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## Redemption through Iambic Reversal? The Case of Henryson's *Cresseid*

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In the Introduction to his recent translation of *The Testament of Cresseid & Seven Fables* by Robert Henryson, Seamus Heaney speaks of Henryson's 'Cresseid (stress on second syllable)'.<sup>1</sup> I should like to show here that, while the name *Cresseid* in Henryson's *Testament* is indeed stressed on the second syllable in the majority of cases, there are a significant number of cases where it is stressed on the first syllable, and that in this respect Henryson's poem differs markedly from the poem of Chaucer's to which it is a response, namely *Troilus and Criseyde*, where the name *Criseyde* is stressed on the second syllable almost without exception. I also argue that in Henryson's poem the distinction between the iambic *Cresseid* (with stress on the second syllable) and the trochaic *Cresseid* (with stress on the first syllable) may be significant semantically and thematically.

I have counted thirty instances of the name *Cresseid* in Henryson's poem. In nineteen of these instances, the name occurs iambically, with the stress on the second syllable. As an example I quote the first occurrence of the name in the poem, at line 42, the concluding line of the stanza in which Henryson speaks of a book ('ane quair', l. 40):

Writtin be worthie Chaucer glorious  
Of fair Cresseid and worthie Troylus. (ll. 41–42)<sup>2</sup>

In eleven out of the thirty instances of the name, on the other hand, the name occurs trochaically, with the stress on the first syllable. The first case of its doing so is in the stanza in which Mercury refers Cupid to the highest and lowest among the planets (Saturn and Cynthia respectively) for an assessment of the sentence to be passed on Cresseid for blaming Cupid and Venus for the desolate state in which she finds herself after being deserted by Diomeid:

<sup>1</sup> Robert Henryson, *The Testament of Cresseid & Seven Fables*, trans. by Seamus Heaney (London: Faber and Faber Ltd, 2009), p. ix. The germ of the idea for this article came to me as long ago as 1962, in a weekly class on the Scottish Chaucerians given by Jonathan Wordsworth in Exeter College, Oxford, in the Hilary term of 1961–62. I am grateful to Professor Stephen Gill, Emeritus Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford, who also attended the class, for confirming my recollection that Mr Wordsworth pointed out the subtle change from an iambic to a trochaic presentation of the name *Cresseid* at lines 520 and 522 of Henryson's *Testament*. His suggestion, if I remember right, was that an analysis in these terms of other instances of the name in this poem might be worth undertaking.

<sup>2</sup> Quotations from the *Testament* are from *The Poems of Robert Henryson*, ed. by Denton Fox (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), pp. 111–31.

'[...] The pane of Cresseid for to modifie [...].' (l. 299)<sup>3</sup>

The remaining ten instances in the *Testament* of Cresseid's name occurring trochaically (which I shall discuss below) are at lines 310, 332, 380, 402, 408, 490, 497, 522, 526, and 537. It is noteworthy, then, that in over a third (36%) of the instances of the name *Cresseid* in the *Testament*, Henryson departs from an iambic presentation of the name in favour of a trochaic one.

Henryson's use of the name *Cresseid* is consistently disyllabic, which means that the terms *iambic* and *trochaic* can be used with reference to it relatively unambiguously. The case with Chaucer's use of the name *Criseyde* in *Troilus and Criseyde* is rather different, as the name occurs in that poem sometimes as a disyllable, sometimes as a trisyllable, and sometimes even as a tetrasyllable, depending on its metrical context. It seems clear, for example, that it is meant to be pronounced as a disyllable, with stress on the second syllable, in the following line:

As was Criseyde, as folk seyde everichone (l. 176),

but that it is metrically trisyllabic, with only the second syllable stressed, in

Criseyde was this lady name al right (l. 99).<sup>4</sup>

The name is evidently trisyllabic also when it occurs at the end of a line. A careful reading of the poem in the light of Norman Davis's and Donka Minkova's accounts of Chaucer's versification indicates that, when spelt with final *-e*, the name is trisyllabic in line-final position, with only the second syllable stressed, and the final *-e* pronounced as an unstressed, extrametrical syllable, as in:

Of Troilus in lovyng of Criseyde. (l. 55)<sup>5</sup>

Another, less immediately clear example is:

'[...] Thanne is my swete fo called Criseyde!'

And wel neigh with the word for feere he deide. (l. 874–75),

where it may not be obvious, until the second of the two lines quoted is read, that stress on the second syllable of *Criseyde* is needed to ensure the effect of the rhyme provided by *deide*, and that both the final *-e* of *swete* and the *-ed* ending of *called* should accordingly be given syllabic status (with 'trochaic substitution' in the case of *called*, that is, stress on the first as opposed to the second syllable).<sup>6</sup> The scansion of line-final, trisyllabic *Criseyde*, with final *-e*, is consistently presented as having stress only on the second syllable in Masahito Nishimura's recently updated scansion dictionary of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, and also, it seems, in John Warrington's edition of *Troilus and Criseyde* as revised by Maldwyn Mills, where relevant instances of unstressed *-e* are marked in such a way as to indicate syllabic pronunciation.<sup>7</sup>

There are a few cases where it may not be clear to a modern reader whether the name is meant to be treated as disyllabic or trisyllabic. One such case is:

<sup>3</sup> *Poems of Henryson*, ed. by Fox, p. lxxxvi.

