïst nuit obscure;
 S'ele vousist, ço fust viaire
 Que volisseiz par mi cel aire;
 Les eves faiseit corre ariere:
 Scientose ert de grant maniere (1216-28).

[She possessed great knowledge:
 She knew much of skill and of superiority
 Of conjuring and of sorcery;
 She had applied herself so intently to her arts
 That she was exceedingly wise and learned;
 Astronomy and necromancy
 She had learnt by heart from childhood;
 Of magical arts and conjuring she knew so much
 That she could turn a bright day into dark night;
 If she wished so, it would appear
 That you were flying up in the air;
 She made rivers flow backwards;
 Her knowledge was of considerable magnitude.]

The repetitive use of the verb and noun *saveir* and adjectives *sage*, *aprise*, and *scientose* emphasizes Medea's inordinate learning and wisdom with respect to magic, yet Benoît does not associate her sorcery with malevolence. Although Medea is trained in necromancy or "black" magic, Benoît limits the examples of her power to the marvellous control she exerts over the natural world: she can make day night, rivers flow against the current, and people appear to fly. There is no suggestion of cruelty or wickedness in her witchcraft, only wonder. Medea is also identified with "*engin*," a trait which Benoît has used earlier as a catchphrase for Jason. However, Jason's "*engin*"

has very negative connotations, for it is linked directly with "*traïson*" or "treachery;" in contrast, Medea's "*engin*" is associated with a "*maistrie*" or "superiority" in magic, suggesting an artfulness rather than deceit.

By choosing to reveal Medea's magical skills before she meets Jason, Benoît successfully presents to the reader an exotic and bewitching figure who courteously greets Jason and his men. However, it is not Jason who falls under Medea's spell; rather, she is the one completely entranced by him, first by what she hears and then by what she sees. She is pleased to learn that the visitor to her father's court is Jason, for she has heard of his reputation (1257-60). Already favourably disposed toward him by virtue of his fame, she is instantly overcome by love at first sight:

Mout l'aama enz en son cuer:
Ne poëit pas a nesun fuer
Tenir ses ieuz se a lui non (1261-63).

[She loved him greatly in her heart:
She could not for any price
Avert her eyes from him.]

Medea cannot avert her gaze from his handsome form, his hair, his eyes, his face, his body. Upon describing Jason's physical beauty and "*bone maniere*" (1273), Benoît reiterates Medea's captivation by the image before her eyes:

Mout le reguarde en mi la chiere.
Mout i a Medea ses ieuz
Douz, frans e simples, senz orguieuz;
Mout le remire doucement (1274-77).

[Many times she stared at his face.
Many times Medea directed her eyes toward him,
Soft, open, and naïve, without arrogance;
Many times she regarded him with a gentle look.]

She is literally spellbound by Jason's very presence. The references to the softness, openness, and naïveté of Medea's eyes suggest a kind of innocence about her. Benoît reinforces this aura of innocence by revealing a few lines later that she is inexperienced in matters of love, "*Onc mais nul jor n'i entendi, \ N'amer ne voust ne n'ot ami* [She had never given any thought to love; she had neither desired love nor had a beloved]" (1283-84). Her ignorance in love not only facilitates her role as victim of Jason's nefarious designs, but also strikingly contrasts with her significant knowledge of magical lore by which she is initially defined. By juxtaposing the description of Medea's knowledge of sorcery with her ingenuousness in matters of the heart, Benoît heightens the tragic elements of the story. How can a woman so learned and knowledgeable in art of controlling nature be so incapable of controlling her own emotions and, by extension, her own destiny?

Medea is, in fact, made passive by her gaze.⁶ Her look lacks aggression and, therefore, does not objectify Jason, the focus of her gaze; instead, it renders her compliant and seemingly transfixed. This depiction of Medea's submission to Jason's visual image echoes Medea's own description in the *Heroides* of the impact that Jason has on her eye. In Ovid's version of the story, Medea implores "*cur umquam Colchi*

⁶ Critics have come to call this type of gaze "love's fatal glance." See Sarah Stanbury's "The Lover's Gaze in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde "Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism*, eds. R.A. Shoaf and Catherine S. Cox (Binghamton: MRTS, 1992): 224-238; Ruth H. Cline's "Hearts and Eyes," *Romance Philology* 25 (1971-72): 263-297; Frances K. Donaldson-Evans' "Love's Fatal Glance: Eye Imagery in Maurice Scève's *Délie*," *Neophilologus* 62 (1978): 202-211; Lee Patterson's "'Rapt with Pleasaunce': Vision and Narrative in the Epic," *English Literary History* 48 (1981): 455-475; and Robert Baldwin's "'Gates Pure and Shining Serene': Mutual Gazing as Amatory Motif in Western Literature and Art," *Renaissance and Reformation* n.s. 10, 1 (1986): 23-48.

Magnetida vidimus Argon [Why did we Colchians ever see the ship Argo?] (*Her.*XII.9)

and later describes how Jason's beauty robbed her eyes of the power to see:

tunc ego te vidi, tunc coepi scire, quid esses;
 illa fuit mentis prima ruina meae.
 et vidi et perii; nec notis ignibus arsi,
 ardet ut ad magnos pinea taeda deos.
 et formosus eras, et me mea fata trahebant;
 abstulerant oculi lumina nostra tui.⁷

[Then I saw you, then I began to know what you were;
 That was the first downfall of my reason.⁸
 And I saw you and I perished; nor did I burn with customary fires,
 But rather as the pine torch burns before the mighty gods.
 You were beautiful, and my fates dragged me to my destiny;
 Your eyes stole the light from ours.⁹]

Benoît's Jason also steals the light from Medea's eyes. From the moment she first perceives Jason, Medea is, in effect, blinded, for his appearance eliminates all other lines of vision for her. She can no longer "see" anything else, a fact which Benoît emphasizes by depicting Jason from this point on in the story almost exclusively from Medea's perspective. All objective insight into Jason's character and motivation ends with this initial encounter between the lovers; the reader must now judge Jason's actions through Medea's eyes.

Jason does more than simply "blind" Medea. He also stirs feelings of passionate

⁷ Ovid, *Heroides*, trans. Grant Showerman, 2nd ed. revised by G.P. Goold (Cambridge, MA: Loeb edition by Harvard University Press, 1977; rpt. 1986), Letter XII, lines 31-36.

⁸ I have chosen to translate *mens* here as "reason" rather than "soul" since I feel that "reason" continues the image of the intellect as suggested by the verb *scire* in the previous line and fits nicely with the reference to "eyes" and "sight."

⁹ I have translated *lumina nostra*, which means both "our lights" and "our eyes," as "the lights from our eyes" in order to convey both senses of the expression.

desire within her very being. Whereas Medea's heart has always been filled with the teachings of astronomy and necromancy (1221-22), it is now overcome by love (1261). Love supplants all other thoughts and emotions as it enflames Medea with desire: "*Sis cuers de fine amor esprent* [Her heart caught fire with passionate love]" (1278). Benoît's use of the term "*fine amor*" here is significant, for he is the first of the *romans d'antiquité* authors to introduce the expression.¹⁰ Needless to say, the concept of *fine amor* has been the subject of considerable modern critical debate.¹¹ However, with respect to the *Roman de Troie*, scholars have generally argued that Benoît contrasts *fine amor* with *fole amor*, thereby presenting the two extremes of love's spectrum.¹² It is an argument based largely on Moshé Lazar's interpretation of the term *fine amor* in his seminal study *Amour courtois et "fin'amors" dans la littérature du XII^e siècle*,¹³ but one which ignores the context within which Benoît himself applies the term. Does

¹⁰Jones, 46.

¹¹ It is not the purpose of the present study to trace the debate over *fine amor* and courtly love; however, the controversy, which started with Gaston Paris' use of *amour courtois* to describe the love of Lancelot and Guenevere in the *Conte de la charrette*, effectively illustrates the difficulty involved in defining a medieval concept from a twentieth-century point of view. An excellent study of the problems involved in defining *fine amor* today can be found in J.D. Burnley's "*Fine Amor: Its Meaning and Context*," *Review of English Studies* n.s. 31 (1980): 129-48.

¹² According to Alfred Adler, Paris and Helen's love is the model of *amor jugalis*, an ideal against which the other love relationships in the *Roman de Troie* fail to measure up (17-24); Rosemarie Jones suggests that the story of Jason and Medea is an inversion of the "courtly love" convention (46); Joel Feimer views the bond between Jason and Medea as one of *fine amor*, but fails to provide a clear definition of what he considers this love to be (164); and Barbara Nolan interprets *fine amor* as "perfect" or "true" love which can develop into Ovidian *fole amor*, as in the case of Medea (96-99).

¹³ *Amour courtois et "fin'amors" dans la littérature du XII^e siècle* (Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1964), see especially pp. 55-85.

Benoît really associate *fine amor* with the notion of "perfect" love, a love that has as its opposite *fole amor*? If one examines the specific occurrences of *fine amor* in the *Roman de Troie*, one will discover that such love is associated with passion rather than with any concept of "ideal" love. Benoît uses *fine amor* specifically to describe the love experienced by individuals in three of the four major love narratives: thus, Medea becomes "enflamed" by *fine amor* (1278); Achilles is overwhelmed by *fine amor* (17547); Diomedes suffers the torment and pain of *fine amor* (393-95) and is "set alight" by it (15020); and Briseida gives her *fine amor* to Diomedes against all reason and against all that is right (20272-3).¹⁴ In each instance, *fine amor* is directly associated with some sort of negative effect, be it the destructive force of fire, personal agony, or foolishness, rather than with some form of moral benefit. Significantly, Benoît does not use *fine amor* to describe the love of Troilus for Briseida nor, more importantly, to characterize the love between Paris and Helen, a relationship which, although the cause of the Trojan war and Paris' death, is portrayed more favourably than those of the other major love narratives. He also makes a point of specifically noting that *fine amor* is *not* the motivation for Circe's or Calypso's many sexual relationships with men,

O eles cochoënt plusor,
 Mais n'i esteit pas fine amor,
 Que traïson e decevance (28743-45).

[Some men lay with them,
 But it was not passionate love,
 Only betrayal and deception.]

By extension, Circe's relationship with Ulysses must also be based on lust rather than

¹⁴ Only Briseida refers to her love directly as *fine amor*; all other references to an individual's love experience as *fine amor* are made by the author.

on feelings of *fine amor*.

By linking *fine amor* so closely with the language of destruction, namely *esprendre*, *douleur*, and *folie*, Benoît is able to convey the intensity of feeling involved in the love experience. *Fine amor* is shown to be passionate love, an overwhelming desire which ultimately destroys its victims. This understanding of *fine amor* is further supported by Benoît's use of the adjective *fin\fine* throughout the poem. Other than in connection with *amor*, Benoît uses *fin\fine* almost exclusively to describe the purity of metals and of marble, as in "*fin or*," "*fin acier*," "*fin argent*," and "*fin marbre*." In doing so, he presents the physical substance as "perfect" or "pure" in the sense that it is either unalloyed with base metal or uncontaminated by other rocks. The adjective indicates a refinement or concentration of gold, iron, silver, and marble rather than a virtuous "ideal." Thus, when applied to an abstract concept, such as *amor*, *fin\fine* suggests only an intensity of that concept, not necessarily a "perfection" of it. For Benoît, this intensity becomes a negative force since *fine amor* is associated with the verb *esprendre* and the nouns *douleur* and *folie*. *Amor's* ability to burn the sufferer or to inflict pain or to undermine reason suggests an extreme or "refinement" of love which is anything but virtuous. As such, *fine amor* draws its value not from the adjective *fin\fine*, but from the context within which it is used.

Upon seeing Jason for the first time, Medea is no longer defined solely by her wisdom in sorcery, but also by her heart. She is immediately thrown into turmoil as the seat of her passion competes with her reason for control. References to Medea's heart occur at each critical moment in the development of her relationship with Jason,

particularly at the very beginning. In response to her initial visual impression of Jason, her heart is filled with love (1261) and becomes enflamed (1278). Her turmoil and determination to have Jason as her own increase as her gaze remains transfixed:

Or i a si torné son cuer
 Qu'el ne laira a nesun fuer
 Qu'ele n'en face son poëir;
 Poi preisera tot son saveir,
 S'ele n'aemplist son corage (1285-89)

[Now her heart is so turned
 That she will not cease for any price
 Until she has brought him under her power;
 She will value all her knowledge very little,
 If she cannot attain her heart's desire.]

Just as Medea could not avert her gaze from Jason's beauty "*a nesun fuer*" (1262), so she will pursue her beloved regardless of the "price." Compelled by the passion released within her heart, she believes that she can bring Jason under her spell. The repetition of the phrase "*a nesun fuer*" not only suggests the magnitude of Medea's feelings for Jason, but also foreshadows the great personal cost at which Medea will finally achieve her goal. He conveys a sense of irony with the suggestion that Medea feels driven to bring Jason under her power and that failing to do so will prove her magical arts of little worth. So mesmerized is she by his presence that she can think of nothing else but him. Medea is subject to love's control from the moment she sees him. Her magic no longer holds the power she insists it has, for she remains helpless to make Jason truly love her; instead, her skill in sorcery will only prove to be of great value to Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece. Love has effectively transformed Medea from mighty sorceress to submissive woman, for she cannot restrain her

feelings for Jason:

Tost li avreit s'amor donee,
S'il fust en lieu qu'il li queïst:
Ne cuit ja l'en escondeïst (1280-83).

[Without delay she would have given him her love,
If he had been in a suitable place to seek it:
She did not think she could refuse it to him.]

While these lines reveal Medea's willingness to bestow her love upon Jason, they also illustrate the power which he now holds over her, for she can refuse him nothing.

This passive Medea suffers the agonies of love in silence for a week:

Ensi sofri a mout grant peine
Toz les uit jorz de la semaine;
N'ot bien ne repos ne solaz:
Dès or la tient bien en ses laz
Amors, vers cui rien n'a defense (1291-95).

[So she suffered in great pain
All the eight days of the week;
She had neither solace nor respite:
Love now held her firmly in his bonds,
Against whom no one has any defence.]

Her pain is great and unrelenting as she is held prisoner by her own passion. Her isolation ends only when Aeetes specifically commands her, as hostess, to engage the Argonauts in conversation during their stay. Thus Medea is forced to act, albeit with considerable trepidation: "*Mout en dote le commencier* [Greatly did she hesitate to start on it]" (1299). At her renewed sight of Jason, she immediately burns with passion: "*E cele ... d'amor esprent* [And she ... burned with love]" (1308). Her beating and burning heart continues to torment her as she impatiently awaits in her bedchamber for his arrival: "*Mout li tressaut li cuers el ventre; \ Esprise l'a forment Amors* [Greatly did her

heart tremble inside her; love burned strongly within her]" (1464-65). Love's flame flares up again and again, and a feeling of anxious uncertainty pervades her inner self. These references to Medea's love as a fire continue the motif begun with her initial gaze upon Jason (1278). The fire imagery of her love parallels the fire associated with the guardians of the Fleece: the bulls of Mars which breathe a "*feu ardent*" from their nostrils and mouths (1353-55) so that their entire bodies seem to burn like wood (1358); and the ever-vigilant serpent which spews a lethal combination of "*feu*" and "*venin*" on its victims (1369-76). Benoît emphasizes the fiery natures of these mythical creatures by having them described as such three times in the story, each time by Medea. Medea verbally refers to their fire on two occasions, first when she first speaks to Jason and warns him of the dangers that await seekers of the Golden Fleece, and later when she presents him with the magic charms and spells needed to overcome them. She then describes the fiery bulls and serpent a third time as she witnesses Jason's struggle to win the Fleece; however, she does so, not by means of direct speech, but by her gaze. As Medea looks down from her tower upon the unfolding scene, she visualizes for the reader the battle for the Golden Fleece. It is only through her eyes that we see the events taking place. In doing so, Benoît presents a highly evocative picture of a solitary woman enflamed by passion watching her beloved combat the deadly flames of the supernatural guardians of the Fleece. So blinded is she by her love for the Greek hero that she fails to identify the destructive nature of the bulls' and serpent's fire with her own burning heart.

At no point in the *Roman de Troie* does Medea undergo a moment of true self-

recognition with respect to her love for Jason. It is only through the narrator that the reader discerns Medea's inner conflict as joy leads to woe:

Sovent esguarde e se porpense
 Coment ele ait joie pleniere,
 Quar destreite est de grant maniere (1296-98).

[Often she reflected and thought
 How she might have complete joy,
 Since she is so tormented.]

Medea cannot comprehend the significance of her turmoil, for she sees Jason as a salve for her pain, not the cause. As she waits for Jason to come to her room at night, she reveals something of her inner turmoil for the first time in her own voice, rather than through the voice of the narrator:

Certes mout a en mei folor:
 De quei me sui jo entremise?
 Mieuz en devreie estre reprise
 Que cil qui est trovez emblant.
 Fol corage e mauvais semblant
 Porreit l'om or trover en mei,
 Que ci m'estois ne sai por quei.
 Estuet me il estre en esfrei
 Que volentiers ne vienge a mei
 Jason, quel hore qu'i envei? (1496-1505).

[Truly there is much foolishness in me:
 In what have I involved myself?
 I am more deserving of rebuke
 Than one who is found stealing.
 One could now find in me
 A foolish heart and false-seeming,
 For here I am and I know not why.
 Must I be in torment,
 Because Jason does not willingly come to me
 At whatever hour I send for him?]

Barbara Nolan has suggested that Medea exhibits here a self-awareness of the folly

of her behaviour.¹⁵ However, it is not so much an appreciation of the imprudence of her love as it is the recognition of the absurdity of her present situation, namely Medea's racing around a dark castle at night in anticipation of a clandestine meeting with her beloved. There is little evidence to indicate that Medea undergoes "an intense self-analysis, in which [she] acknowledges her own folly."¹⁶ The passage quoted above actually begins with Medea asking herself a set of rhetorical questions regarding the court's apparent unwillingness to sleep this particular night. Thus, when she describes herself as "foolish," she is essentially chastising herself for spending the night by mentally willing the courtiers to go to bed and furtively spying on them in order to confirm that they have done so. From Medea's point of view, the "torment" Jason causes within her is the result of his failure to appear at the appointed hour, not the result of an uncontrollable desire for him. Any appreciation of the irrationality of her love experience is only superficial.

As such, Benoît's heroine is quite different from her Ovidian counterpart, a woman who clearly recognizes the foolishness of her actions:

sed trahit invitam nova vis, aliudque cupido,
mens aliud suadet: video meliora proboque,
detoria sequor (*Met.* VII.19-21).

[But a strange power draws me against my will; desire
advises one thing, reason another. I see the better and
pronounce them good; I follow the worse.]

Despite her "*furor*" (*Met.* VII.10) or "madness," Ovid's Medea retains the ability to cast

¹⁵ Nolan, 101.

¹⁶ Nolan, 101.

judgement on her behaviour; she simply remains powerless to follow any course of action but the most imprudent. In contrast, Benoît's Medea cannot perceive her own foolishness; she only acknowledges, albeit briefly, the sheer power of her passion. As she stands in her tower gazing down upon Jason who battles valiantly for the Golden Fleece, she laments,

Jason, sire, beaus amis genz,
 Mout sui por vos en grant error,
 Quar jo vos aim de grant amor.
 En grant dotance m'avez mise:
 Ne puet mais estre en nule guise
 Que jo m'en puisse aseürer,
 Tant que vos veie retomer.
 Grant paor ai e grant dotance
 Que de ço n'aiez remembrance
 Que vos ai dit e enseignié:
 Ja mais nen avrai mon cuer lié
 Desci que vos tienge en mes braz (1862-73).

[Jason, my lord, my handsome sweet beloved,
 I am greatly confused on your account,
 Because I love you with a great passion.
 You have instilled in me great fear:
 It is not possible by any means
 That I can feel assured about it
 Until I see your safe return.
 I have a great fear and apprehension
 That you will have no memory of what
 I have told you and instructed you to do:
 My heart will never again be happy
 Until I hold you in my arms.]

She seems to comprehend that love has somehow impaired her reason, but she does not consider this mental confusion to be self-destructive. Nevertheless, Medea does stress the enormity of her emotions with the repetition of the word *grant*. She uses the adjective five times in this brief passage and always with respect to "fear" or "love." The end-rhyme of "*grant error*" and "*grant amor*" emphasizes the correlation between

Medea's love and her confusion, an affinity which Medea herself fails to hear. Instead, she describes her heart as weighed down by concern for Jason's safety as she awaits to embrace the returning hero. Her heart is, in truth, burdened by the overwhelming passion that she feels for Jason. She cannot understand that her transitory embrace will only alleviate her heart for the moment, not forever. The repeated references in this passage to "*grant dotance*" and "*grant paor*" also emphasize another characteristic of Medea, her fear. Although she recognizes that Jason is the direct cause, she perceives her fear as arising not from the power of her love for him, but from the possibility that Jason may die in the attempt to win the Fleece. However, Medea's first reference to her "*grant dotance*" follows immediately upon her acknowledgement of her "*grant amor*" for Jason, a juxtaposition which suggests an association between the two feelings¹⁷ but one which Medea fails to recognize.

In contrast, Jason does not experience the same feelings of passionate love; he only projects the appearance of a true lover. To this extent, Benoît follows Ovid in his portrayal of his hero as a cool and detached lover.¹⁸ Whereas Benoît details Medea's physiological response to Jason's appearance when she first meets him, he provides no such insight into Jason's reaction to her. It is a silence which speaks volumes. Unlike Medea, Jason is seemingly unmoved by her presence, for her beauty is not described through his eyes but through the narrator's. The richness of her clothing, the

¹⁷ If one simply alters punctuation of the two lines in Constans' edition by replacing the period with a comma, the relationship between Medea's overwhelming passion and her fear becomes even more evident.

¹⁸ *Metamorphoses* VII, 89-99.

loveliness of her face, and the delicacy of her complexion are all recounted impersonally and immediately preceding Medea and Jason's initial encounter. Consequently, her physical presence appears to have little, if any, effect on him. This presentation is a striking contrast to the portrait of Jason, which follows directly upon the description of the lovestruck Medea and is introduced by the line, "*La forme esguede de son cors* [She studied the form of his body]" (1265). By prefacing the list of Jason's various attributes with reference to Medea's gaze, Benoît emphasizes the fact that the hero is being described exclusively from her perspective. Jason's initial lack of interest in Medea is reinforced by the fact that he makes no attempt to speak to her or to seek out her company. Whereas in Ovid's version of the episode Jason presses her for help:

vero coepitque loqui dextramque prendit
hospes et auxilium submissa voce rogavit
promisitque torum (*Met.* VII.89-91),

[but the stranger began to speak and seized her right
hand and, in a low voice, he asked for her help and
promised her marriage,]

Benoît has Medea break the silence and only then after a full week has passed. Her first words are also spoken in a voice "*Soëf, basset, que l'om ne l'oie* [Soft, low, which no one could hear]" (1312), but it is a manner which suggests her modest nature (1309) and foreshadows the furtiveness that will characterize their love affair.

The only direct perception of Jason's character occurs at the beginning of the tale, when Benoît describes him as a man "*De grant beauté e de grant pris\ E de grant sen* [Of great beauty, of great value, and of great judgement]" (729-30) who:

Grant force aveit e grant vertu,
 Par maint regne fu coneü;
 Mout fu corteis e genz e proz
 E mout esteit amez de toz;
 Mout por demenot grant noblece
 E mout amot gloire e largece;
 Trop ert de lui grant reparance,
 E tant aveit fait dès enfance
 Que mout ert coneüz sis nons
 Par terres e par regions (731-40).

[Had great strength and great courage,
 For which he was renowned in many realms;
 He was very courteous, noble, and brave
 And well loved by all;
 He conducted himself with very great nobility
 And dearly did he love glory and liberality;
 His reputation was very great,
 And he had accomplished so many deeds since childhood,
 That his name was well-known
 Throughout the lands and regions.]

Unlike Medea, who has studied the magical arts "*dès enfance*" (738 and 1420), Jason has spent his childhood accomplishing great feats. His many heroic qualities are emphasized by the repetition of the adjectives *grant* and *mout* and the adverbs *trop* and *tant* throughout this passage; however, the narrator also notes Jason's love of glory, be it the public veneration gained by his prowess or by his generosity to his men. It is an important motivating force for the hero, one which his uncle, Pelias, has recognized early on. Pelias plays on Jason's overwhelming desire for fame in order to persuade him to seek the Fleece. He challenges Jason before the entire court, saying,

Mout as grant pris e grant valor,
 Mout as conquise grant honor,
 Mais conquerre la puez mout maire (833-35).

[You are a man of very great value and courage,
 You have acquired very great honour,

But you could acquire even more of it.]

The public forum of the request and the subtle insult appended to Pelias' compliments leave Jason little choice but to accept. Jason knows that he possesses the necessary power and fortitude (861-64); he is also curious to visit foreign kingdoms and to explore lands about which he has only heard (867-70); however, most importantly, he desires to spread his fame throughout the world:

E mout voudreit faire tel rien
Que l'om li atornast a bien
E dont il essauçast son nom (871-73).

[And he strongly desired to accomplish such a feat
That men would count it to his credit
And therefore celebrate his name.]

What Jason does not have is the privileged knowledge needed to ensure his success, a wisdom that only Medea can provide. Thus his need for personal glory prompts him to seek the Golden Fleece as well as to woo Medea for the sole purpose of gaining her help.

Knowing Jason's reason for coming to Colchis, Medea attempts to dissuade him by revealing the many dangers that await him on the island of the Golden Fleece.

Jason's reply is polite, but surprisingly curt:

Mieuz vueil morir que jo n'essai
S'en nul sen avoir le porrai.
Se o mei ne l'en puis porter,
Ja mais me m'en quier retomer;
Quar a toz jorz honiz sereie,
Si que ja mais honor n'avreie.
Par ci m'en covient a passer (1391-97).

[I prefer to die rather than fail to attempt to see
Whether I can procure the Fleece by any means.
If I cannot take it back with me,

I do not wish to go back at all;
 Because I would be forever shamed,
 So that I would no longer possess honour.
 This is what I must do.]

Once again, Jason's great desire for fame is emphasized, but this time it is through his own voice rather than through the narrator's. Unlike Medea, he only fears dishonour and, consequently, he easily dismisses her request. She succeeds in gaining his complete attention and respect by revealing that she possesses the knowledge he needs to overcome the guardians of the Fleece:

Mais jo sai tant de nigromance,
 Que j'ai aprise dès m'enfance,
 Que, quant que jo vueil, tot puis faire:
 Ja ne m'iert peine ne contraire.
 Quant que est grief, tot m'est legier:
 Ja n'i trouverai encombrer (1419-24).

[But I know so much about necromancy,
 Which I have studied since childhood.
 That I can do whatever I desire.
 There will never be any grief or conflict for me.
 No matter how hard things are, all is easy for me.
 I will never find any difficulty in it.]

In describing her powers of sorcery, Medea exhibits an imposing confidence, something she sorely lacks when dealing with matters of love. Her abilities in magic are indisputable; even Jason has heard something of them (1329-32). Nevertheless, a certain irony surrounds Medea's final lines. Although she has the power to control the natural world and to overcome the supernatural defences of the Golden Fleece, she will eventually learn that she cannot create what she truly desires, namely an ever-faithful Jason. Her magic will prove impotent with respect to the human heart.

Such confidence is not evident as Medea tries to discover Jason's feelings

toward her. Having approached the Greek hero only at her father's command and with great hesitation, she tentatively sets out her conditions for helping him to win the Golden Fleece:

Mais se de ço seüre fuisse
 Que jo t'amor aveir poüsse,
 Qu'a femme espose me preisses,
 Si que ja mais ne me guerpisses,
 Quant en ta terre retornasses,
 Qu'en cest país ne me laissasses,
 E me portasses leial fei,
 Engin prendreie a bon conrei
 Com ceste chose parfereies,
 Que mort ne mahaing n'i prendreies (1407-16).

[If I could be assured
 That I could have your love,
 That you would make me your wife,
 So that you would never abandon me
 When you return to your homeland,
 That you would not leave me in this country,
 And would remain faithful and loyal,
 I would use all my skill
 So that you might accomplish this thing
 Without encountering either death or grievous injury.]

By using the imperfect subjunctive and the conditional verb tenses, Medea presents her terms in a tentative manner, thus revealing her fear of Jason's possible reaction. Even though Jason agrees to meet all her conditions, she still insists that he first reveal what is in his heart: "*Ton cuer m'en di senz deceveir, \ Tot ton corage en vueil saveir* [Tell me what is in your heart without deception; I want to know all of your heart's desire.]" (1427-28). Medea, who is so strongly associated with the heart, presumes that Jason will likewise disclose truthfully his innermost desire; however, the heart is not an image with which Jason is identified. Benoît only refers to his heart once and then as a "*Grant*

cuier" (867) filled with the yearning to see strange new lands and to achieve glory, not as one enflamed by love.

Jason is cunning enough to realize the importance of Medea's question and carefully gives her the answer she so desperately wants to hear. Having grown confident by the apparent sincerity of his words, she defines the terms of her bargain clearly and succinctly for a second time:

En ma chambre vendreiz toz sous:
 Ja compaignon n'avreiz o vos.
 La me fereiz tel seürance
 Que vers vos n'aie plus dotance;
 Puis vos dirai com faitement
 Porreiz les bues e le serpent
 Veintre e danter e justisier:
 Ja puis n'avreiz d'eus encombrier (1449-56).

[You will come alone to my bedroom,
 Bringing no companion with you.
 There you will give me such assurances
 That I will no longer doubt you;
 Then I will tell you in what manner
 You will be able to vanquish and
 Subdue and dominate the bulls and serpent;
 Thereafter you will have no difficulty with them.]

No longer are Medea's conditions and promises qualified by the use of the subjunctive and conditional verb tenses; the potential for fulfillment is very real, as indicated by her switch to the future indicative. Benoît reveals early on that her "*corage*," or heart's desire, is marriage: "*Mout le desire a mariage* [Greatly did she desire marriage]" (1290). Thus, when Jason finally comes to her bedchamber that night, she quickly brings out a statue of the god, Jupiter, and instructs him as follows:

Sor l'image ta main metras,
 E sor l'image jureras

A mei fei porter e tenir
 E mei a prendre senz guerpir;
 Leial seignor, leial amant
 Me seies mais d'ore en avant (1629-34).

[You will place you hand on this statue
 And swear on it
 To hold and keep faith with me
 And to marry and never abandon me;
 Faithful lord, faithful lover
 You will be for me for now and forever.]

With these words, Jason and Medea undergo a ceremony easily recognizable by a medieval audience as a clandestine marriage.¹⁹ The references to "*fei*" and "*leial*" in this passage are significant, for such vocabulary is typical of Medea's language from the moment she first speaks to Jason. This episode is the third time that she states explicitly her conditions for helping the Greek hero, a repetition which, in itself, indicates her concern with loyalty. Her need to be assured of Jason's faithfulness is further emphasized by the fact she uses the noun *fei* on three occasions (1413, 1631, 1668) to describe her perception of the bond between them and the adjective *leial* four times (1320, 1413, 1633) to describe the counsel she offers him and the type of relationship she expects to enjoy. However, Medea fails to notice the absence of such vocabulary from Jason's speech; he never describes himself or his commitment to her as *leial* and only once refers to his *fei* (1432) and then only in direct response to her demands.

Medea's seeming success in achieving her greatest desire is quickly undermined

¹⁹ Rosemarie Jones is wrong in suggesting that Medea follows Jason without any legal bond (44); Jason and Medea's mutual pledge taken on the statue of Jupiter would undoubtedly be considered a legitimate, non-Christian marriage by Benoît and his audience. For a detailed study of the nature of clandestine marriage in the middle ages, see Henry Ansgar Kelly's "Clandestine Marriage and Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Viator* 4 (1973): 435-57.

by Benoît, who intrudes at the moment of their marriage vow to reveal Jason's future faithlessness: "*Mais envers li s'en parjura; \ Covenant ne lei ne li tint* [But he perjured himself toward her; he held neither covenant nor oath to her]" (1635-36). The lovers do not hesitate to consummate their verbal bond and do so in mutual sexual pleasure, for

Tote la nuit se jurent puis,
Ensi com jo el Livre truis,
Tot nu a nu e braz a braz.
Autre celee ne vos faz:
Se il en Jason ne pecha,
Cele nuit la despucela;
Quar, s'il le voust, ele autretant (1643-49).

[All night long they lay together,
Just as I found described in the book,
Naked body against naked body, arm in arm.
I do not hide anything from you:
Jason did not sin therein,
That night he took her maidenhead,
Because if he wanted it, she did just as much.]

Although Benoît claims that he is following his source, no analogue for this episode exists in classical literature. The sense of shared passion conveyed by this scene is very important, for it indicates that mutual sexual pleasure does not necessitate mutual feelings of *fine amor*.²⁰ It also makes clear that, despite Jason's faults in his treatment of Medea, he is not deserving of blame for their sexual relationship. Both individuals take an active role in its initiation. As Joel Feimer has noted, Benoît's choice of "*jurent*" suggests both the sexual act performed by the lovers (perfect form of *gesir*) and the

²⁰ Similarly, Ulysses, whom Benoît never describes as being in love with Circe, also enjoys his sexual encounter with the sorceress: "*O sei le couche: mout li plaist/ Qu'il la jôisse e qu'il la baist* [She is intimate with him: it pleases him greatly that he may enjoy her and that he may kiss her]" (28759-60).

pledge they make to each other (indicative form of *jurer*).²¹ This comparison can be taken even further, for the verb form also echoes the "*conjure*" (1666), or magic charms and spells, which Medea reveals to Jason in the subsequent scene. Although it is generally defined as "to perform magic," the Old French verb *conjurere* is derived from the Latin *conjurare*, meaning "to pledge together." Thus Jason and Medea's marriage oath (*jurer*) becomes a bond of mutual sexual gratification (*gesir*) and of occult wisdom (*conjurere*). Only by Jason's *parjurer* is it broken, a fact which Benoît emphasizes by interrupting the narrative progression from *jurer* to *gesir* to *conjure* with the revelation of Jason's *parjurer*.

Jason's effect on Medea's eye also extends to her ear, for he easily tricks her with lies and false promises. Medea fails to notice that, despite his initially dismissive attitude, he instantly consents to her conditions when he learns that she can provide help. Without pausing for a moment, he declares his love for her as well as promises to be faithful (1430-33), to make her his wife (1434), and to bring her with him to his homeland (1439-40); significantly, he does not promise that he will never abandon Medea, an omission that she does not seem to hear. Upon arriving at her room that night to reiterate his vow of fidelity at her request, Jason tries even harder to win Medea's favour. He uses the language and imagery of love-service with an alluring eloquence to convince her of his sincerity:

Dame ... n'i quier guion
 Se vos e vostre maistre non:
 S'en vostre prison me sui mis,
 Il ne m'en deit pas estre pis (1595-98)

²¹ "The Figure of Medea in Medieval Literature: A Thematic Metamorphosis," 174-75.

[Lady ... I do not seek any guide in this
Other than you and your governess;
If I have put myself into your prison,
It must not be to my disadvantage.]

Casting himself in the role of Medea's "prisoner," he begs for mercy, cajoling her with descriptions of himself as her "*chevaliers*" (1602), or devoted knight. He claims that he makes these assurances "*Senz fauseté e senz mentir* [Without falsehoods or lies]" (1616). However, his semblance as Medea's vassal-in-love ends abruptly upon waking the next morning. He immediately reminds Medea politely, but rather firmly, that it is her turn to fulfill her part of the bargain and to do so without delay (1651-58). Thus the roles are reversed as Medea now fulfills his bidding. Nevertheless, upon learning the magic charms and spells which are essential for his success, Jason seems to react with genuine affection, for "*Entre ses braz Jason la prent, \ Cent feiz la baise doucement* [Jason took her in his arms, a hundred times he kissed her gently]" (1762-63). Medea has finally given him what he truly wants. This embrace is the only spontaneous gesture of love that he shows her, for at no other time does he respond to her physically without apparent calculation and self-interest.

As Benoît presents the story, Jason's ability to lie and perjure himself is not very surprising, for he clearly comes from a race of liars and tricksters. His uncle, Pelias, fearing that his position as king is quickly becoming compromised by Jason's growing popularity and renown, plans secretly to dispose of his nephew:

Mout ot vers lui le cuer felon,
Ne ne faisait se penser non,
Saveir par com faite mesure
Porreit ja prendre engin e cure,
Come il alast a male voë,

Si que la terre ne fust soë
 Ne de rien nel pouïst gregier (753-59).

[His heart was wickedly turned toward him;
 Nor did he cease to contemplate,
 To know by what proper action
 He could use skill and care to see
 In what way Jason might come to a bad end,
 So that he would never have the land,
 Nor harm Pelias in any way.]

His heart holds no love for Jason, only treachery. Like Jason, he will use whatever "engin" (756 and 782) necessary to send his nephew to his death. However, Pelias takes great care not to reveal his "*mal porpens* [evil intention]" (781) to anyone:

Mais ne voleit pas ne n'osot
 Mostrer ne faire aucun semblant
 Qu'il le haïst ne tant ne quant (786-788).

[But he neither wished nor dared
 To show or to give the appearance
 That he hated Jason at all.]

Although the rightful king, Pelias is so uncertain of his royal position that he cannot let anyone in the kingdom know his true feelings. Thus he takes on a "*semblant*" of fondness and admiration for Jason. He slyly challenges Jason to seek the Golden Fleece before the entire court, which has assembled at his command for a festival. With considerable rhetorical skill, Pelias sweet-talks Jason, telling him how much he loves him (818-19) and acknowledging in detail his beauty, his valour, and his great accomplishments (821-32). Only once he has beguiled his nephew with lies and flattery does he hint at Jason's need to acquire greater fame and suggest that he do so by bringing the Golden Fleece back to Greece. His ploy succeeds, for Jason, confident in his abilities and buoyed up by seven days of celebrations, immediately accepts the

challenge. It is a strategy that closely resembles Jason's own tactics in dealing with Medea. He proves to be a similarly proficient rhetorician, for he persuades Medea of his sincerity by means of eloquent flattery and beguiling untruths. He also brandishes a false "*semblant*." Thus, just as Pelias manipulates Jason by appealing to his greatest desires, so Jason exploits Medea by responding to her fiery passion.

Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece is presented very much as a game, both by him and by his uncle. A challenge is made, the rules set out, and, once Jason accepts, the game begins. Although the two technically play the same game, the object of it is very different for each player. For Jason, the goal is to win a prize hitherto unattainable by any man, thereby increasing his fame; for Pelias, the goal is to destroy Jason, thereby securing his kingship. In the end, Jason wins the game, and Pelias accepts defeat gracefully:

Sis oncles l'a mout honoré;
 Ne li a nul semblant mostré
 Qu'il fust iriez de sa venue:
 N'esteit pas chose aperceüe
 Qu'il le haïst ne qu'il vousist
 Que damages li avenist (2055-60).

[His uncle greatly honoured him;
 He did not give him any appearance
 That he was angry at his return,
 Nor was it perceived
 That he hated Jason or wished
 That harm might come to him.]

Thus the game and its performance are simple and straightforward. If Pelias is at all angered by Jason's success, he maintains the appearance of a "good loser." However, Jason's mistake is to play a similar "game" with Medea and to assume that she is playing one on the same terms with him. He interprets her offer of help in return for

love and marriage as a simple game of exchange. For Jason, it is a minor, but necessary, diversion within the bigger game of winning the Golden Fleece. He fails to recognize that Medea is playing, if one may call it that, in deadly earnest and for keeps. She specifically cautions Jason against game-playing with respect to their relationship, for she prefaces the marriage vow she has him swear by saying, "*Jo ne vueil mie faire a gieus\ De mei e de vos l'assemblee* [Now I do not want to make a game of the union between you and me]" (1626-27). Any game-playing up to now must cease, but Jason, ever the gamester, fails to heed Medea's words, with tragic results.

Nevertheless, Jason is not completely at fault, for Medea does mislead him by appearing to play by the same rules. Jason is of the opinion that the Colchians are avid game-players, for, upon arriving on the island, he immediately sees the inhabitants at play:

La joèrent maint chevalier
As dez, as eschès e as tables,
E as autres gieus deportables (1190-92).

[In the courtyard many knights played
At dice, at chess, and at backgammon,
And at other games of diversion.]

Engaged in variety of aristocratic games and diversions, Aeetes and his court are portrayed as a cultured civilization rather than as the barbarian nation of classical tradition. The reference to "*autres gieus deportables*" suggests that they also engage in love-play. Consequently, Jason perceives them to be game-players like himself, a view that is further supported by the fact that Colchis is famous for the Golden Fleece and the many attempts to win it. Medea unintentionally reinforces Jason's view of her

people with her words and actions. Shy and uncertain as to how she should approach Jason, Medea represents herself as a player of games, first with the bargain she offers Jason and then with her behaviour when he enters her bedchamber. Like Pelias, she has, in effect, set the rules. Her lady-in-waiting encourages her in game-playing by suggesting that she lie in her bed and await Jason (1544-48). As a result, Jason finds her feigning sleep when he arrives:

Medea le senti venir,
 Si a fait semblant de dormir,
 E cil ne fu pas trop vilains:
 Le covertor lieve o ses mains.
 Cele tressaut, vers lui se torne;
 Auques fu vergondose e mome:
 "Vassaus," fait el, "qui vos conduit?" (1585-91).

[Medea sensed his coming,
 So she pretended to sleep,
 And he was no ill-bred churl.
 He drew back the covers with his hands.
 She started, turned toward him;
 She was a little ashamed and upset.
 "Vassal," she asked, "who brought you here?"]

As do Pelias and Jason, Medea is guilty of presenting a "*semblant*" that belies the truth. Nor is Jason fooled by her play-acting, but he is both courteous and enough of a seasoned game-player to allow her pretence to pass by without comment. In his eyes, she is playing the coquette as she starts at his touch and blushes at his gaze. Her seemingly naïve question simply confirms his interpretation of her actions, for she knows perfectly well that her lady-in-waiting brought him to her at her request. Jason will, in fact, continue to play the game until he and Medea return to his home in Greece. However, once away from the gameboard that the island of Colchis has become for him, he eventually stops playing, only to turn his attention away from Medea and to a

new "*gieu deportable*," or diversion. Unfortunately, Medea is too much like her father; just as he reacts to Jason's winning of the Fleece with "*grant ire* [great anger]" (1980), so she proves to be a "poor sport" with respect to her husband's new-found game. Although Benoît does not include the tragic end of the classical story, his reader would certainly know the extent to which Medea hates to lose.

Medea's impatience emphasizes her poor game-playing skills. For a full week, she suffers the torments of love without voicing her passion, but, once her father unintentionally gives her leave to do so, she immediately loses all forbearance. She quickly reveals her feelings to Jason, yet fails to weigh his response carefully in her desperation to press her suit. Upon securing Jason's promise to come to her after the court has retired for the night, Medea rushes back to her bedchamber to await the arrival of her lover:

Ariere en ses chambres s'en entre.

Mout li enuie que li jors
 Ne s'en vait a greignor espleit:
 Mout se merveille que ço deit.
 Tant a le soleil esguardé
 Que ele le vit esconsé (1463-68).

[She fled back to her rooms.

Greatly did it bother her that the day
 Did not pass with more speed;
 Greatly did she marvel that it should be so.
 She watched the sun for so long
 That she saw it set.]

Medea's eagerness to see Jason again is juxtaposed against the slow passing of the day. She has clearly begun her vigil much too soon, yet she will not be deterred.

When Jason does not appear promptly at nightfall, she slips quietly downstairs to see if everyone has indeed gone to their beds. Her frustration at their continued wakefulness is revealed by the series of questions she asks herself:

Iço ... que sera?
 Ceste gent quant se couchera?
 Ont il juré qu'il veilleront
 E que mais ne se coucheront?
 Qui vit mais gent que tant veillast,
 Que de veillier ne se lassast?
 Mauvaise gent, fole provee,
 Ja est la mie nuit passee,
 Mout a mais poi descu qu'al jor (1487-95).

[What is this?
 When will these people go to bed?
 Have they taken an oath to stay awake
 And never to go to sleep?
 Who ever saw people stay up so late,
 That they do not tire of staying up?
 Evil people, demonstrably foolish,
 Already midnight has passed,
 There is very little time before daybreak.]

The reader can hear the irritation and bewilderment in her voice as she curses the courtiers for delaying her plans. Her inability to sit still (1510-18), her return to stand outside the great hall in order to await the departure of courtiers to their beds (1523-30), her nervous anticipation of Jason's arrival as she lies in bed (1589) are all images which effectively illustrate her frustration. Her impatience is similarly evident upon Jason's successful attainment of the Golden Fleece. As she greets the returning hero, she restrains herself from embracing him, but she cannot stop from whispering in his ear in order to arrange for a love-tryst in her room that night (2005-12). Her behaviour appears to be a direct contrast to the transfixed state which she experiences upon seeing Jason for the first time. Thus she is torn between the passivity which

accompanies her initial visual perception of Jason and an overwhelming and aggressive determination to possess him. This seeming dichotomy serves to heighten the sense of Medea's inner turmoil for the reader.²²

In contrast, Jason and Pelias are both characterized by leisurely deliberation. Pelias patiently bides his time until a suitable opportunity arises which permits him to dispose of his nephew. As a result, he waits almost a month from when he first decides to destroy Jason before initiating his plans (799). After careful scheming, he pronounces the challenge of the Golden Fleece on the seventh day of a great court festival (814). The timing is ideal, for the celebrations have put everyone in a good humour and made them all, especially Jason, receptive to a dare. Nevertheless, despite Jason's eagerness to seek the Fleece, he does not set off immediately on the quest; rather, he must wait a month for his ship, the Argo, to be built (905) and does so without any apparent impatience. Thus it is a full two months before Pelias is finally rid of his nephew. Although the Greeks are anxious to reach Colchis quickly, they prove to be easily distracted. They stop over on the shores of Troy for two days where

N'aveient mie grant corage
De faire el país lonc estage,
Mais mout lor ert e buen e bel
De reposer en lieu novel
E d'auques sojomer lor cors (995-99).

[They had no intention
Of making their stay long in the country,
But it was so pleasant and beautiful to them
To stay in this new place

²² The conflict within the sufferer of love between the passive, paralytic state imposed by the gaze and the active, agitated state produced by the "impatience" or desire to possess the beloved is typically Ovidian; see in particular the story of Narcissus (*Met.* III.402-93).

And delay their course a while.]

Seduced by the appealing setting, the Argonauts rest longer than expected. Their seemingly insignificant delay has serious results, for their presence causes the king, Laomedon, much consternation and the ensuing altercation between his messenger and the Greeks sows the seeds for the Trojan war. Nevertheless, Jason and his men continue to seek idle pleasure and enjoy a similarly leisurely sojourn on Colchis, for they remain there almost two months. After his arrival, Jason delays a full week before he actually undertakes the battle for the Golden Fleece. Like his uncle before him, he waits for the most appropriate opportunity to reveal himself before attempting to win the Fleece. It does so in the form of Medea. Once he is secure of success by virtue of the power she offers, Jason confidently sets off to battle the supernatural bulls and serpent. However, having won the Fleece, Jason does not rush back to Greece as one might expect: rather, Benoît specifically notes that he lingers in Colchis another six weeks:

Tote la quinzaine e le meis
S'i sojornerent li Grezeis.
Grant loisir ont li dui amant
De faire ensemble lor talant:
Sovent demeinent bele vie (2023-27).

[For an entire month and a half
The Greeks lingered there.
The two lovers enjoyed great leisure
And together fulfilled their desire;
Often they led a beautiful life.]

Just as on the Trojan shores, Jason and his men are enticed by the sensual pleasures which Colchis offers. The ensuing delay allows Jason and Medea more time together and, consequently, reinforces Medea's belief that Jason must truly love her.

Surprisingly, Benoît ends the story of Jason and Medea with their return to

Greece, claiming that he does not find anything else about them in his source:

Jo ne le truis pas en cest livre,
 Ne Daires plus n'en voust escrire,
 Ne Beneeiz pas ne l'alonge,
 Ne pas n'i acreistra mençonge (2063-66).

[I do not find anymore in this book;
 Dares did not wish to write more,
 And Benoît does not lengthen it,
 Nor will he add lies to it.]

As has been noted earlier, Dares makes no mention of Medea in his brief account of Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece, and Benoît has been using Ovid thus far to augment his version of the episode. The *Metamorphoses* and, to a lesser extent, the *Heroides* provide the missing ending, yet Benoît evidently makes a conscious choice not to include it. Although he comments that he must now finish the tale of Jason and Medea in order to proceed to the main focus of his work, the Trojan war (2043-44), he has already devoted over 1,300 lines to their story; a few more at this point do not seem very significant. In addition, he has disclosed to the reader much of the tragic conclusion, revealing that Jason perjures his marriage vow (1635-36), that, upon returning to Greece, he eventually abandons Medea (2036), and that the gods take cruel vengeance upon him for breaking his faith (2040-42). Benoît only refrains from recounting Medea's brutality: he provides no details of her severe punishment of her husband and his new wife and, by presenting Medea as Aeetes' only child (1215), he avoids the need to address the classical Medea's violent slaughter of her brother as she flees with Jason to Greece. The reader would certainly know the traditional ending to the story, but Benoît's alterations and silence effectively downplay the cruelty

previously associated with Medea. In such a way, he is able to maintain his presentation of her as a victim both of love's torment and of Jason's faithlessness. However, perhaps more importantly, Benoît's deliberate omission allows him to shift the focus of the story's "moral" in another, very different direction. Whereas Jason is clearly guilty of betrayal, Medea is not, in Benoît's view, completely blameless, for

Grant folie fist Medea:
 Trop ot le vassal aamé,
 Por lui laissa son parenté,
 Son pere e sa mere e sa gent (2030-33).

[Great was Medea's recklessness;
 She loved the vassal too much,
 For him she abandoned her family,
 Her father, her mother, and her people.]

She has loved too much and, as a result, forsaken her family and her people. As the only heir to the kingdom, she has also allowed her passion to undermine the political stability of Colchis. Thus Benoît illustrates the effect that love can have not only on the individual who experiences love, but also on all those whose lives touch upon that person. Consequently, Jason and Medea are both guilty of treachery, the one in love and the other in filial duty. The decided emphasis on Medea's act of betrayal, rather than on her brutality, is a unique interpretation of the Jason and Medea story and one which will prove to be essential for uniting the *Roman de Troie* as a whole.

With the story of Achilles and Polyxena, the last of the major love narratives, Benoît presents a mirror-image of Jason and Medea's relationship, a story which both parallels and inverts the original. The exploration of the female experience of passion now becomes one of the male experience. The similarities between Medea's and Achilles' ordeals are obvious: both fall in love with the beloved at first sight; both exhibit

similar symptoms of distress; both use the aid of a go-between (a maid in Medea's case and a messenger in Achilles') to initiate the relationship; and both are ultimately destroyed by an act of betrayal.²³ However, it is the differences between the two stories which are most significant. For Achilles, the act of betrayal is not the work of his beloved, but of her family. Polyxena, in contrast to Jason, remains an almost intangible figure throughout the entire episode. Achilles also exhibits an unmistakable self-awareness of his tormented passionate state and a true recognition of its devastating effects, unlike Medea, who does not appear to comprehend the significance of her inner turmoil and overwhelming desire. The description of Achilles' love experience is presented in considerable detail by Benoît and, more importantly, by Achilles himself. As R.M. Lumiansky has noted, this story is the longest of the major love-narratives at approximately 3,000 lines.²⁴ Benoît amplifies Dares' brief account of the episode:

Polyxenam contemplatur, figit animum, amare vehementer
eam coepit. tunc ardore compulsus odiosam in amore
vitam consumit (*De excidio Troiae*.XXVII).

[He studied Polyxena and transfixed his mind; he began to
love her vehemently. Then, compelled by his burning
passion, he spent his hateful life in love.]

However, he preserves the amatory imagery of his source and builds directly upon it, thereby intensifying the love motifs which he first introduced so carefully with the story of Jason and Medea. The contemplation of the beloved, the fixation on her visual

²³ Barbara Nolan has also noted these parallels (102-4).

²⁴ "Structural Unity in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*," 424.

image, the vehemence and consuming force of love's flame are all characteristics of Achilles' love experience as well as of Medea's. Nevertheless, his story seems all the more tragic, for Benoît neither conceals nor merely hints at his fate; rather, he emphasizes Achilles' doom and his comprehension of the power of *eros* as he remains powerless against it. The result is perhaps the most detailed and insightful presentation of the love experience for any character in the *Roman de Troie*.

Like Medea, Achilles falls victim to love by means of his eye. As he and the other Greeks partake in the Trojan celebrations in honour of the anniversary of Hector's death, he observes Polyxena as she mourns beside her brother's tomb:

Veüe i a Polixenain
 Apertement en mi la chiere:
 C'est l'acheison e la maniere
 Par qu'il sera getez de vie
 E l'ame de son cors partie (17540-44).

[There he saw Polyxena
 And focussed directly upon her face;
 This is the reason and the means
 By which he will lose his life
 And his soul will be parted from his body.]

Achilles' eye is initially aggressive as it fastens upon Polyxena's face. However, its potency is quickly undermined, for Achilles becomes mesmerized by Polyxena's beauty with a single glance. Smitten, he can neither move physically nor avert his eyes from her:

Onques ne remua ses piez
 Tant com des ieuz la pot veeir:
 Ja ne s'en queïst mais moveir
 Tant come ele fust en la place (17602-5).

[Never did he move his feet

As long as he could see her with his eyes.
 Never did he seek to move from there
 As long as she was in that place.]

As a result, the visual authority of his gaze is lost. He no longer possesses the power to close his eyes at night (17576-77), and his initially dominating stare becomes compliant as he is forced to watch Polyxena at the exclusion of all else. Benoît, however, does not choose to emphasize the feelings of love which envelop Achilles at this moment, as he does with Medea; rather, he focusses on the tragedy which will ensue as a direct result of Achilles' gaze. Thus the act of visual perception is not only the means by which *eros* gains control of the individual; it is also the impetus which leads the observer to his death, a fact which Benoît declares unequivocally at the moment Achilles first sees Polyxena (17542-44) and in those lines immediately preceding the event (17535-39). The destructive nature of *fine amor*, which is merely suggested by its ability to enflame Medea's heart (1278), is made explicit with the example of Achilles. Benoît tells the reader that *fine amor* is the direct cause of Achilles' demise, for "*Il fu destreiz por fine amor* [He was overwhelmed by passionate love]" (17547).

Throughout the story of Achilles, love is intrinsically connected with death and combat, more so than in any of the other love-narratives. Vocabulary, such as *destreindre*, *morir*, and *ocire* and their derivatives, and imagery relating to death occur in this episode with a frequency found only in the battle narratives. The temple setting of Achilles' first view of Polyxena also evokes a sense of impending doom, for Polyxena is not simply at prayer, but rather sadly mourns beside her brother's tomb. The moment

seems an unlikely one in which love can thrive. Achilles is completely unprepared for love's onslaught which awaits him. He enters the temple "*toz desarmez* [all disarmed]" (17532), thereby leaving himself completely vulnerable to the "*mortel plaie* [deadly wound]" (17562) which his gaze, now under love's command, inflicts upon him. The initial blows which Achilles suffers are superficial, for he is "*Pinciez ... d'Amors e mors* [pinched and bitten by Love]" (17568 and 18086) and also whipped by "*le verjant d'Amors* [the switch of Love]" (17572). However, Benoît reveals that love's preliminary attack quickly becomes more aggressive:

Poi li vaudra ci sis escuz
 E sis haubers mailliez menuz.
 Ja s'espee trenchant d'acier
 Ne li avra ici mestier:
 Force, vertu ne hardement
 Ne valent contre Amors neient (17579-884).

[His shield and armour of fine chain mail
 Will be of little value here.
 He will have absolutely no need here of
 His sharp sword of steel;
 Strength, virtue, and daring
 Are worthless against Love.]

The battle launched by *eros* will prove to be unlike any other experienced by the war veteran, so different that traditional weapons will be of little use. Love assaults him "*aigrement* [violently]" (18080) and holds him tightly in "*ses laz* [his bonds]" (17688).

Achilles also describes love's power over him as a fetter he cannot break:

Por ço m'a si lacié e pris
 Que jo ne li puis eschaper.
 Dès or m'estuet merci criër:
 E jo, a cui la criërai? (17650-53).

[For Love has taken and bound me so

That I cannot escape him.
 From now on I must cry for mercy;
 But to whom shall I cry for it?]

Entrapped in the bonds of passion, Achilles can only beg for mercy, but his cries fall on deaf ears. Even God will not take pity on him. This metaphorical battle between love and the Greek hero is initially an internal one, for "*Mout ert sis cuers en grant bataille* [His heart was very much (engulfed) in a great battle]" (18142). It only becomes real when Achilles enters the temple in order to speak with his beloved as arranged. Again, as at Hector's tomb, he arrives unarmed (22165-66). Unprotected and unsuspecting of betrayal, Achilles is cut down by Paris and his men so aggressively that his body cannot be buried, but must be cremated. Love's figurative assault thus becomes a tragic reality for the hero, an external manifestation of his inner state.

Significantly, Achilles recognizes that his love for Polyxena can lead only to disaster, as indicated by the first words he speaks upon seeing her:

Ha! las ... tant mare i mui!
 Tant mare alai veir les lor!
 Tant mare i vi la resplendor
 Dont mis cuers sent mortel dolor
 Senz aveir en aucun retor! (17638-42).

[Alas ... it is my great misfortune to be here!
 It is my great misfortune to see all these people!
 It is my great misfortune to see her brilliance
 Through which my heart feels mortal pain
 Without giving any relief.]

Unlike Medea, who considers her separation from Jason to be the cause of her heartache, Achilles comprehends that his overwhelming desire for Polyxena promises only agony and despair. The repeated reference to "*tant mare*" emphasizes the

misfortune which will follow, as the unrelenting and deadly pain inflicted upon his heart by love becomes the literal and mortal blow of the sword. He even realizes that he only deceives himself with the belief that Polyxena will love him in return, for she must wish him, the murderer of her beloved brother Hector, dead (17660-63). Nevertheless, Achilles cannot stop himself from loving Polyxena. Enslaved by his fiery passion, he no longer possesses the power to reason correctly, as the epigram which introduces this chapter attests: "*Qui tres bien est d'amor espris,/ Il n'a en sei sen ne reison* [Whosoever is fully enflamed by love possesses neither judgement nor reason]" (18458-59). However, he acknowledges his impaired judgement with a clarity and comprehension not found in the figure of Medea; he not only describes himself and his love as *fole* (18032, 18039, and 18050), but also compares himself to Samson, King David, and Solomon (18045-48), wise men who also fell victim to love's irrationality. Consequently, he rashly promises Priam and Hecuba to withdraw himself and his men from the Trojan war if he can marry Polyxena. He also justifies his actions to his fellow Greeks with the statement, "*Trop puet trover danz Menelaus/ Gentes dames a cuers leiaus* [Lord Menelaus can find many beautiful ladies with loyal hearts]" (18243-44), without recognizing that the logic of his argument could just as easily apply to him. However, his loss of reason is not complete since Achilles does ultimately allow his men to return to the fighting when he realizes that the Greeks have suffered heavy losses. Ironically, it is this decision, the only rational one he makes while under love's influence, which hastens his own death, for Achilles' murder by the Trojans is punishment for the violation of his oath.

Not surprisingly, Achilles under the influence of love is identified with the image of the heart. Just as Medea's heart burns with passion at the sight of Jason, so Achilles' is kindled by love's eternal flame as he gazes upon the fair Polyxena:

La grant beauté e la façon
 Qu'Achillès vit en la pucele
 L'a cuit el cuer d'une estencele
 Que ja par li nen iert esteinte (17552-55).

[The great beauty and form
 Which Achilles saw in the young girl
 Burned his heart with a spark
 Which he could never extinguish.]

It is as though Achilles' eye and Polyxena's physical image are two flints which, once brought together in the act of visual perception, ignite a blazing passion within the observer's heart. However, Polyxena's physical form and beauty do more than merely captivate Achilles' eye and kindle desire's flame within him; they also penetrate his very being to such an extent that they are literally imprinted upon his heart:

En son cuer l'a escrite e peinte:
 Ses tres beaus ieuz vairs e son front
 E son bel chief, qu'ele a si blont
 Que fin ors ressemble esmerez,
 Totes denote ses beautez (17556-60).

[He has written and painted her on his heart:
 Her eyes so beautiful and bright, her brow
 And her beautiful hair, which was so blonde
 That it resembled pure refined gold,
 He notes all her beauties.]

The metaphor is a provocative one, for it likens Achilles' heart to a manuscript page upon which he inscribes Polyxena's effigy, as written word and visual image. Consequently, he is forced to read and gaze upon it each time he looks inward in an effort to understand his own confused state. Achilles even acknowledges this peculiar

transference of physical form to his heart, saying that Polyxena's likeness is "*peinte e escrite*" there (18082). Although he is the initial aggressor, establishing contact with Polyxena by means of his eye, Achilles is essentially reduced to passive recipient as her visual image invades his very soul. Her beauty and presence overwhelm the seat of his passion to such an extent that all else must be excluded, a physiological condition which justifies Achilles' inability to contemplate anything but his beloved:

Tant i pense, tant i entent
 Que il n'ot mais ne il n'entent
 Rien nule que dite li seit:
 Tant l'a Amors griefment destreit! (17621-24).

[He thought and reflected upon her so much
 That he neither heard nor understood
 Anything that was said to him;
 Love had overwhelmed him so completely!]

Once again, Benoît emphasizes love's power. Achilles' desire for Polyxena is so overwhelming that his internal and external senses are distorted. He can no longer see, hear, or comprehend effectively.

Thus passion takes control of Achilles' heart, as it does his eye, and forces him to see his beloved at the expense of anything or anyone else:

Sempres li estreint si le cuer,
 Ne se meüst a nes un fuer
 Tant come il la poüst choisir;
 Del cuer li issent lonc sospir.
 Quant ne la veit, adonc s'en torne:
 Mout fait pensive chiere e morne (17611-16).

[Always love so gripped his heart,
 He could not move by any means
 As long as he was able to see her,
 From his heart came long sighs.
 When he did not see her, then he turned away,

His face thoughtful and sad.]

Like a statue, he cannot move. Only Polyxena's departure from his line of vision ends his trance-like state. The final line of the passage echoes the description of Medea as she turns away "*pensive e mome*" from her bedroom window, frustrated at Jason's delay in coming to her (1520). Like Medea, Achilles is also sleepless (17574-77) and subject to a changing complexion as he contemplates Polyxena and his love for her (17606-10); however, his symptoms are much more severe for Benoît casts him as a victim of *amor hereos*, or lovesickness. Achilles seems to recognize his affliction, for he does not describe himself as enflamed by love, as does Medea (1863-64), but as "*Malade [sick]*" (17729) and "*ne...pas sain [unwell]*" (18083), with a heart full of "*grant mal [great pain]*" (17742). Even the reference to Polyxena's image being transcribed upon his heart suggests that he is stricken by morbid love, since the internalization of the literal image of the beloved is typical of the disease. Achilles' illness thus foreshadows his tragic end, for *amor hereos*, if left unattended as it is in his case, traditionally resulted in death.²⁵

Like Medea, *fine amor* makes Achilles susceptible to the playing of games; however, it is not his beloved who toys with him, but love itself. Upon seeing Polyxena at Hector's tomb, Achilles is effectively transformed from a player of love-games to a victim of love's game-playing. In an early encounter between Achilles and Hector

²⁵ For a full description of *amor hereos* and its symptoms, see John Livingston Lowes' "The Loveres Maladye of Hereos," *Modern Philology* 11 (1913-14):491-546; Jacques Ferrand's *A Treatise on Lovesickness*, trans. and eds. Donald A. Beecher and Massimo Ciavolella (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1990); and Mary F. Wack's *Lovesickness in the Middle Ages: The Viaticum and Its Commentaries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

during which they bandy insults with one another, the Trojan prince accuses the Greek warrior of offending the gods with his homosexual relationship with Patroclus,²⁶ saying

tantes feiz avez sentu
 Entre vos braz nu a nu,
 Et autres gieus vis e hontos,
 Dont li plusor sont haïnos
 As deus, quin prenent la venjance
 Par la lor devine poissance (13183-88).

[so many times have you felt
 In your arms naked flesh against naked flesh,
 And played other vile and shameful games,
 Many of which are hateful
 To the gods, for which they take vengeance
 By means of their divine power.]

Such unnatural love is equated to a horrendous game which serves only to mock the gods. The punishment to which Hector explicitly refers is the death of Patroclus, an event which Achilles grievously mourns (10330-70); however, his words also foreshadow Achilles' own death, which takes a form of a game. Significantly, Achilles falls in love with Polyxena during the Trojan "gieus," or games, marking the anniversary of Hector's death. Benoît goes on to present love's torment of the Greek hero as another game, much more serious than any he played with Patroclus: "*Amors li mostre de ses gieus\ E come om tient de lui ses fieus* [Love shows him his games and how anyone holds his fiefs from love]" (18005-6). Subject to overwhelming passion, Achilles is no longer free to trifle with love as he has done before; now he is enslaved to the demands and whims of love. Continual abuse is the price he must pay, for

²⁶ The tradition that Achilles and Patroclus were lovers is a classical one going back to the lost writings of Aeschylus, a fact which Plato notes in his *Symposium* [Trans. W.R.M. Lamb, Loeb edition (London: William Heinemann, 1925): 180A].

C'est li servises e la rente
 Que Amors prent mainte feiee
 De ceus qui sont de sa maisniee.
 De ceus est bien danz Achillès (18020-23).

[This is the service and the price
 Which Love exacts many times
 From those who are his followers.
 Among them is lord Achilles truly numbered.]

The expense proves to be too high; Achilles has neither the power to control the "*enviaïl* [game-bid]" nor "*Des gieus partiz ... le chois* [the choice of party-game]" (20782-83). Thus his death takes the form of cruel play, something which Paris calls an "*estranges gieus partiz* [strange party-game]" (20942), as an unarmed Achilles is hunted down in the Trojan temple.

Throughout Achilles' love experience, Polyxena remains a surprisingly elusive figure. Although it is her physical presence which initiates the effects of passion within Achilles' heart, there is no true interaction between the two. So engrossed is she in her grief at Hector's tomb, she neither sees the Greek hero nor is aware of the effect that she has on him. Achilles' negotiations for her hand in marriage are conducted by proxy between his messenger and her parents and without her consultation. Benoît even notes that Polyxena is totally unresponsive to the messenger when he tries to speak to her directly of Achilles' love:

N'el nel receit, n'el ne li dit
 Orgueil n'outrage ne despit;
 Ne fait semblant que point l'en peist
 Ne que de rien bel ne li seit (17987-90).

[She neither acknowledges him, nor speaks to him
 With proud, insulting, or scornful words;
 It did not seem that she was in any way disagreeable,

Nor that she was pleased by anything.]

Polyxena appears completely unmoved by the messenger's words, conveying neither pleasure nor dismay at the possibility of marrying the Greek hero. Only when Achilles has broken his end of the bargain with Priam and Hecuba by allowing his men to fight the Trojans, does Benoît reveal that Polyxena was pleased at the prospect of their marriage (21232-33). However, Benoît provides no further insight into her feelings for Achilles and their possible marriage, thus placing the emphasis of the love experience almost exclusively on Achilles. Throughout the story, Polyxena remains a mere pawn in her family's schemings to destroy the Greek hero and a visual fantasy for her beloved. She is truly objectified both by Achilles and by everyone around her, a state which becomes a physical reality with the building of a "tomb" for the slain Achilles. Polyxena's reaction to Achilles' death only becomes evident with the creation of the statue carved in her image for the memorial:

Triste la firent e plorose
 E par semblant mout angoissose,
 Por Achillès qui morz eteit,
 Qui a femme la requereit.
 Formee l'ont en tel maniere
 Que mout en fait dolente chiere (22439-44).

[The artisans made her sad and tearful
 And full of great anguish in appearance,
 For Achilles who was dead
 And who asked for her as his wife.
 They carved her in such a fashion
 That her face had the expression of great pain.]

So lifelike is the statue, Benoît tells us, that it accurately reflects the feelings of the real Polyxena (22445-60). However, this revelation of the Trojan princess's genuine sorrow is overshadowed by the detailed visualization of Polyxena as an object. The woman

whose grieving effigy was first imprinted metaphorically on Achilles' eye and heart is now transformed literally into a three-dimensional art object of mourning. She stands immobile, frozen in perpetual grief as she holds the ashes of the butchered Achilles. The reality of her anguish is reduced to a lifelike, but lifeless, image, one projected upon her, not by her. In addition, Achilles, who was initially so transfixed by his gaze that he could neither move nor look away from Polyxena, is now truly motionless, held forever in her embrace.

By focussing so intently on the love experience for Achilles and by revealing so much of the hero's inner torment, Benoît effectively creates a story of unrequited love. Despite the brief references to Polyxena's apparent willingness, even desire, to marry Achilles and to her grief at his death, she remains little more than a fantasized figure for Achilles as well as for the reader.²⁷ Benoît provides no insight into the development and depth of her feelings for the Greek hero. However, more significant than Benoît's silence concerning Polyxena is Achilles' apparent indifference to her response to him; he never believes that she could love him, the murderer of her brother, nor does he seem really to care. As such, he differs greatly from Medea, whose passion for Jason is characterized by both a fear of rejection and a concern with loyalty. Achilles' only fear is that the Trojans will refuse to give him Polyxena, not that Polyxena will refuse him. Consequently, the language of fear and loyalty which typifies Medea's speech is

²⁷ The visual and erotic impact of the female figure for the determining male gaze is discussed more fully in Laura Mulvey's "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" and Paul Willeman's "Voyeurism, The Look, and Dwoskin" in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology: A Film Theory Reader*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 198-209 and 210-218.

noticeably absent from Achilles'. So absorbed is he with his own love experience that even the vocabulary of death and combat, which dominates his speech, is expressed solely in relationship to himself, never in relationship to Polyxena. As his passion for the Trojan princess increases, he begins to refer to her less and less, choosing instead to focus almost exclusively on his love rather than on his beloved. This total self-involvement is further emphasized by Achilles' declaration, "*Narcissus sui* [I am Narcissus]" (17691). Achilles makes the comparison because he believes that he, like Narcissus, will die for love (17709-10). However, his lack of concern for Polyxena's feelings suggests that he suffers from "narcissistic" tendencies of his own. Although Achilles considers himself to be as helpless as the Ovidian hero against the image he perceives, he also notes that Narcissus' love for his own "*ombre*," or reflection, is a love for something "*Que rien nen est ne rien ne fu* [Which is nothing and was nothing]" (17699). Similarly, Polyxena is nothing more for the reader than the fantasy Achilles creates for himself. Like Narcissus' reflection, she is an inversion of reality.

In relating these narratives of unrequited love, Benoît presents distinct conceptions of the lover and of the beloved. Both Medea and Achilles suffer some form of loss as a direct result of their overwhelming and unreciprocated desires. For Achilles, his loss is largely physical: he sacrifices his body to *Amors* and, ultimately, his body is shredded. For Medea, although she too suffers the physical torments of love, her loss is largely intellectual and social; she sacrifices her knowledge to Jason and her homeland and family for him. Love also raises the question of loyalties. Medea's concern with Jason's loyalty to her overshadows her own loyalty to her family and

people. In contrast, Achilles does not even consider Polyxena's loyalty, and his own loyalty to his people, although temporarily eclipsed, is never totally subsumed by his new-found love. In fact, the similarities in the love stories fall more along the lines of gender. Achilles and Jason, as men, share similar attributes, even though one loves truly and the other falsely. Both men conceive of women in abstract terms rather than as individual beings. Medea, as a sorceress, functions as a kind of *techne* for Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece. Polyxena, as a visual image, becomes figuratively and literally a static *objet d'art* for Achilles. While Jason conceives of love in purely strategic terms, namely how to win the Fleece, Achilles expresses love in strategic terms, namely his refusal to fight the Trojans. Thus passionate love results not only in an obsession for the beloved, but also in a course of action which is potentially devastating for both the sufferer and everyone else. Medea's and Achilles' stories of unrequited love effectively illustrate love's role as a significant motivational force behind the social and political events of Colchis and Troy. Benoît explicitly states the profound socio-political impact of *eros* for the reader:

Creance e fei, pere e seignor
 En ont ja relenqui plusor,
 E granz terres e granz païs (18455-57).

[Already many have relinquished for love
 Their belief, their faith, their father, their lord,
 And great kingdoms and great countries.]

This powerful influence of erotic desire will be examined further in relationship to mutual love in the chapter which follows.

Chapter Two

"Le pechié deit espeneïr
Qui dous amanz fait departir,
Ensi come li Grezeis firent"¹

Patterns of Mutual Love in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*

Benoît clearly uses language and imagery to distinguish between the male and female experiences of unrequited love. By examining the narratives involving mutual love, namely the stories of Paris and Helen and of Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes, we will see how Benoît incorporates and adapts these same patterns and, in doing so, divides the mutual love experience along gender lines. The motifs of the eye, ear, heart, and fire, which are so significant to the love relationships of Jason and Medea and of Achilles and Polyxena, also dominate in the context of reciprocated love. Although Benoît draws on classical tradition for Paris and Helen's story, he creates the love-triangle of Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes from his own imagination. This wholly original addition suggests that Benoît invents the story for the express purpose of mirroring the love affair of Paris and Helen, for the two stories parallel one another in terms of plot structure more than the stories of Jason and Medea and of Achilles and Polyxena do. Helen and Briseida are both taken forcibly from their people and their

¹ "Whoever makes two lovers part must expiate his sin, just as the Greeks have done" (13313-15).

husband/lover and they both succumb to a new love with disastrous results. The love relationships of Paris and Helen and of Briseida and Diomedes develop under the shadow of a past, more legitimate love on the part of the women and, as a direct result, have dire consequences. Paris and Helen's love brings about the downfall of Troy; Briseida and Diomedes' love brings about the social condemnation of Briseida by both her own people and the Greeks.

In turning to the love narrative of Paris and Helen, we come to the story which twelfth-century and modern audiences alike would consider to be the direct cause of the Trojan war. Although the story of Paris and Helen is the most catastrophic of all the love narratives on a political level, Benoît portrays their love relationship as the most positive. This apparent "idealization" of an adulterous affair which has such tragic consequences for so many has been the subject of considerable critical debate.² As Lee Patterson notes in his analysis of the *Roman de Troie* in *Chaucer and the Subject of History*,

[Paris and Helen's] love may be an effect of the Trojan desire for revenge for the abduction of Hesione and may be in itself illicit. But Benoît nonetheless represents it in terms that invoke a different, brighter world, in which *Amors* is not a device of statecraft and where gifts of Venus entail only happy consequences. Adulterous love is the efficient cause of the Trojan war, but the straightforward link between personal immorality and historical disaster established by the narrative is then

² R.M. Lumiansky believes that Benoît dramatizes the courtship of Helen in order to increase the love interest ("Structural Unity in Benoît's *Roman de Troie*," 415); Alfred Adler views Paris and Helen's relationship as "objectionable," but made legitimate only through Beauty (417); Rosemarie Jones argues that Benoît deliberately idealizes the couple because their love is mutual (47-50); Barbara Nolan interprets Paris and Helen's relationship as one of private "foolish" love (109).

undone by Benoît's empathy for the lovers yearning for a realm in which private but by no means solely carnal desire can be fully legitimized.³

This sympathetic portrayal of erotic love is indeed remarkable since the accusation of female faithlessness, a charge which Benoît showers so vehemently upon Briseida, could just as easily apply to Helen. A close analysis of the Paris and Helen story reveals that Benoît is strangely silent with respect to many of the details of their love affair. Not only does he avoid any reference to their relationship as one based on *fine amor*, he also fails to criticize Helen or her behaviour in any way. Despite her continual presence throughout the *Roman de Troie*, she remains an almost elusive ideal. This chapter will attempt to address the reasons for Benoît's obvious benevolence towards Helen at the expense of Briseida.

