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'Wereyed on every side:' Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Logic of Siege Warfare*

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Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is a narrative of war that disavows any interest in recounting the events of war. Set towards the end of the Trojan War, Chaucer's tale turns its back on valorous deeds and bloody battles in favour of the love affair between a Trojan prince and a beautiful widow, Troilus and Criseyde. This attitude is epitomized by a line from the opening of the poem that Chaucer closely translated from Giovanni Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*: 'The thynges fellen, as they don of werre' (1.134).[1] Things happened, as they do in war: armies attacked the city, the city fought back; pitched battles occurred, soldiers died; the war of attrition continued. The events of the Trojan War are 'wel wist' (1.57), and it is not Chaucer's task or his intention to recapitulate what we already know about the war. This idea is repeated at the end of the poem, where Chaucer states that if he had intended to write 'The armes of this ilke worthi man, / Than wolde ich of his batailles endite; / But for that I to writen first bigan / Of his love, I have seyd as I kan' (5.1765–1769). If Chaucer had meant to write about Troilus' military endeavours, then

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1 All citations of Chaucer are from Larry D. Benson gen. ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd edn (Oxford, 2003), with reference to *Troilus and Criseyde: A New Edition of 'The Book of Troilus*, ed. Barry Windeatt (London, 1984). Translations and glosses otherwise unattributed are my own. For Chaucer's source, see Giovanni Boccaccio, *Filostrato* in *Opere minori in volgare*, ed. Mario Marti, 4 vols (Milan, 1970), 2:I.16: 'Le cose andavan sì come di guerra'.

he would have done so, but his focus has been on Troilus the lover, not Troilus the soldier. For those readers wishing to learn about the 'worthi dedes' of Troilus, Chaucer writes, they should turn to Dares, author of a supposedly reliable account of the Trojan War.[2] The echo of the *Aeneid*'s opening line, 'Of arms and the man I sing' [*arma virumque cano*], in Chaucer's reference to 'The armes of this ilke worthi man' serves to reinforce the distance between Chaucer and the literary tradition that venerates the deeds of war.[3] In place of 'his batailles', Chaucer chooses instead 'his love'.

Yet the gap between Troilus's 'love' and his 'batailles', between the amorous quest of love and the military quest of war, is not that great. In a complaint from Book 5, Troilus explicitly makes this connection as he figures himself as a subject besieged, attacked by a merciless Cupid. 'O blisful lord Cupide,' Troilus complains, 'Whan I the proces have in my memorie / How thow me hast wereyed on every syde, / Men myght a book make of it, lik a storie' (5.582–4). In a formulation that recalls the description of Troy as 'biseged al aboute' from the poem's beginning (1.149), Troilus imagines himself as 'wereyed on every syde' by Cupid, attacked on every side. By framing Troilus's suffering as a desire to transform this experience into a 'proces' that might in turn become a 'storie', which in this case is closer to the Latin *historia* than our modern 'story',[4] this passage forms a metacommentary on the poem as a whole. The subject of *Troilus and Criseyde* is clearly announced in the poem's opening stanza: 'The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen / … In lovynge, how his aventures fellen / Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie' (1.1–4). In other words, the poem promises to narrate how Troilus was 'wereyed' by Cupid and brought to woe because of it. This passage signals how Chaucer displaces the siege of Troy onto the siege of Troilus, translating

2 For the different narratives of the Trojan War in the Middle Ages, see Marilynn Desmond, 'Trojan Itineraries and the Matter of Troy', in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English: Volume 1: 800–1558*, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford, 2016), 251–68.

3 While the *Aeneid* has often been seen as the archetypal war text, as David Quint argues it is in actuality defined by a sharp ambivalence that enables the text to be read as both pro- and anti-imperialist; see Quint, *Virgil's Double Cross* (Princeton, NJ, 2018).

4 *Middle English Dictionary* (hereafter *MED*), ed. Hans Kurath and Sherman M. Kuhn, 13 vols (Ann Arbor, MI, 1952–2001), s.v. *storie* (n. 1a). See Paul Strohm, '*Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie*: Generic Distinction in the Middle English Troy Narratives', *Speculum*, 46.2 (1971), 348–59.

the epic into erotic discourse and drawing the two together through an invocation of narrative creation. Chaucer combines the allegorical siege made popular through texts such as the *Roman de la rose* with the siege of Troy to develop a nuanced account of entrapment in which love and siege are bound together.[5] The connection between Troilus's 'batailles' and 'love' is siege warfare: whether defending his city from Greek assaults or defending himself from the arrows of Cupid, Troilus is under siege.

In this chapter I pursue this connection between war, narrative, and literary technique to analyse how Chaucer constructs the siege as a dynamic space in which to imagine the forces that shape and determine human behaviour. I argue that Chaucer reconfigures the idea of a military and political siege in order to explore a more complex sense of entrapment that constrains the actions, thoughts, feelings and expressions of the individual characters in the poem.[6] Both Troilus and Criseyde have their actions constrained by the siege of Troy, as Troilus is conscripted to support the city's war efforts while Criseyde is handed over to the Greeks as part of a prisoner exchange. They are each caught up in strategic plans that sacrifice their individual agency for the wellbeing of the polity as a whole. At the same time, Chaucer juxtaposes such public roles with the intense private experience of their love affair, which is similarly brought about through strategic ploys and constrained behaviours. In addition to the models of determinist history provided by writers such as Boethius and Statius, the siege offers Chaucer a way to mediate between different forms of constriction and to reflect on the forces that shape human action.[7]

5 For the literary tradition of allegorical sieges, see Malcolm Hebron, *The Medieval Siege: Theme and Image in Middle English Romance* (Oxford 1997), 136–65.

6 For the role of entrapment in *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Stephen A. Barney, 'Troilus Bound', *Speculum* 47.3 (1972), 445–58. Barney does not draw attention to the role of siege as part of Chaucer's theme of bondage, but does productively illuminate the 'four kinds of bondage to which Chaucer's thought runs: imprisonment by Fortune (the world, nature, astral influence), by love, by evil, (the devil, hell, sin, the flesh), or by Christ (God, the providential scheme of the things)' (447). For a more recent consideration of Chaucer's language of bondage, see Marion Turner, *Chaucer: A European Life*, 197–216.

7 For connections between determinism and history in *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Morton W. Bloomfield, 'Distance and Predestination in *Troilus and Criseyde*', PMLA 71.2 (1957), 14–26; Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*

The similarity between military practice and literary making is central to articulating this sense of entrapment, for both impose form onto matter, seeking to shape their objects.[8] As I will show, Troilus's desire to overcome the destruction of war through narrative is part of a broader pattern in which Chaucer suggests the resonances between siege warfare and literary composition. In particular, Chaucer blurs the lines between Pandarus's amorous designs to engineer a relationship between Troilus and Criseyde and the strategies deployed in siege warfare. Drawing the language of literary composition into dialogue with war, Chaucer shows how tactics such as siege shape texts as well as wars: the spatio-temporal form of military siege imposes itself in *Troilus and Criseyde* through a heightened awareness of enclosed spaces and a temporality of suspense.

Physical violence is almost completely absent from *Troilus*, and as such the poem does not easily fit within accounts of medieval war literature, which tend to focus on moments of violent action and bloodshed.[9] In addition to eschewing war at a thematic level, *Troilus* is also

(Madison, WN, 1991), 84–164; Jeff Espie and Sarah Star, 'Reading Chaucer's Calkas: Prophecy and Authority in *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Chaucer Review* 51.3 (2016), 382–401 and, especially, Matthew Giancarlo, 'The Structure of Fate and the Devising of History in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 26 (2004), 227–66.

8 See Christopher Cannon, 'Form' in *Middle English: 21st Century Approaches*, ed. Paul Strohm (Oxford, 2007), 177–90, and Taylor Cowdery, 'Hoccleve's Poetics of Matter', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 38 (2016), 133–64 (136 especially). Medieval studies has been an active participant and beneficiary of the renewed interest in formalist approaches to literature. In 2018 alone there have been two major edited collections focused on literary form: Robert J. Meyer-Lee and Catherine Sanok, eds, *The Medieval Literary: Beyond Form* (Cambridge, 2018) and Thomas A. Prendergast and Jessica Rosenfeld, eds, *Chaucer and the Subversion of Form* (Cambridge, 2018).

9 When scholars have considered the relationship between *Troilus* and war, the poem has generally been read as exemplifying Chaucer's lack of interest in war. This has been a longstanding view in Chaucer criticism. For E. Talbot Donaldson, 'the narrator's real subject is not war but unhappy love'. Donaldson, 'The Ending of Troilus', in *Speaking of Chaucer* (New York, 1970), 84–101 (93). See also Derek Pearsall, who ends his brief discussion of Chaucer's engagement with war by concluding, 'War and chivalry are not Chaucer's favourite subjects' (*The Life of Geoffrey Chaucer* [Oxford, 1988 (1994)], 46). For medieval war literature, see the essays collected in Corinne J. Saunders, Françoise H. M. Le Saux and Neil Thomas, eds, *Writing War: Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare* (Cambridge, 2004). This paradigm is shifting as scholars pursue new connections between war and literature, for example the role of emotions in wartime. See Stephanie

seen by scholars to resist war at a contextual level.[10] While scholars such as Marion Turner and Paul Strohm have argued that *Troilus* engages the political atmosphere of London during the 1380s, the poem's relationship to contemporary warfare remains under-explored.[11] Unlike

Downes, Andrew Lynch and Katrina O'Loughlin, *Emotions and War: Medieval to Romantic Literature* (New York, 2015) and Downes, Lynch, and O'Loughlin, eds, *Writing War in Britain and France, 1370–1854: A History of Emotions* (New York, 2019).

