The Futility of Prophecy: Prophecy and Poetry in English Narratives of Troy

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Dedication

Dedicated to Caleb Easler
and to the memory of Claire Gilbert Marty

Ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε πίπτει· εἴτε δὲ προφητεῖαι, καταργηθήσονται· εἴτε γλῶσσαι, παύσονται· εἴτε γνῶσις, καταργηθήσεται.
Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. (1 Corinthians 13:8, ESV)

Abstract

This dissertation explores prophets and prophecy in late medieval and early modern English retellings of Trojan War narratives, in particular within the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lydgate, and William Shakespeare. In medieval and early modern England, the Trojan War formed the basis of cultural and political legitimacy: the English people claimed direct descent from the Trojans. English writers used the Trojan War both to celebrate war and to criticize it, and both celebration and criticism are evident in these narrative's prophecies of triumph and destruction. Throughout these narratives, prophets advise the Trojans to make peace with the Greeks, but the prophets go unheeded and Troy falls. Nonetheless, these poets draw connections between these prophecies and their own poetry, and so prophecy's failure engenders doubt concerning the utility of poetry itself.

Through the similarities between poetry and prophecy, I look at the ways literature has questioned its own usefulness. I argue that prophecy both reveals the limitations on poets in adapting literary traditions for their own time and also makes space for memory and imagination. Through their representation of prophecy, these poets call into question the efficacy of poetry and of knowledge, but they do so in ways that ultimately reaffirm the power and limits of both knowledge and literature. Moreover, my study of prophecy illuminates the nature of adaptation more broadly: prophecy, and retellings in general, stretch the limits of narrative. Namely, although retellings of old stories do place limits on the agency of both poet and audience—in much the same way a prophets' agency is limited—retellings and prophecies also open up new possibilities for the larger narrative tradition, providing new perspectives and imaginative opportunities in both space and time. As a narrative tool—particularly in oft-retold tales such as that of

the Trojan War—prophecy allows writers to raise questions, to explore and enforce the limits of narrative, and to examine the limitations on and uses of literature itself.

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Introduction. Utility and futility: prophecy in Trojan War narratives

Quis genus Aeneadum, quis Troiae nesciat urbem,
virtutesque virosque, aut tanti incendia belli?
Who does not know of Aeneas' descendants, of the city of Troy, of its courage and its men, or of the fires of so great a war?

-Dido speaks to the Trojans, *Aeneid* I.565-66

heu, vatum ignarae mentes! quid vota furentem,
quid delubra iuvant?
Alas for the ignorant minds of the prophets! What good can vows or shrines do for the mad?

-Virgil on Dido's passion for Aeneas, *Aeneid* IV.65-66

We do not possess the first tale of Troy: every Trojan War story is a retelling. Even the Homeric epics clearly draw on older, generally lost traditions.[1] There is no Troy without adaptation and translation, no 'original' Trojan War narrative free of reception. Troy stretches back to the earliest records of Western literature, and it stretches forward to the present day; presumably the story will continue to be retold in the future.

In this dissertation, my subject is prophecy in the tradition of the Trojan War. Like the writers and poets who retell the Trojan War narrative, I cannot tell the whole story, and so I focus on one brief moment, one space in time, in the long history of the reception of Troy: late medieval and early modern England, in particular the work of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lydgate, and William Shakespeare. My study of prophecy's narrative function illuminates the nature of adaptation more broadly: prophecy, and retellings in general, both reveal and expand the limits placed on narrative. In particular,

[1] See Jan Haywood and Naoíse Mac Sweeney, *Homer's* Iliad *and the Trojan War: Dialogues on Tradition* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 7; Jonathan S. Burgess, *The Tradition of the Trojan War in Homer and the Epic Cycle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 7; and Andrew Erskine, *Troy between Greece and Rome: Local Tradition and Imperial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 50, on the tradition before the Homeric epics.

prophecy reveals and expands narrative limits on agency, limits on usefulness, and limits on perspective. I explore the limits placed on poet and audience in writing or reading the retelling of an old story and the limits of narrative as a means of transferring knowledge, providing counsel, and understanding both past and future. But I also consider the possibilities for adaptations to expand narrative limits by providing new perspectives in both space and time.

I argue that prophecy both reveals the limitations on poets in adapting literary traditions for their own time and also makes space for memory and imagination. As a narrative tool—particularly in oft-retold tales such as that of the Trojan War—prophecy allows writers to raise questions, to explore and enforce the limits of narrative, and to examine the uses and the failures of literature itself. Considering prophecies in these narratives gives us a new means of examining the uses of translation, adaptation, and retellings: in these tales, prophecy parallels and comments upon the larger work of the retold narrative.[2] This dissertation, therefore, is about a moment in a long literary tradition. But it is also about the *nature* of literary traditions. It is about the question of why we retell stories, again and again, for hundreds or even thousands of years.

In all these retellings, one thing remains constant: Troy must be destroyed. Though prophets advise the Trojans to make peace with the Greeks, these prophets go unheeded, and Troy falls. Regardless of the adaptation, the prophets cannot change the ending of their story. And yet, despite this inevitable failure of prophecy, remarkably, English poets draw connections between these prophecies and their own poetry. Prophecy

[2] On the connections between prophecy and poetry in ancient thought, see Emily Pillinger, *Cassandra and the Poetics of Prophecy in Greek and Latin Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 8-12.

and poetry share in the work of translation and counsel, and poets cannot change the ending of the story any more than the prophets can: in a poem that retells a well-known story from the past, the ending is already known. Prophecy thus becomes another way to understand what poets do in their own work of adaptation, and so prophecy's failure also engenders, in various ways, doubt concerning the efficacy of poetry.