In his portrayal of Paris and Helen, Dares emphasizes the simultaneity with which Paris and Helen fall in love:

quod ubi Alexandro nuntiatum est Helenam ad mare venisse, conscius formae suae in conspectu eius ambulare coepit cupiens eam videre. Helenae nuntiatum est Alexandrum Priami regis filium ad Helaeam oppidum, ubi ipsa erat, venisse. quem etiam ipsa videre cupiebat. et cum se utrique respixissent, ambo forma sua incensi tempus dederunt (*De excidio troiae.X*).

[But when it was announced to Alexander (Paris) that Helen had come to the seaport, he, conscious of his own beauty and desiring to see her, began to walk within her sight. It was announced to Helen that Alexander, the son of King Priam, had come to the city Helaea, where she was. She also desired to see him. And when they had looked at one another, they spent time both kindled by

³ *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991): 118.

each other's beauty.]

The mutual desire of Paris and Helen to see each other, the reciprocity of their gaze, the fire of passion which is ignited in both of them at the same time are all features which Benoît includes in his version of Paris and Helen's first encounter. Benoît inverts the order by having Helen hear first of Paris' presence in Venus' temple (4319). He also suggests a certain craftiness on Helen's part, for she does not admit to anyone that she wishes to see Paris; rather, Benoît juxtaposes Helen's knowledge of Paris' arrival with her sudden express wish to go and make a vow "*a cel jor determiné* [on that precise day]" (4326). The implication that Helen goes to the temple under false pretences indicates a concern on her part with outward appearances; it is as though she fears people knowing that she, a married woman on her own, desires to look at a handsome stranger. In contrast, Benoît is much more explicit regarding Paris' wish to see Helen:

Quant Paris sot qu'ele ert venue, --
 Il ne l'aveit onques veüe, --
 Mout la coveita a veer (4333-35).

[When Paris knew that she had come --
 He had never seen her --
 Greatly did he covet a look at her.]

Paris does not simply want to see Helen, he "*coveite*" a look, a verb choice which both denotes the sinfulness of his desire to gaze upon the beautiful woman and foreshadows his inordinate yearning upon seeing her to possess her as his own. Nor does Paris wish his gaze to be unreciprocated, for Benoît also reveals that Paris departs for the temple not just to see Helen, but so that she may also see him (4341). The Trojan

hero's recognition of the need for a returning look is highly significant. No other lover in the *Roman de Troie* seems to realize, or even to care, that his or her amorous look is never returned by the beloved at the same moment; instead, the lover remains totally absorbed by his or her own love experience. Robert Baldwin comments that

Despite the many literary studies on the theme of amorous gazing, no historian of literature or art has ever discussed the motif of lovers gazing mutually into each other's eyes. Literary love gazing is for the most part one way, either a dart-like glance from the beloved which penetrates the lover's eyes and wounds his heart, or an equally devastating glance of the lover at the physical beauty of the beloved. As love's metaphors of darts, arrows, wounds and sickness imply, the lover is too overwhelmed to "fire" back amorous glances of his own.⁴

Paris will likewise be overwhelmed by Helen's beauty when he first sees her, but he comprehends that it is just as important that she see him. Had Polyxena, even in her grief, been able to gaze upon Achilles as he does upon her, their love might have similarly flourished. Had Medea realized that her amorous glances were not returned by Jason, she might not have so willingly helped him to win the Golden Fleece.

Thus Paris and Helen gaze upon each other in mutual wonder: "*Mout s'entresguarderent andui* [Greatly did they gaze upon each other]" (4342). The mutuality of Paris and Helen's gaze is illustrated in one of the earliest illuminated manuscripts of the *Roman de Troie*.⁵ In the bottom panel of the miniature on the

⁴ Baldwin, 23.

⁵ Formerly Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale fr. 1610, dated 1264 with a provenance of Eastern France (Burgundy or Lorraine); the relevant folio, one of four excised from the manuscript, is now held in a private collection in The Netherlands; a facsimile of this folio can be found in Hugo Buchta's *Historia Troiana: Studies in the History of Mediaeval Secular Illustration* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1971), plate 4a.

lefthand side, a crowd of worshippers stand facing an altar. In their midst, Paris reaches out with both arms to Helen as they look into one another's eyes. Benoît goes on to describe how Paris and Helen suffer the effects of love simultaneously:

El veeir e el parlement
 Que il firent assez briefment,
 Navra Amors e lui e li,
 Ainz qu'il se fussent departi.
 En lor aé, en lor enfance,
 En lor forme e en lor semblance
 Les a griefment saisiz Amors:
 Sovent lor fait muër colors (4355-62).

[In looking and in conversing
 Which they maintained only briefly,
 Love wounded both him and her,
 Before they might depart.
 In their youth, in their adolescence,
 In their beauty and in their appearance
 Love seized them seriously:
 Often love made their colour change.]

It only takes the briefest of moments for them to succumb. The phrase "*e lui e li*" and the repetition of "*lor*" and "*les*" in this passage emphasize the sharing of the love experience. Paris and Helen not only exchange looks, but words with each other. Love seizes them in every aspect of their physical appearances and wounds them both. As a result, their mutual feelings of passion cause the colour of their complexions to change, a typical symptom of erotic desire. Love does not favour one over the other, but afflicts each equally.

Although the narrator notes that Paris and Helen are each initially attracted by the beauty of the other (4345 and 4350), he adds,

Tant erent bel, ne me merveil
 S'il les voleit joster pareil:

Nes pōüst pas aillors trover (4363-65).

[They were both so beautiful, it does not surprise me
That Love wished to unite them in this way:
He would not have been able to find them anywhere else.]

This narrative intrusion not only reiterates Paris and Helen's equality in appearance and in the experience of overwhelming desire, but also suggests that Love is likewise attracted by their beauty with the result that he cannot help but bring them together. It is as though Paris and Helen exert an unconscious influence over love, a power unlike that of any other lover or pair of lovers in the poem. Whereas Medea and Achilles become passive as they look upon Jason and Polyxena, Paris and Helen immediately act in response their mutual gaze: "*Tel leiser orent de parler/ Qu'auques i distrent de lor buens* [They were so eager to speak that they said a little then of their wishes]" (4366-67). Although they speak to each other, their first meeting is told entirely from Benoît's perspective. Unlike such encounters in the other love narratives, there is no direct speech on the part of either Paris or Helen. Benoît also remains strangely silent regarding what exactly their "*buens*" may be, and so the reader is left to speculate: do the two speak of their mutual attraction or of something more? However, the fact that the two are able to converse, albeit briefly, is important. Both Medea and Achilles are so overwhelmed by love's initial onslaught that neither one has the power to address the beloved. Benoît seems to suggest that this paralysis has dire consequences for the love experience; by failing to act immediately, the lover falls victim to the tyranny of *eros*. In contrast, Helen appears to know Paris' feelings toward her before he departs: "*Mais ele sot tres bien de veir/ Qu'il la vendreit ancor veir* [But

she knew very well in truth, that he would come again to see her]" (4371-72). The uncertainty and apprehension which Medea and Achilles experience upon seeing their beloveds is not felt by Helen; she is assured of Paris' return. The real question is, does she know what his return will entail?

Throughout the love episode, Helen remains a rather enigmatic character, for her motives and feelings are seldom revealed by either Benoît or, more importantly, by herself. As noted earlier, Benoît hints that her reason for going to Venus' temple on the day Paris will be there is not to pray, as she claims, but rather to see the handsome stranger. Benoît is equally suggestive when he describes Helen's reaction to Paris' return with his men to the temple in order to steal her away:

La bele, la pro dame Heleine
 I pristrent tote premeraine:
 Ne se fist mie trop laidir,
 Bien fist semblant del consentir (4503-6).

[The beautiful, the honorable lady Helen
 They took the very first from there:
 She did not act too outraged,
 Truly she gave the appearance of consent to it.]

Like Dares, who refers to his Helen as "*non invitam* [not unwilling]" (*De excidio troiae*.X), Benoît only implies her collusion, not asserts it. In such a way, Benoît provides the reader with no concrete evidence of her guilt beyond mere speculation and innuendo. Instead, Helen is continually associated with "*semblant*," whether it is her "*bon semblant*" (4350) which attracts Paris or her "*semblant*" of consent as described here. Thus she is initially defined for the reader by her body and gestures rather than by her voice and words. In this sense, Helen seems to resemble Polyxena, who is little

more than a silent body for Achilles; however, Helen's silence extends only to the reader, not to Paris. He is the only one to know her true feelings. Upon their arrival on Tenedos, Helen again projects a "*semblant*," this time one of grief, to all around her:

Dame Heleine faiseit semblant
 Qu'ele eüst duel e ire grant:
 Fortment plorot e duel faiseit,
 E doucement se complaigneit.
 Son seignor regretot sovent,
 Ses freres, sa fille e sa gent,
 E sa ligniee e ses amis,
 E sa contree e son païs,
 Sa joie, s'onor, sa richece,
 E sa beauté e sa hautece (4639-48).

[Lady Helen was giving the appearance
 That she was distressed and greatly angered:
 She cried forcefully and in sorrow,
 And softly she was complaining.
 Often she missed her lord,
 Her brothers, her daughter and her people,
 And her family and her friends,
 And her country and her homeland,
 Her joy, her honour, her wealth,
 And her beauty and her rank.]

Barbara Nolan argues that the verb of "seeming" here undermines Helen's gesture of mourning.⁶ However, as I have already noted, Benoît uses "*semblant*" in connection with Helen to suggest her true inner state. Her appearance functions as a kind of commentary on her thoughts and emotions. Because the reader is not privy to Helen's words, he or she must rely on authorial description and observation in order to interpret Helen's actions.⁷ What is important in this passage is not Helen's appearance of grief,

⁶ Nolan, 107.

⁷ Significantly, Helen's gestures and appearance are never described from Paris' perspective, only from Benoît's.

but the catalogue of her perceived losses. Her despair is not simply of a personal nature, namely her separation from husband, family, and friends; it is also of a social one, for she fears the loss of homeland, honour, wealth, and social status.

In response to Helen and her women's uncontrollable grief, Paris becomes angry (4670) and, for the first time, the reader hears the two declare their feelings in their own voices. Paris begins by assuring Helen and her women that in Troy they will suffer neither shame, evil, or pain (4696-98); they will be protected (4699); they will have the city at their command (4701-2); they will never fear anything (4705-6); and they will have all the riches they desire (4709-12). His promises, in fact, address many of Helen's earlier concerns with respect to her social status in a new land. Having taken careful note of his guarantees, she gives a very pragmatic reply in return:

Sire ... s'estre poüst,
 Ja ne vousisse qu'ensi fust;
 Mais quant iço vei e entent,
 Que il ne puet estre autrement,
 Si nos covendra a sofrir,
 Peist o place, vostre plaisir.
 Deus le quart, qui bien nos fera
 E qui honor nos portera! (4721-28).

[Lord ... if it could be,
 I would not wish that it were this way;
 But when I see this and understand,
 That it cannot be otherwise,
 So we will have to suffer
 Your pleasure, like it or not.
 May God protect him who will do us good
 And who will bring us honour!]

Helen is undeniably cautious. She does not say that she is glad that Paris has taken her, but she does accept the reality of her situation and acquiesces. In addition, she cleverly reminds Paris of his promise of care and honour, asking God to protect only

that man who will provide such security. Paris appears to be extremely attuned to her concerns, for he responds in a way which can only convince her of his sincerity:

Or ai mon cuer si en vos mis,
 E si m'a vostre amor espris,
 Que del tot sui enclins a vos.
 Leiaus amis, leiaus espos
 Vos serai mais tote ma vie:
 D'iço seiez seüre e fie.
 Tote rien vos obeïra
 E tote rien vos servira (4741-48).

[Now I have placed my heart so in you,
 And your love has so burned me,
 That I am completely enclined toward you.
 Loyal beloved, loyal spouse
 You will henceforth be all my life:
 Of this fact you may be certain and confident.
 All will obey you
 And all will serve you.]

Paris draws on the imagery and language of erotic desire which typify the other love narratives and adapts them in an entirely new fashion. He does not simply offer his heart to Helen, but claims he has already placed it within her. He also describes Helen's love, not his own, as the fire which enflamed him. This subtle shift in the pattern of the motifs of heart, love, and fire indicates that Paris is fully aware of Helen's passionate feelings toward him and that he views their mutual love as an emotional *fait accompli*. Only the physical consummation of their desire remains to be fulfilled. Paris goes on to stress his fidelity with the repetition of "*leiaus*" and the vow of marriage. Finally, he promises Helen social status with his claim that all of Troy will obey and serve her.

Despite the brevity of Paris' speech, its eloquence is undeniable; nevertheless,

Helen accepts his offer rather coyly. She claims that she does not know how to respond (4755), yet she does so with considerable rhetorical skill. Having made the point that no one is more afflicted with sorrow and pain than she is (4756-57), she insists emphatically that she is blameless for what has happened: "*Quant defendre ne me porreie,/ De dreit neient m'escondireie* [Since I could not defend myself, it would be pointless for me to refuse]" (4763-64). Yet, in only a few lines, she easily acquiesces to Paris' desires without any apparent reservations: "*Se me portez honor e fei,/ Sauve l'avreiz son ma valor* [If you are honourable and faithful to me, you shall have the same according to my worth]" (4766-67). Like Medea's bargain with Jason, Helen's conditions are simple and direct and focus exclusively on honour and faith. However, her words also convey an underlying promise of sexual favours that does not pass by Paris unnoticed. As Benoît comments, "*Mout l'a Paris reconfortee/ E merveilles l'a honoree* [Greatly did Paris comfort her and marvellously did he honour her]" (4769-70). The play on *reconfort* and *honor* is obvious in context. As the reader later learns, Paris does honour Helen by marrying her and providing her with the comforts of social position and wealth; however, for the moment, he honours and comforts her in a much more immediate and physical way, for "*Mout la fist la nuit gent servir* [Greatly did he serve her well that night]" (4771).

Benoît is surprisingly silent concerning Menelaus and Helen's relationship with him. Although he notes that Helen is Menelaus' wife and mother to his daughter (4245-47), he provides no direct insight regarding their marriage. Benoît only briefly describes the Greek king's pain and anguish upon discovering that his wife has been taken

(4787-89). By keeping Menelaus very much in the background and avoiding any explicit comments on Helen's feelings for her husband, he allows the love between Paris and Helen to develop almost unhindered by the shadow of her previous, legitimate marriage. Even during the preparations for war by the Greeks, Benoît emphasizes Menelaus' socio-political motivations for his actions, for he states that the Greek king undertakes the battle in retaliation for the "*hontage*," or "shame," shown to his wife (4943) and for the "*damage*," or "injury," brought upon his kingdom (4944).⁸ Never does Benoît suggest that Menelaus pursues Helen because he loves her. In contrast, Paris offers Helen both love and social rank. Once they have consummated their relationship, Paris fulfills his end of the bargain with care and attentiveness. As they enter Troy, Paris takes Helen's horse by the reins and leads her into the city at his side "*De li honorer* [to honour her]" (4815-16). Helen has regained her *honor* as she enters the city, for this simple gesture venerates her as Paris' equal, both in his eyes and the eyes of the Trojans who watch their arrival. The Trojan tribute continues as Priam comes to greet them both and to take the reins of Helen's horse from his son for the rest of the journey (4846). This courteous display not only demonstrates the honour shown to Helen by the Trojan king, but also indicates an acceptance of Helen on the part of the Trojans. Priam emphasizes their approval of her by informing the silent woman that in Troy she will be a "*dame del país* [lady of the homeland]" (4852). Thus another of Helen's fears is dispelled, for she now has a country and people to call

⁸ Agamemnon also appeals to these same issues of "shame" and "injury" when he encourages Menelaus to declare war on Troy (4973-78).

her own.⁹

Once in Troy, Benoît emphasizes Helen's integration into Trojan society and her acceptance by the people of Troy. Not only does Priam, like a father, give Helen away at her wedding to Paris (4864-66), but she is welcomed by the family and the people as if a daughter:

Heleine fu mout honoree
 E mout joïe e mout amee
 Del rei Priant e de sa femme
 E de toz les autres del regne (4877-80).

[Helen was greatly honoured
 And welcomed with joy and love
 By king Priam and his wife
 And all the others of the kingdom.]

Unlike the other love narratives, no authorial intrusion appears to undermine the moment. Only one voice of dissent, Cassandra's, is raised against Helen, a reminder of the inevitable end of the story of Troy (4897-928). However, her speech is quickly silenced by Priam (4934-6), and Benoît significantly passes no comment regarding the prophetess' claims. Instead, he stresses the honour shown to Helen as well as the love.¹⁰ For her part, Helen responds in kind. Once she has accepted Paris' terms for their relationship and added a few of her own, Benoît never suggests that she regrets her decision or mourns for her previous life. Helen will prove a loving and dutiful wife

⁹ However, it is also noteworthy that Helen is no longer in control of her horse in this scene; in taking hold of the bridle, Paris and Priam have taken command literally of her steed and figuratively of her life and destiny.

¹⁰ Perhaps the most significant honour paid to Helen is Priam's gift to her of the Chamber of Beauties after her marriage to Paris (14951-54).

to Paris and a loyal "Trojan."¹¹ With the other Trojan women, she will stand on the city walls and watch the battle between her own people and her adopted one, becoming "*mout pensive e mout dotose* [very thoughtful and very fearful]" (8081-86) at the sight. She will care for the wounded Hector (14619-21) and genuinely grieve at his death (16480-90). On the anniversary of his death, while others come to the temple merely to gossip and flirt, Helen will mourn with Polyxena at Hector's tomb (17514). In addition, Helen's grief is so overwhelming upon Paris' death that she desires only death (22920-23011).¹² However, Helen's concern for her social position also resurfaces at this climactic moment, in spite of her overwhelming sorrow. Anticipating a change in attitude toward her, she asks for death as punishment for her role in the Trojan war, saying, "*serai haïe* [I will be hated]" (22951). She asserts that no one will bless her (22960-61) and that Hecuba will take vengeance up on her for the deaths of her children (22968-70). Her speech is, in fact, a clever rhetorical strategy. Clearly, Paris' death places her in a precarious political position, for she has been the occasion for both the war and his demise. Now she no longer has his protection. Moved by her grief and passionate speech, the Trojans do not respond as Helen claims they must, namely by killing her, but rather continue to embrace her as their own.

Since the story of Paris and Helen follows directly after the story of Jason and Medea, the reader cannot help but make comparisons. The conditions that Helen

¹¹ Jones, 49.

¹² In her role as Paris' wife, Helen presents an image of spousal faith and devotion which closely resembles that of Andromache; however, the reader must not forget that Helen, unlike Andromache, is another man's legitimate wife.

presents to Paris are similar to those Medea sets for Jason. Both women are also concerned with the faithfulness of their beloveds. However, Helen is much more preoccupied with the social consequences of her departure from her home than Medea is. While Medea asks only that Jason take her back to Greece with him, Helen is explicit in her demands of honour and rank. Like Jason and, to a lesser degree, Medea, Helen is associated with the term *semblant*, but her appearance reveals the truth of her feelings while Jason's and Medea's belie theirs. Paris, on the other hand, possesses a power of speech similar to Jason's, for he uses language both to persuade and to deceive his listeners. In an effort to convince Priam to send a mission to Greece for the return of his sister, Hesione, Paris describes his dream in which Venus promises him the most beautiful woman in Greece if he will only judge her the fairest of the three goddesses (3912-21). Paris claims that his vision is proof that the Trojans will succeed in their plans; therefore, he will lead the mission to Greece willingly since Venus is clearly very sympathetic towards him: "*Si sai tres bien que la deuesse/ M'aïdera, n'en dot de rien* [So I know very well that the goddess will help me, I doubt nothing of it]" (3920-21). Nevertheless, Paris' statement is rather ambiguous. He claims that his presence will ensure success, but success in what? Priam evidently understands Paris' claim to mean the return of Hesione, for he selects his son as leader of the mission. However, given the juxtaposition of Paris' statement to his own description of Venus' bribe for judging her the fairest, it seems as though the help which Paris insists the goddess offers is not for the benefit of Troy, but for Paris alone; such will indeed prove to be the case.

Paris also uses eloquent words and rhetoric to convince his men to steal Helen. Claiming that it is now impossible to retrieve Hesione (4387-88), he urges them to inflict "*honte e damage* [shame and injury]" (4385) on the Greeks. His words echo those of Menelaus and Agamemnon, who call for the same retribution against the Trojans. Paris then suggests that they plunder the temple for gold, silver and other riches (4415-18), noting almost as an afterthought the presence of a most beautiful woman who, if also taken, would be "*La plus preissee* [the most precious]" (4421). Significantly, he does not refer to Helen by name. While it is clear to the reader that Helen is the main reason for Paris suggesting the attack on the temple, his men believe that she will simply be the most valuable prize among many. Only the reader perceives the double intention of Paris' words; the Trojans comprehend only the political motivation and the promise of financial reward.¹³ Thus Paris deceives his men with his clever rhetoric, persuading them to see Helen as nothing more than a precious object. However, Paris limits his linguistic powers of deception to his men. While Jason's lies and flattery prove a successful means for temporarily seducing Medea, Paris' honesty and candour win over Helen and become the basis for a successful and long-lasting relationship. Nor does Paris objectify Helen as Jason does Medea. For him, Helen is much more than a means to an end; she is the end in herself.

With the love-triangle of Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes, Benoît significantly develops the themes of love, loyalty, and verbal eloquence which he introduces with the stories of Jason and Medea and of Paris and Helen. In such a way, he creates a

¹³ Nolan, 107.

wholly original story which functions as a commentary on the earlier love narratives, particularly that of Paris and Helen. Words and actions which pass by with authorial silence in their story are now subject to Benoît's direct, and often harsh, criticism. It is as though he is able to castigate his own fictional creations, but cannot do the same to the "historical" figures of Paris and Helen. The character of Briseida is clearly based on Dares' Briseis, the slave-concubine of Achilles taken from him by Agamemnon and eventually restored.¹⁴ While both women have a similar physical characteristic, eyebrows which are joined together, only Benoît points to this feature as a imperfection in her appearance: "*Mais les sorcilles li joigneient,/ Que auques li mesaveneient* [But her eyebrows joined together, which somewhat misbecame her]" (5279-80). In doing so, he effectively suggests that this blemish is a physical manifestation of a defect in Briseida's character, for he adds almost immediately, "*Mout fu amee e mout amot, Mais sis corages li chanjot* [Greatly was she loved and greatly did she love, but her heart changed in her]" (5285-86). Thus, before Benoît even tells her story, he reveals to the reader Briseida's most important characteristic, her inconstant heart.

Our first view of Briseida is with her lover Troilus. Having learned that Priam is sending her to her traitorous father, Calchas, in the Greek camp, the two lovers meet to console one another. It is an important scene in the story, for Benoît provides no other details regarding the development of Briseida and Troilus' relationship. Instead, the reader is forced to turn to the lovers' emotional parting in order to determine to what

¹⁴ In classical tradition, it is the loss of Briseis which causes Achilles to refuse to fight in the Trojan war, not his desire to marry Polyxena. Benoît evidently did not know that Dares' Briseis is the same woman as Dictys' Hippodamia, the daughter of Brises, for he retells the story of Agamemnon's taking of Hippodamia elsewhere in the *Roman de Troie* (26747 ff.).

extent the two are truly in love. Benoît begins by focussing on Troilus' "*ire e tristece* [anger and sorrow]" (13262) at the thought of losing his beloved Briseida. He has given away his heart to her and, consequently, burns with a fiery passion:

Tot son cuer aveit en li mis;
Si par ert de s'amor espris
Qu'il n'entendeit se a li non (13265-67).

[He had placed in her all of his heart;
He burned so much from his love of her
That he did not pay attention to anything but her.]

Like so many of the lovers in the *Roman de Troie*, Troilus is initially identified by his heart. The image closely echoes Paris' own perception of his love experience, for he too places his heart in his beloved and, as a result, becomes enflamed by love (4741-43). However, the sense of mutual passion indicated by Paris and Helen's physical exchange of hearts and love is absent here. Whereas Paris is set alight by Helen's love for him, Troilus is kindled only by his own overwhelming passion. Like Achilles, he can think of nothing but his beloved.

Benoît also briefly mentions Briseida's love for Troilus in this scene. She has given him "*E de son cors e de s'amor* [both of her body and her love]" (13269), an image which indicates her love for him, but fails to convey the same feeling of passion. The typical imagery of overwhelming desire is noticeably absent, for there are no references to fire or to her heart. Benoît does not even present her love as comparable to Troilus'. Knowing that she must leave Troy, Briseida feels "*grant duel* [great sorrow]" and "*grant ire* [great anger]" (13275) as she "*del cuer sospire* [sighs from her heart]" (13276), but her distress is not at the thought of losing Troilus. As Briseida begins to

speak, the reader soon discovers that her emotional state is a direct result of her fear of being without social standing or honour in the Greek camp:

A une assez vil chamberiere
 Sereit il d'estre en ost grant honte:
 N'i conois rei, ne duc, ne conte
 Qui ja honor ne bien m'i face (13280-83).

[It would be very shameful for
 A rather lowly servant to be in the camp:
 I know neither king, nor duke, nor count
 Who would ever honour me or be good to me.]

Briseida is not so concerned that she will be parted from Troilus, but that she will suffer shame and be deprived of honour at the hands of the Greeks. Like Helen, her social position in a new environment is extremely important to her. In contrast to Troilus, who has given her his heart, she has placed only her "*atendance*," or "hope," in him (13286) rather than her love. Even when she refers to her and Troilus' love, it is in the context of his loss, rather than hers: "*Ja mais nul jor que seiez vis/ Nos amera rien plus de mei* [Never as long as you may live will anyone love you more than I]" (13288-89). Although her statement indicates a sincere love for Troilus, it also suggests a presumption on her part. Briseida never says that no one will love her more than Troilus does, a rather meaningful silence since she will, in fact, find someone else who will. She feels as though she will die when first parted from Troilus (13495-97) and asks only for death: "*La mort veuil e quier e demant* [I want and seek and ask for death]" (13294), but not simply for the sake of lost love. Just as Helen begs for death at the hands of the Trojans once Paris is no longer alive to safeguard her, so Briseida prays for a similar

fate rather than live amongst a foreign people without a protector of her own.¹⁵

As Briseida departs for the Greek camp, Benoît creates a picture which clearly inverts Helen's arrival in Troy. Like Paris, Troilus takes hold of the reins of Briseida's horse (13425); however, the purpose of his gesture is neither to honour or control her, but rather to guide and comfort her, albeit temporarily, as he leads her away from her people and to an unknown fate. In these last private moments together, the two pledge eternal love. Briseida asks Troilus never to forget her and then adds that

Ne sera ja autrui amie;
S'amor toz jorz li guardera,
Ja mais jor autre ne l'avra,
Ne rien n'avra joie de li (13500-3).

[She will never be a lover to another;
She will guard her love for him forever,
Never will another have her,
No one will have joy from her.]

Despite the apparent sincerity of her promises, her words are tinged with irony, not just because Briseida has thus far shown herself to be more concerned with the social implications of her departure than with her separation from Troilus, but also because Benoît reveals these vows only after a lengthy diatribe against Briseida and unfaithful women in general. This authorial intrusion echoes Benoît's interruption just as Jason and Medea pledge their marriage vows and, similarly, subverts the apparent sincerity of Troilus and Briseida's troths. Benoît is also considerably more expansive in his criticism on this occasion. He informs the reader that Briseida will, in fact, soon forget

¹⁵ I would disagree here with Gretchen Mieszkowski, who interprets Briseida as simply vowing that she would rather die than leave Troy ("The Reputation of Criseyde: 1155-1500," 80).

her grief and find comfort in a new love (13434-37). He then elaborates on the general faithlessness of women who, like *Fortuna*, cry with one eye and laugh with the other (13442).¹⁶ Such women are not subject to their gaze, but to their mutable emotions.

Once outside the city walls, Troilus hands Briseida over to the Greeks and specifically to Diomedes, who conducts her to the Greek camp (13529). That Benoît should be so precise regarding the change in escort is noteworthy, for the switch foreshadows the substitution of Diomedes for Troilus as Briseida's protector and lover. As they journey through Greek lines, Diomedes seizes the opportunity to approach Briseida concerning his new-found passion for her. In a significant departure from the other love narratives, Benoît does not describe the moment at which Diomedes falls in love. Instead, the Greek warrior admits simply that *Amors* attracts him to her (13559) and acknowledges, "*Qui vostre grant beauté remire,/ N'est merveille se il esprent* [Whoever looks upon your great beauty, it is no wonder that he burns]" (13560-61). It is an image which suggests that he, like so many others, is enflamed by her beautiful appearance; however, apart from this brief reference, Benoît remains silent regarding the impact that Briseida's physical image has upon Diomedes' eye. Diomedes' gaze in this initial encounter is not as important as his clumsy attempt to woo her with words.¹⁷ With a lack of rhetorical flourish, he begins by stating unequivocally that he wants Briseida's love:

¹⁶ Nolan, 21.

¹⁷ Rosemarie Jones also notes Diomedes' lack of eloquence in expressing his feelings of love to Briseida, saying that he "still has a long way to go to become the ideal courtly lover" (52).

E que si somes près de l'ost,
 E que jo vos vei deshaitiee,
 Pensive e dotose e iriee,
 Jos criasse mout grant merci,
 Qu'a chevalier e a ami
 Me receüssiez tot demeine (13538-43).

[And although we are so near the camp,
 And although I see that you are unhappy,
 Thoughtful and distressed and angry,
 I would cry great mercy of you,
 If you would receive me entirely
 As your own knight and lover.]

His later claim that he has never had an "*amie*" before (13557-58) is confirmed with these opening lines, for they are surprisingly blunt and almost naïve in tone. As such, he resembles Medea in his approach, for she tackles Jason with a similarly forthright and unsophisticated rhetorical technique.

Although Diomedes tries to incorporate a love vocabulary into his plea by referring to himself a Briseida's "*chevalier*" and "*ami*," he stresses Briseida's present misfortune rather than his love for her with these opening lines. As Benoît will later reveal, Diomedes' lack of elegance in speech is intentional, for

Ne cuit que nus qui bien amast,
 Tant dementres come il preiast,
 Que il ne fust auques vilains (15063-65).

[He thought that anyone who loved well,
 All the time as he beseeched,
 That he was somewhat undignified.]

Consequently, he differs greatly from the other lovers in the *Roman de Troie*, for whom the description of their passionate feelings and turmoil is essential for the love experience. Instead, Diomedes presents his own efficient, but rather unromantic,

philosophy on love as he continues to remind Briseida of everything she has left behind:

A la gent qui vos ont norrie
 Sai que sereiz toz jorz amie:
 De ço nos deit om ja blasmer.
 Mais j'ai oï assez parler
 Que gent qu'onc ne s'erent veü
 Ne acointié ne coneü
 S'amoënt mout, ç'avient adès (13549-55).

[I know that you will always be beloved
 To those people who have raised you:
 For this you should not be blamed.
 But I have heard said many times
 That people who have not seen each other
 Nor are acquainted nor known to each other
 They loved greatly, these things happen often.]

Unlike Medea, Achilles, and Paris, Diomedes does not use the imagery of the heart, fire, and the eye to describe his love. His argument is one of logic, namely that people who have never met before are known to fall in love. His point is well taken, since it applies to all the other love stories in the *Roman de Troie*. However, Diomedes presents himself simply as one of many men who are attracted to Briseida, not as someone truly special. So desperate is he for her favour that he does not wait for her to bestow it upon him, but rather steals one of her gloves when no one is looking (13709-10). He keeps the token, like his love, to himself and never displays it for public viewing, as he will later do with her sleeve.¹⁸

¹⁸ Although Briseida does not give her glove to Diomedes, Benoît notes that the Greek warrior is unaware if she is angered by his action (13711-12). The meaning of this authorial comment is rather ambiguous, for it suggests both that Diomedes is so inattentive to Briseida's reaction that he does not even see her anger and that Briseida is not angered at all by his "theft."

Instead of focussing on the details of his feelings for Briseida, Diomedes emphasizes his loyalty and devotion. He acknowledges that many of the Greek men will seek her love, but he can offer her honour: "*Se de mei faites vostre ami,/ Vos n'i avreiz se honor non* [If you make me your beloved, you will have nothing but honour]" (13580-81). It is a surprisingly effective argument, for Benoît has already revealed that Briseida's greatest fear in coming to the Greek camp is the loss of honour. Diomedes also unknowingly appeals to her concern for loyalty in a lover by describing himself simply as a "*Leial ami e dreiturier* [Loyal and legitimate lover]" (13588). Without a doubt, there is a certain guilelessness about Diomedes' speech. However, Briseida, ever pragmatic, does not rebuff his advances outright and even appears to respond with some encouragement to his suit. As Gretchen Mieszkowski notes, she is a woman in a vulnerable position, alone among enemy men, with only her prudence to protect her.¹⁹ Despite her distress at leaving Troy and Troilus, Briseida is quite self-composed as she gives Diomedes an ambiguous answer to his petition:

Mais ne vos ai joi coneü
 A doner vos si tost m'amor.
 Mout s'en desveient li plusor.
 Mainte pucele est escharnie
 Par ceus ou est la tricherie
 E qui sont mençongier e faus:
 Cil deceivent les cuers leiaus (13626-32).

[But I have not known you enough
 To give you my love so soon.
 Many people are led astray by this.
 Many a damsel is outraged
 By those in whom there is treachery
 And those who are liars and false:

¹⁹ "The Reputation of Criseyde: 1155-1500," 83.

They deceive faithful hearts.]

She does not say that she can never love Diomedes, only that it is too soon to say. Briseida also emphasizes her concern with the falsity of lovers, a rather ironic comment given her future change of heart, but an important issue for her particularly in her present circumstances. In a very real sense, Briseida cannot encourage Diomedes at this time due to her uncertainty regarding her current situation, nor dare she pointedly discourage him for the same reason. However, Benoît gives absolutely no indication that Briseida feels any love for Diomedes at this moment. Unlike the other love narratives, no mention is made of her impression of the Greek warrior's appearance, of his effect on her eye or heart, or of any passionate feelings she may have for him. Instead, Briseida's speech is filled with language which typifies her immediate personal concerns, for she makes several references to her many fears in this new and seemingly hostile environment. What is significant about this entire address is its surprising parallels to Helen's grief-stricken discourse on Tenedos (4639-48). Like Helen, Briseida mourns the loss of her friends and homeland (13641-43), of honour (13644), of rank (13659-60), and of wealth (13645-47). Like Helen, she will succumb to a new love. However, she is judged by Benoît to be the faithless and inconstant one.

Diomedes' ingenuous appeal to Briseida continues as he returns to fight in the war. In a misguided attempt to win her favour, he purposely seeks out Troilus "*por la danzele* [on account of the maiden]" (14286-87). He unhorses the Trojan prince and sends his squire to present the horse to Briseida as a "*druërie* [love-token]" (14311);

however, the gift does not have the desired effect. Not surprisingly, Briseida is insulted that Diomedes would intentionally harm her beloved and describes his actions as demonstrative only of "*male amor* [evil love]" (14326) for her. Taking the horse, she tells the squire that, if Diomedes truly loves her, he would spare both her people and the one she loves (14333-35). Her statement is highly significant, for it indicates that Briseida comprehends the profound influence that love exerts not only on the beloved, but on everything and everyone associated with him or her.²⁰ However, unlike Achilles, who withdraws from battle on account of his beloved and her people, Diomedes does not appear to be affected by Briseida's arguments; instead, he continues to fight the Trojans, eventually losing his own horse. As his fortunes in war change, so he falls further into the torments of love. For the first time, Benoît describes in detail Diomedes' inner turmoil, one which clearly parallels the unrequited love experience of Achilles. Diomedes cannot sleep nor close his eyes at night (15005); he often sighs, lost in thought (15007); the colour of his complexion changes (15011); and he breaks out in a cold sweat (15012-13). Like Achilles, he has all the symptoms of *amor hereos*. Love has also become a metaphorical battle for him, for:

Tel sont li trait d'Amors sovent;
 Cui il de rien tient en sa lace,
 Sovent li pert bien a la face;
 Trop par sont griés ses chevauchiees,
 Endurer fait morteus haschiees (15014-18).

[Such are often the arrows of Love;
 Whomever he holds in his bond in any way,
 Often it truly shows in his face;

²⁰ Briseida's apparent awareness of this fact has also been observed by Rosemarie Jones (54).

Very grave indeed are his attacks,
He causes one to endure mortal torments.]

Diomedes, who is unable to describe his feelings for Briseida when he first meets her as anything more than a fiery passion felt by all who see her (13560-61), is now shown to be completely overcome by love. The language and imagery of battle and the reference to death not only emphasize the intensity and potentially destructive nature of his feelings for Briseida, but also foreshadow the savage injury he must endure on the battlefield before Briseida feels any love for him.

Without question, Briseida is defined not by her love, but by her desire for honour and her fear of shame. Such imagery and vocabulary typify her early speeches in the love story, for she mentions *honor* on five occasions and *honte* on six.²¹ Briseida initially tells Diomedes that she cannot return his love because she is not willing to be the subject of gossip (13655-68). Upon meeting her father, she weeps and berates him for the shame and dishonour that he has brought upon her and himself:

voz tres granz heritez,
Voz richeces, voz mananties
E voz honors avez guerpies
Por estre povre e eissilliez (13728-31).

[your very great inheritance,
Your riches, your wealth
And your honours have you abandoned
In order to be poor and exiled.]

²¹ Briseida only refers to *amor* in her initial speeches on five occasions: twice with respect to other people's love, once as *fole* (13652), once as *male* (14327), and only once with respect to herself. Similarly, she only mentions *cuer* and *corage* six times and seldom in terms of herself. However, as soon as she succumbs to Diomedes, she immediately refers to her own heart eleven times in quick succession, a frequency which effectively illustrates her sudden and overwhelming desire.