10 Joanna Bellis has described Chaucer as the 'elephant in the room' within the context of a discussion about the poetry of the Hundred Years War, noting how 'his almost complete silence' on the subject of the war 'is surprising'. Bellis, *The Hundred Years War in Literature 1300–1600* (Cambridge, 2016), 126. See also Ardis Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy: Chaucer, Language, and Nation in the Hundred Years War* (Oxford, 2009), xix–xxx. For Chaucer's attitudes to war and peace, see Roger Sherman Loomis, 'Was Chaucer a Laodicean?', in P. W. Long, ed., *Essays and Studies in Honor of Carleton Brown* (New York, 1940), 129–48; Terry Jones, *Chaucer's Knight: the Portrait of a Medieval Mercenary* (Baton Rouge, 1980); V. J. Scattergood, 'Chaucer and the French War: *Sir Thopas* and *Melibee*', in G. S. Burgess ed., *Court and Poet: Selected Proceedings of the Third Congress of the International Courtly Literature Society* (Liverpool, 1981), 287–96; R. F. Yeager, '*Pax poetica*: On the pacificism of Chaucer and Gower', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 9 (1987), 97–121; Christopher Allmand, *The Hundred Years War*, 134–5; John H. Pratt, *Chaucer and War* (Lanham, MD, 2000); Judith Ferster, 'Chaucer's Tale of Melibee: Contradictions and Context', in Denise L. Baker, ed., *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War in French and English Cultures* (Buffalo, NY, 2000), 73–90; John M. Bowers, 'Chaucer After Retters: the Wartime Origins of English Literature', in Baker ed., *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War*, 91–126; Nigel Saul, 'A Farewell to Arms? Criticism of Warfare in Late Fourteenth-Century England', in Chris Given-Wilson ed., *Fourteenth Century England II* (Woodbridge, 2002), 131–45 (135–40); and David Wallace, 'Chaucer, Langland, and the Hundred Years War', in *The Medieval Python: the Purposive and Provocative Work of Terry Jones*, ed. Robert F. Yeager and Toshiyuki Takamiya (New York, 2012), 195–205. For Chaucer's experience of war, see Turner, *Chaucer*, 70–94.

11 For the context of domestic politics and *Troilus and Criseyde*, see John P. McCall and George Rudisill Jr, 'The Parliament of 1386 and Chaucer's Trojan Parliament', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 58.2 (1959), 276–88; Marion Turner's chapter 'Urban Treason: *Troilus and Criseyde* and the "Treasonous Aldermen" of 1382', in *Chaucerian Conflict* (Oxford, 2007), 31–55; and more recently Turner, *Chaucer*, 426. See also Paul Strohm, 'The space of desire in Chaucer's and Shakespeare's Troy', in *Love, History and Emotion in Chaucer and Shakespeare: Troilus and Criseyde and Troilus and Cressida*, ed. Andrew Johnston, Russell West-Pavlov and Elizabeth Kempf (Manchester, 2016), 46–60 (46). For an examination of how *Troilus* resists its historical

his literary contemporaries William Langland and John Gower (and successors such as Thomas Hoccleve and John Lydgate), Chaucer does not respond in a sustained manner to the events of the Hundred Years War in *Troilus* or any of his other works.[12] Despite participating in the French campaigns of Edward III, serving time as a prisoner of war and undertaking war negotiations on behalf of the English crown, Chaucer's writing only draws on these experiences through oblique and occasional references.[13] Even in those rare instances when Chaucer writes about war, the consensus is that he does so in an allegorical register rather than as a response or reflection on the experience of war. For example, Simon Meecham-Jones has drawn attention to the ways siege functions in Chaucer's poetry as an allegory for how a poet operates within an authoritarian domestic political regime, rather than a response or representation of military experience.[14] The work of Ardis Butterfield has challenged this consensus. *Troilus* is a poem 'of, about, and immersed in war', according to Butterfield, an immersion demonstrated in the text's

context, see Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 84–164. For an account of the emotions of war in *Troilus*, see Simon Meecham-Jones, '"He In Salte Teres Dreynte": Understanding Troilus' Tears', in *Emotions and War*, ed. Downes, Lynch and O'Loughlin, 77–97.

12 See Wallace, 'Chaucer, Langland, and the Hundred Years War'. For Langland and the Hundred Years War, see Denise N. Baker, 'Meed and the Economics of Chivalry in *Piers Plowman*', in Baker, ed., *Inscribing the Hundred Years' War*, 55–72; and Elizaveta Strakhov, '"Who will bell the Cat?": Deschamps, Brinton, Langland, and the Hundred Years' War', *Yearbook of Langland Studies* 30 (2016), 253–75. For Gower, see R. F. Yeager, '*Pax poetica*' and 'Politics and the French Language in England During the Hundred Years' War: The Case of John Gower', in Baker, ed., *Inscribing the Hundred Years War*, 127–58; Saul, 'A Farwell to Arms?'; Sara V. Torres, '"In Praise of Peace" in Late Medieval England', in *Representing War and Violence, 1250–1600*, ed. Joanna Bellis and Laura Slater (Cambridge, 2016), 95–115. For Lydgate and the Hundred Years War, see R. D. Perry, 'Lydgate's *Danse Macabre* and the Hundred Years War', *Literature and Medicine* 33.2 (2015), 326–47; and Andrew Lynch, '"With face pale:" Melancholy Violence in John Lydgate's Troy and Thebes', in *Representing War and Violence*, ed. Baker and Slater, 79–94. For Hoccleve, see Andrew Lynch, '"Manly Cowardice": Thomas Hoccleve's Peace Strategy', *Medium Aevum* 73.2 (2004), 306–23.

13 See, for example, attempts to locate the 'Tale of Melibee' within the shifting landscape of Ricardian war policy. For example, R. F. Yeager, '*Pax poetica*' and Saul, 'A Farwell to Arms?'.

14 Simon Meecham-Jones, 'The Invisible Siege – the Depiction of Warfare in the Poetry of Chaucer', in *Writing War*, ed. Saunders, Le Saux and Thomas, 147–67.

interest in familial conflict and its political interest in negotiation, epitomized by the character of Pandarus, whose role as a go-between echoes the political negotiations that were a central part of late medieval war.[15] Yet while Butterfield reveals how *Troilus* is saturated with the trappings of military culture, her analysis concentrates on war in a general rather than specific manner. Centring the role of siege in *Troilus* reveals Chaucer's fascination with the pervasive atmosphere of constriction that siege warfare creates and throws light on the ways that literary form interacts with martial form.

The siege of Troilus and Criseyde is never solely allegorical; it also reflects the fears and anxieties of contemporary war. Although Chaucer represents a conflict from antiquity, the siege of Troy would have held uncomfortable resonances for Chaucer's local London audience. During the late Middle Ages, London self-consciously modelled itself as a new Troy, a typological similarity that ostensibly amplified the importance of the city and situated it as the inheritor of Troy's glories.[16] Associating London with Troy engaged a deep cultural myth transmitted through influential texts such as Geoffrey of Monmouth's twelfth-century *Historia regum Britanniae* (*History of the Kings of Britain*).[17] Yet while Richard II, chroniclers, poets and the mayor of London indulged this fantasy, the connection with Troy also introduced a note of civic anxiety. As Marilynn Desmond argues, 'the matter of Troy in the Latin West sustains a vision of the city of Troy as ever present yet always already destroyed'.[18] Troy did not just bestow a narrative of cultural glory but prophesied a city and a people destroyed by war and betrayal. As I will show, the anxieties that formed such a crucial part of the Trojan story were exacerbated by the shifting fortunes of the Hundred Years War. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer creates a portrait in which the most intimate spaces of private experience are shaped by the conventions and

15 Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, 187–200 (197).

16 See Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in The Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis, 2003).

17 See John Clark, 'Trinovantum – The Evolution of a Legend', *Journal of Medieval History* 7 (1981), 135–51. For the broader influence of Geoffrey of Monmouth's history, see Francis Ingledew, 'The Book of Troy and the Genealogical Construction of History: the Case of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia regum Britanniae*', *Speculum* 69.3 (1994), 665–704, and Michelle Warren, *History on the Edge: Excalibur and the Borders of Britain, 1100–1300* (Minneapolis, 2000).

18 Desmond, 'Trojan Itineraries', 251.

temporality of siege warfare by drawing on the traditions of siege literature and the practice of siege during the Hundred Years War. Although cloaked in the language of courtly love, *Troilus and Criseyde* records anxieties that were incited by the fear of siege warfare.

The first part of this chapter provides a brief overview of medieval siege warfare and the tradition of siege literature, highlighting how Chaucer draws on and differentiates himself from this tradition. It then focuses on how Chaucer deploys this martial lexicon in the speeches of Pandarus and Diomede, arguing that their invocation of this language significantly shapes how the audience would understand the character of Criseyde. The final section of the chapter attends to the latter books of *Troilus*, where Chaucer explores the languorous temporality of siege by counterposing the city of Troy with the Greek camp. In these locations, truce is experienced as a temporary suspension of conflict rather than a return to peace, and it entails its own kinds of anxieties. Throughout *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer blurs the boundaries between love and war. In examining the formal slippage between the two, this chapter addresses several related questions. How does military siege exacerbate the forms of constraint and suffering that we see represented in Chaucer's aristocratic Trojan pagans, characters who may be seen as stand-ins for Chaucer's own audience of aristocratic, fourteenth-century Londoners? How might we imagine this connection between historical and contemporary siege mentalities? And, if we can describe the reach of the state of siege into the lives of individuals, what then does this tell us about how Chaucer and his audience experienced life in wartime more generally?

The Hundred Years War: Siege as Strategy and Symptom

Siege is the act of enclosing an enemy camp, fortification, or city with the intention of winning control of that structure or territory, either through destruction or by forcing surrender.[19] Siege campaigns were drawn out contests between aggressors and defenders. Often a successful campaign would depend on which side had better supplies, creating a

19 See Malcolm Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge, 1994); Bernard S. Bachrach, 'Siege Warfare: A Reconnaissance', *The Journal of Military History* 58.1 (1994), 119–33, and *The Medieval City Under Siege*, ed. Ivy A. Corfis and Michael Wolfe (Woodbridge, 1995).

grinding war of attrition as the assailants sought to force the inhabitants of the castle or city to surrender. A major siege of a town or city would completely transform that space, interrupting the rhythms and routines of daily life for many months. The city would be cut off from its usual trade and supply routes and its economy would be crippled. The cruelty and suffering inflicted by siege warfare was emphasized by narrative accounts of sieges that lingered on the hardships faced by the citizenry. For example, chronicle accounts of the Siege of Calais (1346–47) often include a letter purportedly written by Jean de Vienne, who was leading the defence of the French town, desperately asking King Philip VI to rescue the town as they were on the brink of starvation.[20]

Sieges played a critical role in the series of conflicts now known as the Hundred Years War (1337–1453).[21] While battles are often seen as the major events punctuating the war's history, sieges had a much greater impact on the outcome of the conflict.[22] Battles such as Crécy (1346), Poitiers (1356) and Agincourt (1415) capture the imagination, but pale in comparison to the scale of a major siege. Sieges involved a much greater number of participants, a larger amount of munitions and a more sophisticated level of organization than battles.[23] Major sieges arguably reached into the everyday lives of medieval citizens to a greater

20 Jean describes to Philip how the Calaisiens had eaten their horses, dogs and rats, 'and there remains nothing to them on which to live unless they eat each other' (uous gentz en Caleys ont mange lour chyuals, chens, et ratez, et nest remys rien pur lour uiuere sy non chescune mange alter); quoted in *Knighton's Chronicle 1337–1396*, ed. and trans. G. H. Martin (Oxford, 1996), 78–79.