I argue that these prophecies, like retellings themselves, demonstrate both the limits of narrative and the ways in which those limits are expanded. In this introduction, I briefly discuss the reception of Troy in late medieval and early modern England before turning to the intersections between translation, narrative limits, and prophecy. The Trojan War narrative has been translated in myriad ways throughout the centuries, across languages, space, time, and genres. Within the narrative itself, knowledge, power, and loyalties are all translated from one people to another, and outside of the narrative, in its larger cultural and historical contexts, the Trojan War has been put to use in the translation of power (*translatio imperii*) and of knowledge (*translatio studii*). Moreover, prophecy is itself a form of translation, a means of translating the divine into human speech. Each form of translation both imposes limits on and expands the possibilities of narrative.

Translation, prophecy, and limits

Classical reception—the ways in which Greek and Roman texts and culture are read and transformed ("received") by later cultures—examines how we use and retell the past. The story of the Trojan War, as one of the classical world's best-known myths, has received much attention, and its reception in late medieval and early modern England is of particular note. Christopher Baswell and C. David Benson have established the central

place of the Trojan War narrative at this time in England and throughout Europe: in late medieval and early modern England, the English people claimed direct descent from the Trojans and used their story to establish cultural and political legitimacy.[3] Many scholars have noted how poets also use the Trojan War to establish their own poetic authority. Some have considered the gender politics of Troy, examining how the Greeks and Trojans traffic in or dismiss women such as Helen, Cassandra, and Criseyde.[4] Others have noted the ways in which poets use the Trojan War as a triumphalist narrative of expanding empire,[5] while still others have explored the caution and pessimism inherent in such narratives.[6] As adaptations of classical tales, Trojan War narratives necessarily participate in *translatio studii* ("translation of learning"), which brings the ancient past's learning forward through history. But they also participate in both the celebration and critique of *translatio imperii* ("translation of empire"), and English writers imagine themselves as the heirs both to Troy's power and to its destructive tendencies.

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[3] See Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the* Aeneid *from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's* Historia Destructionis Troiae *in Medieval England* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1980). See also Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell's collection *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004) for the Trojan narrative throughout Europe.

[4] See Mihoko Suzuki, *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989); and Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

[5] See, for instance, Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). Paul Strohm examines the ways in which John Lydgate legitimizes the Lancastrian regime in the *Troy Book;* see "Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English* Literature, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[6] See James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Alex Mueller, *Translating Troy: Provincial Politics in Alliterative Romance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013), among others.

The Latin word *translatio*—from which we get our English word "translation"—simply means a "carrying across." "Translation" often means translation across languages, and certainly this form of translation is in play with Trojan War narratives. Homer was first translated into Latin by Livius Andronicus in his third century BCE *Odissia*, in one of the earliest works of Latin poetry, and following the end of the Roman empire and throughout the Middle Ages, Trojan War narratives continued to be translated from Latin into a range of vernaculars, including French, German, Norse, Spanish, and English.[7] Virgil was translated from Latin into English in the sixteenth century, first by Gavin Douglas (into Scots) and then by Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey, and Homer was translated from Greek into English by George Chapman, with publication beginning in 1598. Even today, new translations of Trojan War narratives appear with regularity.[8] And such translation across languages also involves translation across time and space. Miles and centuries lie between the Homeric epics and the translation of Homer into Latin by Livius Andronicus, and again between the Homeric epics and the translation of Homer into English by George Chapman. In these translations, the cultural context changes as well as the language, as the translations themselves reflect.[9]

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[7] Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* was translated and adapted particularly often. On the "Nachfolger Guidos" in various languages and regions—including Italian, Spanish, French, German, and English—see Wilhelm Greif, *Die Mittelalterlichen Bearbeitungen der Trojaner-Sage* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1886), 64-70.

[8] Notable recent examples include Emily Wilson's translation of the *Odyssey* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 2018) and Shadi Bartsch's translation of the *Aeneid* (New York: The Modern Library, 2021).

[9] As Ardis Butterfield writes, "No translation is innocently neutral, nor should seek to be. Every lexical choice, every syntactic choice, is freighted with social and cultural assumptions that shape the resulting prose or poetry, sometimes in ways that work against or even betray the original text: *traduttore/traditore* [translator/traitor]" (Ardis Butterfield, "Rough Translation: Charles d'Orléans, Lydgate and Hoccleve," in *Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory*, eds. Emma Campbell and Robert Mills [Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012], 205). For one small example, Livius Andronicus replaces the Homeric Muse with an Italian water-goddess, Camena: *Virum mihi, Camena, insece versutum* (*Odissia*, Fragment 1).