<sup>4</sup> Quotations from *Troilus and Criseyde* are from *The Riverside Chaucer*, gen. ed. L. D. Benson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 471–585.

<sup>5</sup> See Norman Davis's account of Chaucer's versification in *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. xxxviii–xli, and Donka Minkova, 'Chaucer's Language: Pronunciation, Morphology, Metre', in *Chaucer: An Oxford Guide*, ed. by Steve Ellis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 130–57 (pp. 149–57).

<sup>6</sup> On trochaic substitution (or iambic reversal) see Minkova, 'Chaucer's Language', pp. 153–54.

<sup>7</sup> Masahito Nishimura, *Further Investigation into the Scansion of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde: Revising the Scansion Dictionary of Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde* (Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2010); and Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. by John Warrington, rev. with an introduction by Maldwyn Mills (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1974).

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‘[...] But I conjure the, Criseyde, anon [...]’ (III. 193),

where it might seem that the final *-e* of *conjure* should not be pronounced, and that *Criseyde* should be given a trisyllabic (dactylic) pronunciation. It is altogether likely, however, that, in accordance with Norman Davis’s perception that in Chaucer’s versification final *-e* was ‘generally pronounced’, though with some exceptions, one of them being elision of final *-e* before a vowel,<sup>8</sup> the final *-e* of *conjure* should be pronounced here and that of *Criseyde* elided, so that *Criseyde* is given disyllabic, iambic status. This scansion seems to be supported by the notation given in Mills’s revised version of Warrington’s edition of *Troilus and Criseyde*, if not by that given in Masahito Nishimura’s scansion dictionary, in which, however, the line in question appears to have been misread.<sup>9</sup>

Elision of the final *-e* before a following initial vowel also seems to establish as disyllabic and iambic each of the following three instances of the name *Criseyde*, which might confuse a modern reader:

To that Criseyde answerde thus anon (III. 1209);

the virtually identical

To that Criseyde answerde right anon (III. 1492);

and

‘[...] If that Criseyde allone were me laft [...]’ (IV. 281),

where it should be noted that in each of the first two instances the final *-e* of *answerde*, and in the third instance that of *allone*, needs to be treated as a syllable for the name to be recognized as iambic. This scansion of the lines in question is confirmed both by Warrington and Mills, and by Nishimura’s scansion dictionary.<sup>10</sup>

The name seems to be tetrasyllabic, again with stress on the second syllable (represented here by *-e-*), in this instance:

Criseyða gan al his chere asprien (II. 649),

where the fourth syllable (represented by *-a*) might be thought to carry the second of the expected five stresses in the line; it is indeed scanned as stressed in Nishimura’s dictionary. Remembering, however, with Norman Davis, that the five stresses in a line of this type ‘may vary a good deal in strength according to the sense, and indeed often be potential rather than essential to a natural reading’, I would suggest that in this case the final *-a* of *Criseyða* bears secondary stress.<sup>11</sup> A comparable case, also apparently tetrasyllabic, is:

They spaken of Criseyde the brighte (V. 516),

where Nishimura also scans the final *-e* of *Criseyde* as stressed, but where it seems to me that reduction of the stress is more likely. The important thing to note, however, is that here, as in the previous case and in all the other examples from *Troilus* discussed so far, the first and second syllables of the name are unstressed and stressed respectively, together constituting, in metrical terms, an iambus.

<sup>8</sup> See Davis in *Riverside Chaucer*, p. xl.

<sup>9</sup> See Chaucer, *Troilus*, ed. by Warrington and Mills, p. 126 (it should be noted that the numbering in this edition is by stanza rather than by line); and Nishimura, *Further Investigation*, p. 335, where the personal pronoun *I* has been omitted from the relevant line.

<sup>10</sup> See Chaucer, *Troilus*, ed. by Warrington and Mills, pp. 168, 179, 206; and Nishimura, *Further Investigation*, pp. 382, 394, 423.

<sup>11</sup> See Davis in *Riverside Chaucer*, p. xl.