21 See Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege*, 156–78.

22 As military historian Cathal Nolan has recently argued, focusing on the battle as the key event of war is a misprision that yields a false and simplistic historical understanding. Rather than a decisive binary of victory/defeat, Nolan argues, war more often results in 'something clouded … an arena of grey outcomes, partial and ambiguous resolution of disputes and causes that led to the choice of force as an instrument of policy in the first place'. *The Allure of Battle: A History of How Wars Have Been Won and Lost* (Oxford, 2017), 2. For a historiographical account of the turn away from 'decisive battles' in military history that argues for the central role of literary theory in this development, see Yuval Noah Harari, 'The Concept of "Decisive Battles" in World History', *Journal of World History* 18.3 (2007), 251–66.

23 See also the remarks of Philippe Contamine on medieval war in general: 'In its most usual form medieval warfare was made up of a succession of sieges accompanied by skirmishes and devastation, to which were added a few major battles or serious clashes whose relative rarity was made up for by their often

extent than the distant and fleeting experience of battles, generally fought away from urban centres.[24] The largest sieges of the conflict, such as those at Calais and Rouen (1418–19), were designed to consolidate territorial gains for the English after victories on the battlefield (at Crécy and Harfleur, respectively) and also held important symbolic value as exercises in asserting English dominance, the right to be *on this territory*. They dragged on for the better part of an entire year or more, while battles often lasted only a few hours; Agincourt, for all its overdetermined importance to English history, lasted barely a morning.[25]

The experience of being on the outside of a siege and being besieged on the inside were profoundly different. At the Siege of Calais, for example, Edward III established a camp that was so elaborate and extensive it formed a new town, Vielleneuve-la-Hardie, near the outskirts of Calais.[26] The English camp had houses with thatched roofs 'set out in properly ordered streets', according to the chronicler Jean Froissart, a market held on Wednesdays and Sundays, haberdashers, butchers' shops and stalls selling 'cloth and bread and all other necessities'.[27]

sanguinary character' (*War in the Middle Ages*, trans. Michael Jones [New York, 1984], 101).

24 It was the English *chevauchée*, brutal raids through the French countryside, however, that inflicted the greatest suffering on non-combatants; see Nicholas Wright, *Knights and Peasants: The Hundred Years War in the French Countryside* (Woodbridge, 1998).

25 Anne Curry describes Agincourt as having 'a greater cultural legacy than any other medieval engagement', a position codified through Shakespeare's *Henry V* and then reinscribed in the national consciousness of England through Laurence Olivier's 1944 wartime adaptation. This is despite the fact that Agincourt was not, in Curry's terms, 'a decisive battle'; see Curry, *Agincourt* (Oxford, 2015), 1.

26 Susan Rose, *Calais: An English Town in France, 1347–1558* (Woodbridge, 2008), 12.

27 'Hostelz et maisons, qui estoient assises et ordonnees par rues bien et faitissement … et place ordonnee a tenir marchié le mercredi et le samedi, merceries, halles de draps, de pain et de toutes autres neccessités', cited from Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 864, fol. 142r, in Valentina Mazzei, ed., 'Jean Froissart, Chroniques, Book I and Book II, Besançon, Bibliothèque municipale, MS 864', in *The Online Froissart*, ed. Peter Ainsworth and Godfried Croenen, version 1.5 (Sheffield: HRIOnline, 2013), http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/onlinefroissart [accessed 1 April 2018]. See also Jean Froissart, *Chronicles*, trans. Geoffrey Brereton (London, 1968 [rpt 1978]), 97 (henceforth cited as *Chronicles*). Froissart's account is building on the well-informed testimony of the earlier chronicler Jean le Bel.

The siege was less an event of war and more a complete occupation of French territory. Viewing galleries were erected to allow the royal party to gaze upon Calais and the English encampment entertained a regular stream of illustrious guests; soon after or even during the siege, Edward codified this chivalric celebration by founding the Order of the Garter.[28] Ultimately, the siege would mobilize the largest English force of the entire Hundred Years War, involving around 26,000 soldiers.[29] As the inhabitants of Calais were brought to the brink of starvation, outside the walled town Edward III created a culture of aristocratic *otium*. This distinction is important for *Troilus and Criseyde* because, as I will outline in my discussion of Books 4 and 5, when Criseyde is sent away from Troy to the Greek camp she is still besieged; Criseyde is held against her will and subject to the same constrictive forces that acted upon her in Troy. Through his representation of Criseyde's experiences, Chaucer creates a sharp distinction between the besieging Greeks and besieged Trojans that is not dissolved by simply leaving the city of Troy.

Siege enables the representation of war within a readymade frame, whether through text, image, or performance.[30] It provides a focal point for narratives and a set of actors that audiences could easily interpret, indulging the oppositional logic of warfare. The siege became an increasingly important part of medieval warfare during the Hundred Years War and, alongside this rise in strategic prominence, sieges also featured frequently in literary texts.[31] In Middle English alone the Hundred Years War gave rise to a cohort of texts that organized their narratives around sieges, including *The Siege of Jerusalem*, *The Sege of Melayne* and John Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes*, in addition to evocative historical texts such

28 Ormrod, *Edward III* (New Haven, CT, 2013), 288.

29 Ibid., 290.

30 See Hebron, *Medieval Siege*, 152–53. For the performance of sieges, see Estelle Doudet, 'La Catastrophe Dans Le Théâtre Politique Français (1460–1550): Moteur Du Spectaculaire, Frontière de l'indicible', *European Medieval Drama* 14 (2010), 47–71. I am grateful to Professor Doudet for sharing this article with me.

31 For accounts of the Hundred Years War, see Christopher Allmand, *the Hundred Years War: England and France at War c. 1300 – c. 1450* (Cambridge, 1988); David Green, *The Hundred Years War: A People's History* (New Haven, CT, 2014); Boris Bove, *La Guerre de Cent Ans* (Paris, 2015); Georges Minois, *La guerre de Cent Ans: naissance de deux nations* (Paris, 2016); and Jonathan Sumption's indispensable narrative account, *The Hundred Years War*, vols I–IV (London, 1990–present). References to Sumption will be given according to volume number.

as John Page's alleged eyewitness account of Henry V's siege of Rouen.[32] In addition to the representation of contemporary sieges in historical chronicles, medieval authors often revisited ancient and biblical sieges, using such re-imaginings to articulate visions of community, national-belonging and historical progression.[33] For a poem such as the alliterative *Siege of Jerusalem*, siege operates as a guiding principle for the narrative as the poem lavishes attention on the destruction inflicted by Vespasian and his army. The siege functions as 'a symptomatic figure for a particular existential condition', according to Marco Nievergelt, 'a sense of threatened, beleaguered identity characterized by vulnerability and anxiety, and therefore expressed in terms of metaphorical conflict, stasis, enclosure, fortification, and entrenchment'.[34] Images and narratives of siege suffused medieval culture as news of contemporary sieges, disseminated through newsletters and narrative poems, rubbed shoulders with performances, romances and pageants that restaged legendary sieges.[35] Emerging from the anxieties of the late fourteenth-century, texts such as

32 Editions hereafter cited parenthetically in text include Michael Livingstone, ed., *Siege of Jerusalem* (Kalamazoo, MI, 2004); *The Siege of Melayne* in Alan Lupack, ed., *Three Charlemagne Romances* (Kalamazoo, MI, 1990); John Lydgate, *Sege of Thebes,* ed. Robert R. Edwards (Kalamazoo, MI, 2001); and Joanna Bellis, ed., *John Page's the Siege of Rouen: Edited from London, British Library MS Egerton 1995* (Heidelberg, 2015). For a survey of medieval siege literature, see Hebron, *The Medieval Siege*, 1–8. For the role of 'eyewitness' testimony in siege narratives, see Joanna Bellis, '"I Was Enforced to Become an Eyed Witnes": Documenting War in Medieval and Early Modern Literature', in *Emotions and War*, ed. Downes, Lynch and O'Loughlin, 133–51, and Bellis, '"The Reader myghte lamente": The sieges of Calais (1346) and Rouen (1418) in chronicle, poem and play', in *War and Literature*, ed. Laura Ashe and Ian Patterson (Cambridge, 2014), 84–106.

33 Marco Nievergelt, 'The Sege of Melayne and the Siege of Jerusalem: National Identity, Beleaguered Christendom, and Holy War during the Great Papal Schism', *The Chaucer Review* 49.4 (2015), 402–26; Suzanne Conklin Akbari, 'Incorporation in the Siege of Melayne', in *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England: Essays in Popular Romance*, ed. Nicola McDonald (Manchester, 2004), 22–44. See also Akbari, 'Embodying the Historical Moment: Tombs and Idols in the *Histoire ancienne jusqu'à César*', *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 44.3 (2014), 617–43. For accounts of the relationship between siege and literary form, see Christopher Cannon, *The Grounds of English Literature* (Oxford, 2004), 139–72 and Helen Solterer, 'States of Siege: Violence, Place, Gender: Paris around 1400', *New Medieval Literatures* 2 (1998), 95–132.

34 Nievergelt, 'National Identity', 407.

35 For the circulation of newsletters and other forms of information about the

the *Siege of Jerusalem* create a fantasy of cohesion through the repetition of ancient conflicts.