But even before the Trojan War was translated across languages, time, and space, it was translated across genres. Our first extant Trojan War narratives, the Homeric works, are in the form of epic, but before those epics were translated into other languages, they were translated into tragedy: the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides all retell moments surrounding Troy's fall. Likewise, the Trojan War appears at the beginning of historiographical works, including the histories of both Herodotus and Thucydides. And when the Romans began to translate the Trojan War into Latin, they too translated Troy across genres, whether discussing it in their histories (e.g., the beginning of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*), casting it in epistolary form (e.g., many of Ovid's *Heroides*) or recasting it into new forms of epic (e.g., Virgil's collapsing both Homeric epics into one, or Ovid's meandering epic of the *Metamorphoses*). Each genre presents new possibilities for the Trojan War narrative: to explore a different perspective (for example, the epics tend to focus on the experiences of men; the tragedies tend to focus on the experiences of women), to probe a different moment in time (the very end of the war, the aftermath, a moment before the war even beings) or place (within the walls of Troy, outside of the walls, matters back home in Greece), to present the story for a different purpose (e.g., to entertain, to provide catharsis, to explore the facts and fictions of history).

In translating Troy—across languages, time, space, and genre—these poets and writers are participating in what the Middle Ages referred to as the translation of knowledge, *translatio studii*.[10] Knowledge from the past must be passed down, handed

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[10] On the concept of *translatio studii*, see, among others, Ruth Evans, Andrew Taylor, Nicholas Watson, and Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, "The Notion of Vernacular Theory," in *The Idea of the Vernacular: An Anthology of Middle English Literary Theory, 1280-1520*, eds. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Nicholas Watson,

off, carried over—translated—in order to survive. In translating knowledge from one generation to the next, these writers keep the knowledge of Troy alive and renewed; they render it into new forms, changing the nature of that knowledge as they pass it along; and they establish themselves as authorities, with the credibility and knowledge to pass true knowledge along—and perhaps even to surpass earlier authorities.

But these writers also participate in what the Middle Ages called the translation of power—*translatio imperii*—as they retell Troy for new audiences, with new purposes and new ideologies.[11] The Trojan War story itself is a story of *translatio imperii*, the story both of failed expansion of empire (whether Troy attempts to overreach itself by declaring war on Greece, or whether the Greeks all but destroy themselves in returning home from conquering Troy) and of successful translation of empire (as Troy under Aeneas reestablishes itself in Italy). But the story has also been put to use by those attempting to consolidate power within or expand their own empires, by rulers such as Augustus, the Plantagenets, and the Lancastrian kings of England. The narrative becomes not just a story of, but a tool for, *translatio imperii.*

These texts contain yet another form of translation: the translation of loyalty. Characters within these texts often translate their loyalties from one side of the war to the other, as they betray their kings, their war leaders, and their people. These translated

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Andrew Taylor, and Ruth Evans (University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 317-18.

[11] On the concept of *translatio imperii*, see, among others, Sarah Salih, *Imagining the Pagan in Late Medieval England* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer), 2019, 33-34; Adam J. Goldwyn, "Trojan Pasts, Medieval Presents: Epic Continuation in Eleventh to Thirteenth Century Genealogical Histories," in *Brill's Companion to Prequels, Sequels, and Retellings of Classical Epic*, ed. Robert Simms (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 154-55; and Emma Campbell and Robert Mills' introduction to *Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory* (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 1-2.

loyalties are interpreted by the narrators in various ways, whether they are denigrated as vile (Calchas's betrayal of the Trojans in the medieval texts), excused as the actions of an otherwise good man (Antenor's betrayal of the increasingly tyrannical Priam in Dictys), or left as a subtext (Aeneas's possible betrayal of Troy in the *Aeneid*). This concern with loyalty is reflected in the ideal that a translator or adaptor should remain faithful to their source texts.[12]

Prophecy itself is also a form of translation, as it translates divine knowledge into human speech.[13] In some cases, prophets translate omens—divine signs from the natural world—into human speech and advice. In other cases, prophets need no omens to see what the gods want; they simply translate the gods' will into human speech. And at times, the god speaks directly through the prophet, in the prophet's own voice. Prophets themselves do so much translating that they are often accused of (and sometimes guilty of) translating loyalties as well: in medieval texts, Helenus is considered a coward, Cassandra is a nuisance, and Calchas actually breaks from Troy to Greece when he learns what the future holds. The prophets' loyalty is elsewhere: to truth, to the gods, to final outcomes.

But what purpose does prophecy serve in these texts? In a retold narrative, a well-known narrative—such as every extant narrative of Troy—prophecy might seem unnecessary and redundant. As advice for the characters, it can do no good; Fate has

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[12] On the connections between translation and betrayal, see Simon Gaunt, "Untranslatable: A Response," in *Rethinking Medieval Translation: Ethics, Politics, Theory*, eds. Emma Campbell and Robert Mills (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2012), 246-249; on the question of fidelity in adaptation, and challenges to the ideal of fidelity, see Linda Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 6-7.

[13] Pillinger explores prophecy as a form of translation in her study of Cassandra; see, for instance, Pillinger, *Cassandra*, 3-10 and 21-24.

already decreed what has come to pass. As advice for the audience or reader, it cannot advise: the events concerning which it advises have already passed. As a way of passing on knowledge to the characters, it is knowledge that cannot help them: they can do nothing but despair in response. As a way of passing on knowledge to us, it is knowledge we do not need: we, with our knowledge of the past and of this well-known narrative, know the ending of the story already, so why do the prophets need to tell us?