The *Riverside Chaucer's* text of the poem, based on that of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 61 (Cp), has two spellings of the name which might give rise to doubt as to whether it is metrically trisyllabic or tetrasyllabic.<sup>12</sup> The first of these occurs in Deiphebus's question to Pandarus, in Book II, as to whether the Criseyde of whom he, Pandarus, is speaking, is not

'[...] Criseda, my frend?' He seyde, 'Yis.' (II. 1424);

and the second in Pandarus's words to Helen and Deiphebus when he tells them, in Deiphebus's house, where Troilus and Criseyde are also, though in different rooms, of Troilus's wish that they should bring to him

'[...] Criseda, my lady, that is here [...]'. (II. 1644)

In each of these two cases, Nishimura's dictionary, which is evidently based on *Riverside's* text of the poem, presents the name as trisyllabic rather than tetrasyllabic, and with stress only on the second syllable.<sup>13</sup> B. A. Windeatt's edition of the poem, also based on the text of Cp, in fact gives the spelling *Criseyda* in both cases (with *Of Criseyd* as a variant in the former case and *Criseide* as a variant in the latter).<sup>14</sup> The *Criseyda/Criseide* spelling may well suggest that the name is meant to be pronounced as tetrasyllabic, and this is surely more likely than a trisyllabic pronunciation in each of these two cases, since a trisyllabic pronunciation would leave the line with one less than the generally expected ten syllables to a line. The edition of the poem by Warrington and Mills (based, however, on the text of the Campsall MS, now New York, Pierpont Morgan Library, MS M. 817), spells the name *Criseyda* in both cases, a spelling which, in the context of each line as a whole, clearly indicates a tetrasyllabic pronunciation, while leaving open the extent of the stress that should be accorded to the final -a, which in each case (given such a pronunciation) would be expected to carry the second of the line's expected five stresses.<sup>15</sup> All the indications are that, in terms of syllable-count, stress, and position in the line, these two cases are exactly comparable to the occurrence of the name in II. 649, discussed above, and in terms of syllable-count and stress to its occurrence in V. 516, also examined above. It may be noted, however, that in each of the two cases just discussed the first and second syllables of the name are unstressed and stressed respectively, thus constituting an iambus, whether a trisyllabic or a tetrasyllabic pronunciation is preferred.

In discussing Chaucer's treatment of the name *Criseyde*, then, I use the term 'iambic' with reference to its metrical realization provided that its first and second syllables are unstressed and stressed respectively, whether the name is given only two syllables or three or four. I am thus using the term in relation to Chaucer rather more loosely than in relation to Henryson, whose consistent presentation of the name *Cresseid* as a disyllable means that the name constitutes a strict iambus in all cases where its first and second syllables are unstressed and stressed respectively. The term 'iambic', as I am using it in relation to Chaucer, is applicable, I would argue, to all those instances of the name *Criseyde* in *Troilus and Criseyde* that I have discussed so far.

In *Troilus and Criseyde* I have found, in one form or another, nine instances of the name *Criseyde* in Book I; twenty-two in Book II; thirty-six in Book III; forty-seven in Book IV;

<sup>12</sup> For a concise account of the poem's manuscript tradition and editorial history, see *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 1161–62.

<sup>13</sup> See Nishimura, *Further Investigation*, pp. 191, 309, 319.

<sup>14</sup> See Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus & Criseyde: A New Edition of 'The Book of Troilus'*, ed. by B. A. Windeatt (London: Longman Group Limited, 1984), p. 65 and pp. 228–29, 238–39.

<sup>15</sup> See Chaucer, *Troilus*, ed. by Warrington and Mills, pp. 103, 111, and the earlier (first) edition by Warrington:

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and fifty-two in Book V (I leave out of account here the letter C in the extrametrical phrase 'La vostre C' following the final line (V. 1631) of Criseyde's letter to Troilus in Book V). This gives a total of 166 instances.

A careful examination of each one of these instances has shown that they are all iambic in the sense just explained, with one sole exception. This is the second occurrence of the name in the poem, in the passage describing Criseyde as she appears in the temple where Troilus subsequently sees her and falls in love with her:

Among thise othere folk was Criseyda,  
In widewes habit blak; but natheles,  
Right as oure firste lettre is now an A,  
In beaute first so stood she, makeles. (I. 169–72)

In other words, just as A is without question the first letter of the alphabet, so was Criseyde, for all her widow's weeds, unquestionably foremost among beautiful women. The name as it occurs here is clearly trisyllabic, with full stress on the first syllable and some degree of stress also on the third and final one. Nishimura's notation indicates full stress on both the first and the final syllable, and this may indeed have been intended; the stress on the final syllable would in any case have to be heavy enough to give due effect to the rhyme of A at the end of I. 171 with the final -a of *Criseyda* in I. 169. Using the term 'trochaic' in the same relatively loose way as the term 'iambic' has been used above in relation to Chaucer's treatment of his heroine's name, we may say that this occurrence of the name in *Troilus and Criseyde* is wholly exceptional in being trochaic in the sense that its first and second syllables are stressed and unstressed respectively, rather than the other way round, whatever degree of stress may have been accorded to its third and final syllable.