Troilus and Criseyde is a different kind of siege poem. Whereas medieval siege narratives typically focus on the broad effects of siege on the besieged, registered through details such as the damage inflicted on bodies or the effects of price-inflation,[36] Chaucer chooses instead to examine how the effects of siege occur on a psychological level, creating a portrait of the mental consequences of warfare. In so doing, Chaucer draws on the language and tropes of allegorical siege narratives such as the *Roman de la rose*, which use siege as an allegory for courtly love.[37] Written by Guillaume de Loris in the 1230s, but left incomplete and continued by Jean de Meun some forty years later, the *Rose* was one of the most widely read medieval poems and a monumental work on philosophy, love and allegory.[38] At the heart of the poem lies an allegorical quest for Rose, a figure for both the Dreamer's lady and female sexuality more generally, who is locked in a castle guarded by Jealousy.[39] Chaucer translated part of the *Rose* and uses its vocabulary of amorous siege throughout *Troilus and Criseyde* to portray Criseyde as a subject twice besieged: first by the Greeks and then through her love affairs with Troilus and Diomede.[40] It is through the plans of her uncle,

war, see Andrea Ruddick, *English Identity and Political Culture in the Fourteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2013), 33.

36 See, for example, the *Siege of Jerusalem*: 'A womman, bounden with a barn, was on the bely hytte / With a ston of a stayre, as the storyj telleth, / That the barn out brayde from the body clene / And was born up as a bal over the burwe walles' (lines 829–32). The narrator later comments on the drastic price inflation in the besieged city: 'Sale in the cité was cesed by thanne; / Was noght for besauntes to bye that men bite myght: / For a ferthyng-worth of fode floryns an hundred / Princes profren in the toun to pay in the fuste' (lines 1141–44).

37 Hebron, *Medieval Siege,* 153–57. See also Peter L. Allen, *The Art of Love: Amatory Fiction from Ovid to the* Romance of the Rose (Philadelphia, 1992).

38 For a recent assessment of the *Roman de la rose* in its philosophical context, see Jonathan Morton, *The 'Roman de la rose' in its Philosophical Context: Nature, Art, and Ethics* (Oxford, 2018).

39 See Hebron, *Medieval Siege*, 153–54, and Heather Arden, 'The Slings and Arrows of Outrageous Love in the *Roman de la Rose*', in *The Medieval City Under Siege*, ed. Corfis and Wolfe, 191–206.

40 For Chaucer's relationship to the *Roman de la rose*, see James I. Wimsatt, *Chaucer and the French Love Poets: The Literary Backgrounds of the 'Book of the Duchess'* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1968), John Finlayson, '*The Roman de la Rose* and Chaucer's Narrators', *Chaucer Review* 24.3 (1990), 187–210, Marilynn Desmond,

Pandarus, that Criseyde is first enclosed in the siege-like strictures of courtly love.

Criseyde Besieged

Close to the end of Book 1, Pandarus decides to set into motion a plan to bring about a meeting between Troilus and Criseyde. Reflecting on his designs, Pandarus crafts an evocative comparison. Anyone who plans to build a house will never act with a 'rakel hond', Pandarus tells us (1.1067). Rather, they will begin with one stone and envisage in their mind the complete design they intend to actualize. So, we are led to infer, will Pandarus proceed in a careful and systematic manner:

> For everi wight that hath an hous to founde
> Ne renneth naught the werk for to bygynne
> With rakel hond, but he wol bide a stounde,
> And sende his hertes line out fro withininne
> Aldirfirst his purpos for to wynne.
> Al this Pandare in his herte thoughte,
> And caste his werk ful wisely or he wroughte. (1.1065–1071)

Preparation is key, and it is crucial to think through the strategy in full. This passage is an almost direct translation from the early thirteenth-century *Poetria nova* of Geoffrey of Vinsauf, the most popular rhetorical art of poetry in the Middle Ages.[41] Rita Copeland draws attention to how

Ovid's Art and the Wife of Bath: The Ethics of Erotic Violence (Ithaca, NY, 2006), Nicolette Zeeman, 'Philosophy in Parts: Jean de Meun, Chaucer, and Lydgate', in *Uncertain Knowledge: Scepticism, Relativism, and Doubt in the Middle Ages*, ed. Dallas G. Denery III, Kantik Ghosh and Nicolette Zeeman (Turnhout, 2014), 213–38, and Stephanie A. Viereck Gibbs Kamath, *Authorship and First-Person Allegory in Late Medieval France and England* (Woodbridge, 2012). For the influence of the *Roman de la rose*, see Sylvia Huot, *The Romance of the Rose and its Medieval Readers: Interpretation, Reception, Manuscript Transmission* (Cambridge, 1993).

41 Geoffrey of Vinsauf, *Poetria Nova* in Ernest Gallo ed. *The Poetria Nova and its Sources in Early Rhetorical Doctrine* (The Hague: Mouton, 1971), I.43–48; trans. Margaret Nims (Turnhout, 2010), 20: 'Si quis habet fundare domum, non currit ad actum / Impetuosa manus: intrinseca linea cordis / Praemetitur opus, seriemque sub ordine certo / Interior praescribit homo, totamque figurat / Ante

Pandarus emplots the affair between Troilus and Criseyde in rhetorical terms, as Pandarus imagines the time and place of his plan as if he were designing the optimal conditions for a piece of epideictic rhetoric.[42] In an alternate interpretation, Christopher Cannon reads this passage as an eloquent description of the process of literary becoming, indicative of a broader medieval attitude to form that sees form not as a stable entity but rather as something that must be moulded. It is the '*in*forming of raw materials according to the script of some idea', in Cannon's words, whereby a writer gives shape to matter, and this passage thus doubles as a commentary on Chaucer's broader project of composition.[43] For both Copeland and Cannon, this passage is a crucial metatextual reflection on literary composition.

Within the besieged city of Troy, Pandarus' meticulous design and preparation takes on an additional martial meaning as the strategy he outlines unfolds like a battleplan. There are three parts to Pandarus's campaign: the first is to wear down Criseyde's defences through his sly rhetoric, the second is to prepare Troilus for battle by making him a soldier fit for love and the third phase is to put this plan into action by conquering Criseyde. Pandarus reflects on the success of his plans in Book 3, where he provides the details of his 'game' to Troilus. 'For the have I bigonne a gamen pleye' (3.250), Pandarus confesses, readily admitting that he used trickery to implant the thought in Criseyde's mind that she should yield to Troilus: 'And were it wist that I, thorugh myn engyn, / Hadde in my nece yput this fantasie / … Whi, al the world upon it wolde crie' (3.274–6, 277). Pandarus states that his courtship strategy was underhanded because he manipulated Criseyde's emotions, and that if word got out about his contrivances then he would be accused of 'the werste trecherie' (3.278). Pandarus' chicanery casts Criseyde as a fortress to be breached: rather than bombarding Criseyde's walls with

manus quam corporis; et status eius / Est prius archetypus quam senilis' (If a man has a house to build, his impetuous hand does not rush into action. The measuring line of his mind first lays out the work, and he mentally outlines the successive steps in definite order. The mind's hand shapes the entire house before the body's hand builds it. Its mode of being is archetypal before it is actual). For the vast influence of the *Poetria Nova*, see Marjorie Curry Woods, *Classroom Commentaries: Teaching the Poetria Nova Across Medieval and Renaissance Europe* (Columbus, OH, 2010).

42 Rita Copeland, 'Chaucer and Rhetoric', in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven, CT, 2006), 122–43 (132).

43 Christopher Cannon, 'Form', 175.

siege engines, Pandarus has relied on trickery to slip through the gates unnoticed and placed – 'yput' – the 'fantasie' of love for Troilus inside her. The word that Pandarus uses to describe this trickery, *engin*, is a key term for medieval warfare that links war and rhetoric together.

According to military manuals, preparation was the key to victory in battle. The *De re militari* of Vegetius, for example, famously makes this explicit: 'he who wants peace, prepare for war; he who wants victory, let him instruct his soldiers diligently; he who wishes favourable results let him fight with skill, not by chance'.[44] Like rhetoric, war is an art that can be taught, undertaken with skill and not left to the vicissitudes of fortune. By reading Pandarus's plans within the context of military strategy, we can see more clearly how poetics, love discourse and siege warfare are mutually informing in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In what follows, I will first outline how the medieval term *engin* migrates between and across military, poetical and rhetorical discourses. Returning to *Troilus and Criseyde*, I will then examine how Pandarus's language intentionally scripts Criseyde as a subject besieged by love.

The medieval concept of *engin* invoked by Pandarus encompassed a broad semantic field that ranges from intellectual capacity to malicious intent; importantly, its definitions included the martial as well as the rhetorical, and it was a key term for considering the relationship between creativity and knowledge in the Middle Ages.[45] It derives from the Latin *ingenium*, which gives us the modern sense of *ingenious*, and enters Middle English via French.[46] *Engin* gains its conceptual purchase on medieval ideas of creativity because of the important role accorded to *ingenium*, meaning innate intellectual ability, in classical rhetoric. Following the teaching of Plato in the *Phaedrus* and the writing of Isocrates, who argued that although eloquence could be trained through practice and knowledge it depended on an innate ability within the

44 'Igitur qui desiderat pacem, praeparet bellum; qui victoriam cupit, milites inbuat diligenter; qui secundos optat eventus, dimicet arte, non casu.' *Vegetius: Epitoma Rei Militaris*, ed. Michael D. Reeve (Oxford, 2016), 64; translation from *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science*, trans. N. P. Milner (Liverpool, 1993 [2001]), 63. For the influence of Vegetius in the Middle Ages, see Christopher Allmand, *The* De re militari *of Vegetius: The Reception, Transmission and Transmission of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2011).

45 *MED*, s.v. *engin* (n.). For medieval conceptions of *engin*, see Jonathan Morton, '*Engin*: Creativity, Innovation, and Knowledge in the Medieval Romance Tradition of Alexander the Great', *Romanic Review*, forthcoming.