All of these translations—of language, genre, space, time, knowledge, power, and loyalty—reveal the limits of narrative. There are limits to power and knowledge: power and knowledge translated to a new time and space may mean the loss of power and knowledge elsewhere. Rome and England cannot rise, for example, unless Troy falls. Genre, too, is limiting. The conventions of genre mean that a writer has to cast their story in very specific ways. For example, a classical Greek tragedy should commit to the unities—to the limits—of time and place. An epic ought to start *in medias res.* A common soldier's journal of the war, an eyewitness account, cannot reveal the councils of the gods. And, finally, language itself is limiting: words fail. Lucretius complains in *De Rerum Natura* of the paucity of Latin philosophical vocabulary to express Greek ideas; Chaucer explains in *Troilus and Criseyde* that the form of language changes after a thousand years; Douglas apologizes in his preface to the *Eneydos* for his failures to express Virgil's poetry in its full splendor as he translates.[14] Words themselves are limited in telling the full story.

[14] The humility *topos* is certainly at play in some of these apologies for the failures of translation, but the use of a *topos* does not mean that what these writers say is a lie: no translator can translate fully.

No narrative can tell the full story: no narrative can portray every gesture, thought, emotion, or action; no narrative can portray every character's point of view; no narrative can portray every event. Narratives are limited by time, space, and character, and they are limited by the perspectives, the biases, the knowledge, and the lifetime of the author. Virgil, for instance, can have Anchises tell Aeneas the future of Rome, but no further than Augustus; Chaucer cannot consult Homer in Greek. But such limits are *necessary* to narrative. A narrative *must* begin (though not necessarily at the beginning) and end (though not necessarily at the end). It must select a character, or set of characters, on which and through which to focus its attention. It must select certain events. It cannot explore every interpretation. In revealing one thing, it conceals another; in concealing one thing, it reveals another. Art is contained within limits; without limits, without selection and choice, there is no art.

As yet another form of translated narrative, prophecy too has limits. It cannot tell the whole future, both because telling the whole story is impossible and because to do so would not serve the purposes of the narrative. If a prophecy within a narrative could, somehow, contain the whole story, there would be no point in continuing the narrative. But prophecy is *particularly* a narrative of limits: it limits narrative possibilities. In saying that a thing will happen, it limits the possibilities of the future to that thing. In saying that a thing will happen *if* another thing happens, it limits the possibilities of the future to two choices: either to do, or not to do. And prophecy, in interpreting and selecting, simultaneously reveals and conceals, skewing the audience's vision to its own ends. But it must do so: there is no such thing as an objective narrative, no such thing as a

complete story, no such thing as plenitude. The narrator, or the prophet, chooses the focus.

But as a retelling closes down one possibility for a narrative, it can also open up new possibilities—a new perspective, a new moment in time. In all of these translations and adaptations, something may be lost, but something more is gained. And so, we retell stories—stories like the tale of Troy—again and again. We retell stories to fit our own time and place.[15] We turn to a new language, a different event, a new character's point of view, a different genre or medium, a different purpose. Each translation, each retelling, has limits and possibilities, but the sum total of all the narratives of Troy passes beyond the limits of a single narrative. We retell stories because, for a story to be a story, it *cannot* contain the whole story—but we want to get as close to the whole story as possible. Each narrative is itself limited, but each additional instance expands the limits of the whole. We now have Trojan War narratives that explore feminist perspectives,[16] that create characters unimagined by Homer or Virgil,[17] that serve as love stories or tragedies or farces, that critique the expansion of England into France[18] or of American

[15] Hutcheon suggests that "adaptation is how stories evolve and mutate to fit new times and different places…We retell—and show again and interact anew with—stories over and over; in the process, they change with each repetition, and yet they are not recognizably the same. What they are not is necessarily inferior or second-rate—or they would not have survived. Temporal precedence does not mean anything more than temporal priority...In the workings of the human imagination, adaptation is the norm, not the exception" (Hutcheon, *A Theory of Adaptation*, 176-77).

[16] Madeline Miller's novel *Circe* is a recent example (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2018).

[17] For instance, Kerry Greenwood's *Cassandra: A Delphic Women Novel* (Scottsdale, AZ: Poisoned Pen Press, 2013) invents a hero, an eventual love interest for Cassandra, named Diomenes; she notes in her afterword that she "made up Diomenes out of whole cloth" because she could not find an Achaean voice she liked who would survive the war (391).

[18] As, arguably, late medieval English translations of Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* do.

empire into the Middle East,[19] that imagine Virgil in conversation with his own characters,[20] that teach mythology to children, that entertain crowds in movie theaters. Each particular retelling has its own limits, but in sum these retellings have expanded the narrative into a whole whose limits are beyond imagining.

And while prophecy cannot tell the whole story, and while it may seem redundant, nonetheless, as a genre, its limits may expand the limits of other narratives. Prophecy allows us a peek into the future, and prophecy reinterprets history, foretelling the future so that we can understand the past anew. And prophecy—in particular conditional prophecy (if this, then that)—also opens up possibilities in a retold narrative. The condition—if this, then that—opens up the possibility of its opposite—if not this, then (perhaps) not that. Prophecy, in its ambiguity, also reveals the opening of other possibilities, including interpretive possibilities and imaginative possibilities.

I begin in Chapter 1 with selected moments in the classical and late antique background to medieval and early modern narratives of Troy. These later narratives' celebration of empire can be traced to Virgil's *Aeneid* (first century BCE), a poem which translates the survivors of the Trojan war to Italy as the ancestors of the triumphant Roman people. Medieval English writers, following Geoffrey of Monmouth, adopt the *Aeneid*'s framework for Aeneas's descendant, Brutus: Brutus, like Aeneas, must abandon his home and translate the Trojan empire to Britain. But two traditions—one triumphant, one critical—lie behind medieval Troy narratives, and whereas the *Aeneid* seems to

[19] Jan Haywood argues that this critique lies behind several of the choices in Wolfgang Petersen's 2004 film *Troy* (Haywood and Mac Sweeney, *Homer's* Iliad *and the Trojan War*, 165-180).