Before it can safely be concluded that Chaucer's use of the name *Criseyde* is predominantly iambic, it is necessary to look at those two other poems of his in which the name occurs. These are *The Legend of Good Women* and the *ballade* attributed to Chaucer known as 'Against Women Unconstant'. In the latter poem, which consists of only three rhyme royal stanzas, the name occurs only once, at line 16, the second line of the third stanza:

Ye might be shryned for your brotelnesse  
Bet than Dalyda, Creseyde or Candace,

where it is clearly trochaic rather than iambic.<sup>16</sup> As for *The Legend of Good Women*, a poem that was evidently known to Henryson, it is only in the two versions of the lengthy Prologue to this poem that the name occurs.<sup>17</sup> In counting the instances of its occurrence here, I have treated as a single instance each of those two cases in which the wording of the line in which the name occurs is identical in both versions. The relevant lines here are 441 in the F version, corresponding to 431 in the G version ('[...] Or in the Rose or elles in Creseyde'), and F 469, corresponding to G 459 ('[...] For that I of Creseyde wroot or tolde [...]').<sup>18</sup> In each of these two instances, as will be evident, the name is iambic in the sense of the term explained above. I have treated as separate instances, on the other hand, those cases in which the context of the name's occurrence differs in wording from one version of the Prologue to the other, so that the name's occurrence may in each case be said to reflect a separate act of composition. There are four such instances. The first is at F332:

Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. by John Warrington, Everyman's Library, 992 (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1953), p. vii; cf. Chaucer, *Troilus*, ed. by Windeatt, pp. 68–69.

<sup>16</sup> The poem is quoted from the text printed in *Riverside Chaucer*, p. 657.

<sup>17</sup> On Henryson's knowledge of *The Legend of Good Women* see briefly John MacQueen, *Robert Henryson: A Study of the Major Narrative Poems* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 65.

<sup>18</sup> *The Legend of Good Women* is quoted from the text of the Prologue as printed in *Riverside Chaucer*, pp. 588–603.

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'[...] And of Creseyde thou hast seyde as the lyste [...]',

and the second in the corresponding passage in the G version, G264–65:

'[...] Hast thou nat mad in Englysh ek the bok  
How that Criseyde Troylus forsok [...]'?

The third is at G344–45, which has no corresponding passage (or occurrence of the name) in the F version:

'[...] Therefore he wrot the Rose and ek Criseyde  
Of innocence, and nyste what he seyde [...]'.

Each of these three instances, as will be seen, is iambic. The fourth and final one, however, at G 530–31, where there is again no corresponding occurrence of the name in the F version, is trochaic:

'[...] Why noldest thou han writen of Alceste,  
And laten Criseide ben aslepe and reste? [...]'

There are thus six instances of the name in *The Legend of Good Women*, one of which is trochaic. If these six instances are added to the one instance in 'Against Women Unconstant' and to the 166 in *Troilus and Criseyde*, we have a total of 173 occurrences of the name in Chaucer, only three of which (1.7%) are trochaic. It is highly likely that when Henryson thought of the name as used by Chaucer, he would have thought of it as iambic rather than trochaic.

As Barry Windeatt (among others) has pointed out, Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* is not exactly a sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, since Troilus is presented as still alive in Henryson's poem, whereas Chaucer's poem ends with an account of his death and the ascent of his soul to the eighth sphere.<sup>19</sup> *The Testament of Cresseid* tells the story, not told by Chaucer, of what happened to Criseyde after her replacement of Troilus with Diomedes, son of Tydeus, in her affections. The antepenultimate reference by name to Criseyde in Chaucer's poem reads:

Criseyde loveth the sone of Tideüs  
And Troilus moot wepe in cares colde (V. 1746–47),

and the penultimate reference to her in the poem states (in a subordinate, concessive clause) that 'Criseyde was untrewed' (V. 1774). At the risk of oversimplifying the complex character of Criseyde as presented by Chaucer, we may safely say that there is a marked difference between the Criseyde of Books I–III of Chaucer's poem, which culminate in the blissful coming together of her and Troilus as lovers, summarized in the final couplet of Book III:

And Troilus in lust and in quiete  
Is with Criseyde, his owen herte swete (III. 1819–20),

and the Criseyde of Books IV–V, which culminate, as far as she is concerned, in her becoming the mistress of Diomedes.<sup>20</sup> Henryson seems to retain in his poem a sense of these two aspects of Criseyde as Chaucer presents her, and also of the pity shown for her by Chaucer's narrator in the context of the transference of her affections:

<sup>19</sup> See Barry Windeatt, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 370; and Anne M. McKim, 'Orpheus and Eurydice and *The Testament of Cresseid*: Robert Henryson's "fine poetical way"', in *A Companion to Medieval Scottish Poetry*, ed. by Priscilla Bawcutt and Janet Hadley Williams (Cambridge: Brewer, 2006), pp. 105–17 (pp. 111–12).