46 *Dictionnaire du Moyen Français (1330–1500)*, s.v. *engin* (subst. masc.).

orator, Cicero contends in *De Oratore* that *ingenium* is necessary to achieve true excellence in rhetoric.[47] As the terms of rhetoric were adapted to poetic composition during the Middle Ages, *engin* became associated with artistic skill.[48] In the *Roman de la rose*, for example, Pygmalion, characterised as a master artist, is spurred into creating a sculpture 'pour son grant engin esprouver' (for proving his great skill, line 20826).[49]

In addition to its connection with novelty, ability and innovation, *engin* also held specific meanings in the context of war. Siege engines, for example, are familiar features of any siege description. In *the Siege of Jerusalem*, we hear how Vespasian ordered men to 'benden engynes, / Kesten at the kernels and clustred toures, / And monye der daies worke dongen to grounde' (lines 678–80), while in the *Roman de la rose*, the Castle of Jealousy is surrounded by walls so strong that they 'ne doit

47 Here Cicero puts this belief in the mouth of his teacher Crassus, who states that 'it is, in the first place, natural ability and talent that make a very important contribution to oratory … For a certain quickness of the mind and intellect is required [for the orator], which displays itself in the keenness of its thoughts, in the richness with which it unfolds and elaborates them, and in the strength and retentiveness of its memory' [sentio naturam primum, atque ingenium ad dicendum vim aferre maximam … Nam et animi atque ingenii celeries quidam motus esse debent, qui et ad excogitandum acuti, et ad explicandum ornandumque sint uberes, et ad memoriam firmi atque diuturni]. Cicero, *On the Orator: Books 1–2*, ed. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA, 1942) 1.113; trans. Cicero, *On the Ideal Orator (De Oratore)*, ed. and trans. James M. May and Jakob Wisse (Oxford, 2001). See Elaine Fantham, *The Roman World of Cicero's* De Oratore (Oxford, 2004), 81–82, Plato, *Phaedrus* in *The Collected Dialogues of Plato: Including the Letters*, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntingdon Cairns, trans. R. Hackworth (Princeton, NJ, 1963), 475–525, and Isocartes, 'Against the Sophists', in *Source Book of the History of Education for the Greek and Roman Period*, ed. and trans. Paul Monroe (New York, 1901 [1915]), 91–95 (93–94). *De Oratore* was unknown to medieval thinkers until it was rediscovered in 1421, but Cicero also writes of the importance of *ingenium* in the introduction to *De Inventione*. For the importance of *ingenium* to medieval conceptions of innovation, see Patricia Clare Ingham, *The Medieval New: Ambivalence in an Age of Innovation* (Philadelphia, 2015).

48 For the relationship between classical rhetoric and medieval literary theory, see Rita Copeland, 'Chaucer and Rhetoric', 122–25, and Copeland, 'Rhetoric and Literary Criticism', in *The Oxford Handbook of Rhetorical Studies*, ed. Michael J. MacDonald (Oxford, 2014), 341–52.

49 Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun, *Le Roman de la Rose*, ed. Armand Strubel (Paris, 1992); trans. Charles Dahlberg (Princeton, NJ, 1995).

pas fere faute / Por engin qui sache geter' (should not give way to any machine for throwing missiles, lines 3837–8). These instruments were crucial implements for besieging armies, enabling the aggressor to attack fortifications and destroy defences such as city walls.[50]

Beyond this understanding of *engin* as a machine, however, lies a broader connection between the idea of *engin*, in the sense of guile or trickery, and siege warfare. *Engin* is the crucial element for successfully overcoming your enemies during siege, a capacity relied upon by besiegers and besieged alike. Later in the *Siege of Jerusalem*, we come across more siege engines as 'Josophus the gynful here engynes alle / Brente with brennande oyle and myche bale wroght' (lines 813–14). The narrator is recounting how Josophus destroyed the Romans' siege engines. Josophus is described as 'the gynful' – meaning 'the crafty' – an adjectival form of *engin* that seems to enjoy a particular currency with military tactics.[51] This passage perfectly illustrates the significance *engin* holds within the context of war because it is used to denote both the mental capacity that enables Josophus to strike against the Romans and the name of the machines he destroys. In Jordan Fantosme's chronicle, a historical work from twelfth-century England that is deeply indebted to the romance tradition, the military importance of *engin* for certain kinds of conflict is again made clear: 'Craft [engin],' Fantosme writes, 'is better than war against outlaws.'[52]

One way in which we can bring these disparate meanings of *engin* together is to recall that like a speech, sermon, or poem, war is undertaken through training and craft, and was theorized as one of the seven mechanical sciences in medieval education.[53] Hugh of St Victor,

50 See Mark Denny, *Ingenium: Five Machines that Changed the World* (Baltimore, MD, 2007), 71–91.

51 More specifically, it is linked with Scottish military tactics. See Alastair J. Macdonald, 'Trickery, mockery and the Scottish way of war', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 143 (2013), 319–37.

52 Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R. C. Johnston (Oxford, 1981), 1.148: 'Mielz valt engin que guerre sur gent desmesurez.'

53 In 'States of Siege', Solterer draws a similar conclusion about the relationship between architecture, literary creation and violence, by way of Paul Virilio's 'techniques of fighting'. For Virilio, fortifications conserve techniques as well as power; they ensure the propagation and continuation of force in the form of knowledge. Solterer argues: 'Sieges stand as artisanal work because they yoke together people in the throes of making different places for themselves … A rapport between artwork and violence that involves "pulling, or throwing or

for example, places armament alongside fabric making, commerce, agriculture, hunting, medicine and theatrics. 'These sciences are called mechanical, that is, adulterate,' Hugh explains, 'because their concern is with the artificer's product, which borrows its form from nature.'[54] Pandarus' campaign in *Troilus and Criseyde* draws out these similarities through an allegorical frame that construes courtly love as a military enterprise. Chaucer departs from the *Poetria nova* by detailing a specific outcome for Pandarus's designs: 'his purpos for to wynne' (1.1069). Although 'wynne' here has the primary meaning of achieving success and accomplishing a set goal, in Middle English it could also mean to engage in armed combat.[55] This pugilistic note echoes within the besieged city of Troy and, as I will discuss below, Chaucer reactivates its bellicose overtones in Book 5. Chaucer layers these amorous and military meanings together to draw out the connections between siege-craft and courtly love.

The campaign to 'wynne' Criseyde takes place through a series of enclosed spaces as Chaucer links the enclosure of Criseyde with the entrapment of siege.[56] The campaign begins as Pandarus intrudes upon a private space of female reading. Pandarus, keen to find his niece to persuade her of Troilus's virtues, is taken by two of her ladies into an enclosed parlour. Criseyde and her ladies have been listening to a tale about Laius, king of Thebes, and the misfortunes brought by his son Oedipus, events that occurred a number of centuries before the siege of

casting bodies" collapses the distinction between productive and destructive violence in disconcerting ways. Yet, in a medieval context, this blurring of types of violence was incorporated into the very spectrum of human artful activity' (114).

54 'Mechanica dividitur in lanificium, armaturam, navigationem, agriculturam, venationem, medicinam, theatricam,' (book 2, chapter XX, p. 38, line 19); 'hec mechanice appellantur, id est adulterine, quia de opere artificis agunt, quod a natura formam mutuatur' (book 2, chapter XX, p. 39, line 16). Charles Henry Buttimer, ed., *Hugonis de Sancto Victore Didascalicon De Studio Legendi* (Washington, D.C., 1939), 1–133. Translation from *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. Jerome Taylor (New York, 1961), 74, 75.

55 *MED*, s.v. *winnen* (v.), 1(c).

56 For a recent analysis of the different layers of intertextuality in this scene, and a virtuoso reading of the scene as a whole, see Joyce Coleman, '"Withinne a Paved Parlour:" Criseyde and Domestic Reading in a City under Siege', in *Reading and Writing in Medieval England: Essays in Honor of Mary C. Erler*, ed. Martin Chase and Maryanne Kowaleski (Woodbridge, 2019), 9–38 (12–18).

Troy. Twice in twenty lines the reader is informed that the ladies' reading material concerns Thebes, and Chaucer folds in another reference to the cursed city when Pandarus responds to Criseyde's description of the text: 'Al this knowe I myselve / And al th'assege of Thebes and the care; / For herof ben ther maked bookes twelve' (2.106–8). While Criseyde tells her uncle she had been reading a 'romaunce … of Thebes' (2.100) that could be the twelfth-century *Roman de Thèbes*, this time the reference is probably to the *Thebaid* of Statius, a Latin epic written in twelve books. In what is by this point a heavy-handed gesture, Chaucer uses his characters to remark on the intertwining of his tale of Troy with that of Thebes, a literary-historical act that scholars have shown fundamentally shapes the poem's philosophy of history and political imagination.[57] As Jennifer Summit has argued, through this scene of reading, 'Criseyde is proleptically reading what is in essence her own story' because the destruction of Thebes was widely seen as prefiguring the destruction of Troy.[58]

At a surface level, however, this episode overlays a courtly scene with siege warfare.[59] Chaucer represents the text being read in this scene in a consciously ambiguous way that hints at literary history without definitively stating whether Criseyde's 'geste' and Pandarus' 'bookes twelve' are the same book.[60] What is emphasized in the passage is that the text deals with the story of a city under siege.[61] As the narrator states, Criseyde and her ladies are listening to 'the geste / Of the siege of Thebes' (2.83–84). Chaucer's imposition of a *mise-en-abyme* frame of sieges-within-sieges is not simply a virtuoso display of literary knowledge, but rather it links reading and war together. In response to the fears of siege

57 See, for example, Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 126–36.

58 Jennifer Summit, '*Troilus and Criseyde*', in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven, CT, 2006), 213–42 (214). See also Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets* (Ithaca, NY, 1984), 115–17, and Catherine Sanok, 'Criseyde, Cassandre and the Thebaid', *Studies in the Age of Chaucer* 20 (1998), 41–71.

59 As Carolyn Dinshaw notes: 'In a city under siege, Criseyde reads a romance about a city under siege'; see *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison, 1989), 52.