[20] In Ursula K Le Guin's novel *Lavinia,* the shade of Virgil speaks with Lavinia centuries before his own death (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2008).

celebrate empire, the influential late antique texts of Dares and Dictys portray the Trojans' warmongering as tyrannical. In this chapter, I reexamine the nature of prophecy in the *Aeneid* as well as in the narratives of Dares and Dictys. I argue that these moments of prophecy complicate the authors' purposes in retelling the story of Troy, that these prophecies allow these writers to celebrate and criticize, blame and exonerate simultaneously. Prophecy therefore becomes a technique for expanding narrative limits on perspective and point-of-view, and prophecy allows these writers to trouble the apparently simple answers of their narratives.

In Chapter 2, I turn to Geoffrey Chaucer. In his fourteenth-century *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer uses the Trojan War as a backdrop for the romance of the Trojan prince Troilus and his beloved Criseyde, a traitorous prophet's daughter and an eventual traitor herself. In this chapter, I consider Chaucer's use of prophecy to reconsider literature's utility in passing on cultural knowledge, and I draw connections between Chaucer's views of knowledge—particularly knowledge gained through experience and knowledge gained through the authority of books—and gender. By drawing parallels between Troy's destruction and Troilus's death, Chaucer examines epistemology and uncertainty: how knowledge is gained, how it is limited, and what it can and cannot accomplish. Chaucer's long philosophical poem demonstrates that cities do not last, love does not last, and life does not last; it reveals that knowledge is often impotent and always tinged with uncertainty. Knowledge is no defense against death's finality; it only reminds us that all things must end.

In Chapter 3, I examine John Lydgate's fifteenth-century retelling of the story of Troy in his *Troy Book*, a long work (30,117 lines) commissioned by the future King

Henry V. In the *Troy Book*, Lydgate aims to advise Henry and legitimize his rule, but, although the poem serves Henry's interests, Lydgate does not simply praise Henry's imperialistic ambitions: he celebrates his king's warlike virtues, but aligns himself with peace. In this chapter, I reexamine existing views of Lydgate's understanding of his own work as a mirror for princes. Lydgate uses prophecy to explore the conflict between the martial values required to translate power (*translatio imperii*) and the clerical values required to translate knowledge (*translatio studii*). He draws parallels between the prophets' counsels to Priam and his own counsels to Henry, and yet his prophets' continual failure indicates an understanding that his own peaceful counsels may fail to persuade.

Finally, in Chapter 4, I turn to the early modern period with William Shakespeare's drama *Troilus and Cressida*. This play draws both on medieval versions of Troy and on newer translations of Greco-Roman works unknown to the Middle Ages. One of Shakespeare's more problematic and pessimistic plays, *Troilus and Cressida* questions the worth of honor, warfare, love, speech, and language. As a part of this pessimism, Shakespeare reduces the role of prophets from his play—with the notable exception of Cassandra—and yet the play is filled with prophetic moments. I draw connections between the prophecies and the broken oaths of the play, and I argue that the reduction of prophetic characters, coupled with the lack of narrator beyond a prologue, means the audience itself must fulfill the role of prophet, interpreting the signs and seeing through to an ending that is never fully revealed, as the play ends before Troy is destroyed.

Conclusion

What is the narrative utility of prophecy in retold stories about the past? What pleasure or knowledge might it bring the reader? Prophecy about past events cannot directly advise the reader, and it is redundant if we know the ending. But, from that perspective, all retellings are themselves redundant. Nonetheless, because of the limits of narrative—because no full story is possible—we continue to reread and retell old stories. Each retelling stretches the limits of the narrative, allowing for new perspectives, new insights, new reasons to tell the story anew: we already know the story, but now we can know it in a new way. And prophecy participates in stretching these limits. Prophets and poets are both *vates* in these retold stories—and as the story is retold again and again, the readers become *vates* too.

Much like retellings themselves, these prophecies are messy, ambiguous, contradictory. Prophecies and retellings simultaneously shut down and open up possibilities. They simultaneously give agency to and take agency away from both author and reader. They demonstrate both the utility and futility of literature, language, and speech. Ultimately, while these prophecies, like the retellings in which they are embedded, are limited themselves, they nonetheless stretch the limits of narrative.

Chapter 1. The utility of prophecy: narrative ambiguity in the Trojan narratives of Virgil and "Dares and Dictys"

The story of the Trojan War—of the rape of Helen, the war between Greece and Troy, and Troy's eventual destruction—is one of the West's foundational narratives. Our knowledge of the Trojan War begins in the eighth century BCE, with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. But Troy was soon appropriated by the Romans as a foundation legend, most famously in the *Aeneid*, a poem which ostensibly celebrates Roman expansion as it translates the survivors of the Trojan War to Italy as the ancestors of the triumphant Roman people. The *Aeneid* is full of prophecies of Rome's future glory.