<sup>20</sup> A sense of this difference is sympathetically and convincingly conveyed by Jill Mann, *Geoffrey Chaucer* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1991), pp. 29–31.

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For she so sory was for hire untrouthe,  
Iwis, I wolde excuse hire yet for routhe. (V. 1098–99)

Chaucer indeed seems to anticipate Henryson here, particularly if *sory* may be understood in the sense of ‘remorseful’, since Cresseid does in fact repent of her treatment of Troilus at the end of Henryson’s poem, as will be shown below.<sup>21</sup> Linked with his Chaucerian sympathy for Criseyde is the fact that Henryson has clearly also taken note of the heavy emphasis on Fortune in Chaucer’s poem. In *Troilus and Criseyde* it is Fortune that is blamed, first in general terms by the narrator (IV. 1–14) and later in more specific terms by Troilus (IV. 260–87) and his friend Pandarus (IV. 383–85; 390–92), for the situation, described early in Book IV, that brings about the physical separation of Troilus and Criseyde: the decision by the parliament of Troy to exchange Criseyde for Antenor, a Trojan warrior who has been taken prisoner by the besieging Greeks. This leads to Criseyde having to leave Troy, and Troilus, to join the Greeks, escorted by the Greek warrior Diomedes: a situation which provides a background, if not an excuse, for her submission to Diomedes’s advances. Henryson clearly sees Cresseid as a victim of Fortune (‘how was thow fortunait’, l. 79; ‘The quhilk fortoun hes put to sic distres’, l. 89), though more in a context of what he has to say about her than in relation to what Chaucer describes.

The *Testament* may be briefly summarized as follows: abandoned by Diomedes, Cresseid resorts to promiscuity (if we may believe what ‘sum men sayis’, l. 77), and reproaches Venus and Cupid for her predicament. She then has a dream in which Cupid accuses her of blasphemy against himself and Venus, his mother, before an assembly of the gods, here represented as the seven planets, albeit graphically described in human terms. Both Saturn and Cynthia (the moon) condemn her to physical ugliness and beggarhood, and Cynthia explicitly imposes on her a sickness that will reduce her to begging like a leper (‘lyke ane Lazarous’, l. 343). She awakes to find herself disfigured (l. 349), with her face showing the symptoms of leprosy (l. 372), and in shame retires to a leper house where she recites a lament, blaming her drastically changed circumstances on Fortune (ll. 412, 454, 469). She goes begging with the lepers, and the climax of the poem comes when Troilus rides past her with a group of victorious Trojan knights. Not recognizing her, but reminded by something in her appearance of his beloved Cresseid, he throws a purse of gold and some jewels into her lap and rides on. She herself does not recognize Troilus, but when informed of his identity by one of the lepers she recites another lament, this time applying the fickleness of Fortune to herself (ll. 549–52; cf. l. 574), and thrice contrasting herself with Troilus in respect of her faithlessness and his constancy: ‘O fals Cresseid and trew knight Troylus!’ (ll. 546, 553; cf. l. 560). She then makes her ‘testament’ (l. 576), leaving to Troilus the ring he had given her in exchange for hers (in *Troilus and Criseyde*, III. 1368), and dies. One of the lepers conveys the ring, and news of her death, to Troilus, who, if we may believe what ‘Sum said’ (l. 603), makes a tomb for her and inscribes it with her epitaph.

In a useful review article Anne M. McKim, in the course of picking her way through various conflicting views of Henryson’s poem, more or less recently published, writes of Cresseid: ‘What is incontrovertible is that [...] she moves from anger to self-pity, from blaming her gods to blaming Fortune, and finally to self-reproach and belated remorse.’ I would agree for the most part with this, and with McKim’s further statement that: ‘Henryson’s

<sup>21</sup> See under *sōrī* (adj.) in the electronic *Middle English Dictionary* (completed 2001), senses 1(c) and (h).



greatest innovation is this emphasis on Cresseid's moral growth.<sup>22</sup> I would nevertheless wish to juxtapose this latter statement with the earlier statement by Denton Fox that 'Henryson's great innovation [...] is Cresseid's leprosy', since Cresseid's moral growth is surely assisted by the fact that Troilus takes pity on her as a result of her infirmity, whether or not this is in fact leprosy.<sup>23</sup> Fox, who shows convincingly that Cresseid's symptoms as described by Henryson are indeed those of leprosy, notes that in Henryson's time leprosy was generally considered to be a venereal disease, and a punishment sent by God.<sup>24</sup> In the *Testament* it is, of course, the pagan gods, represented by the planets, who condemn her to her malady, but there is no serious inconsistency here, since what Henryson describes reflects the medieval view that the planets, with which the pagan gods had come to be identified by the end of the pagan era, functioned during the Christian era as signs whereby God announced his intentions, whether benevolent or threatening.<sup>25</sup> It is in fact during the account of Cresseid's dream, in which the gods decide on her punishment, that the first occurrence in the poem of her name in trochaic form, at line 299, noted above, occurs.