60 See Leah Schwebel, 'What's in Criseyde's Book?', *Chaucer Review* 54.1 (2019), 91–115.

61 As Summit argues, 'where the *Thebaid* illuminates the brutal effects of war on women, Pandarus's "tale" would subsume that story – and, by extension, women's wartime experiences – under the courtly conventions of romantic love' ('*Troilus and Criseyde*', 215).

in Troy, Criseyde and her ladies turn to literary accounts of a previous siege. A fourteenth-century copy of the *Bible historiale* bears witness to a similar experience. Besides the account of Judas Maccabeus' taking of Ephram are written the now barely visible words 'Calais. Nota. Calais', an addition that Jeanette Patterson has shown happened soon after the Siege of Calais.[62] Confronted with soldiers at the city gates, a citizen turned to familiar stories of sieges past, using such intertextual frameworks to gloss the experience of war.

During the conversation with Pandarus that follows this scene, Criseyde immediately announces her fear of the siege. 'For Goddes love', she implores her uncle, 'is than th'assege aweye? / I am of Grekes so fered that I deye' (2.123–24). The first thing Criseyde wants to know is whether the siege has been raised or not; potential lovers are the furthest thing from her mind. The entrapment of siege blurs into the entrapment of courtly love as Pandarus capitalizes on Criseyde's anxieties to introduce Troilus as a potential lover.[63] At a later point in the initial conversation with Pandarus, Criseyde again asks her uncle for news of the war. This time Chaucer represents the war as an unwelcome disruption of the idle conversation that Criseyde and Pandarus had been enjoying. Pandarus and Criseyde were deep in conversation, 'In many an unkouth, glad, and depe matere' (2.151), only for the otiose pleasure to be punctured by Criseyde again bringing up the events of the war. They were talking 'as frendes doon whan thei ben mette yfere, / Tyl', Chaucer writes, 'she gan axen hym how Ector ferde, / That was the townes wal and Grekes yerde' (2.154–55). War imposes itself, making its presence felt in the disruption of this courtly scene, as conversation can last only so long before fear of the siege returns.

This effect is heightened by the craft of Chaucer's stanza design as the 'Tyl' comes after five lines of courtly pleasure, the 'wordes glade', 'frendly tales' and 'merie chiere' that construe the chamber as a space secure from the concerns of the outside world, safe and complete unto itself. The rhythmic accretion of these pleasurable short clauses

62 BnF MS fr. 152, fol. 349v. See Jeanette Patterson. 'Stolen Scriptures: The Bible Historiale and the Hundred Years' War', *Digital Philology: A Journal of Medieval Cultures* 2.2 (2013), 155–80 (170). See also, Clive R. Sneddon, 'A Critical Edition of the Four Gospels in the Thirteenth-Century Old French Translation of the Bible' (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Oxford, 1978), 229–33.

63 As Joyce Coleman notes, Pandarus's emphasis on Criseyde's anxieties departs from Chaucer's source, Boccaccio's *Filostrato*, where Pandaro makes no mention of the war; see Coleman, '"Withinne a Paved Parlor"', 36.

draws Chaucer's reader into the courtly scene, but the stanza abruptly changes direction with that 'Tyl' in its penultimate line: Chaucer pulls the handbrake to bring this courtly pleasure ride to an abrupt stop. Figuring Ector as the 'townes wal' draws further attention to the artificiality of the courtly scene by underscoring how the safety of Criseyde's 'paved parlour' (2.82) is dependent on the strength of the city's besieged walls. Pandarus tries to reassure his niece, telling Criseyde that the war is going well. 'Ful wel, I thonk it God' (2.155) he responds, and segues into a paean to the virtues of Troilus, Hector's brother, 'The wise, worthi Ector the secounde' (2.158). The chain of association that links Hector, the 'townes wal', to Troilus, introduced as a doubled Hector, emphasizes how Troilus has come to represent the town of Troy as a whole. This association is further reinforced by Troilus' name, meaning 'little Troy', a metonymy that Chaucer activates throughout the poem.[64]

The displacement of military siege onto erotic siege is realized in the consummation scene between Troilus and Criseyde. Here, in the conclusion of Pandarus' designs, Troilus makes a series of promises to Criseyde that conclude with his declaration: 'N'y wol not, certein, breken youre defence' (3.1299). One of the poem's modern editors glosses this line as meaning that Troilus will not do anything to disobey Criseyde's prohibition, yet the line clearly resonates with the idea of breaking the defences of a castle or town.[65] In a similar manner, Criseyde accedes to Troilus as if welcoming him within the walls of her castle: 'Welcome,' Criseyde cries, 'my knyght, my pees, my suffisaunce!' (3.1309). Troilus has not had to rely on the brute force of siege engines to break Criseyde's defences. Rather, she has invited him in to consummate their relationship. Chaucer does not explicitly invoke the siege of Troy in these passages of courtship, but by showing how the practice of warfare intersects with the rituals of courtly love he demonstrates the ways that siege warfare shapes the characters of *Troilus and Criseyde*.

After the consummation of the affair, *Troilus and Criseyde* shifts from this erotic siege to the political siege as Troy responds to the catastrophic capture of Antenor by agreeing to a transfer of prisoners that sees Criseyde sent to the Greeks. Through the first three books, Chaucer explores the ways that military siege shapes the lives of the besieged and conditions behaviour so that the logic of siege pervades interpersonal

64 For considerations of how Troilus' fate parallels that of Troy, see Barney, 'Troilus Bound', 457, and the references cited therein.

65 Geoffrey Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. B. A. Windeatt (London, 2003).

relationships. Yet Chaucer repeats the language and imagery of sexual conquest in Book 5, challenging any simple distinction that would associate the state of siege solely with the physical borders of the siege.[66] Here Chaucer reprises the language of conquest as Diomede attempts to win Criseyde using exactly the same rhetoric as Pandarus in Book 2. 'But whoso myghte wynnen swich a flour', Diomede thinks, 'From hym for whom she morneth nyght and day, / He myghte seyn he were a conquerour' (5.792–94). The use of 'wynnen' echoes Pandarus's earlier stated desire to 'wynne' by uniting Troilus and Criseyde and reinforces the idea of militaristic contest as Diomede construes this love as a competition between men. Criseyde is figured as an object to be won from Troilus that affirms Diomede's masculinity. Winning Criseyde would allow Diomede to say he were a 'conquerour', a word that Chaucer uses elsewhere in his poetry exclusively in military contexts.[67] Diomede's speech then follows the same pattern as Pandarus's rhetoric from Book 2: 'He gan first fallen of the werre in speche / Bitwixe him and the folk of Troie town; And of th'assege he gan hire ek biseche / To telle hym what was hire opynyoun' (5.855–57). Beginning first with the latest news of the war, Diomede woos Criseyde by positioning himself in relation to the siege. Although Criseyde has escaped the suffocating confines of the besieged city of Troy, the state of siege continues in the Greek camp.

Diomede's language of erotic conquest resonates with contemporary legal records that similarly used the language of siege warfare to describe erotic attention. For example, in 1381 Lettice Kirriel, an English noblewoman, submitted a petition against a knight named Sir John Cornewall in which she claimed that he pursued her with such relentlessness she lived as in a state of siege: 'he has several times made assault against Lettice, and comes and goes from time to time such that she dare not leave the castle without a multitude of people and holds vigil inside the castle as in times of war'.[68] The line between imaginative and historical

66 For a treatment of the discourses of sacrifice and love, see L. O. Aranye Fradenburg, *Sacrifice Your Love: Psychoanalysis, Historicism, Chaucer* (Minneapolis, 2002), 199–238.

67 The word is associated most often with Theseus, who is described as a 'conquerour' five times in the *Knight's Tale* (at lines 862, 916, 981, 998 and 1027). For an analysis of Theseus's military and imperial identity, see David Wallace, *Chaucerian Polity* (Palo Alto, CA, 1997), 104–24.

68 'il ad fait assaut a dite Letice; et iese en agait de temps en temps, issint q'ele n'osa quatre anz passez isser de son dit chastel saunz multitude de gentz, mes deynz le dit chastel tenu veille come en terre [*sic*] de gurre'. Quoted and translated

siege was blurred through such accounts of gendered violence. Siege warfare was not only comprised of military acts, but also functioned as an imaginative storehouse of narrative precedents used to highlight the mechanisms through which society held women 'as in times of war'. As invoked in the language of Pandarus and Diomede, the siege of Troy becomes the means through which Chaucer can explore how Criseyde is ultimately caught in the multiple vectors of violence characteristic of siege warfare, whether imagined in literature or experienced in late medieval life.

Troy's Siege and Chaucer's London

The state of siege suspends the everyday life of a city to create dead time for the besieged. By blockading the city, the assailing army suffocates the lives of citizens and interrupts the rhythms of daily life. As Helen Solterer writes, 'The outstanding impression cultivated by the siege is suspense. Besieger and besieged alike are kept hanging – caught in a position of uneasy expectation, fearing the worst attack, mustering the force to withstand it.'[69] The temporality of city life shifts, as men were conscripted to aid the city's defence while the lives of those who did not fight were held in a state of suspense. In the retelling of the rape of Lucrece in the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer represents siege as creating a temporality of dangerous *otium* and idleness that leads to Lucrece's demise. Chaucer writes that the siege around Ardea made its inhabitants 'half idel' (F 1697), as the blockade interrupted the everyday life of the city. In this atmosphere of imposed boredom, Tarquin 'Gan for to jape' (F 1699) to ask his friends who the best wife is, thus setting into motion the tragic series of events that will lead to Lucrece's suicide. As Tory Vandeventer Pearman argues, Chaucer draws attention to the specifically gendered aspects of siege warfare across his literary works by consistently associating it with violence done by men to women.[70] In both

in W. M. Ormrod, 'Needy Knights and Wealthy Widows: the Encounters of John Cornewall and Lettice Kirriel, 1378–1382', in *The Medieval Python*, ed. Yeager and Takamiya, 137–49; translation from 138, original 146n7.