But whereas the *Aeneid* seems to celebrate empire, the late antique texts of Dares and Dictys (fourth to sixth centuries) portray the Trojans' "warmongering" as tyrannical. These pseudo-historical accounts—the one supposedly by a Phrygian fighting alongside the Trojans, the other by a Cretan fighting alongside the Greeks—"corrected" the fantastical Homeric and Virgilian epics. The Middle Ages were then heirs to both traditions, the triumphant and the critical. Medieval writers such as Geoffrey of Monmouth (twelfth century) adopt the *Aeneid's* triumphant framework for Aeneas's descendant, Brutus, who, like Aeneas, must abandon his home and translate the Trojan empire to a new land. But in the twelfth century, Benoît de Saint-Maure expanded Dares and Dictys' critical version of Troy in his *Roman de Troie*, which Guido delle Colonne then adapted in his *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287), a text that served as the basis for many of the English versions of Troy.

In all these retellings, one thing remains constant: Troy must be destroyed. But why must Troy fall? The prophecies that fill these texts—prophecies that repeatedly gesture towards the necessity of Troy's destruction—suggest an answer, and in this

chapter, I aim to trace the shifting portrayal of prophecy in certain representative classical and late antique narratives of the Trojan War. I focus particularly on the uses of prophecy in these three texts vital to the medieval tradition: Virgil's *Aeneid,* Dares Phrygius' *De excidio Troiae historia*, and Dictys Cretensis' *Ephemeris Belli Troiani*.[21] The Trojan War narrative was transmitted in innumerable ways throughout classical and late antiquity, but I have chosen to focus on Virgil, Dares, and Dictys as case studies primarily because of their influence on medieval narratives.[22] But while these texts will ultimately serve as major sources for medieval retellings, they themselves are also retellings of the Trojan War narrative, informed by, drawing upon, and competing with earlier traditions. They too redraw the limits of Trojan War narratives, choosing new perspectives for the story, new limits in time and space, and new purposes in the real world. The prophecies within these texts are additional retellings, telling the story within the story before it even happens.[23]

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[21] I use R.A.B. Mynors's edition of Virgil's works throughout this chapter (R.A.B. Mynors, ed., *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969]). For Dares and Dictys, I use Werner Eisenhut's and Ferdinandus Meister's Latin texts, collected in an edition by Giles Laurén (Giles Laurén, ed., *The Other Trojan War: The Chronicles of Dictys of Crete and Dares the Phrygian* [Sophron Imprimit, 2012]).

[22]As Jan M. Ziolkowski writes of Virgil, "no other poet in any language has achieved a cultural impact of the length or strength the Mantuan (as he is sometimes called after his approximate birthplace) has exercised in England. Both before and after the battle of Hastings he occupied a unique place throughout the British Isles as the most broadly known, cited, and invoked of all classical Latin authors" (Jan M. Ziolkowski, "Virgil," in T*he Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558)*, ed. Rita Copeland [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 165). But, as Ziolkowski notes, Virgil's work was not always trusted: "When held to be fictitious, the epic was contrasted to the supposedly veracious accounts of the alleged eyewitnesses to the Trojan War, Dares the Phrygian and Dictys the Cretan" (Ziolkowski, "Virgil," 168).

[23] While these texts cannot change the story entirely, and, in particular, they cannot change the end of the story—Troy must always be destroyed—Troy is not always destroyed within these texts' narratives. The *Iliad* ends before Troy's destruction, while the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid* both take place after its fall. But the audience always knows that Troy must fall. In narratives set before the fall of Troy, the fall is prophesied; and in narratives that take place after Troy falls, the fall, alongside the prophecies predicting it, is recounted, recollected, remembered. Even those narratives that actually depict Troy's fall are always looking forward and backwards through the lens of prophecy.

Furthermore, while these texts seem to offer straightforward answers to the questions raised by Troy's fall, they in fact raise more questions than they answer. At first glance, Virgil's *Aeneid* celebrates the Augustan regime as the happy outcome of the suffering at Troy; at first glance, Dares and Dictys blame Troy's fall on human folly. But the *Aeneid* simultaneously celebrates and criticizes the Roman empire, revealing its cost and asking whether all this suffering is truly worth the outcome; and Dares and Dictys trouble our sense of who is responsible for Troy's fall throughout their texts. And prophecy is one important method these writers use to trouble and complicate their narratives: prophecies reveal that the descendants of the Trojans will rule the world, but prophecies also reveal that Troy must inevitably be destroyed.

Therefore, I argue that prophecy allows these writers to celebrate and criticize, blame and exonerate simultaneously—that prophecy allows these writers to complexify the apparently simple answers of their narratives. In the *Aeneid*, prophecy provides us with the triumphant, divine perspective that seems to dominate the text: a perspective of hope in divine destiny. But through the failure of both prophecy and poetry to tell the whole story and through the contrast between prophecy and its outcome, the *Aeneid* can speak in two voices: the voice of triumph and the voice of compassion.[24] In Dares and Dictys, on the other hand, the inclusion of prophecy just barely allows the gods to enter these pseudo-historical narratives; the gods are an absent presence. Prophecy in Dares and Dictys also provides us with the divine perspective, but this perspective is *not* the dominant perspective in these tales: in a narrative where the gods do not speak and where

[24] On the idea of the *Aeneid* speaking with two voices, see Adam Parry, "The Two Voices of Virgil's *Aeneid*," in *Virgil's* Aeneid: *Modern Critical Interpretations*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987).

humans continually act in self-destructive ways—where the point of view is that of a single limited, biased, human soldier and participant—prophecy suggests, but only suggests, that perhaps the gods are manipulating events behind the scenes.