I should like to argue here that the innovativeness of Henryson's treatment of Cresseid, noted by McKim and Fox, is reflected in his trochaic presentation of her name, and in his variation between this and his presentation of it as iambic. Broadly speaking, we may say that Henryson's iambic presentation of the name calls up memories or associations of Criseyde as presented by Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde*, whereas his trochaic presentation of the name, and the contrast of this with his iambic presentation of it, signals the new Henrysonian approach. Henryson's iambic presentation of the name in the early part of his poem serves to confirm in the reader's mind that we are still dealing, for the moment at least, with the heroine of *Troilus and Criseyde*, whether of Books I–III or IV–V, even at stages where Henryson goes beyond what is narrated by Chaucer. There can be no doubt that Henryson is thinking of Chaucer's Criseyde when he first refers to Cresseid by name, in the context of the 'quair' written by Chaucer, at line 42, in the couplet quoted above, where the name is clearly iambic. The fact that his narrator goes on to refer, at line 61, to 'ane vther quair' in which he found recorded 'the fatall destenie | Of fair Cresseid' (iambic) (ll. 62–63), and to raise the question of whether everything that Chaucer wrote was true (l. 64), does not disguise the fact that the lines which follow, describing Cresseid's abandonment by Diomeid and hinting at her promiscuity, give a very plausible impression of continuing where Chaucer left off.<sup>26</sup> This impression is sustained by the narrator's evident pity for Cresseid and by the references to Fortune, already noted, as well as by the distancing device, characteristic of Chaucer, of disclaiming immediate responsibility for the narrative by referring to oral and written sources, sometimes of questionable authenticity, as in such instances as 'sum men sayis', l. 77, also noted above, and the 'vther quair' (l. 61) just referred to. The references in line 69 to 'this lustie Creisseid' and in lines 78–79 to 'fair Creisseid, the flour and A per se | Of Troy and

<sup>22</sup> Both statements are quoted from McKim, 'Orpheus and Eurydice and *The Testament of Cresseid*', p. 115.

<sup>23</sup> For Fox's statement, see *Poems of Henryson*, ed. by Fox, p. lxxxiv. See also pp. lxxxv–vi, note 4, for Fox's consideration of the possibility that the disease in question may be syphilis rather than leprosy.

<sup>24</sup> See *Poems of Henryson*, ed. by Fox, pp. lxxxiv–v, lxxxviii.

<sup>25</sup> See Jean Seznec, *The Survival of the Pagan Gods: The Mythological Tradition and Its Place in Renaissance Humanism and Art*, trans. by Barbara F. Sessions, Bollingen Series, 38 (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1953), pp. 37–46 (p. 44).

<sup>26</sup> According to Denton Fox, *Poems of Henryson*, ed. by Fox, p. 344, the 'vther quair' in question is a fiction comparable to Chaucer's 'Lolluis', and almost certainly never existed. Attempts have been made to identify it, however; see McKim, 'Orpheus and Eurydice and *The Testament of Cresseid*', p. 112, with references.

*Redemption through Iambic Reversal?*

Grece', both iambic, recall the Criseyde of Books I–III of Chaucer's poem, and specifically the second and third references to her in Book I (*Troilus and Criseyde*, I. 99, 169), where her exceptional beauty is described. The next two references to her in the *Testament*, at lines 110 and 116, on the other hand, both of them also iambic, recall the Criseyde of Books IV–V of *Troilus and Criseyde*, and particularly Book V, in further filling in what might by now have come to seem a gap in Chaucer's narrative, by relating more of what happened to her after her affair with Diomeid. The stanzas in which these lines occur tell of her shame at being seen in the temple of Venus and Cupid after her abandonment by Diomeid, and prepare the way for the stanzas which describe her addressing these deities in 'ane secreit orature' (l. 120) and blaming them for her present outcast state.

It is worth making the fairly obvious point that Cresseid's dream, as narrated in the stanzas which then follow, is focalized through Cresseid; that is to say, it is narrated in terms of what she perceives, with references at its beginning and end to what she heard (or seemed to hear: 'be apperance hard', l. 143) and saw ('this vglye visiou', l. 344) respectively.<sup>27</sup> The poem's next two references to her by name are spoken, within the dream, by Cupid and Mercury. Cupid's reference to her as '3one wretchit Cresseid' (l. 278) is iambic, and the next line indicates that Cupid has in mind here the contrast of Cresseid's present state with her earlier status, for which he, Cupid, was responsible, as the 'flour of lufe' in Troy. Mercury's reference, already quoted, to Cresseid in the context of her 'pane', or punishment (l. 299), on the other hand, is trochaic, the eighth occurrence of the name in the poem and its first occurrence in trochaic form. I would suggest that Henryson, in thus allowing Cresseid to hear her name pronounced in her dream in two different ways, the first in the context of her former glory and the second in a context of punishment, is giving the first indication in the poem of the possibility of her coming to recognize the extent of her own responsibility in the matter of herself and Troilus: it is as if the contrasting pronunciations of her name were conveying to her an intimation of the great moral difference between the two aspects of herself that were present in Chaucer's poem and which Henryson has developed, as shown above. I would also suggest that the narrator's further reference to 'cairfull Cresseid', again trochaic, at line 310 of the *Testament*, serves to keep this possibility in the reader's mind. The next two references to her by name, at lines 325 and 329, both to 'fair Cresseid' and both iambic, occur in a stanza in which the narrator, in a manner reminiscent of the Chaucerian narrator's pity for Criseyde, rails at Saturn for the cruelty of his judgement. But at line 332, where the narrator describes Cynthia reading Cresseid's final sentence, the reference to her is once again trochaic, recalling the trochaic occurrence of the name in the dream and its possible significance.