She cannot understand that he has tried to save both their lives by fleeing to the Greeks and then requesting that she join him; all Briseida can comprehend is that he is the reason for her disrepute. Similarly, when Diomedes forces Troilus' horse upon her against her will, she dares not return it to him because she cannot face the "*honte e contraire* [shame and reproach]" (15088) which will ensue as a direct result of her rejection of his gift.²² Therefore, it is not surprising that Briseida quickly forgets her fear and distress once she feels that she has been accepted by the Greek warriors:

Mout l'ont joïe e honoree
 E mout l'ont tuit reconfortee.
 Or li vait mieuz qu'el ne cuidot,
 Quar sovent veit ço que li plot (13855-58).

[The Greeks welcomed and honoured her greatly
 And they all comforted her greatly.
 Soon it was better than she expected,
 For often she saw the thing which pleased her.]

Consoled by the attention and respect, Briseida loses her "*corage* [heart's desire]" and "*voleir* [wish]" to return to Troy (13859-61). However, Benoît intrudes at this moment to criticize her actions severely, for he states that her feelings have changed too quickly. For a third time, Benoît defines Briseida by her inconstant heart (13864). What is peculiar about Benoît's condemnation is the fact that Briseida has yet to give her love to Diomedes. Compared to Helen, who takes only a single day to succumb to Paris' entreaties, Briseida will prove to be much more steadfast. She is sent to the

²² It is worth noting that the line which soon follows, "*Trop par en fust en l'ost haïe* [She would be very much hated for it in the camp]" (15091) refers directly to Briseida's unfulfilled desire to return Diomedes' gift to him and *not* to a change in her present status in the Greek camp as critics often insist [Jones (53) and R.K. Gordon's translation in *The Story of Troilus*, MART (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978): 16]. The use of the imperfect subjunctive of *estre* reinforces my point.

Greek camp long before Hector's death and, in fact, only begins to love Diomedes a few months after the anniversary of the Trojan prince's death; therefore, she waits almost two years before she betrays her love for Troilus. It is a significant period of time, one over which Benoît conveniently glosses.²³ He even misleads the reader by ascribing swiftness to the inconstant hearts of false women, such as Briseida: "*Mout muënt tost li lor corage* [Very soon they change their heart]" (13443). Yet Briseida appears to be considerably less guilty of the charge of faithlessness than Helen, particularly if one is to judge her on the speed with which she changes lovers.

Benoît describes Briseida's refusal to give Diomedes her love, despite his continual appeals, as an act of "*grant saveir* [great wisdom]" (15034). As in the love narratives of Jason and Medea and of Achilles and Polyxena, Benoît associates overwhelming passion with irrational behaviour. Briseida thus proves herself to be prudent by rejecting Diomedes' desperate pleas; however, Benoît cannot let this apparent compliment stand. He goes on to describe how women, like Briseida, who do not reciprocate their suitors' love possess a great and brutal power over these men:

S'ele aparceit que vos l'ameiz
 E que por li seiez destreiz,
 Sempres vos fera ses orguieuz:
 Poi vos tornera puis ses ieuz
 Que n'i ait dangier ne fierté (15039-43).

[If she were to perceive that you love her

²³ While Benoît emphasizes the rapidity with which Briseida forgets Troilus in favour of Diomedes, the reader who chooses to read the *Roman de Troie* in its entirety will be less affected by these comments. Briseida's story, which begins at line 12931, develops over almost 7500 lines, during which battles also rage, truces are held, and other storylines continue and begin. These often lengthy interruptions in the narrative effectively create the sense of the passage of time.

And that you are anguished on her account,
 Immediately she will perform arrogant actions toward you:
 Henceforth seldom will she turn her eyes to you
 That she does not have disdain and contempt in them.]

Despite the brief allusion to Briseida's wisdom, Benoît immediately undermines his praise by emphasizing the cruelty of women such as her. These women torment their lovers with their disdain and arrogance, turning only to look upon them with haughtiness, not with love. In such a way, their eyes exert an aggressiveness that usually typifies the male gaze, but with a conscious brutality. It seems as though Briseida really cannot win, as far as Benoît is concerned. If she tries to adapt to her new environment, as Helen does, she is criticized; if she tries to remain faithful to her first love, as Helen does not, she is again condemned. Throughout his telling of the love narrative, Benoît appears determined to censure his heroine, regardless of her behaviour.

In fact, Briseida only begins to capitulate to Diomedes when she agrees to lend him Troilus' horse in place of his own lost steed. Although she teases the Greek warrior with the offer ("*sil contralie* [so she teases him]" 15092), she is surprisingly moved by his response. Unlike his earlier approach, Diomedes does not begin with insults to Troilus, but rather with praise for the Trojan prince's prowess in battle (15126-28). For the first time, he also speaks passionately of his love for Briseida. As Benoît has already noted, Diomedes has always withheld expressing his desire in detail for fear of appearing foolish:

En ses paroles dit mout meins
 Que il ne li sereit mestiers
 E dont sereit tenuz plus chiers (15066-68).

[In his speech he says much less
Than would be necessary for him
And for which he would be held more dear.]

His self-consciousness has been at the expense of Briseida's acceptance. However, now unable to restrain himself, he reveals just how much he loves her using the amatory language and motifs found in the other love stories. In his own words, he tells her of the pain he suffers on her account (15141-42); of his "*cuer*" which endures strain without relief (15143-45); of her mercy which he so desperately "*atent ... soplei ... coveit ... desir* [awaits ... seeks ... covets ... desires]" (15150-51); of his wish for death if he can never have her (15162-64); and of his inability to think of anything but her:

Tant estes bele e proz e sage
Que jo ne puis, gente façon,
A rien entendre s'a vos non (15166-68).

[You are so beautiful and virtuous and wise
That I cannot, fair lady,
Think of anything except you.]

His fervent appeal succeeds. Briseida is moved by his words and pleased that "*il est si en ses laz* [he is so in her bonds]" (15173-75), an image which suggests that he is completely imprisoned by her power. As a result, she gives him her sleeve for a "*confanon* [pennant]" (15176-78). Unlike her glove, which Diomedes took without her permission, Briseida presents this token freely and spontaneously; however, her seemingly trivial gesture has a significant, and unexpected, effect on her. In giving of herself for the first time, she:

Ja est tochiee de la veine
Dont les autres font les forfaiz
Qui sovent sont diz e retraiz (15180-82).

[Already she is affected in the spot
Through which others perform transgressions
Which often are spoken of and reproached.]

Her gift to Diomedes symbolizes her betrayal of Troilus, for, with it, she has "*l'amor quassee* [broken her love for him]" (15185). Thus, Benoît tells the reader, she will be subject to one of her greatest fears, public condemnation. More importantly, the first line of the passage, which has the literal meaning of "she is struck on the vein," suggests that the bestowal of her favour upon Diomedes inflicts a metaphorical wound upon her; as such, it foreshadows the literal wound the Greek warrior must receive before Briseida gives herself to him completely.

Diomedes fights for the next four months with Briseida's sleeve on his lance. This public display of her affection for him over such a significant period of time emphasizes her change of heart not only to the reader, but also to everyone on the battlefield. Not surprisingly, Diomedes is eventually wounded grievously during the fifteenth battle by Troilus, who loudly claims that the injury is in direct response to Briseida's "*corte fei,/ Sa tricherie e son beslei* [brief faith, her treachery and her injustice]" (20085-86). Whereas Diomedes initially fought Troilus in order to win Briseida's love, Troilus now fights the Greek warrior for revenge on his beloved. For both men, the Trojan war has become much more personal; it is no longer simply a national battle for the return of a "stolen" Greek queen, but an individual combat over a "fickle" Trojan woman. Troilus' words and insults are heard by Greeks and Trojans alike and repeated "*puis jorz de tot le meis* [for days during the entire month]" (20106). Ironically, Briseida's reputation, which she has tried so hard to preserve, now begins

to be destroyed by rumour and gossip. However, upon the return of the wounded Diomedes to the Greek camp, it is clear that Briseida has still not yet given her love to him completely. Just as Benoît has condemned her to the reader before she ever betrays Troilus, so people denounce her based on Troilus' utterances and not on her own words or actions.

As he lies wounded in his tent, Diomedes can no longer conceal his love for Briseida:

Semblant fait bien que de son cuer
L'aime sor tote rien vivant:
Nen aveit onc fait grant semblant,
Jusq'a cel jor, de lui amer,
Mais lores ne s'en pot celer (20208-12).

[He clearly shows that in his heart
He loves her above all living things:
Never had he given much appearance,
Until that day, of loving her,
But he could not hide it then.]

It is as though the physical wound he has suffered to his side has literally exposed his heart for everyone, and for Briseida in particular, to see. Now Diomedes is the one to fear for her reputation, ordering that she not visit him lest people should speak of it (20214-15). However, despite his resistance and the reproaches of her father, Briseida goes often "*veeir* [to see]" (20225) him. She knows that she behaves "*trop laidement* [very shamefully]" (20230), but she cannot stop herself. Never before has Benoît made reference to her gaze; in doing so now, he emphasizes the fact that she "sees" Diomedes as if for the first time. She cannot control her actions as *eros* governs her behaviour and her reason:

Dès or puet om aparceveir
 Que vers lui a tot atorné:
 S'amor, son cuer e son pensé (20226-28).

[Henceforth one can perceive
 That she has turned completely toward him:
 Her love, her heart and her thoughts.]

No longer defined solely by a desire for honour, Briseida, like other sufferers of erotic passion, is characterized by her love, heart, and mind.

Although she abandons Troilus "A *grant tort e a grant boisdie* [with great fault and with great deception]" (20231), Briseida also exhibits a surprising self-awareness of her betrayal, acknowledging,

Fause fui e legiere e fole
 La ou j'en entendi parole:
 Qui leiaument se vueut garder
 N'en deit ja parole escouter;
 Par parole sont engeignié
 Li sage e li plus veziié (20249-54).

[I was false and fickle and reckless
 When I heard the words of another:
 Whoever wishes to guard himself faithfully
 Must never listen to the words of another;
 By words are deceived
 The wise and the most sensible.]

In her own voice, she speaks of her foolishness in giving her love to Diomedes, referring not only to herself as "*fole*," but also to her "*sen ... fol* [irrational judgement]" (20242) and "*folor* [recklessness]" (20297). Her soliloquy is reminiscent of Achilles' in which he recognizes that his overwhelming passion has undermined his judgement and can only bring agony and despair. Nevertheless, whereas Achilles perceives his eye to be the instigator of his downfall, Briseida places the blame solely on her ear, as

illustrated by her repeated references to the verbs "*entendre*" and "*escouter*" and the noun "*parole*" in this passage. She has listened to and been persuaded by the words of another, namely Diomedes, when her "*cuer*" should have only heeded Troilus (20246-49).²⁴ Like Medea and Achilles, Briseida focusses on the turmoil within her heart, describing it as "*muable e fel* [changeable and treacherous]" (20264), as "*mis* [set]" on Diomedes (20282), as "*en grant tristece* [in great sorrow]" (20300), as "*triz e iriez* [sad and angry]" (20306), and as suffering "*grant torment* [great torment]" (20326). Just as Briseida's gift of her sleeve causes her to "bleed" in betrayal, so her heart "*dueut ... e saigne* [is afflicted ... and bleeds]" (20308) from her faithlessness. She even acknowledges the irrationality of her behaviour, claiming, as Medea does, "*jo sui en error* [I am confused]" (20309). She has given her *fine amor* to Diomedes "*Contre reison e contre dreit* [against reason and against right]" (20272), but she remains powerless to do otherwise. However, it is perhaps her attempt to justify her faithlessness which is most intriguing, for she insists that her heart would have remained steadfast had she not been in a foreign, and potentially dangerous, setting: "*Mais ci esteie senz conseil/ E senz ami e senz feeil* [But here I was without counsel and without friend and without faithful companion]" (20287-88). Briseida thus returns to the fears she expressed when the reader first sees her with Troilus. How could she survive without someone to take care of her?

Before turning away from the story of Briseida and Diomedes, I would like to draw attention to a passage that has gone largely unremarked by the critics, even to

²⁴ Barbara Nolan also remarks that Briseida is right to blame her "fall" on words (113-114).

the point that R.K. Gordon omits it entirely from his translation.²⁵ When Briseida leaves Troy, Benoît gives a detailed and provocative description of the clothes she chooses to wear, in particular a cloak lined with an exotic and marvellous fur. In a significant digression from the main plot, Benoît carefully describes the mysterious oriental beast to whom the colourful and aromatic fur belongs:

L'om les claime dindialos;
 Mout vaut la pel e plus li os.
 Onc Deus ne fist cele color,
 En taint n'en herbe ne en flor,
 Dont la pel ne seit coloree.
 Gent sauvage d'une contree
 Qui Cenocefali ont non,--
 Lait sont e d'estrage façon,--
 Cil les prenent, mais c'est a tart,
 E si vos dirai par quel art.
 La ou il sont a grant arson,
 N'i a ne ombre ne boisson;
 Mais li mostre, li aversier
 Prenent les rains del balsamier,
 Lor cors en cuevrent e lor braz,--
 N'i font ne pieges n'autres laz,--
 E la beste, que n'est pas sage,
 Vient a la fueille e a l'ombrage.
 Ne set sa mort ne son encombre:
 Broste, puis si s'endort en l'ombre.
 Cil la tue, qui mainte feiz
 En est jusqu' a la mort destreiz,
 O ars o esteinz de chalor (13367-89)

[These beasts are called "dindialos;"
 The fur is greatly valued and the bone even more so.
 God never made such hue
 In pigment, herb or flower,
 With which the fur of it is coloured.
 A savage people from a country

²⁵ Gordon, 9; for a detailed discussion of R.K. Gordon's omissions in his translation, see Gretchen Mieszkowski's "R.K. Gordon and the *Troilus and Criseyde* Story," *The Chaucer Review* 15 (1980): 127-137.

Who are called "Cenocefali" --
 They are ugly and strange in manner, --
 Catch the beasts, but it is a very long process,
 And so I will tell you by what art.
 There where they dwell is very hot,
 There is neither shade nor tree;
 But these monsters, these horrible creatures,
 Take the boughs of balsam,
 They cover their bodies and arms with them, --
 They make no other traps or bonds, --
 And the beast, which is not wise,
 Comes to the leaves and the shade.
 He does not know his death nor his danger:
 He grazes, then he sleeps in the shade.
 The man kills him, the man who many times
 Is anguished to the point of death,
 Or burned or killed by the heat.]

In this colourful, rich, and wondrous garment, Briseida presents a fascinating image to the Greeks as she approaches their camp. Only Gretchen Mieszkowski has ever commented on this passage, remarking that the marvellous cloak is a reflection of Briseida's exotic beauty and stature.²⁶ However, the passage is much more relevant than her modest observation implies; it is, in fact, essential to an understanding of Briseida and Diomedes' relationship, for the story of the cloak functions as an ekphrastic voice in the poem.

With the magnificent fur wrapped around her body, Briseida takes on the appearance and even the scent of the "dindialo" for the observer. Diomedes acknowledges specifically that it is her physical appearance which initially captivates him, a combination of Briseida's own loveliness and the exotic fur cloak which she wears. Nor are the other Greek warriors immune to her physical attraction, for

²⁶ "R.K. Gordon and the *Troilus and Criseyde* Story," 128-130.

Mout fut la danzele esguardee;
 Mout l'ont Grezeis entre eus loëe:
 "Mout est bele," ço diënt tuit (13815-17).

[The maiden was much admired;
 Greatly did the Greeks praise her amongst themselves:
 "She is very beautiful," they all say this.]

As she enters the camp, Briseida is subject to a collective gaze. No one appears to be unaffected by her presence, for Benoît notes that all the high princes and lords seek her out expressly "*li remirer* [to gaze upon her]" (13851). Her touch intensifies the effect, as illustrated by Diomedes, who "*sovent color por li mue* [often changed colour for her]" (13848) as he helps her to dismount. However, Diomedes, with his "*felenesse* [treacherous]" (5213) appearance, his "*engeignos* [skillful]" (5216) ability in battle, and his "*noisos* [quarrelsome]" (5215) nature, resembles the brutal and ugly Cenocefali. Thus his patient pursuit of Briseida becomes very much a hunt. Like the dindialo, Briseida arrives at the Greek camp unprotected and is immediately drawn to the safety, or "shade," that Diomedes offers her. The Greek warrior has no need for traps or nets either, for he lures Briseida into a false sense of security with his words and promises of honour. He endures an anguish almost to the point of death, a suffering made manifest by his savage battle wound, and figuratively "burns" with overwhelming passion: "*espris est de fine amor* [he was kindled by passionate love]" (15020). However, Briseida, grown content in her new surroundings, does not recognize the tragedy which awaits her. Although she is not literally killed by Diomedes, she is effectively destroyed by her love for him, for:

Ele aprent or sovent noveles:
 Mout s'en riënt les dameiseles;

Mout la heent, grant mal li vuelent;
 Ne l'aiment pas tant comes els suelent.
 Honte lor a a totes fait:
 Por ço li sera mais retrait (20677-82).

[Now she often hears the news:
 Greatly do maidens laugh at her;
 Greatly do they hate her and wish much evil upon her;
 They do not love her as much as they are accustomed to do.
 She has done shame to all of them:
 On this account she will always be reproached.]

Briseida is not simply disgraced by her actions; rather, she brings "*honte*," or shame, upon all women. Condemned as a perfidious woman by both the Trojans and the Greeks and, more significantly, by her own sex, Briseida loses all that she values in life, namely her honour. Nor does she find happiness, as she so desperately hopes, in her relationship with Diomedes. Returning with him to his homeland after the war, she, unlike Helen, remains nothing more than his "*amie* [beloved]" (27945), for the Greek warrior already has a wife. No glorious celebration welcomes them; instead, Diomedes is rejected by his wife and exiled from his homeland, presumably with Briseida (28041-46).

As stories of requited love, the love narratives of Paris and Helen and of Briseida and Diomedes continue themes developed by Benoît in the unrequited love relationships of Jason and Medea and of Achilles and Polyxena. Once again, the visualization of the beloved and its effect on the heart are essential to the love experience. The active pursuit of the beloved by a male figure is contrasted to the female "rationalizing" of the situation. Concerns with honour and shame constantly occupy the thoughts of women, even when they are overcome by desire.

Consequently, Helen ensures that she will enjoy honour and social status before succumbing to Paris' entreaties, while Briseida delays giving her love to Diomedes for fear of dishonour and ultimately acknowledges the shame of her faithlessness, even though she cannot will her heart to do otherwise. Thus the imagery of the heart and eye is continually juxtaposed to the language of honour and shame in the female love experience. Men, in contrast, prove to be much less rational in love, seldom considering the possible outcome of their actions. Mutual love again raises the question of loyalty and the socio-political consequences which result from a shifting of that loyalty. Both stories reveal the extensive influence of passionate love, be it the destruction of a nation or the condemnation of the individual and her entire sex.

Nevertheless, the question still remains: why does Benoît create the story of Briseida and Diomedes? As this chapter has shown, he has the essence of their love narrative in the story of Paris and Helen; however, he consciously avoids developing the theme of mutual love and betrayal in Paris and Helen's relationship beyond what is absolutely necessary for the traditional plot of the story of Troy, namely, that Paris must steal Helen if the war is to evolve. Critics, in particular Rosemarie Jones, have noted that Benoît presents their relationship as "ideal," but none have adequately explained why he does so.²⁷ Barabara Nolan states that, with the figure of Helen, "Benoît gives a first glimpse into the image of the changeable, unfaithful woman he will develop more fully in the character of Briseida;"²⁸ however, she fails to address the

²⁷ Rosemarie Jones comments, "These changes [to the story of Paris and Helen] would tend to suggest that Benoît has deliberately placed this couple in a favourable light" (47).

²⁸ Nolan, 108.

bigger question. Does Benoît create the story of Briseida and Diomedes simply to mirror Paris and Helen's relationship in the same way he mirrors Jason and Medea's story with that of Achilles and Polyxena? Perhaps, but this answer does not justify Benoît's significant silences with respect to Helen's behaviour, especially when he is so verbose concerning Briseida's actions. Since textual context has failed to provide an acceptable answer, we must turn to the historical context within which Benoît wrote the *Roman de Troie* in the hope of finding a better solution to this problem.

The *Roman de Troie*, like the other *romans d'antiquité*, was written for the court of Henry II.²⁹ That the Angevin court should be so preoccupied with stories of the great classical civilizations is hardly surprising, since the twelfth century witnessed a surge of interest in myths which purported to prove that the Normans and the British were descended from the nobility of Troy, in particular.³⁰ Thus Benoît wrote his poem not simply to entertain, but to present the story of Troy as a myth of descent, in which the glorious past becomes both the origins of a present society and a pattern by which the present may be shaped for the future.³¹ In fact, much of the *Roman de Troie* focusses on the question of lineage, specifically how *fine amor* destroys the very essential

²⁹ Dominica Legge, *Anglo-Norman Literature and Its Background* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1963): 75.

³⁰ Penny Eley, "The Myth of Trojan Descent and Perceptions of National Identity: The Case of *Eneas* and the *Roman de Troie*," *Nottingham Medieval Studies* 35 (1991): 28-29.

³¹ That the *Roman de Troie* was perceived as a myth of descent is further supported by the fact that a thirteenth-century manuscript of the Bible in verse translation includes the entire poem in the Book of Exodus [Jean Bonnard, *Les Traductions de la Bible en vers français au moyen âge* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1884)]. For further details on myths of descent and origin, see Penny Eley's article and Nicholas Howe's *Migration and Mythmaking in Anglo-Saxon England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), especially pp. 2-4.

perpetuation of lineage.³² Thus, with the story of Jason and Medea, which begins the poem, Benoît emphasizes Medea's betrayal of her father and her people, rather than her brutal punishment of Jason and his new wife, even to the point of making her an only child. Her overwhelming passion for Jason effectively destroys a dynasty, for Colchis is left without an heir. Priam explicitly states on two occasions that his decision to send an embassy to Greece for the return of Hesione is for the purpose of avenging the Greek's outrage to his "*lignage*" (3213-14 and 3687-88). Paris uses the same argument to convince his men to steal Helen when they ransack the temple (4384-86). Priam also worries that, by allowing Achilles to marry Polyxena, he is undermining the Trojan lineage (17940-42), while Hecuba uses the promise of Polyxena as a means of obtaining revenge on the Greek hero for his part in the destruction of her lineage (21897-99). Even Briseida and Diomedes' story illustrates this theme, for, as a direct result of their love for one another, they are ultimately left without a homeland of their own.³³

Needless to say, the question of lineage was a significant one in twelfth-century Europe and especially for Henry II. With the death of Henry I in 1135, Britain was left in a precarious political situation. The king's legitimate heir, William, had drowned in the "White Ship" disaster of 1120. Although Henry had wanted his daughter, Matilda,

³² This point has also been observed by Geneviève Hasenohr in *Le Moyen Age: Dictionnaire des Lettres Françaises*, ed. Robert Boussat, Louis Pichard, and Guy Raynaud de Lage (Paris: Fayard, 1964): 40a.

³³ The theme of lineage, its destruction and ultimate preservation, runs throughout the *Roman de Troie*; however, in the interests of the present study, I have touched upon it only briefly and mainly in relation to the love narratives. It is my intention to deal with the topic in greater detail at a later date.

to inherit the throne, the barons instead chose Stephen of Blois, Henry's nephew. However, Matilda would not accept this decision and waged a war that lasted until 1148, when Stephen was finally defeated. Still the barons refused to accept her as queen, and eventually Stephen was returned to the throne. Nevertheless, Matilda did achieve in having her son, Henry of Anjou, declared Stephen's heir with the Treaty of Wallingford of 1153.³⁴ Thus Henry succeeded Stephen in 1154 after almost twenty years of devastating war and political uncertainty. He also came to the throne with considerable dominions in France, the result of his marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine in 1152. And it is Eleanor to whom we must turn our attention for a fuller understanding of Benoît's *Roman de Troie*.

The importance of Eleanor with respect to the question at hand cannot be sufficiently emphasized, for her life is in many ways a mirror image of the story of Helen. In marrying Eleanor, Henry had not only wedded the daughter and heiress of William X, duke of Aquitaine, but also the "cast-off" wife of Louis VII, king of France. Her unhappy marriage to Louis was dissolved by a council of French clergy a mere eight weeks before she wed Henry, whom she had only met once before.³⁵ Historians have debated whether or not the marriage was a love match, but the truth is less important than the fact that late twelfth-century historians attempted to cast the union as such. Robert de Torigny, a contemporary Norman chronicler, makes a point of noting that he is unsure if Henry wed Eleanor "*sive repentino sive praemeditato consilio*

³⁴ W.L. Warren, *Henry II, English Monarchs* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973): 12-53.

³⁵ Warren, 42.

[suddenly or by premeditated deliberation]."³⁶ Gervase of Canterbury, writing after 1160, specifically describes Henry's desire for Eleanor as one based on lust for her possessions as well as for herself:

Dux vero generositate feminae et maxime dignitatum quae eam contingebant cupiditate illectus, amoris et morae omnis impatiens, paucis secum assumptis sociis viam longiorem discurrit in brevi; infra tempus modicum conjugio illius jam olim concupito potitus est.³⁷

[But the lord, enticed by the highbirth of the woman and especially by a lust for the holdings which she possessed, unable to endure love and any delay, took a few companions with him and he made the longer journey in short order; within a brief period of time he possessed a union with that woman whom he had long coveted.]

Gerald of Wales even suggests that Henry and Eleanor engaged "*adulterino concubito* [in adulterous sexual intercourse]" before they ever married.³⁸ Thus, like Helen, Eleanor remarried under the shadow of a past legitimate union as well as to her former husband's greatest political enemy. Even the names of the two women, Aliénor and Heleine, are reminiscent of one another, particularly in French.

Consequently, Benoît is faced with telling a story that parallels contemporary events a little too closely. Rather than castigate Helen for her behaviour and possibly offend the queen, he creates another woman, Briseida, whose story, although similar, is a less obvious match for Eleanor and her position in the Angevin court. Briseida is

³⁶ "Chronica Roberti de Torigneio, Abbatis Monasterii Sancti Michaelis in Periculosis Maribus," *Chronicles of the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II, and Richard I*, ed. R. Howlett, vol. IV (London: Longman, 1884-89): 165.

³⁷ *The Historical Works of Gervase of Canterbury. Rolls Series*, 1879-90, vol. I, 149.

³⁸ *Giraldus Cambrensis, Opera, Rolls Series*, 1861-89, vol. 8, 300.

not a queen, but an aristocratic woman; she is not taken at will to the enemy camp, but rather sent; she does not relinquish her past love quickly, but waits almost two years to do so. Benoît even takes the added precaution of interrupting his lengthy diatribe against unfaithful women, such as Briseida, with a careful supplication to Eleanor:

De cest, veir, criem g'estre blasmez
 De cele que tant a bontez
 Que hautece a, pris e valor,
 Honesté e sen e honor,
 Bien e mesure e saintée,
 E noble largece e beauté;
 En cui mesfait de dames maint
 Sont par le bien de li esteint;
 En cui tote sciënce abonde,
 A la cui n'est nule seconde
 Que el mont seit de nule lei.
 Riche dame de riche rei,
 Senz mal, senz ire, senz tristece,
 Poissiez aveir toz jorz leece (13457-70)!

[In truth, I fear to be blamed for this,
 By that one who has so many good qualities
 Who has nobility, esteem and merit,
 Virtue and judgement and honour,
 Goodness and temperance and purity,
 And noble generosity and beauty;
 In whom the misdeeds of many women
 Are cancelled by her goodness;
 In whom all knowledge abounds,
 To whom there is no equal
 Who may be in the world in any law.
 The powerful lady of a powerful king,
 Without evil, without anger, without sorrow,
 May you have joy forever!]

Some critics have interpreted this passage as evidence of Eleanor's patronage of Benoît as a court poet.³⁹ However, it seems more likely that Benoît includes the

³⁹ This passage is described as a dedication to Eleanor by both Geneviève Hasenohr (139b) and Emmanuèle Baumgartner (25) and as possible evidence of the queen's role as

passage to avert the possible accusation that he is insulting the queen with his condemnation of faithless women who change their loves so quickly and so easily.⁴⁰ Thus, by adding the wholly original story of Troilus, Briseida, and Diomedes, Benoît is able to criticize a woman for behaviour such as Helen's and, by extension, Eleanor's without fear of reprisal. Even more importantly, the addition allows him to idealize the story of Paris and Helen, thereby creating a romantic analogy to Henry and Eleanor's own relationship. With the marriage of Henry and Eleanor, Britain has a new "Paris" and a new "Helen" who will rule over a new "Troy."

Such an analogy also helps to explain Benoît's silence regarding Menelaus and his relationship with Helen, since the Angevin court would hardly appreciate attention being drawn in any significant fashion to the queen's previous marriage. There is, in fact, other textual evidence to suggest that Benoît intentionally presents Eleanor as Helen and Henry as a combination of Paris and Priam. Following Dares, Benoît describes Priam as having eight children, five sons and three daughters (2930-55).⁴¹ Henry also had eight children, five sons (the oldest of whom died in childhood) and three daughters.⁴² This similarity may just be coincidental but, if Benoît intends his reader to draw a parallel between Priam and Henry, then this evidence would date the

patroness by Barbara Nolan (41).

⁴⁰ Eleanor is, in fact, described by Gervase of Canterbury as "*prudens ... nobilibus orta natalibus, sed instabilis* [wise ... of noble birth, but inconstant]" (I, 242-243), characteristics which could just as easily describe Briseida.

⁴¹ One daughter is actually his daughter-in-law, Andromache.

⁴² William (1153-1156); Henry (1155-1183); Matilda (1156-1189); Richard I (1157-1199); Geoffrey (1158-1186); Eleanor (1158-1186); Joan (1165-1215); and John (1167-1216).

poem no earlier than 1167, the year that John, the youngest child, was born. Benoît also pays considerable attention to Trojan culture in terms of its richness and refinement, the best example perhaps being the portrayal of Helen and Paris' *Chambre de Beautés*. The emphasis on the artistic splendour of the Trojan court echoes that of the Angevin. More significant perhaps is the description of the rebuilding of Troy after its first destruction:

Mout la troverent deguastee,
 Mais cent tanz mieuz l'ont restoree;
 Mout la refirent bele et gente (3001-3).

[They found the city greatly devastated,
 But they restored it one hundred times better;
 They rebuilt a very beautiful and pleasant city.]

He includes many details regarding the reconstruction, including the specifics of the parapets, city walls, roads, and Ilion, the principal fortress. In particular, Priam has built a luxurious hall made of marble and ebony with walls encrusted with precious stones and decorated with magnificent sculptures (3099-110). So large is this room that there is enough space for "*ses granz maisniees* [his great household]" (3113-14). The depiction of the rebuilding of Troy echoes Henry's considerable efforts during his entire reign to strengthen and repair the castles throughout his domains.⁴³ The chronicler, Robert de Torigny, describes on many occasions the architectural enterprises of the king, particularly his fortification of the queen's palace at Poitiers and of the fortress-palace at Rouen which included the building of a great hall, a site which, in 1162, would

⁴³ Warren, 234-236.

serve as the assembly room for his vassals from Normandy.⁴⁴

As a myth of descent, the *Roman de Troie* presents both the purported origins of the Angevin court, made more explicit by the parallels between Paris/Priam and Henry and between Helen and Eleanor, and a pattern to shape the future of the Angevin dynasty, namely the theme of lineage and its preservation. Thus Benoît's story of Troy does not conclude with the end of the war and the subversion of social order, but with the reconciliation of lineage so that familial lines are seen to continue, thereby restabilizing society. Certainly, the stories which conclude the poem can be generalized as tales of vengeance, for Benoît tells of Nauplius' revenge for his son's death, of Agamemnon's murder and Orestes' retaliation, of Pyrrhus' revenge for the death of his grandfather, of Pyrrhus' death by Orestes, and of Ulysses' death at the hands of his own son, Telegonus. However, I would disagree with Lee Patterson that the poem's ending, particularly the story of Ulysses, completes the general disaster of the Greek homecoming.⁴⁵ In fact, the last two stories focus as much on the reestablishment of hereditary lines as on theme of vengeance, thereby leaving the reader with a more positive view of the conclusion of the Trojan war. In relating the story of Pyrrhus, the narrator describes how the Greek follower marries Hector's widow, Andromache, who already has a son, Laodamas, by the Trojan prince. With Pyrrhus she has another son, Achillides, and the two half-brothers, Trojan and Greek, grow up together to become close friends even after Pyrrhus' death (29777-810). More

⁴⁴ Robert de Torigny, IV, 106 and 209-210; Alfred Richard, *L'Histoire des Comtes de Poitou, 778-1204*, Vol. II (Paris: A. Picard, 1903): 141.

⁴⁵ *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 121-122 and n. 91.

significant perhaps is the story of Ulysses in which Ulysses is killed by his illegitimate son, Telegonus, whom he fathered by Circe. As Benoît retells the episode, the emphasis is as much on the uniting of Telegonus with his half-brother, Telemachus, as it is on Ulysses' death. The story and, more importantly, the poem do not conclude with killing of the Greek hero, but rather with a description of Telemachus' reign over his father's kingdom with the help of his half-brother "*Ensemble o lui un an e plus* [together with him for over a year]" (30270). When Telegonus eventually returns to Circe's island, he rules there and enjoys a similar peace. The sorcery and passion involved in the conceiving an alternate lineage, namely Telegonus, results initially in death and potential chaos, but ultimately the conflict is resolved by a harmonizing of familial lines.

Thus the *Roman de Troie*, which begins with a tale of deceit and betrayal leading to the end of a dynastic line, finishes with a tale of reestablished peace and familial descent by a new generation. It is a similar promise that Henry offers Britain, for his reign brings the potential of political stability and his marriage assures a new lineage. However, history cannot be shaped in the same way as a literary work. While Henry's reign may be characterized as one which established order and organization in diverse dominions, his relationship with Eleanor proved to be anything but ideal. Although little is known of the early years of their marriage, by 1173, Eleanor was imprisoned for twelve years for her part in William's rebellion against his father. Nor did Henry fare much better with his children. In addition to William's attempted uprising, Richard and John joined forces with Philip II, king of France, against their father at the end of his reign. Their act of betrayal dealt what is traditionally regarded as Henry II's death-blow,

for the king died three weeks after his defeat in France against Richard and Philip. Ironically, Henry's life ends in an almost peculiar inversion of the Ulysses story. Richard and John's treasonous actions in all likelihood hastened their father's death, and the two brothers, in contrast to Telemachus and Telegonus, do not rule afterwards in accord. Instead, Richard is perhaps best remembered as an absentee ruler, while John, who governed in his absence, continually plotted against his brother.⁴⁶ Ironically, it is Henry II's very *lignage*, a theme so important to the *Roman de Troie*, which ultimately undermines the strength of kingship.

⁴⁶ Warren, 594-630.

Chapter Three

"In loves cause of time ago"¹

Gower Rewrites the Story of Troy

The order of the Troy stories as told by Genius is almost a complete reversal of the historical sequence of events. The first tale of Troy to be recounted is not one of the love stories, but rather the climactic conclusion of the war, that is the building of the Trojan Horse and its destruction of Troy (l.1077-1189). This tale is presented as an example of hypocrisy, the first "minister" of the sin of pride. However, in recounting the episode, Genius deviates from what will become his usual rhetorical approach to presenting a particular sin and its manifestation in love. As a rule, Genius begins with a fairly comprehensive analysis of a vice to which he may add a few brief non-amatory examples. He then moves on to the manifestation of this vice in terms of love, followed by love stories exemplifying the sin. Surprisingly, Genius does not recount the episode of the Trojan Horse immediately after his general discussion of hypocrisy (l.575-672) as he should, for the tale, as he tells it, make no mention of love. Instead, he places it immediately after the tale of Mundus and Pauline (l.761-1076), an example of

¹ John Gower, *Confessio Amantis, The English Works of John Gower*, ed. G.C. Macaulay, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1900): Book V, line 3228.

hypocrisy in lovers, and before his conclusion on hypocrisy in love (I.1190-1234). This placement is quite unlike that of other non-amatory tales taken from Benoit's *Roman de Troie*, such as the example of King Namplius and the Greeks (III.973-1088), the example of Athemas and Demophon (III.1757-1856), and the tale of Telaphus and Teucer (III.2639-2774); these stories are appropriately set within the general discourse on the sin of wrath and are not directly juxtaposed to specific tales of wrath in lovers.

However, they also do not describe events which are integral to the war narrative itself; instead, all three are tangential episodes which serve to provide insight into certain characters by describing their adventures *before* and *after* the war. By inserting the episode of the Trojan Horse into the middle of Genius' discussion on hypocrisy in love rather than using it as an example of hypocrisy in general, Gower seems to suggest that all events which form the essence of the story of the Trojan war are related to the subject of love, even the battle sequences. With Gower, the Troy story evolves so that the love stories take priority over the war narrative.