All three of these texts reveal both the failures and possibilities of prophecy, both for the characters within the narrative and for the narrative itself in a broader sense. In these texts, prophecy is a technique for expanding narrative limits on perspective and point-of-view; it provides another perspective on narrative events, and thereby it troubles the easy answers these texts seem to provide on culpability and destiny. As a narrative tool—particularly in oft-retold tales such as that of the Trojan War—prophecy allows writers to raise questions, to reveal and conceal simultaneously, to state facts while skewing interpretation, to explore and enforce the limits of narrative, and, in the end, to examine the utility and the futility of literature itself.

Virgil's *Aeneid*: the cost of *imperium*

Why must Troy fall? In Virgil's *Aeneid*, Troy falls by the will of the gods so that Rome can rise. The *Aeneid*, with its Odyssean first half and Iliadic second half, draws heavily on the Homeric epics,[25] but it is far more political: in appropriating the Trojan War story as an origin story for Rome, the *Aeneid* is heavily invested in the destiny of the triumphant Roman (that is, Augustan) empire.[26] And throughout the poem, Aeneas

[25] See W.A. Camps, *An Introduction to Virgil's* Aeneid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), chapters 8-9, and Damien P. Nelis, "Vergil's Library," in *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition,* ed. Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J. Putnam (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), on Virgil's sources. On Troy as "the shared property of Greeks and Romans," see Andrew Erskine, *Troy between Greece and Rome: Local Tradition and Imperial Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1.

[26] On the historical context of the composition of the *Aeneid,* see Camps, *Introduction,* 1. The story of Aeneas was particularly useful for Augustus as a member of the family of Julius Caesar, supposedly descended from Aeneas' son Iulus. See Erskine, *Troy,* 21-22.

receives numerous prophecies that not only direct the Trojans to Latium, but also predict the greatness of Rome for centuries after Aeneas's death.[27] From one perspective, then, the gods' direction of Troy's fall and Rome's rise is destined, glorious and triumphant, proof of Rome's grandeur.

But from another perspective, the gods' direction through prophecy is cruel manipulation; the gods care nothing for human suffering, and the *Aeneid* thereby subverts its own triumphalism.[28] James O'Hara asserts that the prophecies of the *Aeneid* provide only false hope to Aeneas and the Trojans: "The prophecies do not tell Aeneas what is going to happen...The signs and prophecies that men think are guiding them on the path that is best for them are actually pushing men and events in the direction that fate requires, bringing not only success and victory but also sorrow and death."[29] The events of the *Aeneid* suggest that suffering and sorrow, not glory and triumph, await the descendants of the Trojans, and the young men and women who die violently for Rome's sake all proclaim *imperium*'s high cost.

Thus, even as the *Aeneid*'s prophecies proclaim the triumph of Roman *imperium*, the actual events of the *Aeneid* show that the poem does not shy away from the cost of

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[27] For the literary history of this use of epic prophecy, particularly in Naevius' poetry, see D.C. Feeney, *The Gods in Epic: Poets and Critics of the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 112-13. For more on the tradition of prophecy in literature, see James O'Hara, *Death and the Optimistic Prophecy in Vergil's Aeneid* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 128-29.

[28] As Karl A.E. Enenkel asks, "Does Virgil in these prophecies offer the reader a kind of guideline of the interpretation of the whole work (and if so, what is the character of his political message)? Or are these prophecies deceptive and false, and does Virgil aim at sowing in his readers' minds the seeds of subversive thoughts, in order to discredit Augustan imperialism?" (Karl A.E. Enenkel, "Epic Prophecy as Imperial Propaganda? Jupiter's First Speech in Virgil's *Aeneid*," in *The Manipulative Mode: Political Propaganda in Antiquity, A Collection of Case Studies,* ed. Karl A.E. Enenkel and Ilja Leonard Pfeijffer [Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005], 168-69). Enenkel is specifically considering the prophecies in books 1, 6, and 8.

[29] O'Hara, *Death,* 52-53.

that empire. Scholars tend to lean towards seeing the tension between triumph and cost as either praising the Augustan regime or condemning it; as Philip R. Hardie writes, "Modern criticism of the *Aeneid* has largely structured itself around two opposing assessments of the poem, which see it as either a panegyric of Rome and its hero, Augustus, or as a tragedy of the individual caught up in the remorseless processes of history; an epic of optimism or an epic of pessimism."[30] But I, along with scholars such as Philip Holt, argue that the *Aeneid* embraces both perspectives—and that this is one of the *Aeneid*'s strengths.[31] The main narrative of the *Aeneid* is itself a retelling of Troy's fall and Rome's rise, but it also contains retellings within retellings, allowing for a multiplicity of voices and views on the role of the gods in human affairs.

And prophecy is one form of retelling. Prophecy ought to impart knowledge and counsel to its recipient. But though Aeneas receives prophecies throughout the text, and though he trusts these prophecies, they never impart full knowledge; throughout the poem, he remains ignorant of what the future truly will be. And in advising Aeneas through the prophets, the gods manipulate him: they advise him to serve their own ends,

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[30] Philip R. Hardie, *Virgil's* Aeneid: *Cosmos and Imperium* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 1. Hardie writes, "Of recent years, at least in English-language scholarship, the emphasis has fallen more heavily on the second of these evaluations, even to the point of taking the *Aeneid* as in an important sense anti-Augustan," though Hardie himself focuses on the "panegyrical or ideological aspects" in *Cosmos and Imperium* (Hardie, *Cosmos and Imperium*, 1). And in *Last Trojan Hero,* Hardie notes, "The dubieties and uncertainties of the poem form a counterbalance to its optimistic prophecies" (Philip Hardie, *The Last Trojan Hero: A Cultural History of Virgil's* Aeneid [London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014], 116).