The next two references by name to Cresseid, both of which come from the narrator, occur in the contexts of her waking from her dream (l. 345) and being called by a child to supper in her father's house (l. 359). Both are iambic, which is consistent with the fact that the poem's concern is now returning to the waking world of the Greek setting in which Cresseid had been presented before the account of her dream, and before the trochaic use of her name had been introduced. The five occurrences of her name which follow, however, up to and including the lines describing Troilus's approach to where the lepers are begging (that is, within ll. 379–497), are all trochaic. All but the third of these come from the narrator, in lines reporting Cresseid telling her father that she did not wish to be recognized (l. 380), her distress on entering the

<sup>27</sup> On focalization see Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin, foreword by Jonathan Culler (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), pp. 189–94; and Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 72–78.

leper house (l. 402), and her waiting with the lepers for alms-givers to come her way (ll. 490, 497). It is the third of these five occurrences that is the most interesting for immediate purposes, however, since it comes from Cresseid herself, in the second line of her complaint against Fortune, and is thus focalized through her. This lament, which takes up seven of the poem's total of eighty-six stanzas, differs from the remainder of the poem in being in nine-line stanzas rather than rhyme royal. Here, it is true, Cresseid mainly blames Fortune (ll. 412, 454, 469) for her situation, as already indicated, but in the second line of the lament, the case under discussion, she pronounces her name ('O catiue Creisseid', l. 408) (trochaic) in the way that she has presumably learnt from her dream: an indication, perhaps, that from the dream she has also learnt, or begun to learn, a lesson in humility and self-awareness. This impression is enhanced by the fact that in this lament she is not solely concerned with herself, but encourages the ladies of Troy and Greece to learn from her example (ll. 452–69).

The fifth occurrence of the name in this trochaic sequence of five also deserves particular attention. This occurs in lines 495–97, which form the last three lines of a rhyme royal stanza; they describe Troilus's initial response to the lepers' appeal for alms:

Than to thair cry nobill Troylus tuik heid,  
 Hauing pietie, neir by the place can pas  
 Quhair Cresseid sat, not witting quhat scho was.

The trochaic form of Cresseid's name is especially appropriate here, giving a hint that Troilus, whom Chaucer would lead us to believe has always heard and used her name in iambic form, is unlikely to recognize her. In the passage just quoted it is, of course, the word *Troylus* to which the present participle, (*not*) *witting*, is related: it is Troilus who does not realize who this beggar is. Is it possible, however, that we have here a case of deliberate ambiguity, and that the participle could be related to *Cresseid* as well, indicating that Cresseid, since her dream, is in a confused state, uncertain of who and what she is? The next occurrence of the name is iambic and comes at the end of the rhyme royal stanza immediately following the one just quoted. After making it clear that Troilus thinks he may have seen this woman before, but cannot place her, the stanza concludes:

3it than hir luik into his mynd it brocht  
 The sweit visage and amorous blenking  
 Of fair Cresseid, sumtyme his awin darling. (ll. 502–04)

Here Cresseid (or should we say Criseyde?) is focalized through Troilus, who is reminded by Cresseid of his beloved Criseyde, most especially the Criseyde of Books I–III of Chaucer's poem. The change here to an iambic form of the name from the trochaic form given in the preceding stanza is an extraordinarily beautiful and subtle touch on Henryson's part.

Focalization is also a significant feature of the next two occurrences of the name, which again show a contrast of iambic and trochaic forms. This is in the passage describing Troilus throwing alms to Cresseid:

For knichtlie pietie and memoriall  
 Of fair Cresseid, ane gyrdill can he tak,  
 Ane purs of gold, and mony gay iowall,  
 And in the skirt of Cresseid doun can swak. (ll. 519–22)

From the stanzas leading up to this it is clear that Cresseid is here focalized through Troilus in two different ways: as the beautiful woman he has loved, and as a wretched beggar. It is the memory of the former that motivates his generosity to the latter, as the change from an iambic to a trochaic presentation of her name helps to emphasize, in what is again an extraordinarily subtle touch on the poet's part.