The story of Troy, as it is woven throughout the *Confessio Amantis*, concludes with two significant retellings of love relationships from the *Roman de Troie*: that of Jason and Medea and of Paris and Helen. These two tales are the only Trojan love stories presented in detail in the poem and are among the last of the episodes about Troy recounted by Genius.² Thus the thread which begins with the final destruction of the city ends with the infamous theft of Helen which was to be the catalyst for the Trojan war. Apart from his deliberate choice of ordering the events of Troy

² The tale of Ulysses and Telegonus (V.1391-1788) is actually the last story told by Genius based on the *Roman de Troie*.

anachronistically, Gower's other conspicuous change to the story of Troy, particularly to the love episodes, is his elimination of fire metaphors, a motif so dominant in Ovid's and Benoît's versions. As a result, Medea is not enflamed by passion each time she sees Jason (*Met.*VII.76-83 and *Troie.*1278, 1308, and 1465), but rather feelings of love simply fill her thoughts at night (V.3407). Cassandra's vision of Paris returning to Troy with "*incendia* [burning fires]" (*Her.*XVI.123-4) becomes the mere prediction that his actions shall "for evere thanne undo" (V.7450) Troy. Her brother's wish to be "burnt" and his "ashes" thrown to the wind should the Trojans decide to support Paris in his expedition to Greece (*Troie.*3955-3960) is reduced to an unspoken approval of his sister's words (V.7461-7462). Finally, Paris does not burn with love at the sight of Helen (*Her.*XVI.7-10), but simply makes her acquaintance (V.7515-7518). In fact, fire is used in the Troy stories solely in its literal sense: Namplus uses "bryghte fyres" (III.1039) to lure the returning Greek ships to destruction; the bulls which guard the Golden Fleece spew "fyr and flamme" (V.3508) from their mouths and nostrils; Medea creates fire with her incantations (V.4073-4079) and uses a "fyri hete" and a blazing "brond" (V.4085-4094) to rejuvenate Aeson; she also weaves a magical cloak of fire for Jason's new wife which "brente hir bothe fleissh and bon" (V.4209); and the first destruction of Troy results in the burning of the city walls (V.7210), while the final destruction of the city causes all the inhabitants of Troy to be "brent and slayn" (V.7585).

This noticeable lack of fire metaphors to describe the experience of love and the passion it incites in the characters of the Troy stories is an intriguing departure from

literary tradition. It is also a surprising one, since the motif of love-as-fire is used throughout the *Confessio Amantis*. Many of the protagonists of other tales told by Genius are enflamed by their feelings of love. In the Tale of Constance, Allee, a Saxon king, becomes so enamoured with Constance that his mind dwells only "[u]pon the love in which he brenneth" (II.1410). Similarly, in the Tale of Phebus and Daphne, Cupid pierces Phebus' heart with a fiery arrow of gold with the result that "Phebus in love brenneth" (III.1707). Nor are men the only sufferers of love's burning passion, for Apollonius' future wife is so affected by him that "[h]ire herte is hot as eny fyr" (VIII.846). However, it is with the figure of Amans that the motif of love-as-fire is most fully realized, for love is both literally and figuratively the cause of his torrid passion for his lady. When Amans first encounters Venus and Cupid in the wood and makes his complaint, the God of Love gazes angrily upon him and, as with Phebus, he pierces Amans' heart with a burning arrow:

A firy Dart me thoghte he hente
And threw it thurgh myn herte rote (I.144-145).

For Amans, it is as though the organ has been physically set alight by the "fyr Lancegay" (VIII.2798) of love, an image that is reinforced by the illumination which accompanies this passage in a late fifteenth-century English manuscript of the poem (figure 1).³ This miniature, the only one to illustrate the poem's frame, depicts Venus looking on as the God of Love casts his fiery lance into Amans' heart, which lies

³ Pierpont Morgan Ms. M. 126, folio 8v; for a fuller discussion of this manuscript and its illuminations, see Patricia Eberle's "Miniatures as Evidence of Reading in a Manuscript of the *Confessio Amantis* (Pierpont Morgan Ms. M. 126)," *John Gower: Recent Readings*, ed. R.F. Yeager (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1989): 311-364.

partially exposed behind a golden net within his chest. Significantly, the weapon traces Venus' line of sight, with the feathered tail near her eyes and the burning point at Aman's heart; thus the artist depicts visually the intrinsic relationship between the eye and the heart when under love's influence.⁴ Throughout the poem itself, Amans makes many metaphorical references to his heated condition, even admitting that love is the main cause:

And al makth love, wel I wot,
Of which myn herte is evere hot,
So that I brenne as doth a glede
For Wrath that I mai nocht spede (III.37-40).

His inflamed passion is stronger than the heat of the volcano Mt. Aetna (II.20) and forces him to reveal his love "[t]hat evere in on aliche hot/ [him] grieveth" (III.5526-5527) to his lady, even though he knows that doing so will displease her. Thus Gower uses the imagery of fire and, to a lesser extent, of physical penetration to portray Amans as a passive figure who is acted upon by love rather than acting himself.

Thus, as with the Trojan war which frames the love stories of Benoît's *Roman de Troie*, references to and images of fire and burning are woven throughout Amans' confession which frames the *Confessio Amantis*. In such a way, the fire motif effectively ties those tales and examples using the image to the poem's frame. But, if Gower has eliminated this obvious connection for his version of the Trojan narrative, what means, beyond citing them as simple *exempla* of sin, does he use to intertwine the love stories of Troy with the frame and other tales? As it stands, his retellings of

⁴ In this illumination, Amans' left eye and, to a lesser extent, Venus' left eye have both lost pigment due to damage.

the Trojan stories are necessarily abbreviated, making his task of tying them to the poem as a whole seem even more difficult. A careful examination of these tales in terms of their language and imagery will show that Gower instead selects less obvious vocabulary patterns and motifs from his sources for development as well as introducing new ones of his own. His reordering of the narrative sequence of the Troy stories clearly indicates that he expected his audience to know the history of Troy well, perhaps too well. By presenting the stories so obviously out of sequence, by eliminating the imagery and language of fire which is so closely associated with the Trojan war, and by developing a unique set of images and vocabulary, Gower is able not only to tie his retelling of the Troy stories to Amans' confession and other *exempla* of misguided love, but also to *untie* them from the traditional frame of the Trojan war.

The Tale of Jason and Medea (V.3247-4229) is the longest story told as an example of avarice, the subject of Book V, and is one of the longest tales in the poem.⁵ The tale is based largely on Benoît's version in the *Roman de Troie*, with some use of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* as well as of Ovid's *Heroides* and *Metamorphoses* and its derivatives. As G.C. Macaulay has documented, Gower omits and alters many of the details of the story as told by Benoît, the most obvious change being to eliminate the traditional motivation for Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece.⁶ Jason does not seek the Fleece in response to a challenge set by his uncle, Pelias, who wishes to dispose of his overly popular nephew; rather, he undertakes the quest

⁵ The Tale of Constance (II.587-1612) is approximately the same length, while the Tale of Apollonius of Tyre (VIII.271-2008) is substantially longer.

⁶ See note V.3247ff, p. 497.

seemingly of his own accord, aspiring to prove himself further as a chivalrous knight and to explore new worlds:

Bot he, that wolde it [the quest] noght forsake,
 Bot of his knyghthod undertake
 To do what thing therto belongeth,
 This worthi Jason, sore alongeth
 To se the strange regiouns
 And knowe the condicions
 Of othre Marches, where he wente (V.3279-3285).

These motives seem very noble and cast Gower's Jason, like Benoît's, as a typical knight of mediaeval romance.⁷ He seeks "worschipe overal" (V.3261), but it is an aspiration which Gower soon shows to be the root cause of Jason's downfall. Having proved himself the worthiest in all the lands presently known to him (V.3256-3260), Jason now wishes to increase his fame world-wide by winning a "merveille" (V.3268) of the gods' invention, a prize hitherto unattainable by mere mortals. However, even before the tale begins, Gower indicates that Jason is anything but the worthy knight he appears to be. At the request of Amans, Genius tells the story of Jason and Medea as an illustration of perjury, a vice associated with "Covoitise," the excessive desire that typifies avarice. Thus Genius promises to declare:

Hou the wommen deceived are,
 Whan thei so tendre herte bere,

⁷ Russell A. Peck also notes that, in eliminating Pelias' role in Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece and by adding Aeetes' request that he not attempt the task, Gower "emphasize[s] Jason's willfulness in pursuing his course;" however, I would disagree that Benoît, by including the fact that Jason seeks the Fleece as a suicidal challenge set by his uncle, provides Jason with "an excuse for his pragmatic relationship with Medea and diverts our sympathy as well." Benoît's Jason is, in many ways, a colder and less sympathetic character than Gower's, who is presented as a foolish victim of simple human greed [*Kingship & Common Profit in Gower's Confessio Amantis* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1978): 109-110].

Of that thei hieren men so swere;
 Bot what it comth unto thassay,
 Thei finde it fals an other day:
 As Jason dede to Medee (V.3236-3241).

As Genius intends to recount the story, the crime is clearly Jason's and not Medea's. She is only guilty of being young and, therefore, gullible. It is Jason's overwhelming greed for "worschipe" above all else which allows him to perjure himself so easily and to cast aside so cruelly the love of a woman who gave up everything for him.

These introductory lines also suggest that Gower will be kinder to the figure of Medea than his classical sources ever were and perhaps even more so than Benoît is. Thus Medea is not initially presented as a brutal enchantress, but rather as a woman, like so many others, whose overly "tendre" heart allows her to be deceived by the false words of men. She is also an obedient daughter, a fact which Gower clearly illustrates with a simple two-word description of her response to her father's request that she present herself in the main hall:

After Medea gon he bad,
 Which was his dowhter, and sche cam (V.3368-3369).

Unlike the Medea of the *Roman de Troie*, she does not pause to don her finery before heeding her father's command.⁸ She exhibits similar filial obedience during the festivities celebrating Jason's winning of the Fleece, for she does not throw herself upon her returning lover but waits until "sche was asent" (V.3817). Medea also responds immediately to Jason's greeting as a good hostess should, welcoming him warmly to her homeland and guiding him by the hand to a seat (V.3372-3374). Her

⁸ Linda Barney Burke, "Women in John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*," *Mediaevalia* 3 (1977): 244.

simple and unquestioning compliance with her father's wishes contrasts Jason's unwillingness to observe his host's request that he forgo any attempt to win the Golden Fleece. Even the express desire of a king cannot dissuade him, for

Bot Jason wolde nocht obeie,
 Bot seide he wolde his porpos holde
 For ought that eny man him tolde (V.3362-3364).

His response in this context seems admirable and heroic, but it is also an intimation of the discourteous behaviour he will later show his host, namely the seduction, removal from Colchis, and ultimate betrayal of his host's daughter.

The courtesy with which Medea welcomes the foreigners is rivalled only by that of her father. Gower stresses how Aeetes receives the Greeks in person at the palace gate rather than waiting for Jason and his men to present themselves at court. He too takes Jason by the hand (V.3328-3331) and later catches him by the arm in order to guide him into the hall (V.3337-3338). Gower even presents Jason's curt dismissal of the king's entreaty to abandon the quest for the Golden Fleece as justification for Aeetes to conclude his hospitality toward the Greeks there and then, but the king does not; in spite of Jason's refusal, "[y]it for he [Aeetes] wolde make him [Jason] glad" (V.3367). Thus Aeetes remains at all times the courteous host, wishing only to show Jason "gret worschipe" (V.3325). In fact, his manners in Gower's version of the episode exceed even the civility his character shows Jason and his men in the *Roman de Troie*. There Aeetes regally awaits the visitors in the main hall, only arising to go and greet them once they enter through the doorway:

Par la porte entrent li Grezeis:
 Oëtès vait contre eus li reis;

Si baron and si vavassor
 Les reçurent a grant honor (*Troie*.1197-1199).

[The Greeks entered by the door to the great hall,
 Whereupon Aetes, the king, came to meet them;
 Thus baron and vavasour alike
 Received the visitors with great honour.]

Although he treats them with great respect, this Aetes lacks the personal touch shown by the Aetes of the *Confessio Amantis*. Nevertheless, both the Old French and Middle English accounts of the reception effectively contrast the hostile greeting Laomedon extends to the Greeks camping on his shores as well as the discourtesy that Jason will extend to his Colchian host.

Unlike Benoît, Gower makes no mention of Medea's proficiency in the magical arts until the day after the couple meet and fall in love. Although his audience would certainly know of Medea as a skilled sorceress, Gower chooses to focus first on her courtesy and seeming ingenuousness. The "tendre"-hearted princess becomes enamoured of Jason literally at first sight:

Forthi sche gan hir yhe impresse
 Upon his face and his stature,
 And thoghte hou nevere creature
 Was so wel farende as was he (V.3378-3381).

As in the *Roman de Troie*, Medea is taken by Jason's physical appearance, but with considerably fewer details. Instead, the fact she sees Jason first without speaking more than a few words of welcome to him is emphasized. Unlike the gentle nature she has thus far exhibited publicly to the Greeks, her gaze is initially both active and seemingly aggressive, for she "impresses" her eye upon Jason. It is also a striking image since women in the *Confessio Amantis* are seldom described as using their eyes

assertively to peruse a beloved. Of the 154 references to "eyes" in the *Confessio Amantis*, only twenty-seven refer to those of women. The most common dynamic action of the female eye is not "seeing" but rather "weeping," suggesting that such emotional outpouring is a purely feminine attribute.⁹ The potent, aggressive gaze is almost exclusively a male activity in which women generally function as the visual object, thereby taking on a relatively passive role in the act of "seeing."¹⁰ On the few occasions in the poem in which women "cast" their eyes in any direction, they do so graciously and often deferentially: thus both Phillis (IV.848-849) and Araxarathen (IV.3619-3621) raise their eyes to heaven in supplication; Apollonius' wife, upon being revived by Cerymon, opens her eyes in astonishment (VIII.1202-1207) and wonders aloud at what has happened to her; Rosiphelee, looking about the park, perceives a company of ladies who are true to love (IV.1305-1308) and, consequently, amends her ways; Constance, having been cast adrift for a second time, awakens from her swoon and sees her child (II.1064-1067), whose presence gives her the strength to withstand despair; and Phillis daily gazes out to sea (IV.807-813) and awaits her husband's return from Troy in vain. In each instance, the active female gaze is accompanied by submission on the part of the observer to her present circumstances.

In contrast, the male eye is described as ever wandering and, as such, it

⁹ Although several male figures are described as weeping in the poem, Amans is the only one depicted as such with direct reference to his eye, for he uses the tears of his "ye" instead of ink to write his supplication to Venus and Cupid (VIII.2212-2216); just as when he is struck by Cupid's arrow at the beginning of the poem, he takes on a more passive role with the feminizing of his eye.

¹⁰ See Sarah Stanbury's essay for a detailed discussion on the gender differences of the gaze.

typically leads the viewer into error. Genius explicitly warns Amans of such dangers, admonishing him

to be war therby
[His] yhe forto kepe and warde,
So that it passe noght his warde (I.330-332).

However, males who allow their eyes to rove indiscriminately inevitably do as much harm, if not more, to the objects of their gaze than to themselves. Just as the hunter casts his net, such men "cast about" their eyes until they find a suitable female victim for their nefarious designs; the objectified woman is usually sexually compromised as a result. Apart from Medea, only three other women in the *Confessio Amantis* fail to safeguard their eyes and, instead, turn them at will upon men. Upon witnessing her beloved's death, Thisbe faints and awakens to "caste" her eyes upon his corpse (III.1459-1460); nevertheless, the active nature of her glance is more in line with the weeping eyes which typify Gower's women than with the aggressive male gaze, for Thisbe looks on with "many a wofull pitous lok" (III.1458) and ultimately kills herself. Both Pauline and Olympias, however, gaze directly upon men who deceive them with their physical appearances. In a temple, Pauline sees with "hire yhe" (I.903) the Roman duke Mundus in the guise of the god Anubus and is seduced by him. He then convinces her by means of "blinde tales" (I.927) that she has been chosen to bear the child of a god, only later to reveal the truth to her, thereby forcing her to return to her husband in shame. Queen Olympias, upon noticing the strangely attired magician Nectanabus, "on him hire yhe caste" (VI.1864) and is blinded to his sinister intentions by the beguiling powers of his sorcery. Consequently, when he comes to the queen's room at night, he easily tricks her into believing he is a fantastic god and impregnates her with the future

Alexander the Great.

The eye is an important image throughout the *Confessio Amantis*. Genius begins his shrift of Amans by warning him of the dangers that man's five senses hold, for they are

the gates,
Thurgh whiche as to the herte algates
Comth all thing unto the feire,
Which may the mannes Soule empeire (l.299-302).

As gateways to the heart, the senses can distort man's reason with the "impressions" they receive, thereby causing him to judge all other "impressions" inaccurately. Sight, the "most principal" (l.307) of all the senses, is therefore the easiest means of bringing love's grief to any man (l.325-328). For women, sight brings more than mere grief; it is the impetus by which they are brought to shame and even death.¹¹ Thus Medea's eye becomes the catalyst for the tragic consequences of her love. Her eye is much more aggressive in nature than that of Pauline and Olympias, for it actively attempts to "impress" the beauty of Jason's image upon itself. Sight lines of desire are typically projected by the male observer in literature;¹² however, it is important to note that Medea's eye, although it initiates the gaze, is the *recipient* of the attempted penetration. The difference is a significant one, for it undermines the masculine potency of her gaze. Her glance, like Pauline's and Olympias', does not pierce the male object of sight; rather, her body is invaded as she tries to imprint the figure of Jason upon her own

¹¹ In the *Confessio Amantis*, whether the woman is the object or initiator of the gaze does not matter. Tragedy results when the woman falls under the male gaze and when she gazes upon a male figure with her own eyes.

¹² Stanbury, 228.

That al hir world on him sche sette (V.3634-3637).

Her eyes have lost their assertiveness and become the tear-filled vessels so typical of women in the *Confessio Amantis*. And, just as she "falls" into weeping, so she is "felled" by love as it pierces her very being ("thurgh nome") and overcomes her. Moments later, she will literally "doune falle/ On swoune" (V.3646-3647) as if she has indeed been smitten, thus completing the "falling" motif. With this sustained image, Gower emphasizes the seriousness of Medea's passion and foreshadows the mortal blow with which Medea will "fell" her own children in order to punish the faithless Jason.

Medea's eyes continue to weep as she stands upon a high tower and watches Jason battle the supernatural guardians of the Golden Fleece (V.3735-3736). Her physical position seems to give her visual authority once again, for she remains high above as "sche loketh toward thyle" (V.3741) where the ram resides.¹⁵ The setting is the same as in the *Roman de Troie*, but, whereas Jason's feats are seen solely through the eyes of Medea in the Old French version of the episode, here they are recounted from a seemingly impartial and objective perspective (V.3690-3734).¹⁶ The fact that Medea witnesses the event at all is only revealed upon Jason's triumphant capture of

¹⁵ Sarah Stanbury argues that the female gaze has the power to cross physical boundaries, as illustrated by Criseyde's gaze on Troilus from her window (235-236); Gower downplays the strength of Medea's gaze by referring to her physical location only briefly and by avoiding any reference to the tower window from which, in Benoît's account, she witnesses Jason's struggle.

¹⁶ Although Jason's battles are not described from the point of view of any Greek or Colchian watching the events unfold, it is important to remember that the episode is not truly narrated impersonally. Genius, the omniscient storyteller of the poem, is the real narrator, although he is easily overlooked by the reader as he or she is subsumed by the story at hand. The reader must not forget the fact that each tale is told from Genius' perspective and is "reshaped" to suit his immediate needs.

the Fleece. Thus her gaze lacks its full potency and functions only as part of the gaze of the crowd, that is, the Greeks who wait "[t]o se what ende scholde falle" (V.3757), the "nobles alle" and "comoun of the toun" who "loken up and doun" (V.3758-3760) to see what is happening, and Aeetes, who later comes down to the shore to "sih" the Fleece (V.3773-3774). The effect is not "to personalize Medea further," as Russell Peck has argued,¹⁷ but to distance her from the events taking place. Gower's Medea, like Benoît's heroine, shares no visual interchange with Jason as he draws ever nearer to his prize. More importantly, Gower limits her gaze further by removing her as the agent through which Jason's endeavours are viewed. The many references to "seeing" in this episode emphasize the collective nature of the gaze at the moment of Jason's triumph;¹⁸ nevertheless, the complete picture of Jason's return to Colchis with the Fleece can only be viewed by merging the separate images perceived by each section of the crowd into a single visual sequence. Thus Medea does not see Jason in the distance, but only "[t]he Flees glistrende ayein the Sonne" (V.3743) as indication of his success; the nobles and townspeople do not see Jason or even the glittering Fleece, but only the returning boat (V.3761-3762); and Aeetes comes down to the shore not to greet Jason, but to "sih the Flees, hou that it schon" (V.3774). No one, in fact, actually sees Jason, only the Fleece.

With this achievement, Jason has been, in effect, supplanted by the Fleece. It is no longer a "Schep" but rather the iconographic representation of Jason; as R.F.

¹⁷ Peck, 113.

¹⁸ Stanbury, 237.

Yeager notes, the Fleece is Jason's identity, for he will be known henceforth as the Hero of the Golden Fleece.¹⁹ Gower even portrays the "parlement" of well-wishers who welcome the victorious Jason into the king's hall as speaking of him in such terms, for they say to one another:

This is he,
Which hath in his pouer withinne
That al the world ne mihte winne:
Lo, hier the beste of alle goode (V.3828-3831).

Although Gower's audience would certainly come to the *Confessio Amantis* with this view of Jason, Gower's description of the Fleece reveals an even greater significance for the object than its mere function as an emblem. The Fleece does not simply shine. To Medea's eye, it "glistens" in the sun, and the moment at which Jason wins the Fleece and begins his return to Colchis by boat is accompanied by a similar description of the Fleece and setting:

The Flees he tok and goth to Bote,
The Sonne schyneth bryhte and hote,
The Flees of gold schon forth withal,
The water glistreth overal (V.3731-3734).

These repeated references to "shining" and "glistening" emphasize both the value of the prize and the wonder of Jason's accomplishment. However, the golden shine which symbolizes the Fleece also recalls the "gold which Avarice encloseth" (V.21) described at the beginning of Book V; the greedy man who possesses such gold takes pleasure

¹⁹ R.F. Yeager, *John Gower's Poetic: The Search for a New Arion* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1990): 126 and n. 15.

simply from seeing "hou that it schyneth brihte" (V.36).²⁰ Similarly, possession of the Golden Fleece is all that Jason desires, for he gains glory, and consequently personal satisfaction, in owning what no mortal man has ever before possessed.

Even more significant is Gower's use of "glistening" to characterize both the Fleece and the watery divide between the islands. Gower employs the term very sparingly in the *Confessio Amantis*. Only four objects "glisten" in the poem, two of which are found in the Tale of Jason and Medea. The other two include the "gold glistrende Spoke and whiel" (VII.815) of the Sun's marvellous chariot and, more importantly, the Trojan Horse of brass which "glistrende ayein the Sunne" (I.1137) as it is drawn into Troy.²¹ While the "glistening" of the chariot wheels and spokes epitomizes the brilliance of the sun, the "glistening" of the Trojan horse evokes more malevolent connotations, particularly in connection with the Golden Fleece. Both the Horse and the Fleece at the moment each changes ownership are described specifically as "glistening" against the sun; by using the exact same turn of phrase in reference to these objects, Gower strongly emphasizes the correlation between the two. Just as the Trojan horse brings total destruction to the inhabitants of Troy, so the Fleece ultimately holds grief for Jason. The "glistening" also blinds those observing the

²⁰ Nor does the greedy man, according to Genius, gain more benefit from his riches than does a sheep from its wool:

A Schep riht in the same plit
His wolle berth, bot on a day
An other takth the flees away (V.44-46).

The allusion in these lines to the Golden Fleece, even if unintentional, cannot be overlooked.

²¹ Although Gower mainly uses the *Roman de Troie* for the story of the Trojan horse, he seems to have chosen to include Guido delle Colonne's brass horse rather than Benoît's wooden one.

object and prevents them from seeing the object's true pernicious nature. Thus the Trojans view the gleaming Horse as a benevolent sacrifice to the gods left behind by the Greeks, while Medea perceives the dazzling Fleece as the simple indication that Jason has achieved his quest. So intense is the brilliance of the Fleece that it does not merely shine; its radiant splendour also reflects off the water. The bright glare of the Fleece and its reflection literally obstructs Medea's eye from seeing the figure of Jason just as the seduction of his beauty and coaxing words blinds her to his true nature. Like the Trojans, Medea fails to beware of Greeks bearing gifts. The illumination which accompanies the episode of the Trojan Horse in Pierpont Morgan Ms. M. 126 (figure 2) illustrates the deceiving nature of the Horse's appearance. The Trojans in full armour and with weapons raised stand at the right aloft a tower. From this vantage point, they can only see the head of the Horse as it enters through the city walls; the reader alone has the privileged view of the Horse's body just before it passes into Troy, thereby allowing him or her to see the battle-ready Greeks on the verge of bursting forth from the hidden cavity inside the siege-engine. The red blanket marked with a golden insignia which covers the Horse's body effectively draws the reader's eye to the waiting Greeks and away from the Trojans, who have yet to see the entire Horse and its hidden danger.

Medea's loss of visual authority is accompanied by an increased visual potency on the part of Jason. Although at their first encounter no direct reference is made to his "eye," Jason reciprocates Medea's gaze without hesitation. However, there is no sense of mutuality in their looks; totally self-absorbed, each stares at the other without any apparent realization that the gaze is returned. Gower notes that Jason is unable

to "withholde his lok" (V.3383), a description which implies that he initially lacks the will-power to direct his gaze elsewhere. He finds her beauty beyond compare:

Bot so good hiede on hire he tok,
That him ne thoghte under the hevne
Of beaute sawh he never hir evne,
With al that fell to wommanhiede (V.3384-3387),

but, whereas Jason takes a good look at her, he more importantly takes "good hiede," thereby gaining complete control of situation. His actions are a repeat of the "good hiede [he] nam" (V.3370) when Medea first entered the room. The word "hiede" is generally defined in the *Middle English Dictionary* as "attention," "notice," or "regard," from which it is clear that Jason simply observes Medea at first. However, "hiede" has the secondary meaning of "consideration" which suggests that the person taking "hiede" is not only seeing an object, but is also judging it in some way. Is it possible that Jason, upon finding Medea pleasing to his eye, is calculating her potential usefulness to him in his quest for the Golden Fleece? According to Benoît, this is indeed the case, for his Jason is only interested in Medea when he learns that she holds knowledge crucial to the success of his task (*Troie*.1429-1444); in contrast, Gower's hero is clearly attracted to her before he knows that she can offer any help. Nevertheless, the ability to "take heed" is certainly an action which typifies the sin of covetousness, for the greedy man

takth non other hiede,
Bot that he mai purchace and gete,
His conscience hath al foryete,
And not what thing it mai amonte
That he schal afterward acompte (V.2010-2014).

Consequently, Jason's "heeding" of Medea's beauty, as well as of her counsel before

undertaking to win the Fleece, establishes him as guilty of such sin; having obtained both objects of his desire, namely the Fleece and Medea, he will eventually forget the oath he makes to Medea and thus fail to repay her in full for the debt he owes her. His neglect of his "trouthe" will result in a heavy "forfeture" (V.4214).

As with the references to "eyes" in the poem, Gower divides the word "hiede" along gender lines. The expression "to taken hiede" and its variants are used throughout the *Confessio Amantis* in reference to characters of both sexes. However, men "take heed," or fail to do so, much more often than women do. Of the 150 occasions upon which someone is said "to take heed," or its negative, 140 apply to men: Genius admonishes Amans thirty times to "heed" the tale he is about to tell or has just told, Amans speaks of "heeding" ten times, and male figures in the tales and examples cited by Genius "heed" the remaining one hundred. Only ten instances apply directly to women. However, when women "take heed," they are more likely to see the truth of the situation than men. On the few occasions that they do not, it is either because they did *not* "take heed" or they were somehow deceived by a man. Thus Calistona, having been transformed into a bear, "tok non hiede" (V.6328) of the bow which her son Archas raised at her and, but for the intervention of Jupiter, would have been killed; Queen Olympias "tok good hiede" (VI.1868) of Nectanabus' strange appearance and intense stare, only to be bewitched by his magic. Men, on the other hand, generally "take heed" exclusively of women and do so in a blatantly calculating fashion; as a result, the woman is jeopardized sexually and often mortally.

Medea also "takes heed" of Jason on one occasion, albeit only briefly. Genius

remarks that, upon meeting for the first time, the couple "ech of other token hiede" (V.3388). This single example in the tale of reciprocal "heeding" exemplifies the gender differences of the act.²² Evidently, each casts judgement upon the other, but what exactly are their verdicts is initially unclear. It is not until that night, as the two lie in their own beds trying to sleep, that their private thoughts are revealed. While Medea's contemplation of Jason centres on a single objective, namely marriage:

[Medea] Lay and bethoughte hire al the night,
 Hou sche that noble worthi knight
 Be eny weie might wedde (V.3423-3425),

Jason's deliberations are not so focussed. Although "[a]l was Medea that he thoghte" (V.3407), at no point does he consider marriage as a possible goal. His thoughts revolve around the attraction he feels for her and the challenge of winning the Golden Fleece. Genius adds a touch of humour to the scene by contrasting Jason's racing mind to the empty-headed sheep which "thoghte bot a litel whye" (V.3406) as it sleeps on the island, unaware its imminent doom. The juxtaposition, however, also suggests a certain similarity between the two for, while the sheep fails to consider its own future that night, Jason likewise gives no thought to the consequences of his impending actions. Genius immediately goes on to compare Jason to a ship as he muses in bed

Som time yee, som time nay,
 Som time thus, som time so,
 As he was stered to and fro

²² Olympias and Nectanabus are the only other couple in the *Confessio Amantis* who mutually "heed" each other's physical presence. Nectanabus, like Jason, "of hir [Olympias'] beaute hiede toke" (VI.1857) with the result that he "couthe noght withdrawe his lok" (VI.1858); Olympias likewise "tok good hiede of his [Nectanabus'] manere" (VI.1868) and is greatly intrigued by him, but *not* overcome by feelings of love. Significantly, Medea is the only woman in the poem for whom the act of "taking heed" directly incites an overwhelming passion.

Of love, and ek of his conqueste
As he was helde of his beheste (V.3410-3414).

The metaphor is a meaningful one, for Jason will only set his course of action according to the wind which blows most in his favour. Nor is the irony of the final line of this passage lost on the reader; Jason's "beheste," or vow, to win the Fleece is the only promise he will ever keep. Thus Medea arises the next morning with the sole intention of seeking Jason out in order to "speke and telle of hir desir" (V.3435), while Jason awakens with two very distinct purposes in mind:

he wolde ferst beginne
At love, and after forto winne
The flees of gold, for which he com,
And thus to him good herte he nom (V.3417-3420).

Nothing, not even love, can steer him away for long from his goal of obtaining the wondrous Golden Fleece.

Another significant feature of Jason and Medea's first encounter is the verbal silence between them, for Genius notes that "ther no word was of record" (V.3389). So mesmerized are they by one another's appearance that any conversation they may have had is forgotten or passed over as insignificant by other authors who have recounted their story. Indeed, both Benoît and Ovid present this scene as one of purely visual interaction, but Gower draws this fact to his reader's attention. In doing so, he shifts any possible blame for inadequate narration from himself to his sources. However, he goes on to emphasize this notable silence a second time with Genius' remark that Jason and Medea's infatuation is so intense that words are not needed:

Here hertes both of on acord
Ben set to love, bot as tho
Ther mihten be no wordes mo (V.3390-3392).

This repetition, which comes immediately after the first reference to the lack of spoken record, suggests that Gower is doing more than simply shrugging off responsibility for his account of the episode. By stressing the initial silence between the two lovers, he refutes the traditional accusation that Medea, as a sorceress, somehow bewitches Jason into loving her. Verbal speech is, in fact, a significant feature of Medea's magic. She uses numerous spoken incantations to rejuvenate Aeson, for she must "preie" and "crie" aloud to Hecate, the goddess of sorcery, for initial help (V.3980-3986). Later at Aeson's side,

sche gan to gaspe and gone,
And made signes manyon,
And seide hir wordes therupon (V.4064-4066).

With the "spellings of hir charmes" (V.4067), she is able to place him into a deep sleep and then performs her witchcraft which involves, among other rituals, the making of "many a wonder soun" (V.4098) and the uttering of "jargoun strangeth" (V.4103). Unlike the few words and civilized decorum with which she conducts herself when Jason first arrives on Colchis, her speech and behaviour when performing her magic is unnatural and unworldly. As a sorceress, she becomes more "wilde" than any beast (V.4080-4081) and appears to be "oute of her mynde/ And torned in an other kynde" (V.4082-4083). The apparent insanity which accompanies the realization of Medea's magic resembles the confusion of her "wittes" caused by her intense love for Jason. In both instances, Gower portrays Medea's mind as "turned;" however, whereas Gower states that Medea's passion for Jason incites her to madness, he qualifies her deranged conduct as a sorceress with a brief, but highly significant, phrase: this Medea behaves only "[a]s thogh" she is mad. Nevertheless, this practitioner of magic could not be

further removed from the gentle and genteel princess who welcomes the Greeks to her father's court.

The verbal aspect of Medea's magical arts also plays an essential role in Jason's triumphant capture of the Golden Fleece. Included among the charms and protective talismans which she presents to Jason is a "heavenly figure" (V.3579) inscribed with mysterious conjurations which Medea teaches Jason to read. The words written on the figure are essential to Jason's success, for he must recite them aloud three times as soon as he reaches the island on which the sheep dwells:

[Medea] bad him, as he wolde spede,
 Withoute reste of eny while,
 Whan he were loded in that yle,
 He scholde make his sacrificise
 And rede his carecte in the wise
 As sche him tauhte, on knes down bent,
 Tre sithes toward orient (V.3584-3590).

In addition, she insists that he must "to the goddes preie" (V.3535) once he has overcome the final obstacle to the Fleece, namely slaying the knights who spring up from the sown teeth of the serpent guarding the sheep. Thus Medea's words through Jason's voice frame the heroic act and provide the supernatural power needed to succeed. Jason, in fact, harnesses her energy by appropriating her magical words, but, in doing so, also subverts his own prowess by placing it within the frame of a woman's power. The lengthy descriptions of Medea's incantations and sorcery are not entirely surprising, for Gower is clearly fascinated by magic as illustrated by his many references to and accounts of the "science" throughout the *Confessio Amantis*.²³

²³ Such descriptions can be found in the lengthy discussion on sorcery and witchcraft in Book VI (1261-1390); in the Tale of Nectanabus (VI.1789-2366); and in the section on

However, unlike Benoît, Gower avoids any reference to Medea as a sorceress until after Jason and Medea consummate their relationship; before that moment, Medea offers no details regarding the help she can extend to Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece. By deferring any reference to Medea's powers as an enchantress and maintaining Medea's relative silence when she first meets Jason, Gower effectively discredits the popular view that Medea brought the tragedy upon herself. He consistently lays the blame on Jason.

This initial silence between Jason and Medea underscores another significant feature of their love story, namely that the misuse of words leads to misfortune. When Medea seeks out Jason in order to tell him of her passionate feelings, they sit alone together and, for the first time, speak (V.3436-3440). Jason appears to be the one to initiate the conversation, for Gower says that "he besoughte hir grace" (V.3440). Jason's first words are, not surprisingly, ambiguous. What "grace," or favour, does he seek from Medea? Her love or her help in winning the Golden Fleece? The next lines make it all too clear; Medea listens to "his tale" (V.3441) only to reply:

Jason, as thou wilt,
 Thou miht be sauf, thou miht be spilt;
 For wite wel that nevere man,
 Bot if he couthe that I can,
 Ne mihte that fortune achieve
 For which thou comst (V.3443-3448).

Jason's "tale" has evidently focussed more on his quest for the Golden Fleece, than on his feelings for Medea, if they were even mentioned at all. Instead, Medea is the one

astronomy (VII.633-1506) which includes passages on the supernatural powers of the planets, the signs of the zodiac, and the fifteen stars and their corresponding stones and herbs. In addition, many characters in the tales either perform magic or witness its effects.

to introduce the prospect of love, for she guarantees his life and, more importantly, his "honour" (V.3451) if he will but "holde covenant/ To love" (V.3449-3450). The offer, particularly the appeal to "honour," is simply too tempting. Jason readily agrees to Medea's conditions, saying,

Al at your oghne wille,
Ma dame, I schal treuly fulfille
Your heste, while mi lif mai laste (V.3453-3455).

Jason's use of the adverb "treuly" resounds with irony; he proves to be anything but true to Medea and will eventually earn the epithet of "moste untrewre creature" (V.4213) from her. Medea, however, is not entirely convinced by his vow of faithfulness and will only agree to send for him that night (V.3457-3461), revealing no details regarding the help she can provide. In the *Roman de Troie*, she is the one who has to do the persuading and succeeds in winning Jason's attentions solely by virtue of the knowledge she promises him (*Troie*.1419-24). Only then does Jason agree to marry her. Although Gower's Jason does not know what assistance Medea can offer, he is absolutely certain that he has assured her of his good intentions and won her "grace,"

For of that grace him is begonne
Him thenkth alle othre thinges wonne (V.3463-3464).

Thus, when he is led to her bedroom by her maiden, he no longer perceives Medea as simply the "faireste" of women, but also as the "wiseste" (V.3479).

The Medea of the *Confessio Amantis*, although attracted by Jason's appearance and sweet promises, is not at first easily bewitched by his words as is her counterpart in the *Roman de Troie*. Gower's Medea is much more pragmatic, for she hesitates to reveal to Jason the supernatural power which she possesses until she is confident of

his sincerity. Jason "hiede nam" (V.3475) of the young maiden sent by Medea to guide him to her room with an obedience reminiscent of Medea when she obeys without hesitation her father's command to appear in the main hall. However, Medea's observance of her father's "heste" has no apparent ulterior motive. As suggested in the earlier discussion of Gower's use of "hiede" in the *Confessio Amantis*, Jason's "taking heed" results immediately in the sexual undoing of a woman; despite Medea's willingness to comply, she is still the one who is ultimately deceived. Nevertheless, his immediate compliance with her summons is still not enough; Medea insists on a clandestine marriage "for sikernesse" (V.3483). Like Benoît's Medea, she brings forth the elaborate image of Jupiter on which

Jason swore and seide ther,
That also wiss god scholde him helpe,
That if Medea ded him helpe,
That he his pourpos myhte winne,
Thei scholde nevere parte atwinne,
Bot evere whil him lasteth lif,
He wolde hir holde for his wif (V.3486-3492).