69 Solterer, 'States of Siege', 107–08.

70 Pearman goes on to argue that 'ultimately, it is apparent that Chaucer's uses of asseged and its synonyms create a discursive space for discussing gender and ethnic Otherness in relation to tyranny'; see Tory Vanderventer Pearman, 'Laying Siege to Female Power: Theseus the "Conqueror" and Hippolita the

the *Legend of Good Women* and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer explores how the enforced idleness of siege reproduces ramifying violence within the besieged city. In Books 1–3, Chaucer used images and tropes from courtly literature to frame Troilus and Criseyde's love affair as a kind of siege campaign, in which Troilus serves as a soldier under the command of Pandarus. As we saw, however, Chaucer subverted these generic expectations by repeating siege imagery through the character of Diomede. While the poem continues to represent Criseyde as a figure struggling against the constraints of misogynist society, in Books 4 and 5 the focus shifts to concentrate on the political atmosphere of siege.

The narrative of *Troilus and Criseyde* slows down considerably in the final two books as more space is given over to representing internal frames of mind and less to the mechanisms of plot. In these books, I will argue, Chaucer deepens his account of siege warfare by introducing the space of the Greek camp, in which Criseyde is still subject to the forces of constriction that bound her in the city of Troy, and representing the mechanisms of political negotiation that accompanied sustained siege campaigns. Chaucer shows how the state of siege can continue beyond the walls of the besieged city, revealing that subjects as well as places can suffer the consequences of siege. In the *proem* to Book 4 we are told that Fortune will cast Troilus 'clene out of his lady grace' (4.10). Just as Criseyde is cast out of the city, Troilus is cast out of her love, in an act of doubling that signals the intimate relationship between Troilus and the city of Troy as whole. This occurs as the poem's language of community comes to the foreground: in addition to the parliament scene that includes the 'noyse of peple' (4.183) speaking as one and deciding to exchange Criseyde 'by oon assent' (4.346), Troy becomes an increasingly claustrophobic town of gossip. This claustrophobia is registered through the speed with which news and rumour about the prisoner exchange circulates: 'This thing anon was couth in every strete, / Both in th'assege, in town, and everywhere' (4.61–62). The boredom and constraint of siege creates an atmosphere in which gossip flourishes and in which the needs of the polity are put above the needs of the individual.

Book 4 begins with one of the poem's rare battle descriptions. Chaucer's language leans into an alliterative style to describe the battle between the Trojans and the Greeks.[71] We are told how Hector 'and many

"Asseged" in Chaucer's "the Knight's Tale"', *Essays in Medieval Studies* 23 (2006), 31–40 (35).

71 Chaucer was fond of using ornamental alliteration in battle descriptions.

a worthi wight out went / With spere in honde and bigge bowes bente; / And in the berd, withouten lenger lette, / Hire fomen in the feld hem faste mette' (4.39–42). From the ornamental alliteration of the triplets that begins the passage to the final line that approximates the conventional metrical form of English alliterative verse, Chaucer creates a sonic patterning out of the ornamental alliteration, increased by the repetition of the aspirated 'h' of 'Hire' and 'hem'. The Trojans have lost the battle, 'so mysledden' that they retreat back to the city at night (4.49). The greatest crisis for the Trojans is that in the battle they lost Antenor, taken by the Greeks. As is conventional in medieval war, in the aftermath of the battle the two sides negotiate a prisoner exchange.[72] Each side agrees upon a time of truce, 'and tho they gonnen trete / Hire prisoners to chaungen, meste and leste, / And for the surplus yeven sommes grete' (4.58–60). These lines represent a typical approach to prisoner exchanges during the Hundred Years War: the most prestigious prisoners are exchanged in a *quid pro quo*, while a lump sum is paid for the rest. Yet these treaties are soon disturbed by the intrusion of Calkas, who implores the Greek council to ask for the return of his daughter in a forceful speech that insists upon the truth of his prophecy that Troy will soon fall. Priam grants a safe-conduct to his ambassadors and sends them on their mission to the Trojan camp.

What follows is a highly detailed account of the mechanisms of political negotiation. Hector speaks up for Criseyde, with a considered response: Criseyde is not a prisoner of war and therefore cannot be exchanged for Antenor. Doing so would cheapen the Trojans: 'We usen here no wommen for to selle' (4.182). These objections are met with sharp condemnation from the 'peple', who speak with a single voice to strongly insist that Priam not listen to such objections and instead do whatever it takes to get Antenor back (4.183–86). It is in this scene that Chaucer most fully explores the language and politics of diplomacy in war. The scene is replete with the language of international diplomacy, from the safe-conduct granted by Priam (4.139) to what is perhaps the first usage of the word ambassador in English (4.140).[73] Despite this emphasis on

In the *Knight's Tale* Chaucer imbues the chivalric tournament between Palamon and Arcite with a similar atmosphere: 'Ther shiveren shaftes upon sheeldes thikke; / He feleth thurgh the herte-spoon the prikke' (I.2605–6).

72 Rémy Ambühl, *Prisoners of War in the Hundred Years War: Ransom Culture in the Late Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2012), 112.

73 The *MED* cites this line, along with Chaucer's *Pardoner's Tale* ('Stilbon,

war negotiations, this episode has most often been read in terms of domestic English politics. The prominent role of the 'parlement' called by Priam has been read as a fictionalisation of the Michaelmas Parliament of 1386, in which Chaucer sat as one of the crown's representatives, with the cynical *Realpolitik* of the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor seen as a corollary to the fate of Michael de la Pole, Chancellor to Richard II, being handed over to the commons.[74] However, this episode also speaks to events and anxieties of the Hundred Years War, particularly during the 1380s. While the war with France was fought through a shared culture, as Butterfield has shown, during this period a sharp line of division began to be drawn between friendly and hostile aliens through concepts such as denization.[75] The language used by Calkas to describe his defection, cut across the line break, 'ich was / Troian' (4.71–72), would have been increasingly legible for an England that was working out exactly what that meant and what the ideas of cultural allegiance should look like. We have seen how Chaucer draws on the atmosphere of anxiety and uncertainty created by siege warfare through his representation of the affair between Troilus and Criseyde, and in the final part of this chapter I now turn to consider how Chaucer renders the civic anxiety of the state of siege within his poem.

During the final quarter of the fourteenth century, England was caught in the murky waters between wartime and peacetime. War with France had been declared in 1337 when Edward III launched his claim to the crown of France. That conflict had officially ended in 1360 with the signing of the Treaty of Brétigny, but this treaty left much unresolved, not least the bands of soldiers in northern France who suddenly had no leaders, no purpose and no wages. War reignited in

that was a wys embassadour' [603]), as the earliest examples of 'ambassadour' meaning 'A diplomatic emissary of a ruler, an envoy'. *MED,* s.v. 'ambassadour,' (n.) 1.a. The *OED* similarly cites the line from *Troilus* as the earliest example. *OED*, s.v. 'ambassador,' (n.) 1.b.

74 See Turner, *Chaucer*, 295–313.

75 See Butterfield, *The Familiar Enemy*, and Bart Lambert and W. Mark Ormrod, 'Friendly Foreigners: International Warfare, Resident Aliens and the Early History of Denization in England, c. 1250–c.1400', *English Historical Review* 80.542 (2015), 1–24. See also Lambert and Ormrod, 'A matter of trust: the royal regulation of England's French residents during wartime, 1294–1377', *Historical Research* 89.244 (2016), 208–26, and Andrea Ruddick, '"Becoming English": Nationality, Terminology, and Changing Sides in the Late Middle Ages', *Medieval Worlds* 5 (2017), 57–69.

1369 and France took the initiative in the conflict, launching a series of campaigns that England, grappling with the death of Edward III in 1377 (which came only a year after the death of the Black Prince), struggled to repel.[76] In England during the 1380s – the decade during which Chaucer was most likely at work on the *Troilus* – the threat of war fought on domestic territory became ever greater. During these years, France, along with Scottish allies, planned a series of large-scale invasions.[77] In 1386, the French amassed an invasion force of almost 30,000 soldiers – the largest army gathered by any nation during the entirety of the Hundred Years War – and spent much of the summer and early autumn resolving the logistical challenges of manoeuvring such a gargantuan force. Indeed, the scale of the invasion force was so great that a contemporary chronicler compared the French fleet of 1386 to the one that destroyed Troy.[78] The invasion was thwarted, however, as weather conditions and logistical difficulties compounded to leave the French force frustrated. Nevertheless, the *threat* of invasion disseminated through rumour, bad information and untrustworthy spies, was enough to spread chaos throughout England. It even had direct consequences in the Wonderful Parliament held after the crisis passed, which saw an unprecedented intervention against royal power by the lords of England unhappy at the realm's poor defensive preparedness.[79] Although today these events often receive only a passing mention in scholarship,[80] the invasion scares of the 1380s were so serious that in one modern historian's estimation they represented 'the most deadly threat to England throughout the entire Middle Ages'.[81] Most scholars would agree that *Troilus and Criseyde* was finished before the apex of the invasion scares in summer 1386, and I do not wish to argue for a close association between *Troilus* and this date.[82] Rather, I want to

76 See Sumption, *The Hundred Years War III* (2009), 511–57.

77 For the Siege of Calais see Susan Rose, *Calais*, 7–22. For the invasion of 1385, see Sumption, *Hundred Years War I* (1990), 535ff.

78 J. J. Palmer, *England, France, and Christendom, 1377–99* (Oxford, 1977), 74.

79 Sumption, *Hundred Years War III*, 586–92.

80 For example, the invasion crisis is cited parenthetically by Lee Patterson in *Chaucer and the Subject of History*, 85. See also Paul Strohm, *Chaucer's Tale* (New York, 2014), 59–60, and Marion Turner, *Chaucer*, 372.

81 Quoted in J. J. Palmer, *England*, 74.

82 The dating of *Troilus and Criseyde* is impossible to determine, but I agree with Strohm that it was likely finished before summer 1386; see Strohm, *Chaucer's Tale*, 25. For debates about the poem's date, see John Livingston Lowes,

emphasize that during the time Chaucer was working on this poem there was a rising fear of invasion in London that Chaucer draws on in his representation of the besieged city of Troy.[83]

London was at the centre of the invasion crisis. The St Albans chronicler Thomas Walsingham writes that as Londoners heard the rumours of a planned French invasion in 1386 they began to panic.[84] Londoners 'were as frightened as hares, and as timid as mice' in responding to the rumours, and 'they looked for remote places of refuge, and searched for hiding-places'.[85] Indeed, 'it was as if the city was on the very point of being taken', Walsingham continues, 'for they began to lose confidence in their own strength and to despair of being able to withstand the enemy'.[86] Walsingham writes with total derision about the Londoners. The chronicler can barely contain his disdain when he relays their extreme reactions. Walsingham continues:

> Hence, like men drunk with wine, they rushed to the walls of the city, wrecked the houses that were next to them, pulled them down, and

'The Date of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*', PMLA 23 (1908): 285–306; Robert Kilburn Root, ed., *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde* (Princeton, NJ, 1959); George Lyman Kittredge, *The Date of Chaucer's Troilus and Other Chauer Matters* (London, 1905); Barry Windeatt, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: Troilus and Criseyde* (Oxford, 2002), 3–11; and Turner, *Chaucer*, 269.