### *Redemption through Iambic Reversal?*

Of the eight remaining occurrences of the name in the poem, only the first two are trochaic. The first of these is in the opening line (526) of the stanza describing the lepers approaching Cresseid to see what Troilus has given her; and the second in the line introducing her astonishment that her benefactor was Troilus: 'Qhuen Cresseid vnderstude that it was he [...] l. 537). Of the six remaining occurrences, all iambic, the first three occur in her threefold contrast of herself with Troilus, referred to above: 'O fals Cresseid and trew knicht Troylus!' (ll. 546, 553; it is varied at line 560 to: 'Fy, fals Cresseid; O trew knicht Troylus!'). The fourth occurs in line 595, which tells of the leper reporting Cresseid's death to Troilus, and the fifth in line 607 ('Cresseid of Troy the toun'), in the inscription reportedly written on her tombstone. The sixth, the very last of the poem's thirty references to her by name, occurs in the penultimate line of its final stanza, in which the narrator encourages 'worthie wemen' (l. 610) to bear in mind the 'sore conclusioun | Of fair Cresseid' (ll. 614–15).

Criseyde's contrast of herself with Troilus, quoted above, and her subsequent statement 'Nane but my self as now I will accuse' (l. 574), surely indicate that by the end of the poem she is relatively enlightened, whether or not she can be said to be redeemed in a Christian sense.<sup>28</sup> If by now the trochaic presentation of her name has come to seem indicative of the 'punished' Cresseid, who is not yet enlightened but becomes so after hearing that Troilus was her benefactor, it may seem surprising that her name occurs trochaically in the line, quoted above, which reports her realization of this ('Qhuen Cresseid vnderstude [...] l. 537). I would argue that the trochaic presentation of the name here simply reflects Cresseid's startled state, and the likelihood that her attainment of enlightenment would hardly be instantaneous. It may also seem surprising that, in her threefold contrast of herself with Troilus, also quoted above, Henryson allows her to use the iambic presentation of her name, which it might be felt she is not yet entitled to do: she is enlightened, perhaps, but not so enlightened as to be allowed to pronounce her name in a way that the poem has shown to contrast with a pronunciation that implies criticism of her. Here I would point out that this contrast becomes apparent in Henryson's poem only, or mainly, when the two pronunciations are closely juxtaposed; that the iambic presentation of her name recalls not only the Criseyde of Books I–III of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, who is indeed for the most part favourably portrayed, but also the Criseyde of Books IV–V, who is undeniably open to criticism; and that these two aspects of Criseyde, as portrayed by Chaucer and developed by Henryson, in any case belong to earlier stages of her history than the one reached at the end of the *Testament*. In recalling as it does those different aspects and stages, the iambic presentation of Cresseid's name in her threefold contrast of herself with Troilus seems to me, at least, to give an added poignancy and effectiveness to the concluding stanzas of Henryson's poem.

I noted above that I agreed 'for the most part' with Anne M. McKim's account of Cresseid's development, and I would stand by that statement. I would suggest, however, and hope to have shown here, that the seeds of Cresseid's self-reproach and remorse are sown rather earlier in the poem than McKim's account seems to imply. It is in her dream, I would argue, that it first occurs to Cresseid that she might not be above criticism; this is shown by the focalization through her of the pronunciation of her name in two contrasting ways, the iambic and the trochaic, the latter in a context of punishment. The memory of this, the first

<sup>28</sup> That she achieves Christian salvation was suggested by E. M. W. Tillyard in the chapter 'Henryson: *The Testament of Cresseid*, 1470?' in his *Poetry and its Background Illustrated by Five Poems 1470–1870* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1955; first published 1948 under the title of *Five Poems*), pp. 5–29 (p. 17). See further McKim, 'Orpheus and Eurydice and *The Testament of Cresseid*', pp. 115–17.

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trochaic presentation of the name in the poem, is kept before the reader by further instances of it, all of them attributed to the narrator apart from one, which is attributed to Cresseid herself in a further instance of focalization through her. Two of them, moreover, combine with iambic presentations of the name, and with focalization through Troilus, in providing an extraordinarily moving climax to the poem. Henryson has not only brought Chaucer's story of Criseyde to an ultimately satisfying conclusion by making her a tragic heroine; he has also gone far beyond Chaucer in exploiting the metrical possibilities of her name.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> On Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* as tragedies, see respectively Windeatt, *Oxford Guides*, pp. 154–61, and McKim, 'Orpheus and Eurydice and *The Testament of Cresseid*', pp. 112–16, with references. On this aspect of Henryson's poem see further the brief remarks in *Selected Poems of Henryson and Dunbar*, ed. by Priscilla Bawcutt and Felicity Riddy, The Scottish Classics Series, 16 (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1992), p. 221.