Seduced by his beguiling words, she gives herself to him body and soul and fails to listen to the true import of his alluring utterances. When Medea first reveals her feelings to Jason, he promises unequivocally to fulfill her "heste," or command, to hold a "covenant to love." Now, upon marrying her, he again promises to cherish her, but this time he attaches specific conditions. The vow is more of a bargain than an oath, for Jason states clearly that he will remain a faithful husband to Medea *only* if he wins the Golden Fleece with her help.²⁴ Jason later pledges his "trouthe" to Medea a third

²⁴ Russell A. Peck observes that Jason takes what has been "largess" on Medea's part, namely the offer to help him win the Fleece, and makes it an integral part of the "bargain" (111-

time as she lies in bed despairing at the thought that she may lose him in his attempt to achieve the Fleece:

Conforteth you, for be my trouthe
It schal nocht fallen in mi slouthe
That I ne wol thurghout fulfille
Your hestes at youre oghne wille (V.3653-3656).

Subtly, Jason has shifted the focus of his vow from loving Medea, as he assures her he will do the first time they speak, to winning the Golden Fleece, as he promises in these lines. Medea's "hestes" to which he now refers do not include her earlier request that he love her faithfully. It is a significant silence, but one which Medea neglects to hear. In a clever distortion of his own words, he swears merely to "fulfille" her exact instructions for obtaining the Fleece and makes no mention at all of his love. His reference to "sloth" is also deceiving. Jason will prove anything but idle in his endeavours to win the Fleece, but he will lack such diligence in maintaining his love for Medea.²⁵ Although Gower later notes that "Jason Medea nocht foryat" (V.3728), he refers only to Jason's ability to remember precisely her directives regarding the Fleece. Medea has already insisted that "he nothing foryete scholde" (V.3625) of her counsel, a command which Jason more than willingly fulfills for he "forgets" nothing associated with the Golden Fleece. He merely "forgets" his promise to be faithful. The deception of Medea, which begins with her eye, is completed with Jason's words. So it gradually becomes apparent that Jason's ability to mislead with words is rivalled only by Medea's

112).

²⁵ Sloth is a sin typical of other male characters of the Troy story. Genius presents Eneas and Ulysses as examples of "lachesse" in love (IV.77-233).

skill in magic. Just as she redirects nature in order to meet her own ends, so he will not hesitate to twist his words in order to achieve his desires.

As their relationship develops, Medea also begins to deceive others with silence and false words. Although she greatly fears for Jason's life as she watches him struggle for the Fleece from her tower, she fears even more the discovery of her love for him by the other spectators standing with her. Consequently, she will not speak aloud her thoughts, but prays to the gods

Al prively withinne herselfe,
Ther herde it nouthen ten ne tuelve (V.3737-3738).

Unlike the Medea of the *Roman de Troie* who lets her tears fall and murmurs aloud her prayers as she stands alone in her tower, Gower's heroine is evidently part of the crowd observing the event and must restrain her impulses in order to avoid drawing attention to herself and her passionate feelings.²⁶ She will not kiss the returning hero as she so desperately desires, but simply welcomes him back to Colchis with few words (V.3786-3792). Benoît's Medea, although similarly restrained in her public greeting of the triumphant Jason, does manage to whisper in his ear and arrange to meet privately

²⁶ Gower, in fact, draws on a brief five-line passage from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for his presentation of the episode:

tu quoque victorem conplecti, barbara, velles:
obstitit incepto pudor, at complexa fuisses,
sed te, ne faceres, tenuit reverentia famae.
quod licet, adfectu tacito laetaris agisque
carminibus grates et dis auctoribus horum (*Her.VII*).

[You, barbarous woman, also wished to embrace the victor.
Shame prevented you from trying; yet you would have held him close
But, fearing rumour, you did not.
As is fitting, you rejoiced silently and gave thanks
For the prayers and to the gods who answered them.]

later that night. Gower's Medea, however, must wait until the banquet that evening to make such arrangements. Even then, the two lovers make a show of talking loudly of "other thinges" in order to divert the "supposinges\ Of hem that stoden there aboute" (V.3843-3849). In such a way, they use false words to deceive those around them, an act which echoes Jason's own verbal manipulation of Medea. Gower accentuates the imposing nature of the outside world upon the lovers by noting that they have only a "littel space" (V.3843) to speak freely at the banquet. The phrase recalls their need to seek out a "space\ To speke" (V.3439-3440) when they first reveal their feelings for one another. The repeated reference to "space" suggests not only a space of time but also physical space. Thus Jason and Medea need both the opportunity to speak in private and also a suitable place to do so. Ironically, they cannot find "space" either outside the palace gates or in the great hall, but must retreat to Medea's bedroom, a physically small space, in order to pursue their relationship away from the "pres" (V.3469), or crowd of courtiers, which continually surrounds them.

The clandestine nature of Jason and Medea's relationship is hardly unique to Gower. The night-time setting and emphasis on privacy are features found in the *Roman de Troie* and contrast the daytime setting and public performance of Jason's winning of the Golden Fleece. However, Gower does not use lengthy descriptions and narrative passages to establish the tension between night and day and between private and public; instead, he uses the repetition of words and short phrases to create the same effect. Thus Jason states openly to Aeetes that he intends to win the Fleece, but plots his seduction of Medea with Hercules at night, asking that his words be "wel ... hid" (V.3472). Jason also accepts the king's hospitality and attends all public functions

held at court in his honour, but conspires with his men "[i]n secre" regarding their flight from Colchis and orders them to return to their ships that night "priveliche" so that "noman mihte here dede aspie" (V.3881-3888). References to "privacy" and the cover of darkness also become catchphrases for Jason and Medea's love affair. When she first speaks to Jason after their first meeting, Medea insists that he come to her chamber at night "prively" (V.3460) so that they may talk away from the prying eyes of court. Jason goes to her each night "al prively" (V.3861) when "every torche and every liht\ Were oute" (V.3846-3847) and when he is certain that "every man was faste aslepe" (V.3859). In addition, he departs her room always "nyh day" (V.3547 and 3661) or before "prime" (V.3880), that is, before daylight can make his whereabouts public knowledge. Even their clandestine marriage takes place at night and is marked by an absence of witnesses and public celebration. As such, the event contrasts Jason's battle for the Fleece, which is performed under the very public scrutiny of his men and Aetes' entire kingdom while "[t]he dai was clier, the Sonne hot" (V.3752). Gower reveals the deceptive and deceiving nature of the darkness with the setting of Jason's first furtive meeting with Medea:

The dai made ende and lost his lyht,
 And comen was the derke nyht,
 Which al the daies yhe blente (V.3465-3467).

The image of the approaching night blinding the "eye" of day, that is, the sun, is highly evocative, for it parallels Medea's eye which is blinded, not by darkness, but by Jason's beauty and later by the brilliance of the glistening Fleece. The image also suggests the "blinding" of Aetes and his court by Jason's apparent glory; they remain ignorant of his relationship with Medea and of his secret plans to flee Colchis with her and the

kingdom's wealth until the morning following the lovers' departure:

Bot erly, whan the Sonne schon,
Men syhe hou thei were agon,
And come unto the king and tolde (V.3905-3907).

Only in the daylight, after the exodus of Jason and his men with the treasures of the Colchian kingdom, do Aeetes and his people finally "see" the truth.²⁷

Although Gower maintains and develops imagery and vocabulary found in his sources for the Tale of Jason and Medea, he does make a significant change by drastically reducing the time frame of the love story. While Benoît contrasts the urgency of Medea's passion with the long months that the Greeks remain idle on Colchis, Gower reinforces the immediacy of the love affair by diminishing the time span to a matter of days. Thus Medea and Jason meet, consummate their love, win the fleece, and flee Colchis, all in four days. This conflation of time is emphasized by the many references to "time" and "haste." The word "time" is used on fifteen occasions in the tale and, although not all instances refer to the passage of time, the repetition of the word functions almost as an echo, the continual reminder that time is passing quickly. Jason, unlike his counterpart in the *Roman de Troie*, is consistently associated with "time" and is presented as adhering to a fixed and pressing schedule. When he

²⁷ Not surprisingly, Medea's magic is also practised at night, for she begins her rejuvenation of Aeson "whan ther was nocht bot sterreliht" (V.3958). Although it takes nine days and nights to collect all the ingredients for her brew (V.4019-4922), she performs the actual youth-giving procedure under a "newe Mone" (V.4116). In addition, she will only present Jason with the necessary charms and incantations for winning the Golden Fleece on their wedding night while it is still dark; unlike the *Roman de Troie*, she is the one, not Jason, who insists that they arise before it grows light (V.3547-3550). The practice of magic under the cover of darkness is highly appropriate, since sorcery is occult, or "hidden," knowledge, wisdom which loses much of its influence once it is revealed.

first arrives on Colchis, he tells Aeetes of his quest for the Golden Fleece and immediately asks the king "[t]o haste his time" (V.3342), having no wish to stay longer than necessary. After meeting Medea, his mind flits continually back and forth, from Medea to the Golden Fleece,

Some time yee, some time nay,
Som time thus, som time so (V.3410-3411),

as he tries to choose one over the other. Once he learns that Medea can help him to win the Fleece, Jason seizes the moment and attempts to convince her of his loyalty. Consequently, he does not delay in answering Medea's summons to her chamber, although he is in "conseil" with Hercules when her maiden appears (V.3470-3477). Nor is he slow to visit her again in private after the celebrations of his achievement of the Fleece, for, as soon as the palace is asleep, he "his time kepe" (V.3860) and goes to her room where he "with alle haste" (V.3866) lies down with her. He quickly rises the next morning "whan it was time" (3879) and arranges a "time set" (V.3899) for their escape to Greece. The references to "keeping time" and continual "haste" that typify Jason's behaviour suggest that he acts impetuously and without much thought. The obvious impatience that he exhibits while on Colchis only reinforces the rashness of his empty promises to Medea.

In contrast, the Colchians are characterized by circumspection and timeliness. Aeetes performs his duties as host with care and precision, welcoming the Greeks with the appropriate festivities and celebrating Jason's triumph with an elaborate dinner. Gower's Medea, despite her compelling passion for Jason, is similarly not associated with haste, as is Benoît's heroine, but with caution. She desires only "leisir" with Jason,

a word which conveys the sense of "opportune time," "free time," and "lack of hurry." Consequently, she initially seeks a suitable "leisir" (V.3435) when she may reveal her feelings of love to Jason. Unlike Benoît's Medea, she is not immediately convinced by Jason's hasty promises, but forces him to implore her "longe" (V.3456) before she will accept his suit and insists on marriage before she will consummate the relationship. Once they are married, she discloses the charms and spells needed for winning the Golden Fleece in a comparable "leisir" (V.3500) during their wedding night. Thus, for Medea, everything has its appropriate and appointed time. Her need for circumspection is perhaps best illustrated by her practice of magic. Both her instructions to Jason for achieving the Fleece and her rejuvenation of his father are given in great detail and reveal the time-consuming nature of her art.²⁸ Consequently, the lengthy narrative descriptions of Medea's sorcery effectively contrast the brief accounts of the tale's sequence of events, an apposition which further emphasizes the speed with which the episodes on Colchis take place. Jason seems to function as a kind of "catalyst" on the island, for he affects the ordinary "chemistry" of the inhabitants and causes everyone with whom he comes in contact to accelerate their actions, giving them little opportunity to consider the consequences. As a result, Jason is able to achieve all of his goals, for he successfully presses his demand to attempt the challenge of the Golden Fleece on the hesitant Aeetes and gives Medea little time to reflect on the true nature of their relationship. Only when Jason flees Colchis with the Fleece, Medea, and Aeetes' treasure hoard does the king realize what has happened

²⁸ Medea even possesses the power to "slow" time in a literal sense, as illustrated by her ability to restore Aeson to his youth.

during the Greeks' visit and he "the time forto warie" (V.3899). Medea will likewise "curse" the time she has spent with Jason when he casts her aside for a new wife.

Having married Jason, Medea shifts her obedience from her father to her husband. Russell Peck has observed that Gower chooses to focus on Medea's loyalty to Jason rather than on her disloyalty to her father as Ovid does.²⁹ Since Benoît ends his version of the story with the lovers' flight from Colchis, Gower turns to Ovid for the conclusion to the tale, but he eliminates many of the Latin author's harsh criticisms of Medea in order to maintain Jason's image as the offender in the story. As a dutiful wife, she gives birth to two sons, thereby securing the familial dynasty much to the pleasure of her husband, father-in-law, and herself (V.3937-3941).³⁰ With her powers of magic, she even turns back time for Aeson at Jason's specific request. Gower conveys no sense that Medea deserves her ultimate fate, a significant departure from the sources, for even Benoît, who provides no details regarding the tragedy that would ensue, states candidly that Medea's punishment, namely Jason's unfaithfulness, is a suitable retribution for her own crime of abandoning her family and people (*Troie*.2030-2034).³¹ Nevertheless, Gower does not completely hide Medea's barbarous streak. Although

²⁹ Peck, 113-114.

³⁰ Medea's revenge will be the destruction of this "lignage" which gives Jason and his father such "joie."

³¹ In the *Traitié ... pour essamplier les amantz marietz*, Gower also portrays Medea as undeserving of Jason's unfaithfulness, for he speaks only of the help she gives him in winning the Fleece and of the two sons she bears as his wife. He refers to Jason as a "pecché," or "sinner," and emphasizes his guilt with the repeated refrain: "*Freinte espousaile dieus le vengera* [God will avenge the broken marriage vow]" (Balade VIII, lines 7, 14, and 21) [For the text of the poem, see *The Complete Works of John Gower, Vol I: The French Works* (Oxford, 1899); all translations of the *Traitié* are from an unpublished translation done by Brian S. Merrilees and myself which will accompany an new edition of the poem].

Genius tries to cast her theft of her father's treasure as an example of her devotion to Jason (V.4180-4181), in doing so he also draws attention to Medea's very unfilial behaviour. In addition, a certain ambiguity surrounds Genius' brief account of Jason's succession of his uncle, Pelias:

King Peleüs his Em was ded,
Jason bar corone on his hed,
Medea hath fulfild his wille (V.4187-4189).

This reference to Medea's "fulfillment" of Jason's will does not appear immediately following the summary of her accomplishments on Jason's behalf as one might expect (V.4175-4186), but rather is juxtaposed to Jason's inheritance of his uncle's throne. In this position, the lines seem to allude to Medea's role in the murder of Pelias by his daughters, a detail which Gower may have found in the *Ovide Moralisé*.³² So it seems that while Genius is actively trying to gloss over Medea's less endearing traits for the benefit of his naive listener, Amans, Gower is subtly reminding his privileged reader, who is already familiar with Medea's traditional reputation, that she will "fulfill" Jason's every desire, regardless of the violent means needed to do so.

Consequently, her punishment of Jason is not completely out of character in Gower's version of the tale. Although Genius describes Medea's actions only in brief, the final passage resounds with images and vocabulary from earlier episodes. With her powers of magic, Medea makes a cloak from "cloth of gold" for Jason's bride. The description of the cloak as gold is wholly original to Gower and is reminiscent of the Fleece with its golden sheen. However, unlike the Fleece, Medea's creation does not

³² Conrad Mainzer, "John Gower's Use of the 'Mediaeval Ovid' in the *Confessio Amantis*," *Medium Ævum* 41 (1972): 219.

"glisten" or "shine" and blind the observer; this cloak bursts into flame and destroys the wearer, namely Creusa. Medea then comes to Jason "[w]ith both his Sones on hire hand" (V.4211), an action which echoes her gentle guiding of Jason by the hand when she welcomes the Greeks to Colchis. The initial tenderness of Medea's touch is repeated throughout the tale, for she takes Jason "in hire armes two" (V.3640) to kiss him before he departs on his quest and likewise takes Aeson "in bothe hir armes" (V.4068) before placing him into an enchanted sleep. Gower belies the violence which ensues by having Medea lead her sons to their death in a similar fashion. It is a small detail, but one which serves to emphasize the mother's brutality. In addition, she does not simply murder Jason's progeny, but does so "[b]efore his yhe" (V.4216), an important fact when the reader remembers that it is through the eye that Medea is first wounded by love.³³ As such, her actions are a fitting retribution for Jason's own wandering eye. It is this avenging figure of Medea that is portrayed in the illumination accompanying the tale in Pierpont Morgan Ms. M. 126 (figure 3). She is shown in the gruesome act of murdering the children as Jason, looking on, attempts to draw out his own sword. The miniature, although not entirely faithful to Gower's account of the episode, echoes the final lines of the tale:

sche bothe his Sones slouh
 Before his yhe, and he outdrouh
 His swerd and wold have slayn hir tho (V.4215-4217).

Medea and Jason do not stand together, but are separated by their dying children.

³³ In the *Traité*, Gower also emphasizes the role of Jason's eye in his punishment, for he states that "*ensi come forsenée/ Devant les oels Jason ele ad tué* [In a mad fury/ She (Medea) killed them (his sons) before Jason's very eyes]" (VIII.18-19).

They do not gaze at each other as they did when they first met; rather, all eyes are focussed on the slaughter of the two boys. Significantly, Creusa, very much alive, stands next to Jason and likewise watches. Her presence in the miniature leads the observer's eye away for a moment from the horror of Medea's actions and reminds the viewer of Jason's own role in the events taking place. Medea is also depicted as having wings, a detail not specifically mentioned by Gower. Genius only suggests that she can somehow fly, for she escapes Jason's wrath by fleeing to "Pallas the Court above" (V.4219).³⁴ Thus Jason is "left in gret destresse" (V.4222), alone and abandoned, just as he "Medea lefte" when he "tok a newe [love]" (V.4198).

The other Trojan love story recounted in detail in the *Confessio Amantis* is the Tale of Paris and Helen. Like the Tale of Jason and Medea, it appears in Book V as an example of avarice and develops many of the motifs and language patterns discussed thus far. As G.C. Macaulay notes, the tale is a condensed version of Benoit's account in the *Roman de Troie* with very few alterations to the main storyline:³⁵ Paris describes his dream of the Judgement to the second Trojan parliament and convinces the members to sail with him to Greece; landing on one of the Grecian islands, he discovers Helen worshipping in Venus' temple and is so enamoured of her that he plans to abduct her; that same night, he and his men invade the temple, kidnap Helen, and return by ship to Troy. The story is straightforward and very brief; however,

³⁴ The figure of a winged Medea is no doubt Ovidian, but it also recalls the earlier desire of Gower's heroine for "wynges tuo" (3749) in order to fly from her tower and meet the boat returning with Jason and the Golden Fleece.

³⁵ Note 7195ff., p. 509.

Gower makes one surprising adaptation, for he has Genius present the tale as an *exemplum* of the sacrilege of lovers, rather than as one of theft as the reader might expect. Although the imagery and vocabulary of "stealing" are woven throughout the tale, the choice of representative sin is an intriguing one and, as Margaret Ehrhart has observed, wholly original.³⁶ Genius describes such sacrilege as the flirting and wooing of women by lovers "[w]hyl thei ben in that holi place" (V.7042). Thus whispering to ladies, taking love-tokens from them, or dressing for the sole purpose of attracting female attention (V.7038-7069) are amorous practices not appropriately performed in church, a place of devotion and prayer. As a form of avarice, sacrilege in love perverts the place of spiritual worship into one of fleshly delight. Paris' crime is not so much the stealing of another man's wife, but the commission of such a deed in a holy shrine. From Genius' point of view, the desecration of Venus' temple, and not the abduction of Helen, is the cause of Troy's fall.

Like Benoit's hero, Gower's Paris falls asleep while out with his hounds "[t]o hunte unto the grete hert" (V.7401). Although Gower eliminates the evocative Old French details of the setting, including any reference to the "*vaus Cithariens* [Cytherean valleys]" (*Troie*.3868), he retains the initial image of Paris hunting deer. The noun "hert" refers literally to the stag which Paris and his hounds unsuccessfully pursue, but the word, whether in Middle or Modern English, is also an homonym for "herte," or "heart." With the traditional associations of venery and venereal activities, the pun suggests that Paris is also "heart-hunting" or seeking love. In his dream, Paris

³⁶ Margaret J. Ehrhart, *The Judgment of the Trojan Prince Paris in Medieval Literature* (Philadelphia: UPP, 1987), 189.

envisions Mercury presenting the goddesses Minerva, Venus, and Juno and commanding him to judge the fairest of the three. The prize is the usual golden apple, yet, as the Tale of Jason and Medea has already shown, such golden prizes are usually won, or in this case awarded, at great cost to the individual. The motif of gold recurs throughout the *Confessio Amantis* and particularly in Book V; the association of the precious metal with greed is obvious, and Paris certainly proves to be a greedy man. Although he does not covet the apple itself, he covets the prize it holds for him, namely that the apple, once bestowed upon Venus, will "bringe unto [his] hond/ Of al this Erthe the faireste" (V.7426-7427). Gower mentions the apple four times in only sixteen lines, once as an apple "of gold" (V.7415) and thrice in relation to the verb "yiven." The repetition draws the object to the reader's attention and emphasizes both the "giving" of the apple and the "gift" it promises for Paris. In addition, the presence of an "apple" in an *exemplum* cautioning against vice, particularly within the greater context of the seven deadly sins, alludes to the "apple" of original sin. Certainly, such is the interpretation of the classical story in the *Ovide moralisé*; however, Gower also suggests such a connection, for he places the tale of Paris and Helen between Genius' general introduction to the vice of sacrilege, which begins with God's punishment "that he [Adam] scholde swinke/ To geten him his sustenance" (V.6964-6965), and Genius' introduction to Book VI on the sin of gluttony, which also begins with the example of original sin, "[w]han Adam of thilke Appel bot" (VI.5). Apart from the "appel" in Paris' dream-vision, this reference is the only other one in the poem.

As in the *Roman de Troie*, Venus never mentions Helen by name to Paris. He

simply assumes that, upon seeing her for the first time, she is his prize and takes possession. In his portrayal of Helen, Gower does not attempt to obscure her traditional reputation as he does with Medea. Helen is once again presented as a willing victim in the abduction, for she is evidently attracted to Paris despite the fact she is a married woman. However, Gower attempts to justify her behaviour by depicting her, like Medea, as 'beguiled by her senses. Upon learning of Paris' arrival on the island, Helen is immediately intrigued by what she hears:

Tydinge, which goth overal
To grete and smale, forth withal
Com to the queenes Ere and Tolde
Hou Paris com, and that he wolde
Do sacrifice to Venus (V.7497-7502).

Significantly, she is not at prayer as she should be in Venus' temple, but listening to idle gossip as it passes from one person to the next. As such, she is guilty of sacrilege in love and falls deeper into the sin once she decides to "abyde and se" (V.7503) the Trojan knight. She also fails to guard those senses, namely the eye and ear, which Genius has so strongly warned Amans to protect:

For if thou woldest take kepe
And wisly cowthest warde and kepe
Thin yhe and Ere, as I have spoke,
Than haddest thou the gates stoke
From such Sotie as comth to winne
Thin hertes wit, which is withinne (I.535-540).

Like Medea, Helen falls victim to the "foolishness" of love, but more by means of her ear than her eye. In contrast to the *Roman de Troie*, Gower provides no detailed description of the lovers' physical beauty nor describes their mutual gazes of longing and passion. His Helen is enamoured solely by Paris' engaging speech, for Paris

made hir chiere,
 As he wel couthe in his manere,
 That of his wordes such plesance
 Sche tok (V.7513-7516).

Just as he is able to convince his fellow Trojans to accompany him to Greece with his rhetoric, so he enthralls Helen with his "words" and charming "manner." Paris also clearly resembles those lovers who, during Mass, "stonde and tellen in [their lady's] Ere,/ And axe of god non other grace" (V.7040-7041). Thus he falls quickly into the sin of sacrilege, just as Helen does when she first hears of him. However, unlike the *Roman de Troie*, it is Helen who provokes their first meeting. Paris enters the temple with the full intention of performing "his obeissance/ To Venus on hire holi day" (V.7486-7487). It is Helen's desire to see him that leads to their first encounter, and not an apparently mutual wish by both parties as Benoît suggests.

Thus Helen seems to be the initial aggressor in the relationship, but it is a role which quickly changes as soon as she meets Paris. Just as Medea's eye is penetrated by Jason's physical beauty, so Helen's ear is seemingly pierced by Paris' enticing voice. She immediately becomes a passive, feminized figure whose body is so completely invaded by Paris' masculine assault on her senses that

al hire aqueintance,
 Als ferforth as the herte lay,
 He stal er that he wente away (V.7516-7518).

Paris does not simply meet Helen in the temple, but "steals" her acquaintance, an image which foreshadows his bodily theft of her that night. The reference to "herte" indicates that he has also "stolen" her heart, thus upholding the tradition of Helen as an acquiescent participant in her own kidnapping. In addition, the word recalls the

"hert" which led Paris away from the rest of the hunt, thereby providing him with the opportunity to dream of the Judgement and ultimately possess Helen. However, upon their second meeting in the temple, Helen is decidedly less receptive, for she does not seem to notice him at all:

So fell it, of devocion
 Heleine in contemplacion
 With many other worthi wiht
 Was in the temple and wok al nyht,
 To bidde and preie unto thymage
 Of Venus, as was thanne usage (V.7537-7542).

Her mind has turned away from Paris and back to her original purpose on the island, that is "[f]or worschipe and for sacrificise" (V.7478) to the goddess in whose temple she lingers. She has, in fact, been guilty both of sacrilege and a misuse of opportunity, for she has passed the time from Paris' arrival in the temple until now in casual flirtation rather than in devotion. It is this type of "leisir" (V.7035) against which Genius expressly warns Amans in his general discussion of the vice of sacrilege in love. Unlike Benoît's use of the term "*leisir*" in the *Roman de Troie*, Gower's use of the Middle English equivalent often has definite negative connotations. The word occurs only nine times in the *Confessio Amantis* and, despite its seemingly positive meanings of "opportune time," "free time," and "lack of hurry," leisure often provides the opportunity for sin. Thus Medea desires a "leisir" (V.3435) with Jason for the purpose of revealing her feelings to him, but furnishes Jason with his first opportunity to deceive her with false promises; Egistus is likewise able to entice Clytemnestra, another figure from the story of Troy, into an adulterous relationship "with the leiser which he hadde" (III.1907) while her husband, Agamemnon, is far away fighting in Troy; and King Antiochus, upon

finding "leisir at his wille" (VIII.298), forces his daughter into an incestuous relationship. Even the figure of Ulysses, the Trojan hero, recalls Helen and her misuse of time; just as Helen's wish to "abyde" in the temple in order to see Paris leads explicitly to her abduction, so Ulysses' decision to "abyde a whyle" (VI.1425) with Circe on her island results in the son who will eventually destroy him.

Like Jason, Paris steals away with his beloved in the night. Gower's presentation of Paris' return to Troy with the captive Helen is completely original and highly evocative, for the townspeople come forth "with processioun\ Ayein Paris to sen his preie" (V.7560-7561). The reference to "preie," meaning "prey," recalls the hunting image which began the love episode of the tale. Paris, the hunter of the "grete hert," has successfully stalked his quarry, the most beautiful woman in Greece; in such a way, the motif of the hunt frames the entire tale. It also emphasizes Paris' crime of sacrilege, for such sinners are described by Genius as predators:

And thus he loketh on the fleissh,
 Riht as an hauk which hath a sihte
 Upon the foul, ther he schal lihte (V.7070-7072).

As the lover in church becomes impassioned upon viewing his lady's exposed skin, he is transformed into a bird of "prey" eyeing on the flesh of his quarry. Similarly, Paris, once he sees Helen, is transformed from "praying" man to "preying" man. The term "preie" now reverberates with both its meanings of "prey" and "pray," thereby forcing the reader to reconsider earlier occurrences the word. Thus Paris' worship of Venus includes the offering of riches as he "preith hir that he preie wolde" (V.7509). This line, which initially suggests that Paris asks Venus if he might "pray" in her temple, in retrospect becomes a supplication to "prey" in her temple. And the fact that, upon

making the request, Paris immediately begins to "beholde,\ And sih" (V.7510-7511) Helen only reinforces this interpretation. Paris' "preying" upon Helen is therefore suitably juxtaposed to Helen's "prayers" to Venus at the moment of her abduction. Nor is this image of "prey" restricted to the tale of Paris and Helen, for their return to Troy directly parallels Jason's own return to Greece with Medea, the Golden Fleece, and the Colchian treasure:

Jason to Grece with his preie
Goth thurgh the See the rihte weie (V.3927-3928).

Just what this "preie" is remains ambiguous, for a few lines later Jason is said to have "achieved that he soughte\ And hom with him Medea broughte" (V.3933-3934). No direct mention is made of the Fleece, the original purpose of his departure from Greece, yet the reference to "preie" suggests the Fleece, since it has been described as such elsewhere in the tale. Upon Jason's achievement of the Fleece, the crowd standing nearby sees "hou Jason broghte his preie" (V.3763) back to Colchis. In her instructions for winning the Fleece, Medea advises Jason "to the goddes preie" before he tries to "take his preie" (V.3535-3536). The end-rhyme on "preie" in these lines emphasizes the continual interplay between the two meanings of the word. Thus, when Genius says that Jason "longe ... preide" (V.3456) before Medea would accept the sincerity of his suit, it is no longer clear whether Jason simply "beseeches" Medea or literally "preys" upon her. This tension between "preie" as an act of supplication and as an act of violence is unique to Gower. The Old French term of "*preie*," meaning "*proie*" or "prey," is not used to describe the love relationships of the *Roman de Troie*.

The use of "preie" to mean "prey" occurs throughout the *Confessio Amantis* and

especially in Book V. In particular, the Tale of Tereus uses the image of prey/pray to emphasize the cruelty of Tereus' behaviour. Tereus "preys" upon Philomene, who, in turn, "prays" for divine salvation from her torment. Gower casts Philomene as the "preie which is femeline" (V.5550) and Tereus as the "wolfe which takth his preie" (V.5633). In every example, it is the man who is portrayed as the hunter and the woman who is portrayed as the hunted. Just as with the motif of the eye and, to a lesser extent, the ear, women as "prey" are made passive and subject to the will of their male predator. However, men are often dehumanized in their role as hunter, for they are usually described in bestial terms. Incited by love into irrational passion, these male figures are transformed figuratively, and sometimes literally, at the moment of their greatest violence into animals of prey, most often a lion or wolf. While many of the tales are drawn from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Gower extends the image of bodies-changing-form to stories from other sources, such as the Trojan love stories. The recurring motifs of predator and prey and of prey and pray thus draw seemingly disparate stories together and provide a cohesive connection to the frame of confession.

Katharine Gittes has suggested that Helen's praying just before Paris abducts her indicates that "she has moved from passionate thoughts to contemplative ones ... that she has turned away from Paris to God."³⁷ Given Helen's reputation in the sources and Gower's preservation of such, this view of Helen does not seem true. Gower portrays her as guilty of sacrilege and follows Ovid and Benoît in suggesting that she

³⁷ Katharine S. Gittes, "Gower's Helen of Troy and the Contemplative Way of Life," *English Language Notes* (1989): 23.

does not resist Paris' verbal and physical advances. One must also remember that the encounter and abduction take place in Venus' temple as worshippers first amuse themselves with rumour and idle flirtation, only to focus later on praying to the goddess of ventry, not to God. Unlike Benoît, who sets the episode in Venus' temple but has Paris pray to Minerva, the goddess of the contemplative life, and Helen pray to Juno, the goddess of the active life, Gower has all the worshippers pray to Venus, the goddess of the voluptuary life. The fact that Helen is depicted as engrossed in devotions and contemplations of such a sensual goddess resounds with irony and emphasizes her folly. What prayers will Venus answer except the pleasures of the flesh? Helen does, in fact, receive such worldly "grace" for she gains a new love in Paris.³⁸ Even Genius seems unaware of the humour in his tale. However, as in the sources, Helen only flirts with Paris and does not explicitly conspire to abandon her home and husband for him. Thus Paris is the guiltier of the two and commits the most serious form of sacrilege, for he "out of holi place\ Be Stelthe hath take a mannes wif" (V.7572-7573). In doing so, he prefigures the sacrilege of other warriors from the Trojan war, such as Achilles who first sees Polyxena at Hector's tomb and Troilus who becomes enamoured of Criseide in a holy temple (V.7591-7602).

Although no illumination accompanies this tale in the Pierpont Morgan Ms. M. 126, there are three additional miniatures which depict love relationships from the story of Troy. These love episodes are not all drawn directly from Benoît's *Roman de Troie*, but they are central to the theme of the love as it relates to the Troy story. The fact that

³⁸ Gower maintains his negative view of Helen the *Traitié* for he refers to her as "*la fole peccheresse Heleine* [the wanton sinner Helen]" (X.3).

they are also illustrated for a manuscript suggests that at least one reader of the *Confessio Amantis* considered them worthy of visual interpretation. For the Tale of Orestes, which presents the punishment of Clytemnestra by her son, the picture illustrates both the violent murder of Agamemnon by Clytemnestra and her brutal punishment at the hands of Orestes (figure 4). Significantly, Egistus is not depicted in the miniature, an omission which minimizes his role in the adulterous love affair. The emphasis is, instead, placed upon Clytemnestra, who is shown in the act of murdering the sleeping Agamemnon. The blood which spills so clearly from Agamemnon's breast as his wife plunges the dagger into him is echoed in the adjacent scene. There, Orestes, gazing directly into his mother's eyes, graphically rips Clytemnestra's breast from her body, an assault to which Genius specifically refers in his poem: "he hire Pappes scholde of tere/ Out of hire brest his oghne hondes" (III.2010-2011). The punishment is not only brutal, but also indicates the permanent breaking of the mother-child bond. By ripping away the breast at which he would have suckled as a child, Orestes effectively destroys a major symbol of Clytemnestra's motherhood. Blood pours from her wound, and an angry dog at their feet appears to bark at the violated woman. The dog is not a detail found in Gower's version of the story; however, the animal often represents faithfulness in the visual arts. Thus, by baring its teeth at Clytemnestra, the dog effectively emphasizes her faithlessness. Like Jason, she too is guilty of "love untrew" (III.1898), having succumbed to the advances of Egistus during "leiser" (III.1907), or idleness.

Gower recounts the Tale of Ulysses and Penelope as an example of "lachesse," or laziness, a subdivision of the sin of sloth. As in the *Heroides*, Penelope writes

Ulysses a letter and accuses him of "lachesse" (IV.154 and 187), for he tarries too long at Troy. The accompanying illumination portrays Penelope, with a lady-in-waiting behind her, in the act of handing the sealed letter to a messenger (figure 5). All three figures gaze upon the letter and gesture with their hands toward it. Surprisingly, the errant Ulysses stands behind the messenger, separated physically from his wife as he too gazes upon the letter. Despite his presence in the miniature, Ulysses is excluded from the scene, for he keeps his hands close by his side as though unwilling to receive the document. His unreceptive posture indicates that, despite Genius' claim that Ulysses hurries home after the Trojan war (IV.224-229), the illuminator has followed classical tradition; Ulysses will, in fact, take many years to return to Ithaca.³⁹

Finally, the illumination for the Tale of Ulysses and Telegonus illustrates both the love affair of Ulysses and Circe and the death of Ulysses by the offspring of that union (figure 6). At the left, the two lovers lie in bed, while, at the right, the fully grown Telegonus is depicted in the act of killing his father. As Ulysses lies dying with Telegonus' spear in his chest, he gestures with his left hand back to the bedroom scene, as though to emphasize that his present state is direct the result of the earlier love tryst. The visual narrative is surprisingly simple and direct, but it does not incorporate the significant details of Gower's version of the story. Like Medea, Calypso and Circe are described as powerful sorceresses. However, they do not use their magic to benefit those whom they love, as Medea does for Jason; instead, they use it to drive their male victims mad with overwhelming desire:

³⁹ François Garnier provides a detailed interpretation of hand gestures in medieval art in *Le Langage de l'Image au Moyen Age*, 2 vols., 2nd edition (Paris: Le Léopard d'Or, 1982).

Thei make him love in such a rage
 And upon hem assote so,
 That thei wol have, er that he go,
 Al that he hath of worldes good (VI.1436–1439).

Calypso and Circe possess an aggressive power more typical of male than of female characters in the *Confessio Amantis*. So strong is their magic that they not only transform mortal men into love-crazed fools in order to gain all their possessions, they also transform literally them into irrational beasts, such as "foules, ... beres, tiges, Apes, oules" (VI.1449-1450). This physical metamorphosis parallels the figurative one of predator/prey which occurs in many of Gower's love stories, especially those of Jason and Medea and of Paris and Helen. Similarly, Calypso and Circe's victims become animals of prey by virtue of their irrational passion; however, in a significant inversion of the theme, the sorceresses are not their quarry but their keepers. They do not love these men and, as a result, fail to fall victim to their nefarious designs; consequently, the women successfully objectify men just as many of their male counterparts in other love episodes of the poem objectify women. However, the two sorceresses prove impotent with respect to Ulysses. They succeed easily in reducing his men to mere beasts, but they cannot bewitch the Greek hero. Ulysses is a more powerful magician, for he drives them both "assote" (VI.1458) and "wilde" (VI.1462). Circe and Calypso are made so passive by his sorcery that he is the one who now possesses "here good and ... here love" (VI.1464). Thus Ulysses departs, leaving Circe pregnant with his child, Telegonus, who ultimately destroys his father. Genius tells the story as an *exemplum* against the use of sorcery in love, a significantly different focus from the one presented by Benoît. Although he notes that Telegonus'

actions result in his reunion with his brother, Genius places the emphasis on the destructive nature of magic when used to manipulate feelings of love.