83 As Arthur Bahr saliently reminds us with reference to John Gower's Trentham Manuscript, the historical conditions of a text's production do not determine its meaning in a singular way because the aesthetics always surpass any single frame of interpretation. Bahr concludes: 'The excitement of recovering those [an author's] intentions by delving into an object's past should therefore not distract us from the fact that texts and books may also look forward, to the vitality offered by new readings and communities of readers'; see Arthur Bahr, 'Birdsong, Love, and the House of Lancaster: Gower Reforms Chaucer', in *Chaucer and the Subversion of Form*, ed. Prendergast and Rosenfeld (Cambridge, 2018), 165–81 (178).

84 The chronicle of Henry Knighton provides detailed information about the extensive preparations hurriedly made in anticipation of the invasion. *Knighton's Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Martin, 349–53 (350–54).

85 *The St Albans Chronicle: The Chronica Maiora of Thomas Walsingham*, ed. and trans. John Taylor, Wendy R. Childs and Leslie Watkiss (Oxford, 2003), 1:792 (793): 'timidi uelut lepores, meticulosi ut mures, requirunt hinc inde diuorcia, perscrutantur latebras'.

86 Ibid., 1:792 (793): 'uelut iam capienda foret ciuitas, cepere propriis diffidere uiribus, et de resistencia desperarare'.

> destroyed them … Not a single Frenchman had yet stepped into a boat, not one enemy soldier had put to sea, yet the people of London were in a state of such fear and agitation, that one might have thought the whole land in every region had been overwhelmed and conquered, and they were observing the enemy at their very doors.[87]

London is thrown into a state of complete chaos, according to Walsingham, as the citizenry are totally unprepared to withstand an invasion.

Good evidence suggests that there is at least a grain of truth within Walsingham's account of the invasion crisis. London's city walls had long been a source of anxiety and the houses along the walls were a particular problem. The city council had raised money to refurbish the walls in 1377, and in 1379 they declared that every householder was required to provide a labourer to work on the wall for one day every five weeks.[88] The walls required so much attention because the city still depended on the decrepit Roman walls that had been in serious disrepair since the twelfth century. Aside from sections at the eastern- and westernmost points of the city, the wall was, in one modern historian's words, 'a thing of shreds and patches'.[89]

While conflict in *Troilus and Criseyde* is suspended by the prisoner exchange in Book 4, the state of siege continues to define Troy: the audience knows the truce is only temporary and that Troy will be destroyed. Indeed, this is made clear through Calkas' speech imploring Priam to include Criseyde in the prisoner exchange. Calkas reminds the Greek council that he left Troy because he foresaw the Greeks would 'Troie ybrend and beten down to grownde', that the Greeks will destroy Troy and burn it to the ground (4.76–77). This is further emphasized when the narrator tells his audience that Antenor, who the 'peple' of Troy so badly desire to be returned to their city, 'was after traitour to the town / Of Troye' (4.204–5). These blunt reminders serve to emphasize the

87 Ibid., 792 (793): 'Iccirco, uelut a uino madidi, ad muros urbis currunt, contiguas domos dilacerant, deponunt, destruunt, et cuncta formidolose faciunt que in extremis necessitatibus positi facere consueruerunt. Nondum ullus Gallicus in nauem pedem posuerat, Neptunum nullus hostis intrauerat, et Londonienses, acsi tota terra in circuitu uicta conquisita fuisset, adeo metuunt, ita sollicitantur, uelut ipsos hostes aspicerent ante fores'.

88 Caroline Barron, *London in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2004), 243.

89 Ibid., 243.

sense of determinist history that pervades the story.[90] Like the rumours of invasion that led Londoners to tear down the buildings along the city walls, news of the parliamentary deliberations envelop the city. Chaucer writes how 'The swifte Fame, which that false thynges / Egal reporteth lik the thynges trewe, / Was thorughout Troie yfled with preste wynges / Fro man to man, and made this tale al newe, / How Calkas doughter, with hire brighte hewe, / At parlement, withouten wordes more, / Ygraunted was in chaunge of Antenore' (4.659–65). This passage records the hunger of the Trojans to hear news that will alleviate the suffering of their city.

In Book 5 of *Troilus*, we witness Troilus touring through the city of Troy, visiting the sites that remind him of Criseyde, such that the space of Troy becomes defined and haunted by memories of her: 'thennesforth he rideth up and down, / And every thyng com hym to remembraunce / As he rood forby places of the town / In which he whilom hadde al his plesaunce' (5.561–64). Everywhere Troilus rides in Troy he is reminded of Criseyde, as the siege of Troy is mapped as a personal siege of Troilus. After this plaint, Chaucer describes how Troilus heads straight to the walls of the city to look out at the Greek army beyond: 'Upon the walles faste ek wolde he walke, / And on the Grekis oost he wolde se' (5.666–67). Just as the Londoners are driven to the city walls by the invasion crisis of 1386, Troilus too is drawn to the boundaries of the city. Troilus gazes out at his 'lady free' (5.669) beyond the besieged city as Chaucer links together Troilus' private devastation with the fate of the city: Troilus patrols the boundaries of the besieged city that is defined by the absence of Criseyde. In this way, Chaucer melds the siege of Troy with the siege of Troilus, as the space of the city is charged with memories of his beloved.

While the misogynist resonances between courtly love and siege warfare had rendered Criseyde as a site to be conquered, for Troilus these similarities manifest in an acute mental torture that returns us to the passage with which this chapter began. Troilus has been a subject 'wereyed on every syde' (5.583), a willing agent in defending his city and pursuing his beloved, but still caught in the constrictive logic of siege. In order to fully explore the mental contours of this state, Chaucer surveys the different registers through which siege warfare can shape the lives of individuals. From the militaristic designs of Pandarus to the nesting of the siege of Thebes within this Trojan narrative, Chaucer represents life

90 See Bloomfield, 'Distance and Predestination', in *Troilus and Criseyde*', and Giancarlo, 'The Structure of Fate'.

within the city of Troy as inextricably bound to the experience of siege. Books 4 and 5 shift from the private to the civic experience of siege, and the poem draws the themes of erotic and military siege together within the mental anguish of Troilus. The siege of Troy has become the siege of Troilus; the city of Troy fundamentally defined by his relationship to Criseyde.

* * *

'The true hero, the true subject, the center of the *Iliad* is force', according to Simone Weil's great essay 'The Iliad, or the Poem of Force'.[91] Homer's epic, Weil claims, is entirely consumed by this force: 'Force employed by man, force that enslaves man, force before which man's flesh shrinks away. In this work, at all times,' Weil continues, 'the human spirit is shown as modified by its relations with force, as swept away, blinded by the very force it imagined it could handle, as deformed by the weight of the force it submits to.' Weil's 'force' is an attempt to articulate the totalising power of war, to put into words what war *does*: 'To define force – it is that *x* that turns anybody who is subjected to it into a thing.'[92] Siege functions in *Troilus and Criseyde* as 'that *x*', a force that constricts the thoughts and behaviours of Chaucer's Trojans. Throughout this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate how the siege, variously imagined as a form of warfare, a subject of allegory and a literary strategy, enables Chaucer to represent the forces that curtail liberty. Siege is a form of war that creates a claustrophobic atmosphere, defining the lives of those under siege. Within Troy, the siege creates an atmosphere of anxiety in which the fear of complete destruction is ever-present, yet it also shapes the lives of Troilus and Criseyde in more imperceptible ways. Chaucer uses love to name the insistent anxiety created by this atmosphere. Any reader asked to name the force in *Troilus* that, in Weil's terms, modifies the human spirit 'with force, as swept away, blinded by the very force it imagined it could handle' would surely answer love, thinking of passages such as Troilus's song at the end of Book 3: 'God, that auctour is of kynde, / That with his bond Love of his vertu liste / To cerclen hertes alle and faste bynde, / That from his bond no wight the wey out wiste' (3.1765–68). The discourse of courtly love offers a powerful language for imagining subjectivity and interiority, giving substance to the otherwise

91 Simone Weil, 'The Iliad, or the Poem of Force', *Chicago Review* 18.2 (1965), 5–30 (5).
92 Ibid., 6.

ineffable affective contours of 'that *x*'. Chaucer reveals how siege makes visible the shared structures between love and war – not to simply show that courtly love is war by other means, but to illuminate the uncertain boundaries between the two.

Troilus and Criseyde provides a portrait of a society at war, a society that has been at war for as long as anyone can remember and that is fated to lose that war, ultimately to be destroyed. For a militaristic society like Troy it was never possible to imagine peace, just as for Chaucer's England, war with France could never fully be extinguished. Fleetingly, as part of her speech to Troilus in Book 4, Criseyde consoles Troilus by saying that peace treaties are ongoing and that maybe the war will soon end: 'Men trete of pees, and it supposid is / That men the queene Eleyne shal restore, / And Grekis us restoren that is mys' (4.1345–48). As part of the peace negotiations, it is rumoured that the Trojans will return Helen to the Greeks, and the Greeks will repair everything they have destroyed. Criseyde's counterfactual rests on the word 'restore': if Helen is restored then all that is ill with that society will also be undone and returned to its rightful state. 'Restore', invoked in these lines first in the sense of 'return' and then 'repair', ultimately derives from the Latin *restaurare*, meaning to 'rebuild', and Criseyde's wish articulates a desire for Trojan society to be rebuilt, for its walls to be remade and the siege raised.[93] Even if one siege is raised, it simply means that it is time to prepare for the next.

93 *MED*, s.v. 'restoren' (v. 1).