At the end of the *Confessio Amantis*, Gower envisions a company of lovers parading by him as he recovers from the effects of his confession. The first group, led by Youth, is filled with figures from the story of Troy. Although Amans perceives them to be "glade and blithe" (VIII.2539), they are in fact not happy at all. These lovers are not united by their love, but by their sinfulness in love. Jason does not merely appear with Creusa (VIII.2504-2505); Medea also follows with a group of women similarly deceived by love. She does not stand silently by, but curses him with a "Fy on alle untrewē" (VIII.2566). Troilus accompanies Criseyde, but his happiness is undermined by the ever-present Diomedes (VIII.2531-2535). Paris likewise appears with his beloved Helen (VIII.2529-2530), but they are followed at a distance by Menelaus, grieving his misfortune in love (VIII.2547-2550). Nor is the Greek king alone, for he is accompanied by lovers destroyed by passion, including Achilles and Agamemnon (VIII.2545-2456). Not one figure in the company is able to escape or forget the tragic consequences of his or her love. In such a way, Gower reinforces the connection between erotic passion and sin, for he views the story of Troy as one of love rather than one of war. By disassociating the love episodes from the war narrative, he effectively restructures the Troy story around other tales of love and kingship which exemplify the same sin. Like erotic love, sin is shown to be an overwhelming passion which leads its sufferers away from what is truly good. It is not sinful to love, only to love incorrectly or too much.

If the Troy stories traditionally focus on an historical event of cataclysmic

proportions in which personal desires bear tragic and epic consequences, it seems that Gower is less interested in the subsequent effects of the inner desires and more interested in the desires themselves. As this study of the *Confessio Amantis* has shown, the love experience for men and women is very different. Women are generally objectified by their male lovers. Even seemingly aggressive women, like Medea, Calypso, and Circe, are ultimately reduced by their passion to mere power sources for their male counterparts. Although both men and women fall in love initially by means of their eyes, the female lover is eventually made passive by her gaze, while the male lover is not. Regardless of the validity of his feelings for the woman, he remains capable of manipulating her either by physical force or deceptive means. Thus Jason controls Medea with false words and promises. Despite his love for her, his first concern is the same as that of Benoît's Jason, namely the winning of the Golden Fleece. Gower's Paris also controls Helen with words, but they are genuine declarations of love, very much like those expressed by Benoît's Trojan hero. And so, throughout the *Confessio Amantis*, it is more often the man who sins in love than the woman, resulting in a rather sympathetic presentation of women on Gower's part. In tying the love stories of the poem as romance text to the frame as confessional text, Gower creates a work that is simultaneously sacred and profane. He systematically portrays love as a passion whose function is denaturing both to the divine hierarchy and to women, an almost odd mixture of piety and feminism. The male simply exploits the passion, and by extension sins, for his own benefit.

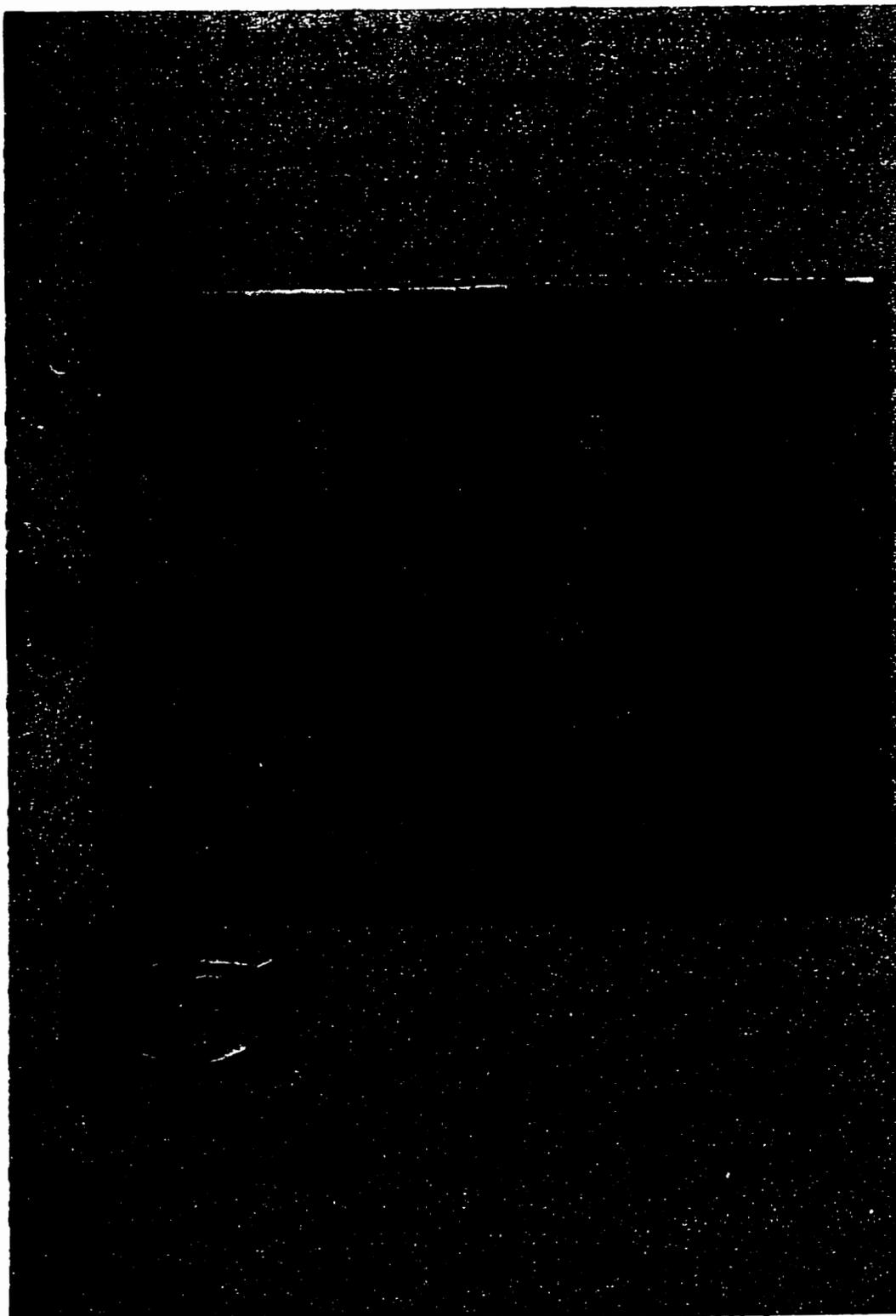


Figure 1 (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M. 126, f. 8v)

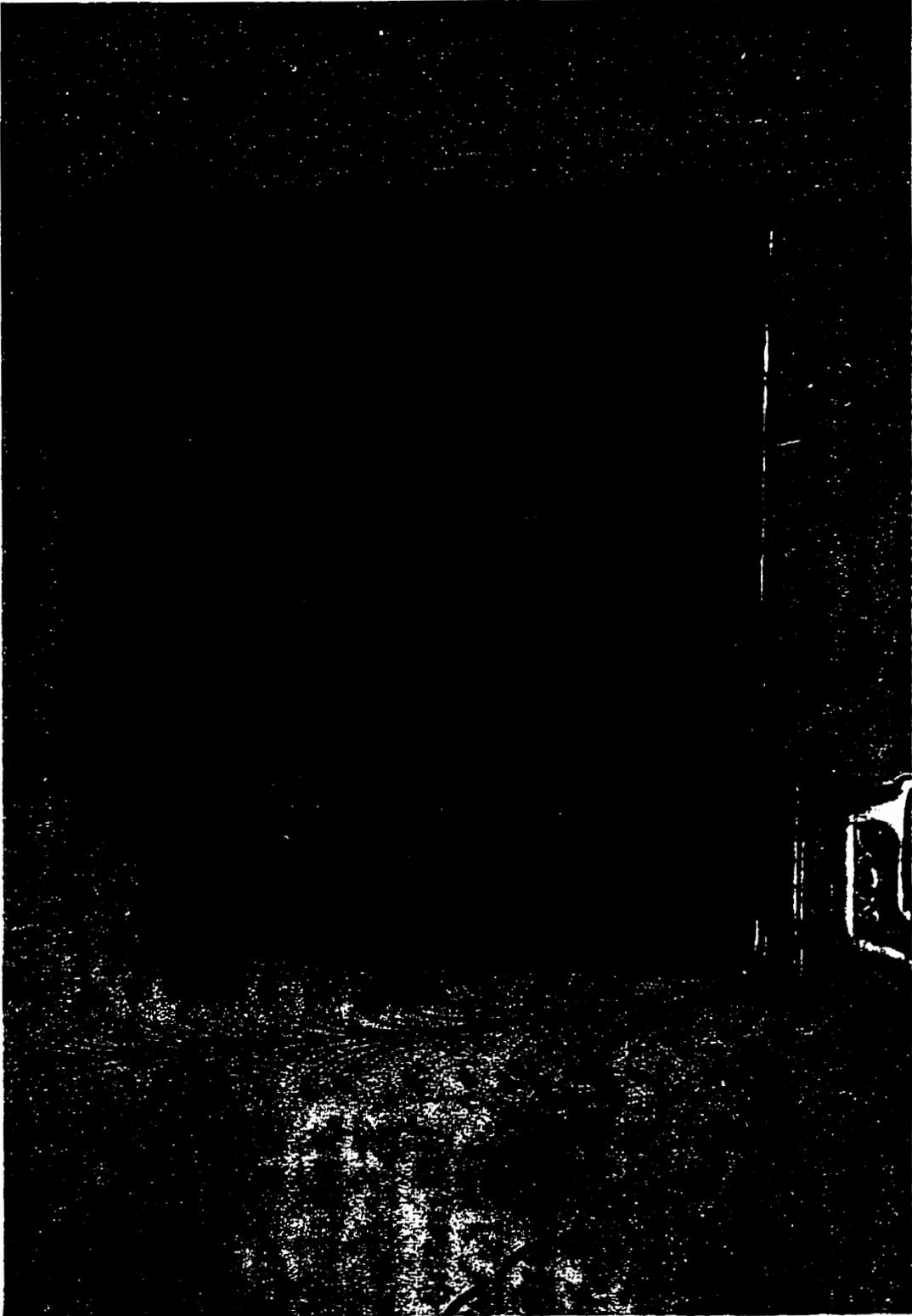


Figure 2 (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M. 126, f. 14v)

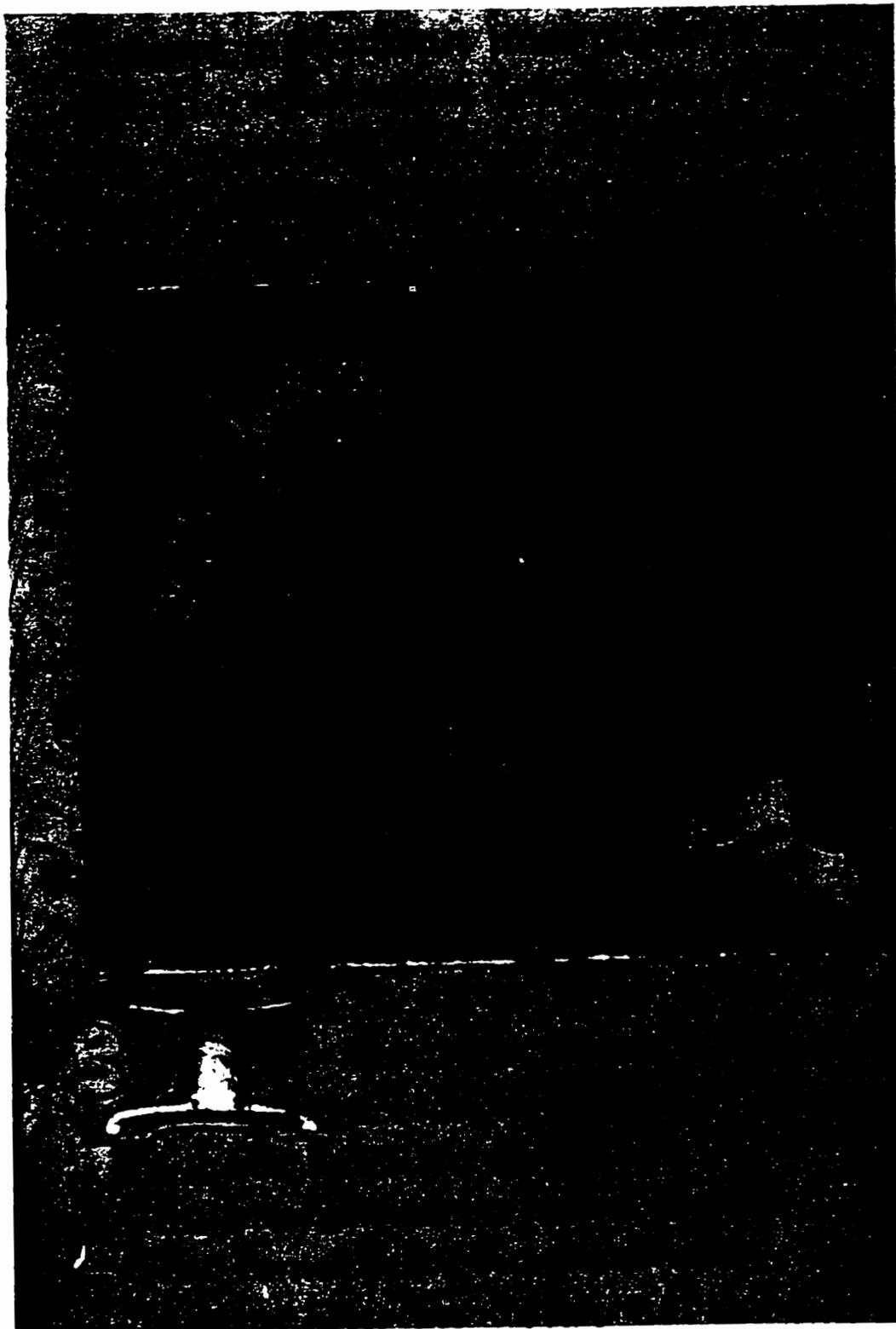


Figure 3 (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M. 126, f. 108 detail)

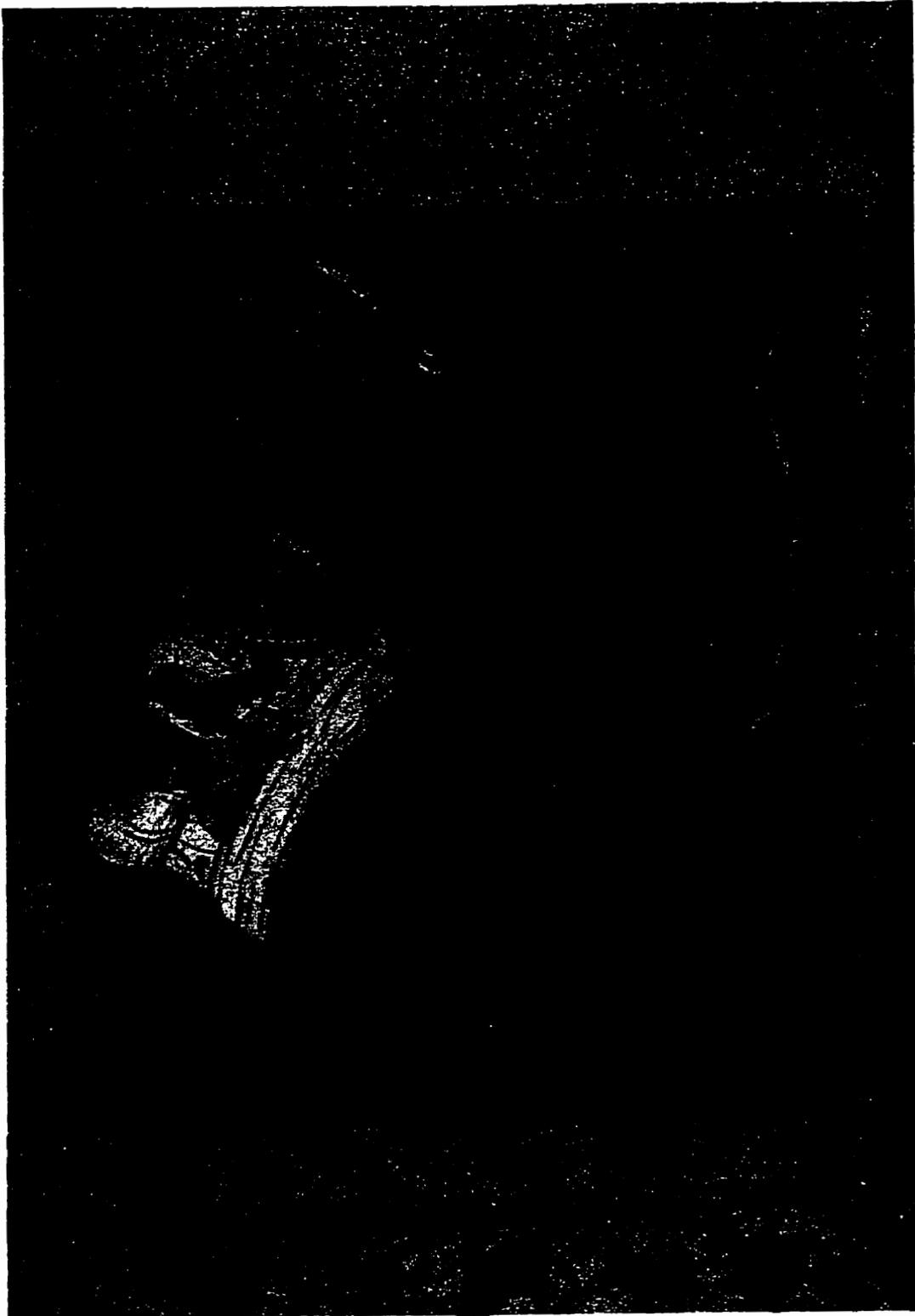


Figure 4 (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M. 126, f. 62 detail)

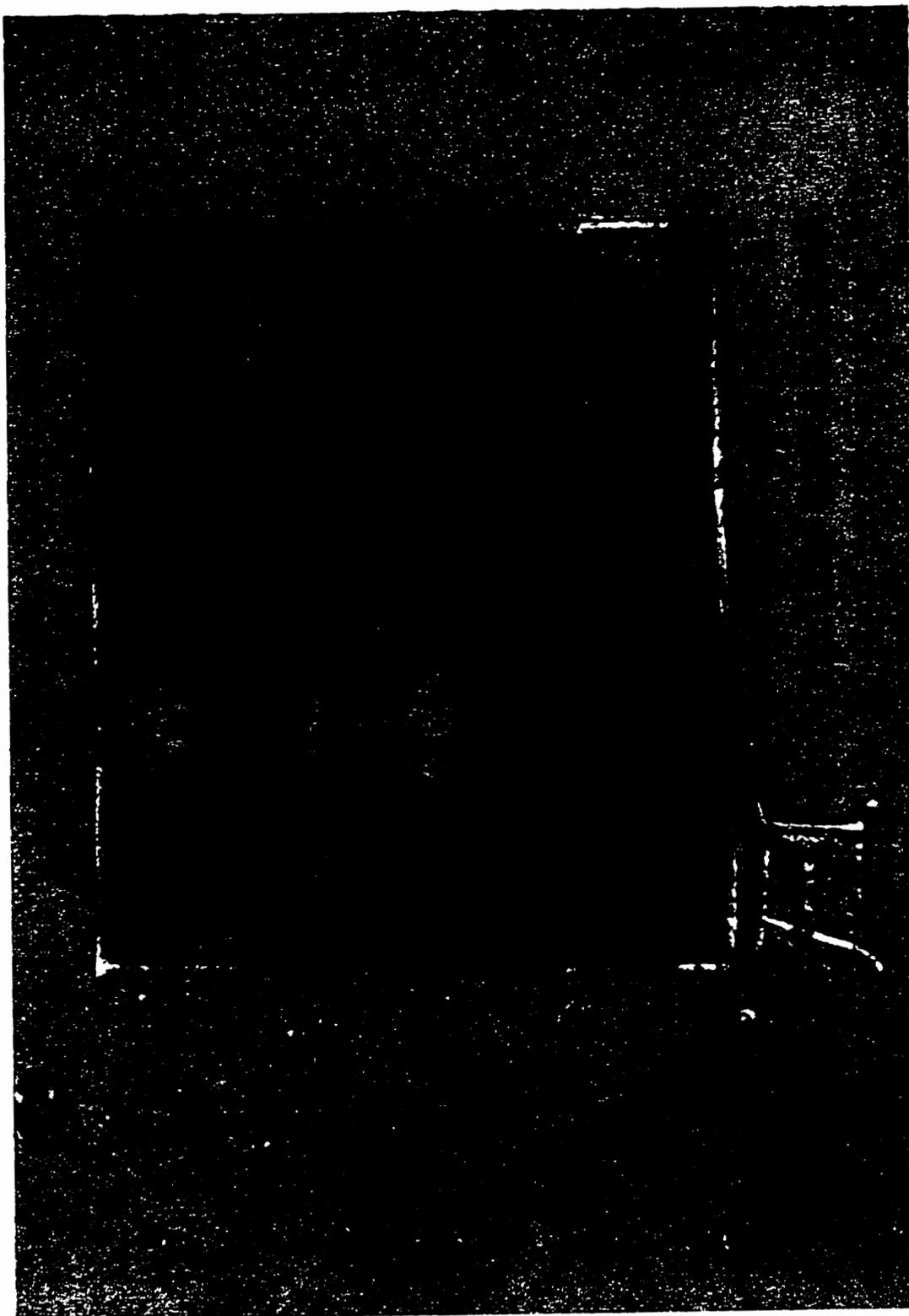


Figure 5 (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M. 126, f. 68v)

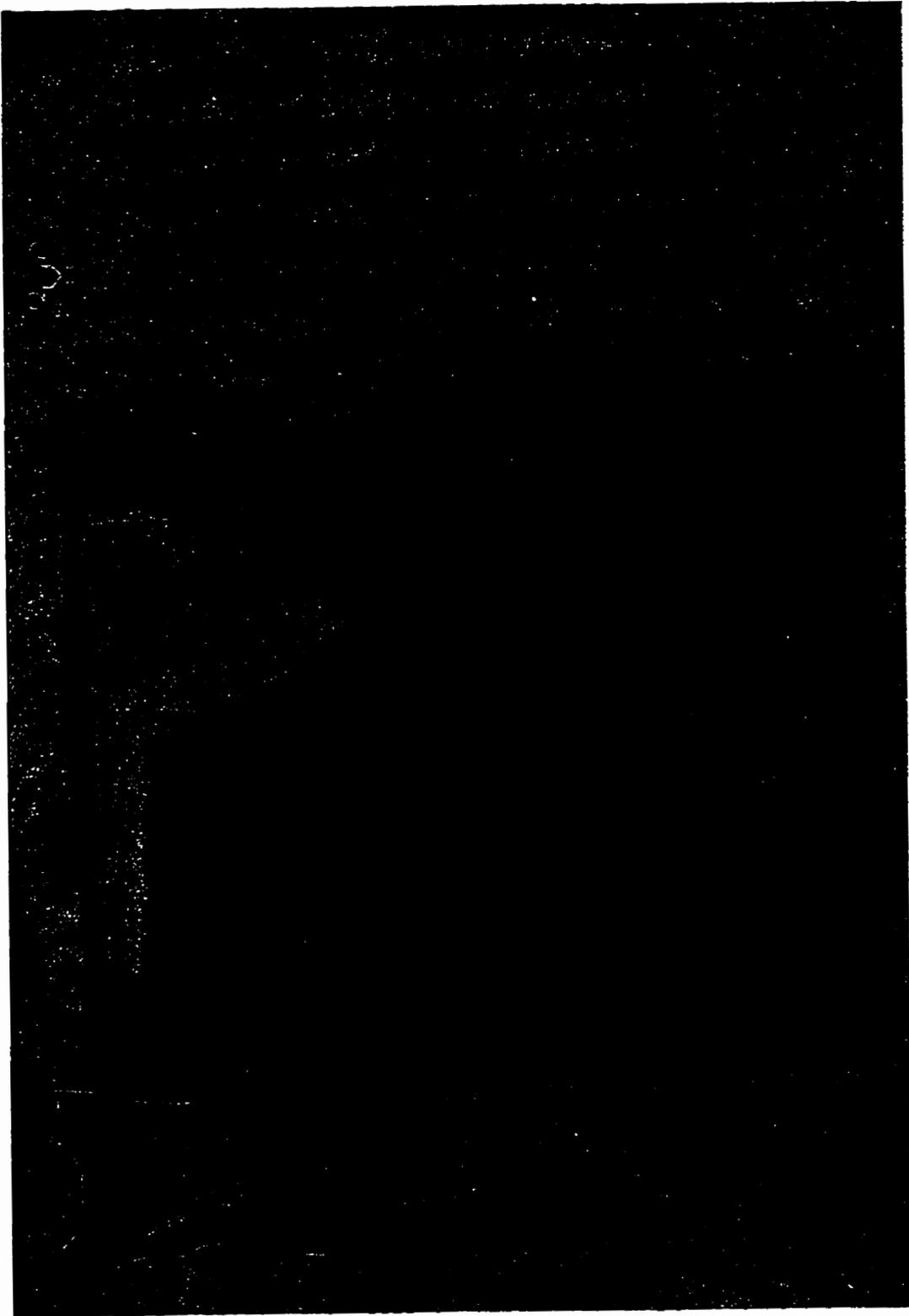


Figure 6 (The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, M. 126, f. 143v detail)

Chapter Four

"God loveth, and to love wol naught werne,
And in this world no lyves creature
Withouten love is worth, or may endure" (III.12-14)

Chaucer Rewrites the Story of Troy

As Sarah Stanbury has documented, both Troilus and Criseyde fall in love by means of their eyes:

Chaucer's most complex development of the imagery of the lover's gaze, however, occurs in *Troilus and Criseyde*, first through the detailed accounts of visual emanations when Troilus falls in love with Criseyde at the temple in Book I, and second through the description of her reciprocal visual and amatory gesture, falling in love with him when she watches him ride by her window in Book 2.¹

She concludes that Troilus, despite his seeming passivity which results from his gaze, still chooses to love, while Criseyde, objectified by her gaze, has no choice but to love. However, in focussing so specifically on the "gaze" in these two episodes, Stanbury ignores other repeated references to "eyes" and "looks" throughout the poem. In addition, she points to the possibility that Criseyde may not return Troilus' look when he first sees her, but fails to note the many other occasions on which characters, and

¹ Stanbury, 226.

in particular Criseyde, avoid or are somehow impeded from seeing. Thus Chaucer's use of the motif of the eye extends considerably beyond the straightforward gaze of lover upon beloved. He continually qualifies the perspective from which the look originates, thereby suggesting a distortion or constraint of the gaze which may affect the interpretation of the perceived image. The "gaze" for Chaucer is, therefore, much more than the simple visualization of an object. Whether the observer sees from a distance, from an elevation, through some sort of frame, be it window or otherwise, or not at all is equally important.

Significantly, Troilus is initially defined by his gaze rather than by his words, for he first appears in the poem in the act of visually surveying the crowd of male lovers in the temple as he mocks them for their "folye" (l.194). The God of Love, offended by Troilus' ridicule, shoots him with an arrow, thereby making the Trojan hero "subgit unto love" (l.231) by means of the very sense with which he scorns other lovers.² He has accused them of being "blynde" (l.202) to their own foolish behaviour. Now Chaucer emphasizes Troilus' inability to "see" the recklessness of his taunting words with the invocation, "O blynde world, O blynde entencioun!" (l.211), which follows immediately upon his wounding by Love. Troilus too has been foolishly blind, but to the power *eros* yields. In a fitting punishment, the God of Love makes Troilus' eye specifically susceptible to love. He will not simply fall in love, but "with a look his herte wex a-fere"

² I am not entirely convinced, as Stanbury is (229), that Cupid shoots his arrow into Troilus' eye; while Chaucer notes that the hero's brow is raised in derision before Cupid raises his bow in anger and that Troilus will eventually succumb to love by virtue of his gaze, Chaucer does not say specifically that the arrow pierces Troilus' eye, only that it strikes "sodeynly" and "atte fulle" (l.209).

(l.229).³ Thus, as the Trojan hero continues to wander the temple "lokyng" (l.269) at women, he suddenly spies Criseyde:

And upon cas bifel that thourgh a route
His eye percede, and so depe it wente,
Til on Criseyde it smot, and ther it stente (l.271-3).

There is, without a doubt, a certain aggressiveness and even violence to Troilus' look. His eye does not merely rove over the crowd, but pierces through it and deeply, a metaphor which presents his glance as a sword. The sword image continues with his envisioning of Criseyde, for his eye "smites," or strikes, her before halting on her visual form.⁴

Significantly, Chaucer does not depict Troilus' look as penetrating Criseyde's body the same way that it penetrates the crowd; rather, his glance strikes her and immediately stops, a description which suggests that Criseyde is somehow unaffected by his gaze.⁵ She is struck, but not cut or apparently harmed in any way. Instead, Troilus is the one rendered transfixed, or "astoned" (l.274), by her image.⁶ Bolstered

³ Chaucer departs from his major source here, for Boccaccio only says that love will "transfix" (*traffisse*) Troilo more than anyone else before he departs the temple; he does not specifically mention Troilo's eye as the means by which the hero will capitulate to love [Giovanni Boccaccio, *Il filostrato*, vol. 53 of *Garland Library of Medieval Literature*, trans. Robert P. Roberts and Anna Bruni Seldis (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1986), Part I, Canto 25].

⁴ I would disagree with Sarah Stanbury that Troilus' gaze pierces Criseyde's isolation (226-227) since there is no indication that Criseyde is aware of or affected by his look.

⁵ The similarities between Troilus' visualization of Criseyde in the temple and Achilles' of Polyxena at Hector's tomb in the *Roman de Troie* are discussed in Stephen A. Barney's notes to *Troilus and Criseyde* in *The Riverside Chaucer*.

⁶ Elaine Tuttle Hansen considers Troilus' gaze to have penetrated the crowd and Criseyde with clear sexual innuendo, although she recognizes that his look merely on "fixes" on Criseyde and does not seem to have pierced her. The result, however, is a paralysis on

by the God of Love who fills the "subtile stremes of hire yen" (I.305), Criseyde's gaze becomes the active agent, reflecting back on Troilus. So strong is the effect of her look that Troilus "felte dyen" (I.306) as his body is now invaded by the female gaze. His assertive masculine eye is rendered submissive, for, upon seeing his beloved, he cannot direct his eye elsewhere or close it for very long (I.301). Time and time again, his eye is continually drawn back to Criseyde (I.313-15). Troilus is literally mesmerized by her. Nor does her effect on him end with the physical consummation of the relationship. When Troilus awakens the next morning, Chaucer immediately observes that "nevere his look ne bleynte from hire face" (III.1346). So taken is Troilus by the physical form which he admired so much from afar that he spontaneously and repeatedly kisses Criseyde's two eyes, the "humble nettes," as he calls them, that have so successfully ensnared him (III.1352-55). However, Criseyde's nets are not as unassuming as Troilus claims, for Chaucer later reveals that they are "knotte[d] ... Aboute his herte" (III.1732-33). Just as love "bigan his fetheres so to lyme" (I.353) with an overwhelming passion for Criseyde when he first sees her, now Criseyde is portrayed as the predator who has caught her quarry in a trap from which he cannot escape.

Chaucer prepares the reader for the role of the gaze in Troilus' initial encounter with Criseyde by emphasizing the constant admiring glances which the young knights give the women who attend the temple. These men do not devote themselves to prayers, but to the "Byholding ay the ladies of the town" (I.186). Chaucer explicitly

Troilus' part [*Chaucer and the Fictions of Gender* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992): 145].

characterizes the male look as one of aggression, for each man "lete his eighen baiten/ On any womman that koude espye" (l.192-3). The verb "baiten," with its meaning of "to feast," casts the male eye as a devourer of the female image, suggesting that his gaze not only overpowers the perceived object, but also consumes it.⁷ However, Troilus, who is already under the control of *eros* even before he sees his beloved, does not "baiten" on Criseyde's image at her expense; he does so only at his own. He is first overwhelmed by her physical presence, for "nevere thought hym seen so good a syghte" (l.294). Upon visualizing her, he at once responds physically to her glance:

And of hire look in him ther gan to quyken
 So gret desir and such affeccioun,
 That in his herte botme gan to stiken
 Of hir his fixe and depe impressioun (l.298).

These physiological details are not found in Boccaccio's version of the scene. As Chaucer presents the episode, Criseyde's "look" penetrates the Trojan hero and, more importantly, her very image impresses itself upon his heart.⁸ His internalizing of her image continues even after he departs the temple, for, once back in his private chamber, he makes "a mirour of his mynde" (l.365) in which he mentally envisions his beloved's physical form from the likeness stored within his heart. When Criseyde departs for the Greek camp, Troilus will again turn to his memory in an effort to reconstruct a visual effigy, albeit only an internal one, of his beloved. He rereads her

⁷ The alternate meanings of "to hook" and "to torment" for "baiten" are just as suggestive with respect to the male gaze,

⁸ Although Stephen Barney points to several possible sources for this description, including elsewhere in Boccaccio, he fails to note Benoît's description of Polyxena's image being "written" and "painted" upon Achilles' heart (*Troie*.17556 and 18082).

past letters and even visits her empty house and other Trojan landmarks which remind him of her with the hope of:

Refiguring hire shap, hire wommanhede,
Withinne his herte, and every word or ded
That passed was (V.473-5).

However, the result is a poor substitute, for Troilus only falls further into despair.

Criseyde remains impervious to Troilus' gaze during the encounter in the temple, for their eyes do not even meet. As she stands among the crowd, she does not look directly at him, but "a litel aside" (l.291) as though glancing past him unawares. Her seemingly oblique gaze still manages to pierce Troilus, for he is "with hire look thorough-shoten and thorough-darted" (l.325). However, it is important to note that Criseyde succeeds in wounding Troilus without knowing or even intending to do so. Her effect on the Trojan hero is purely unconscious on her part, a significant point if one wishes to attribute blame to Criseyde for her subsequent actions. By virtue of *eros*, who uses her as his agent, Criseyde wields a power over Troilus of which she is completely unaware. Therefore, she cannot be wholly blamed for the events to follow; to a certain extent, she is merely a pawn in the vengeance enacted upon Troilus by the God of Love.⁹ While Troilus actively turns his gaze upon Criseyde, she is continually depicted as turning her gaze away from others. Unlike Boccaccio's heroine, who does not look out from the crowd of women among whom she stands defiantly:

Piacque quell'atto a Troiolo e 'l tomare
ch'ella fe' 'n sé alquanto sdegnosetto,

⁹ Similarly, Criseyde becomes a pawn in Pandarus' machinations of the love affair with Troilus.

quasi dicesse: "E' non ci si puó stare" (l.28),¹⁰

[And as she turned to herself again, that act -- somewhat disdainful as if to say, "No one may stand here" -- was pleasing to Troilo,]

Chaucer's Criseyde exerts an angled look to those around her. Her gaze does not state a fact, but merely asks, "What, may I nat stonden here?" (l.292), as though she feels forced to respond to an unseen or unspoken challenge.

The description of her look being "a litel aside" is characteristic of Criseyde. She often deliberately turns her eyes away, particularly when confronted by a situation which she has difficulty facing. Just as she conveys a sense of self-consciousness with respect to her physical position in this opening scene, so she later communicates her trepidation regarding Pandarus' news by casting "hire eighen down" (ll.142 and 253) each time he begins to speak of it. Criseyde's eye does not fall on him "upon cas," or by chance, as Troilus' does on her; rather, she specifically directs her gaze upon the returning warrior as he rides back into Troy in response to the men in the streets who cry, "Se, Troilus" (ll.612) and to her household who shout, "A, go we se" (ll.615). In contrast to Boccaccio, who presents this moment as one of mutual gazing (*Fil.*2.82), Chaucer juxtaposes Troilus' modest eyes "caste down" (ll.648) to Criseyde's looking down upon him from her window:

Criseyda gan al his chere asprien,
And leet it so softe in hire herte synke,
That to hireself she seyde, "Who yaf me drynke?" (ll.649-51).

Once again, Chaucer emphasizes the fact that the two do not make eye contact. Like

¹⁰ The Italian text of *Il filostrato* is from Vincenzo Pemicone's edition which accompanies apRoberts and Seldis' translation.

Troilus, who first gazes upon her without her knowing, Criseyde now does the same to him. Significantly, his appearance penetrates her heart and provides a form of metaphorical nourishment, for it slakes her thirst. However, the comparison of Troilus' "chere" to a "drynke" does not hold the same sense of aggression that the association of the female image and "baiten" does. The emphasis is on the quenching of the observer's figurative thirst rather than on the ingesting of the visual image. This episode also reveals Criseyde's surprising ability to control her gaze, for she is not "astoned" by his visual image as Troilus is by hers. She can, at will, turn away from his satiating appearance and retreat into her domain.

More noteworthy perhaps is Criseyde's physical positioning at the window. Although it has been argued that her vantage point gives her visual authority and that the window serves as a frame for her gaze, thereby centralizing it for the reader,¹¹ Criseyde does not recognize such empowerment. Instead, she is embarrassed to realize that this man is the one of whom Pandarus has spoken. As a result, she blushes (II.652) and quickly withdraws from her window vantage point:

for pure ashamed, she
 Gan in hire hed to pulle, and that as faste,
 Whil he and alle the peple forby paste (II.656-58).

Unlike Troilus, she has the ability to end her look by withdrawing into her room. While Troilus makes no effort to disguise his amorous gaze upon her in the temple, Criseyde consciously attempts to hide her presence and her look from both Troilus and the people below. Her reaction to his visual image also contrasts with that of Boccaccio's

¹¹ Stanbury, 234-236.

Criseida. Rather than being totally overwhelmed by passionate desire, Criseyde is simply "enclayne[d]/ To like hym first" (ll.674-75). Chaucer pointedly vindicates her actions against those readers who would claim that "she so lightly loved Troilus" if she loves him "Right for the firste syghte" (ll.668-69). No such accusation or defence is ever given with respect to Troilus. So it seems that Chaucer is trying to preserve Criseyde's good name even before she proves unfaithful. However, in doing so, Chaucer also suggests that "sudeyn" love is more acceptable in a man than in a woman.

Criseyde's position at the window also emphasizes her self-imposed isolation throughout the poem.¹² Whereas Helen, a foreign queen, is presented as accepted by Trojan society, Criseyde never appears truly comfortable with her circumstances. From her first appearance, Chaucer presents her as an isolated character. She is a "widewe" and "allone/ Of any frend to whom she dorste hir mone" (l.97-8). She has been abandoned by her father and, as a result, is forced to beg Hector for her life and position, even though she is a native Trojan. Once granted clemency, Criseyde does not enter into society, but rather withdraws into her home where she remains "stille" (l.126). Chaucer continually describes her as seeking solitude and "stillness" throughout the poem. Thus, when Troilus first sees her in the temple, Criseyde is effectively isolated visually not just by means of his gaze, but also by means of her appearance and stance. While all the other women are "Ful wel arayed" (l.167) in bright clothes, Criseyde stands among them in her "widewes habit blak" (l.170),

¹² David Aers views Criseyde's isolation as an essential part of her vulnerability ["Criseyde: Woman in Medieval Society," *The Chaucer Review* 13 (1979): 181].

matchless in beauty but also visually separated from them by her somber clothing. Her posture also sets her apart, for "she stood ful lowe and stille allone,/ Byhynden other folk, in litel brede,/ And neigh the dore" (l.178-80).

Despite her appearance of self-assurance (l.182), Criseyde's body language indicates a self-conscious timidity and insecurity. She does not stand, as Boccaccio's heroine does, daring anyone to approach her, but quietly and alone. She occupies only a little space behind the crowd, rather than functioning as part of it, and, more importantly, she tarries near the door. Her position so close to the doorway suggests that Criseyde remains ever-watchful in case she has need to flee this public and unprotected setting. Similarly, she stands in the window looking at Troilus from her house, crossing the visual threshold only momentarily with her eye. She refrains from physically crossing the barrier of her home to join the crowded streets and, instead, purposely pulls away from the "eye" on the outside world which the window offers here, lest she be seen. Significantly, the window has become more than a frame through which to see out; it is also an opening through which others, the reader included, may see in. As such, it represents a very real threat to Criseyde's self-imposed isolation. In both the temple and her home, she remains ever poised on the threshold, intrigued by what is beyond but unwilling to cross over; it is a physical position which effectively parallels her emotional hesitancy to love Troilus.

At the beginning of Book Two, when Pandarus comes to see her, Criseyde is still within the protection of her home, sitting with two of her women in a "paved parlour" (82). She does not greet her uncle's prospective news with openness, but rather, as has been discussed earlier, turns away her gaze and casts her eyes down. This self-

conscious gesture indicates a retreat within herself. Her spiritual withdrawal soon becomes a reality, for she responds to Pandarus' departure by retiring further into the house and into a smaller physical space in order to contemplate his words:

Criseyde aros, no lenger she ne stente,
 But streght into hire closet wente anon,
 And set hire doun as styлле as any stone,
 And every word gan up and down to wynde
 That he had seyde, as it com hire to mynde (II.598-602).

Just as when she left Hector, Criseyde becomes physically immobile. Her passive physical state is also juxtaposed to her active mind, which races with all that Pandarus has said. Thus she remains in her room "allone" (II.610) until startled out of her reverie by the cries from the street announcing Troilus' arrival in the city. Although she briefly goes to look at Troilus, Criseyde soon returns to her isolation, for she does not simply move away from the window, but once again sits alone with "hire hed ful lowe" (II.689), an unapproachable figure even for the reader.

Throughout the poem, Criseyde only leaves the safety of her home under duress, as in the case of seeing Hector, or in the company of others. Thus she hears Antigone's song not within the confines of her abode, but in her garden where she went:

with hire neces thre,
 And up and down ther made many a wente --
 Flexippe, she, Tharbe, and Antigone --
 To pleyen that it joye was to see;
 And other of hire wommen, a gret route,
 Hire folowede in the gardyn al aboute (II.814-19).

As in the temple, Criseyde tries to subsume herself within the crowd of women; however, no longer protected by walls and a series of inner chambers, she is

susceptible to external influences. In this outdoor setting as she listens to the words of Antigone's song, Criseyde is suddenly vulnerable to love's onslaught. This time, it is her subconscious mind that races with thoughts of Troilus. As she sleeps in her room that night, the lyrics of the song are transformed into a frightening dream for Criseyde:

And as she slep, anonright tho hire mette
 How that an egle, fethered whit as bon,
 Under hire brest his longe clawes sette,
 And out hire herte he rente, and that anon,
 And dide his herte into hire brest to gon --
 Of which she nought agroos, ne nothyng smerte --
 And forth he fleigh, with herte left for herte (II.925-31).

The lovesick, prostrate Troilus of Book One is transformed by Criseyde's mind into an active, aggressive eagle which tears out her heart and sets his own in its place. Although the event is specifically free of pain for the woman, it is noteworthy that Criseyde's conception of the violent act is solely in terms of herself. She does not envision the eagle's removal of his heart from his own breast, nor is it entirely clear that the bird places her heart within himself.¹³ Still resistant to love, Criseyde perceives herself as a victim of the predatory male.

When he brings Troilus' letter to Criseyde, Pandarus does not give it to her in the house. Rather, he pointedly requests that the two of them go out into the garden before he tells her all the news:

¹³ The interpretation of the dream as an exchange of hearts is one posited by John Leyerle in his essay, "The Heart and the Chain," *The Learned and the Lewed*, ed. Larry D. Benson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974): 113-145; although Chaucer will later make this exchange clear in the narrative, Criseyde's dream does not indicate that she views such a transaction taking place.

With that they wenten arm in arm yfeere
 Into the garden from the chaumbre down;
 And whan that he so fer was that the sown
 Of that he spak no man heren myght,
 He seyde hire thus, and out the lettre plighte (II.1116-20).

Pandarus takes Criseyde by the arm as they depart the house together; he leads her far enough away that no one can hear them speak; only once he is assured that he has removed the woman from the security of her abode and her household, does he present Troilus' letter. Despite his efforts, Criseyde so resists taking the document that Pandarus is forced to shove the letter down the front of her dress.¹⁴ The altercation becomes, in fact, a comic reenactment of Criseyde's dream, for Troilus' letter, as the physical manifestation of his heart's desires, is placed in a fairly aggressive fashion at Criseyde's heart by his proxy, Pandarus. Criseyde, however, will not read the document outdoors and, once again, returns "streght into hire chambre" (II.1173) before opening it. Her need for privacy and enclosure continues as she retreats alone "into a closet" (II.1216) to write her reply.

Given Criseyde's preference for closed, private spaces, Pandarus cleverly engineers the love affair by using similar settings outside of her home in order to lull the woman into a false sense of security. Consequently, she first meets Troilus under Pandarus' watchful eye in the Trojan prince's bedchamber at Deiphebus' house. Having succeeded in manoeuvring his niece on that occasion through several rooms to the interior of the building, Pandarus concocts a much more elaborate scheme for the consummation act. He has Criseyde come to his own house for the evening and

¹⁴ In Boccaccio's version of this scene, Criseida first resists taking the letter, but eventually accepts it and tucks it in the front of her dress (II.110-113).

convinces her to stay the night with her women. Like a director of a stage production, Pandarus sets Criseyde in his "litel closet yonder" (III.663) while her women "layen at the dore withoute" (III.745). Pandarus, meanwhile, makes a point of saying that he will be sleeping in the "outer house allone" where he will be "wardein" to her and her women (III.664-5). Thus, from Criseyde's perspective, she is well protected in her small sleeping chamber with members of her household only a step away on the other side of the door and her uncle guarding the outer rooms. She even goes to the trouble of specifically asking Pandarus if Troilus is somewhere in the house, but her uncle dispells her concern with an easy lie (III.569-74).

However, her uncle's house is nothing like her own. When he "softely ... shette" the door (III.749), she truly believes that he is shutting out any threat to her. However, Criseyde does not recognize that danger can also come from within. With the closing of the door, Pandarus effectively traps her inside. She is completely unaware of the tiny "stewe" beyond her bedchamber in which Troilus has been waiting and spying upon her since midnight (III.601-2). His observation of Criseyde through a "litel window" (601) becomes an inversion of her first viewing of the Trojan prince as he enters the city. The large aperture of her window is replaced by a tiny peephole, a perspective which intensifies Troilus' secret gaze. Oblivious to his presence, Criseyde does not realize that her private space is already visually invaded. It is soon physically invaded by Troilus, but significantly not by the conventional approach of the bedroom door; instead, Troilus must use a "secre trappe-dore" (III.759) to reach his lady. His entrance in such a clandestine manner proves the only way to win Criseyde as his own.

Like the heroines of the *Roman de Troie*, Criseyde is undeniably cautious with

respect to matters of love. Although she favours Troilus upon seeing him, Criseyde for the first time expresses her concerns aloud in a psychological debate with herself.¹⁵ She comments how Troilus is worthy (ll.704), of "thewes goode" (ll.723), "nat nyce" (ll.723), and second only to Hector in honour (ll.739-40); yet, Criseyde also fears his very masculinity and power:

Ek wel woot I my kinges 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 stonde in worse plit (ll.708-12).

She recognizes that Troilus' position as a man and a prince would allow him to take her, a widow without a protector, at his will. In addition, Criseyde is concerned that, even if he loves her now, he will not do so forever, since "Men loven wommen al biside hire leve,/ And whan hem leste namore, lat hem byleve" (ll.734-5). She goes on to note her independence as a widow, free from the demands and restrictions of a husband (750-56), but, having stated her fears of responding to Troilus' love, she also recognizes her own sexual desires, for she is "naught religious" (ll.759). In a matter of seconds, she decides that loving this worthy knight would still keep her "honour" and her "name" and very likely "do [her] no shame" (ll.762-3), all values held in high esteem by Benoît's Briseida.¹⁶ However, Criseyde's references to "honour" and "shame" seem

¹⁵ In contrast, Boccaccio describes Criseida as completely overwhelmed by Troilo's appearance and reciprocating gaze without any reservations, for: "*E sì subitamente presa fue,/ che sopra ogni altro bene lui disia* [And so suddenly was she taken that she desired him above every other good]" (ll.83).

¹⁶ Criseyde's concern with the binary values of "honour" and "shame" are not expressed by her Italian counterpart in this same scene.

to trigger a physiological reaction within her, for she almost passes out with sudden fear (II.770). Ever indecisive, Criseyde changes her mind and again. She becomes determined not to love Troilus, believing that he will be "untrewe" (II.786), commit "tresoun" (II.793) against her, and stop loving her in order to love anew (II.788). Ironically, she accuses Troilus in his absence of all the offences that she will ultimately commit against him.

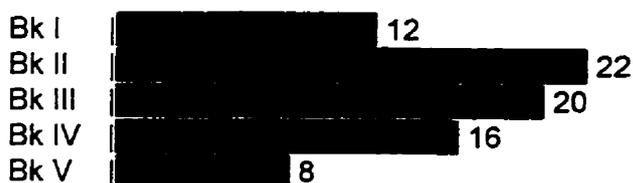
Criseyde's concern with "honour" in this episode provides considerable insight into her personal motivation. While Troilus suffers the ravaging torments of erotic desire lying prostrate on his bed, Criseyde is less obsessed with love than with "honour." She is initially depicted by Chaucer pleading with Hector because of her father's "shame, his falseness, and tresoun" against Troy (I.107); moved by the beautiful woman's complaint, the Trojan prince willingly grants her "onor" (I.120), thus allowing her to remain in Troy a free and respected citizen. The question of honour arises again when Pandarus first reveals Troilus' overwhelming love to Criseyde. Although she promises to help cure Troilus of his morbid passion, she insists on preserving her honour at all costs, saying that she must keep her "honour" (II.468), that she will treat Troilus "in honour" (I.472), and that she will only help "[her] honour sauf" (I.480).¹⁷ The repetition of her desire for honour, regardless of the price, emphasizes the importance of the attribute for her, even if the price is love. She will once again stress the need for her honour to be "sauf" (III.159) when she encounters Troilus in his sickroom at Deiphebus' house. Although she gazes "Ful esily and ful debonairly"

¹⁷ In Boccaccio's version of this scene, Criseida mentions her "*onor* [honour]" only once (II.48).

(III.156) upon the invalid, she is not overwhelmed by his physical presence; she agrees to accept his love-service, but not at the expense of her honour.

Of the seventy-eight references to "honour" in the poem, thirty-seven, or almost half, refer directly to Criseyde, spoken by Chaucer, Troilus, Pandarus, or the lady herself.¹⁸ It is a significant number, particularly in contrast to other dominant images in the poem. Even more interesting is the distribution of the seventy-eight references throughout the poem. The following histogram, or distribution, graph illustrates the allocation of vocabulary relating to "honor" throughout the poem according to book:

Figure 1: Frequency of "Honour" References in *Troilus and Criseyde*



Total: 78.

The numerical values at the end of each bar are the number of occurrences of the selected vocabulary per book; the total listed at the end is the total number of occurrences in the poem. What this graph does not take into account is both the speaker and the relative length of each book in proportion to the number of occurrences of the selected word or words. For example, a large total for a particular book has more meaning if the book represents one of the shorter texts comprising the whole work.

Not surprisingly, Book One, the shortest of the five books, has relatively few

¹⁸ "Honour" words include "honour," "honoure," "honouren," and "honored" as well as their opposites of "dishonour," "shame," "shamed," and "shames."

references to "honour." As the section which provides Criseyde with the least opportunity to express her feelings and concerns, this result is not too surprising. The greatest frequency of "honour" references occurs, predictably, in Book Two, for there Criseyde undergoes the most pressure and personal uncertainty with respect to her relationship with Troilus. "Honour" continues to be a relatively frequent theme in the next two books, for Criseyde worries greatly about her honour in the consummation episode and with respect to her imminent departure to the Greek camp. However, the most interesting result appears with Book Five. It is the longest book, yet the frequency of "honour" references is less than that of Book One. Since Book Five describes Criseyde's faithless change of heart as she abandons Troilus in favour of Diomedes' attentions, the reader might well expect issues of "honour" to be a significant focus, especially for Criseyde, who has been so preoccupied with issues of honour in the three earlier books. Instead, the distribution graph suggests that "honour" is not, surprisingly, an important concern for Criseyde as she transfers her affections from one man to another. A close reading of the text supports this observation. Although Criseyde makes reference to her shame and dishonour in Book Five, even acknowledging that she "dishonours" Troilus with her faithlessness (V.1066), she does not dwell on it.

In contrast to Troilus, who is overwhelmed by the physical symptoms of *amor hereos*, Criseyde is not so afflicted by her visual perception of him. Instead, she is defined by her overwhelming apprehension for her position and honour throughout the poem. When we first see Criseyde, she is in the midst of appealing to Hector "ful sore

in drede" (l.95) and "Wel neigh out of hir wit for sorwe and fere" (l.108) of her status as a traitor's daughter. Chaucer's emphasis on her extreme agitation in this opening scene is significant, for she is repeatedly associated with the passion of fear throughout the poem. In commenting on Criseyde's seemingly heartfelt parting from Troilus, C.S. Lewis notes:

If it be asked how this sincerity and unselfishness in the earlier Criseyde is compatible with her subsequent treachery, we can reply only by a further consideration of her character. Fortunately Chaucer has so emphasized the ruling passion of his heroine, that we cannot mistake it. It is Fear – fear of loneliness, of old age, of death, of love, and of hostility; of everything, indeed, that can be feared. And from this Fear springs the only positive passion which can be permanent in such a nature; the pitiable longing, more childlike than womanly, for protection, for some strong and stable thing that will hide her away and take the burden from her shoulders.¹⁹

Thus Criseyde does not go to the temple to flirt and gossip as others do; rather, she stands in a little doorway "undre shames drede" (l.180), as though the lintel under which she stands has become the physical manifestation of her fear. When she learns from Pandarus that Troilus loves her, she is moved not by reciprocating desire, but by fear. She calls out to Athena to protect her, saying "Thow in this dredful cas for me purveye,/ For so astoned am I that I deye" (ll.426-27). In an inversion of Troilus' reaction to seeing her, Criseyde is now transfixed and feels as though she dies, but from overwhelming dread, not love. She is, Chaucer tells us, the "ferfulleste wight"

¹⁹ *The Allegory of Love: A Study in Medieval Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1936; rpt. 1990): 185.

(II.450). Unlike Troilus, for whom love and death have become binary values,²⁰ fear and death are hers, for she does not almost "starf" for love, but for "feere" (II.449). Criseyde expresses explicitly her apprehension upon learning that Troilus loves her and prays to God that she not lose her honour as she so "drede[s]" will happen (II.480-82).

It is in such a state that Criseyde withdraws into her closet to think about all that Pandarus has revealed to her. As she sits and considers her resistance to loving any man, Chaucer notes:

but whan that she
Was ful avysed, tho fond she right nought
Of peril why she ought afered be (II.604-6).

Calm and protected in her inner sanctum from the world around her, Criseyde cannot understand why she is so fearful. However, just as she lowers her eyes when discomfited by a situation, so she reacts with anxiety every time. That is why she "for feere almost ... gan to falle" (II.770) at the moment she first contemplates loving Troilus. So intense is her continual apprehension that her feelings penetrate her heart in a manner which echoes the imprinting of her image upon Troilus' heart: "And with an other thought hire herte quaketh;/ Thari slepeth hope, and after drede awaketh" (II.810). Troilus' love for her only fills her with more trepidation. The personification of "drede" as a sleeper who awakens in Criseyde's heart suggests that her fears have never really left her, but rather lain dormant, awaiting her despair to summon them.

²⁰ For a thorough study of the "dying-for-love" topos in *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Karen M. Arthur's "A TACT Analysis of the Language of Death in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Computer-Based Chaucer Studies*, ed. Ian Lancashire, CCH Working Papers 3 (Toronto: Centre for Computing in the Humanities, University of Toronto, 1993), and "Speculum Mortis: Reflections on Chivalry and Courtly Society in the Age of Chaucer," Ph.D., University of Toronto, 1994.

Thus it is with a "dredful herte" (II.1101) that she awaits the reason for Pandarus' subsequent visit. Not surprisingly, Criseyde cannot mask her apprehensive nature well, for Pandarus is clearly aware of her typical reaction to the unexpected. As he begins to reveal Troilus' love to her early on in Book Two, Pandarus anticipates her apprehension at what he is about to say, for he prefaces his divulgence with the admonition: "Beth naught agast, ne quaketh naught! Wherto?/ Ne chaungeth naught for fere so your hewe" (II.302-3). Again fear brings out physiological symptoms in Criseyde which parallel those of the lovestruck Troilus. Enthralled by his love for Criseyde, Troilus similarly "loste his hewe" sixty times a day (I.441) and even describes his changing complexion as the death of "hele and hewe/ And lif" (I.461-62).

Significantly, Criseyde's fear does not disappear until Book Three. At first resistant to Troilus' suit, she wishes to give him only her visual image and not herself: "[To] guerdoun hym with nothing but with sighte" (II.1295). Upon returning to her own home after meeting Troilus at Deiphobus' house, she begins to feel secure for the first time as she contemplates his attributes:

he was to hire a wal
Of stiel, and sheld from every displesaunce;
That to ben in his good governaunce,
So wis he was, she was namore afered (III.479-82).

Criseyde does not define him as a potential lover, but as a potential protector and guardian, for he is both a wall and a shield for her. In the consummation scene Troilus literally becomes that wall and shield as he wraps his arms completely around her. Chaucer also notes that she "gan to quake" (III.1200) in his embrace. Although her trembling suggests sexual arousal and anticipation, one must remember that Criseyde

usually quakes from trepidation. Troilus tries to calm her with sweet words and strong arms, but Criseyde expresses her desire to anywhere but where she is; however, she is also lulled by his touch to the point that "al quynt from every drede and tene" (III. 1226). Only now that her fear has finally gone can Criseyde for the first time allow herself to love, for "Right so Criseyde, whan hire drede stente,/ Opned hire herte" (III. 1238-39). Opening her heart is a significant gesture on Criseyde's part, for she seldom leaves herself so vulnerable to personal intrusion. Troilus possesses the ability to melt away her fears as she gradually comes to rely on him, although male and superior, as a loving protector who will leave her identity and widow's status intact.²¹

The final motif to be examined in this chapter is the heart. John Leyerle has pointed out the significance of this image for *Troilus and Criseyde*, noting that it has a two-fold function: it is both the origin of poetic development and the centre around which surrounding poetic elements are grouped.²² As such, the heart is the cause of love and its variable fortune, appearing at every crucial moment of evolution in Troilus and Criseyde's love affair.²³ Leyerle also observes that Criseyde specifically refers to Troilus from Book Three on as "herte," or some form thereof.²⁴ While the metaphorical address of "herte" is both evocative and indicative of a figurative exchange of hearts between the lovers, it also points to another significant feature of Criseyde, namely that

²¹ Aers, 187.

²² Leyerle, 113-114.

²³ Leyerle, 124-125.

²⁴ Leyerle, 128-129.

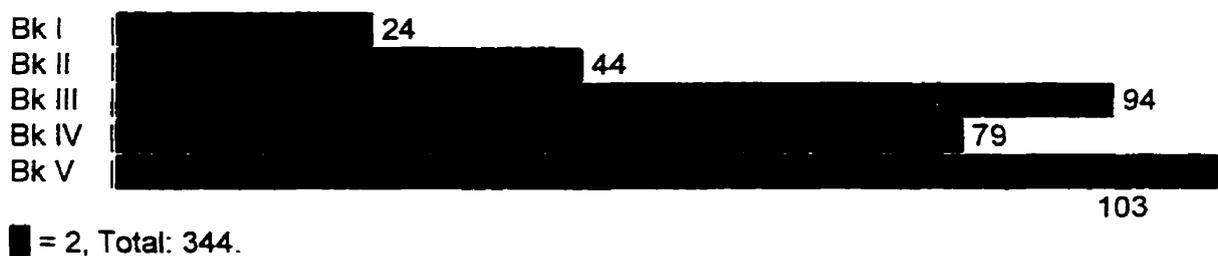
she prefers to use image in reference to others, not to herself. She speaks of "hearts" sixty-nine times in the poem; however, she only refers to her own heart on eighteen occasions, about one quarter of the total number of allusions which she makes to the "heart." In contrast, Troilus uses some form of "heart" seventy-six times and almost always in terms of himself. This discrepancy suggests that Criseyde does not perceive herself in terms of her heart. She only mentions her heart twice in Book Two, both times in the context of trying to protect her heart from love's onslaught, for she vows to "contreyne" her heart against lust (II.476) and later debates whether or not to "sette at reste" her heart on Troilus (II.760). Only in Book Three does she allow herself to succumb to desire, promising to be true to Troilus "with al [her] herte" (III.1001) and acknowledging in her own voice for the first and only time that Troilus' visual image is in her heart "depe ... grave" (III.1499).

Nevertheless, Criseyde's perception of her own heart in relation to her passionate desire for Troilus remains fairly limited. Once their love affair is consummated, she no longer speaks of her love, but of her likely death, in terms of her own heart. Upon learning that she is to be traded to the Greeks, she hopes only to see Troilus once more before death "Dryve out that goost which in [her] herte beteth" (IV.910). She has, in fact, replaced Troilus with God in her heart, for now "the pure spirit wepeth in [her] herte" (IV.1620) at the lovers' grief. Sorrow has also filled her heart to the point that it will "breste" (IV.1638). The heart is, in fact, a major vocabulary pattern in the poem.²⁵ The following distribution graph illustrates the dispersion of

²⁵ "Heart" words include "corage," "hert," "herte," "herted," "herteles," "hertely," and "hertes."

references to "heart" over the five books:

Figure 2: Frequency of "Heart" References in *Troilus and Criseyde*



The fewest references to "heart" occur in Books One and Two. To a certain extent, this distribution is not too surprising. Resistent to Troilus' advances at first, Criseyde speaks in terms other than that of her heart. However, this graph also makes clear that Troilus does not particularly perceive of his love experience from the perspective of his own heart. This fact is somewhat astonishing, since the reader tends to consider the "heart" a significant image in the poem. It is with Book Three, when Troilus finally wins Criseyde, that we see a substantial rise in "heart" vocabulary. Although still a dominant pattern in Book Four, "heart" is actually used most extensively in Book Five. Thus references to the heart occur with greatest frequency in those sections of the poem where Criseyde figuratively gives her heart away, be it to Troilus or to Diomedes. Even though she does not speak of her heart very often, her many addresses to Troilus as "herte" and the mentioning of hearts by other characters are distributed in such a fashion that the reader is unconsciously bombarded by "heart" references in those books which focus on Criseyde's bestowal of her heart.

While Troilus' heart becomes enflamed with passion once he gazes upon Criseyde (I.229), Criseyde's heart is not described in similar terms. Rather than burning with reciprocal feelings of love for Troilus, her heart is opened (III.1239) and unfettered

(II.1216). Just as Criseyde tries to isolate herself physically, so she has attempted to protect her heart from the love of any man. Only by figuratively liberating her heart from the prison of her own creation does she begin to love. However, at no point does she burn with passion for Troilus; rather, Chaucer notes that, before physically succumbing to Troilus, her heart begins to warm, but then grows cold (II.698 and III.800) as fear invades it. Even after the consummation of their relationship, Criseyde does not experience love's flame within her. Such fire imagery is not associated with Criseyde until she encounters Diomedes. As she departs from Troy, the Trojan woman immediately falls into confusion:

Ful redy was at prime Diomede
 Criseyde unto the Grekis oost to lede,
 For sorwe of which she felt hire herte blede,
 As she that nyste what was best to rede (V. 15-18).

Not only does her heart bleed from sorrow, but she no longer knows what to do, a dangerous state of mind for Criseyde since she is a woman who dearly needs the direction of others. The juxtaposition of Diomedes "ful redy" to lead her into the Greek camp and the bewildered Criseyde unable to decide what "to rede" foreshadows the Greek warrior's eventual replacement of Troilus as Criseyde's protector. He does not simply accompany her, but leads "hire by the bridel" (V.92), an image which suggests that Diomedes is in control of Criseyde as soon as Troilus leaves her side. Diomedes will later remind her of the significance of his gesture, revealing that he has been watching her "syn [he] first hond on [her] bridel layde" (V.873).

This scene is significantly different from Boccaccio's version, for Criseida is not accompanied by Troilus, but by Priam and his barons. At the moment of the exchange,

she does not place herself into Diomedes' power by virtue of her passivity; rather, she is disdainful and defiant, departing from her Trojan entourage of her own volition and leaving Diomedes to catch up with her:

Quinci so volse disdegnosamente
 ver Diomede e disse: -- Andianne omai,
 assai ci siam mostrati a questa gente,
 la quale omai sperar puó de' suoi guai
 salute, se ben mira sottilmente
 all'onorevol cambio che fatto hai:
 che hai per una femmina renduto
 un si gran re, e cotanto temuto. --

E questo detto, al caval degli sproni
 dié, senza dir fuor che a' suoi addio;
 e ben conobbe il re e' suoi baroni
 lo sdegno della donna. Indi sen gio
 senza ascoltare o commiati o sermoni,
 o riguardare alcuno, e se n'uscio
 di Troia, nella qual giammai tornare
 piú non dovea, né con Troilo stare (V.8-9).

[Here she turned herself disdainfully to Diomede and said, "Let us go from here now, we have shown ourselves long enough to these people who can not hope for a remedy for their woes if they consider carefully the honorable exchange which you have made, who have given up for a woman so great and so feared a king."

And this said, she gave spurs to her horse without saying anything except farewell to her servants. And the king and his barons clearly recognized the lady's scorn. Forth she went without listening to leave-taking or speeches or looking at anyone, and she departed from Troy, destined nevermore to return there to be with Troilo.]

Chaucer's heroine is not characterized by such scorn and anger. She is "with sorwe oppressed so" (V.177) that she barely hears Diomedes' pleas for her favour, catching only "a word or two" (V.179) of his petition. As the days pass, she regresses to the fearful Criseyde that typified the early part of the poem:

And if that I me putte in jupartie
 To stele away by nyght, and it bifalle
 That I be kaught, I shal be holde a spie:
 Or elles -- lo, this drede I moost of alle --
 If in the hondes of som wrecche I falle,
 I nam but lost, al be myn herte trewe (V.701-6).

Her distress in the Greek camp echoes her emotional state when she first learnt that Troilus loved her. Already her determination to return to Troy on the tenth day is waning as her mind becomes filled with concern for what will happen if she is caught leaving. Just as she feared that Troilus would take her at his will if she did not comply to his wishes, so she fears that a Greek will molest her if she is discovered fleeing. Now, Chaucer describes her heart for the first time as "sette ... afire" (V.720) with love for Troilus, by means of her memories of her lover's image and words. However, Criseyde is no longer near her beloved Troilus, for she "Ful rewfully ... [looks] upon Troie,/ Bih[olds] the toures heigh and ek the halles" (V.729-30). Physically distanced from him, she will once again prove to incapable of crossing the threshold, this time the distance between the camp and Troy, without the aid of a guide. Consequently, she is susceptible to Diomedes' advances despite the fact that her heart burns for Troilus.

In many ways, Criseyde is the epitome of inertia, for she does not act unless first acted upon by a force, almost always a masculine one. Thus, away from the influence of her uncle and Troilus, she is thrown into a state of confusion, resolving to return yet unable to do so despite her best intentions because of her overwhelming fear. It is not surprising, therefore, that she falls quickly for Diomedes' persuasive words, becoming an easy prey for an enemy soldier who "With al the sleghte and al that evere he kan ... Into his net Criseydes herte brynge" (V.773-5). Whereas Criseyde caught Troilus

with the "nets" of her eyes, now Diomedes tries to win her heart by a similar entrapment; however, his pursuit is a conscious one. He purposely sets out "To fisshen hire he leyde out hook and lyne" (V.777), an image which suggests that he will tempt her with a "bait" she cannot refuse. Appealing to her fears, Diomedes not only emphasizes his love for the Trojan woman, but also the imminent destruction of Troy (V.916-17) and his ability to protect her (V.921-24). Although Criseyde does not initially grant his request, she begins to be swayed by his arguments. She thinks not of love but of Diomedes' high status in the camp and the fact that "she was allone and hadde nede/ Of frendes help" (V.1026-27). As a result, she makes the only choice that Criseyde can make and, in a peculiar irony of expression, she acknowledges her "deshonour" to Troilus in one breath (V.1065-66) while she vows always to "be trewe" to Diomedes (V.1070-71) in the next. Nevertheless, she remains incapable of confronting an unpleasant situation. Upon receiving Troilus' pitiful letter, she sends a bland and evasive reply, in which she notes that she cannot write more fully "for feere" (V.1603); however, it is not so much fear of the letter being discovered, as she claims, but fear of Troilus' reaction to her faithlessness.

Unlike Boccaccio, Chaucer sets his love story clearly against the war narrative. He begins with the disclaimer that he will not discuss the details of the Trojan war, but, upon developing Troilus and Criseyde's relationship, he introduces Book Four with an account of the Greek battalions surrounding Troy. In such a way, Chaucer reminds the reader of the ever-present threat to Troy and the lovers, a threat which becomes very real as Criseyde is traded to the Greeks for Antenor. For a woman defined by fear and honour, the deprivation of the security of her home and protector is a most serious

blow. It is these very concerns, and not an overwhelming passion for Diomedes, which lead to her abandonment of Troilus and, ultimately, his death. However, Chaucer, like Gower, pushes his Troy story beyond a mere romance. Troilus does not simply die, but undergoes a spiritual rebirth as his soul looks down from the heavenly sphere upon "This litel spot of erthe that with the se/ Embraced is" (V.1814-15). The intensity of his gaze upon Criseyde, which began the poem, is now literally replaced by a new and distant perspective on the events that have occurred. Troilus' eye is released from the tyranny of love, and he now "sees" clearly and unimpeded for the very first time. His contempt to the world is a contempt for what he has been and, as such, adds an ethical-religious dimension to the story not found in either Benoît's or Boccaccio's versions.

Afterword

This study has been an attempt to determine how three authors, writing for the English court in the late middle ages, differ between the love experiences of men and women. From a theoretical standpoint, the issues I have raised here are also of concern for feminists, formalists, and genre theoreticians. By focussing closely on patterns of vocabulary and imagery, it is clear that erotic love is constructed very differently for each sex. The "voicing" of this passion is achieved not simply by words spoken by the appropriate character, but also by gesture, body language, and authorial intrusion and interpretation. In many instances, it is the silence which speaks and not the textual evidence. Consequently, a factor which has not been addressed, but could be incorporated into a further study, is the role of the male author in the literary creation of the female experience and expression of erotic love.

In selecting the story of Troy as the common thread, the poems are intrinsically linked by foregoing tradition, regardless of whether or not a later text is derived directly from an earlier one. Certainly, a fourteenth-century court audience in England would know of Benoît's twelfth-century version of the Troy story, be it his poem or one of the

Old French prose redactions of it from the thirteenth century. That this audience would not have known Boccaccio's account is even more significant, for Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* provides an essential piece to the puzzle of love narratives traditionally associated with the Troy story. And Gower's presentation of single episodes in his *Confessio Amantis* indicates a willingness of the reader to confront a familiar story in an entirely new context. Thus each of these texts is more than a mere translation; they are imaginative reconstructions, fabricated not just from a combination of sources but from the author's creative genius.

As a result, this thesis offers a variety of possible developments for the future. The most obvious would be to include a chapter on the gendered love experience in Boccaccio's *Il filostrato* and possibly one on Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis troiae*, his thirteenth-century Latin source. In keeping with the focus on French and English versions of the story of Troy, I could also produce a more comprehensive analysis by including Robert Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* and/or William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. A completely different approach would be to isolate a single image or language pattern, such as the gaze or the heart, and reexamine all these texts under a more limited strategy. However, I have been most intrigued by the role that the *Roman de Troie* has played in the transmission of love vocabulary and motifs from Ovid's texts. By working back from Benoît's poem, considerable light could be shed on the intertextuality of these works.

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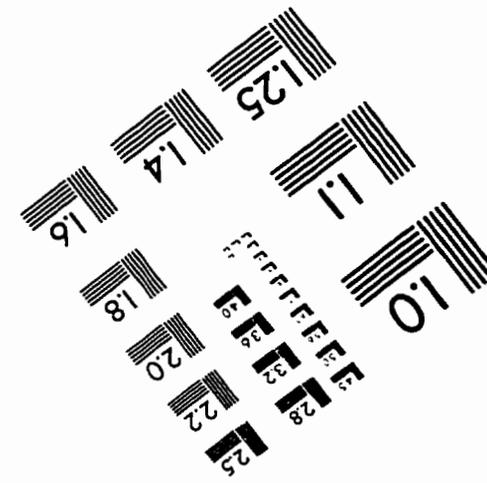
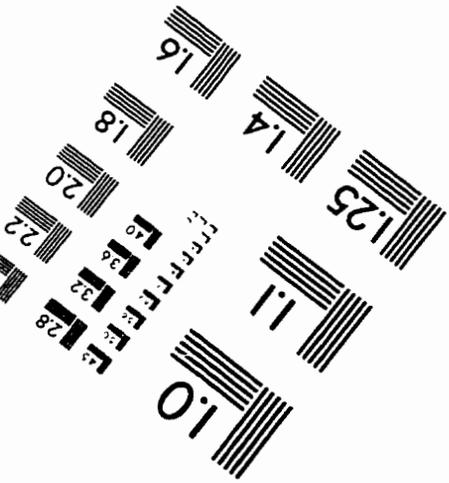
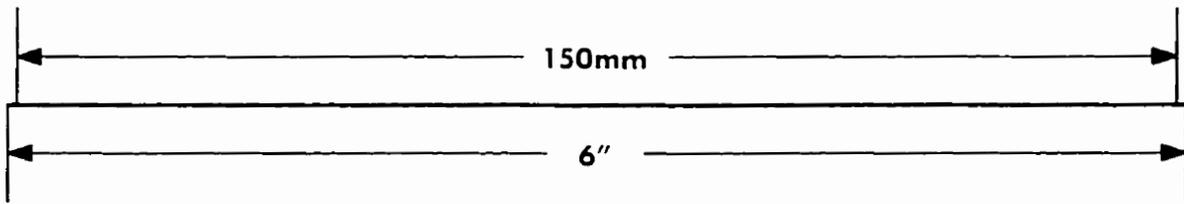
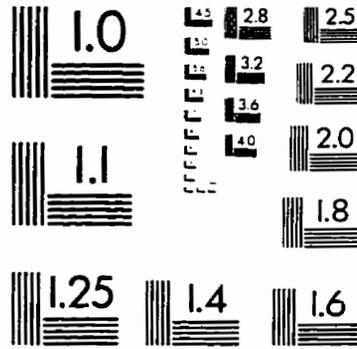
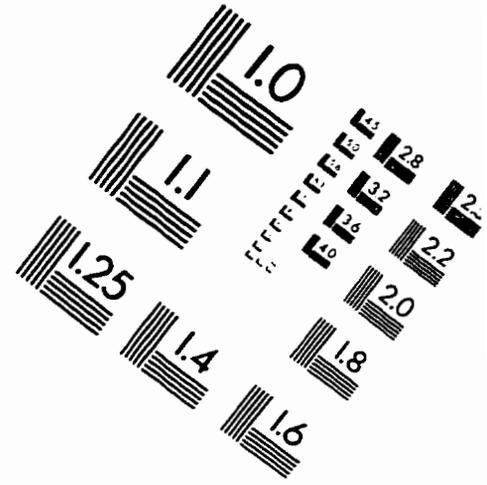
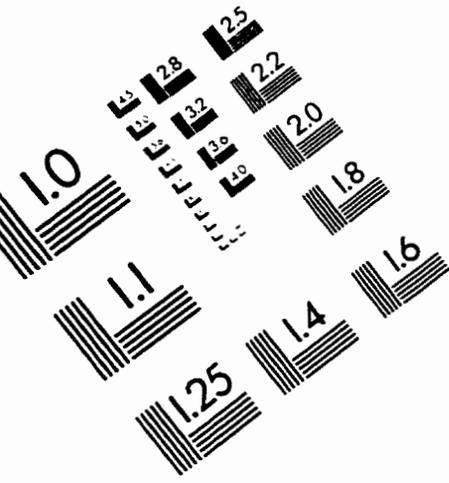
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