[31] Holt argues that "what I have called dual perspective is a pervasive feature of the *Aeneid*… Events which the Augustan reader could behold with instant recognition and patriotic pride are to Aeneas full of perplexity and sorrow. Vergil often shows us these events from both points of view, asking us to see and consider both the recognition and the perplexity, both the pride and the sorrow" (Philip Holt, "Who Understands Vergil's Prophecies?" *The Classical Journal* 77.4 [1982]: 312). Likewise, O'Hara writes, "Scholars have argued too long over whether the *Aeneid* is optimistic or pessimistic: this study argues that in the prophecies of the *Aeneid*, and in the poem as a whole, Vergil expresses both the age's hope for the peace of a Golden Age under Augustus, and its fear that this hope might be deceptive and illusory" (O'Hara, *Death*, 6).

caring nothing for individual suffering and doing nothing to help Aeneas accomplish what, arguably, he most wants to accomplish: to protect those under his care. The tension between the optimism of prophecy's promises and the pain of prophecy's fulfilment underscores the larger tensions in the text. Will Rome truly rule the world forever? And is that truly a good thing? The contrast between prophecy and event exemplifies the *Aeneid's* tension between *imperium*'s triumph and cost: in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas, like Rome itself, is guided by prophecies of glory; and while these prophecies *do* come true, and Rome *does* become great, the prophecies do not prepare Aeneas (and Rome) for the suffering they must undergo to reach that promised glory. Though Virgil's epic does praise the Roman *imperium*, the poem is not ignorant of its price.

Guidance and manipulation in *Aeneid* 1-4

In Books 1-4, Aeneas looks back on and is comforted by the prophecies given to him concerning Troy's fall and Rome's rise. As he arrives in Carthage, retells the story of Troy's fall and his subsequent wanderings to Dido, and then abandons Dido at last—as he looks back to the past and forward to the future—an abundance of prophecy gives Aeneas hope that the things he has endured will be worth it in the end. But as the epic continues, the reader sees that Aeneas is not always given the full story, and in Book 4, he is forced to follow these prophecies against his desires, to his—and Dido's—cost. Aeneas believes he is being benignly directed by the gods, but we see that this direction looks more like indifferent, or even malevolent, manipulation.

From Book 1, it is clear that the gods guide the events of the *Aeneid:* human beings have their part to play, but the gods direct both Troy's fall and Rome's rise. Virgil very quickly gives us a glimpse into the councils of the gods: in Book 1, Jupiter reveals to

Venus his will concerning Aeneas, the Trojans, and Rome: *manent immota tuorum / fata tibi; cernes urbem et promissa Lauini / moenia, sublimemque feres ad sidera caeli / magnanimum Aenean* ("the fates remain unmoved for you; you will see the city and promised walls of Lavinium, and you will bear great-souled Aeneas on high to the stars," *Aeneid* I.257-60). Jupiter foretells the events of the *Aeneid* and beyond, concluding with the glory of Rome: *his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono: / imperium sine fine dedi* ("for them I place limits neither in time nor space; I have given empire without end," *Aeneid* I.278-79). Bruce Louden writes of this and similar "retrospective prophecies" (that is, prophecies that present the past as future) that its "real significance lies in the authority it confers, the divine aura it reveals in its new interpretation of history. What mortals thought of as *human* history is instead revealed to be the working out of the gods' larger design."[32] When we are tempted to fault human beings for what is happening, the narrator reveals the divine hand behind events: Jupiter and fate are responsible. At first glance, this divine guidance seems like proof of the Augustan regime's glory: Augustus is Rome's divinely appointed destiny, and Rome is, by the will of the gods, the greatest empire on earth.

And in Books 2 and 3, as Aeneas recounts the story of Troy's fall and his subsequent wanderings to Dido, we see that Aeneas trusts the prophecies given him, even if he does not yet fully understand them.[33] His recounting is rife with prophecy. The

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[32] Bruce Louden, "*Retrospective Prophecy* and *the Vision* in *Aeneid* 6 and the Book of Revelation," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 16.1 (2009): 7.

[33] Camps notes that Aeneas actively chooses to follow these prophecies: "Because Aeneas is depicted as guided by a command from above, and counselled and reminded from above through oracles and dreams and other kinds of revelation, he is sometimes felt by readers to be no more than a puppet or automaton, controlled mechanically by forces outside himself, and without character of his own...But in fact, though Aeneas is commanded by a higher power, he is not compelled, and it is precisely the circumstance that his will is free and his decisions his own that distinguishes his situation from that of other characters in the

prophecies begin on the night Troy falls, when Hector's ghost tells Aeneas to flee Troy and take Troy's gods with him (*Aeneid* II.268-296).[34] That same night, Venus shows Aeneas the divine hand behind Troy's fall (*Aeneid* II.588-633),[35] and Creusa's ghost foretells *res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx* ("happy times and a kingdom and a royal spouse," *Aeneid* II.783). Aeneas receives an omen in Apollo's temple at Delos (*Aeneid* III.73-98), which Anchises misinterprets to mean they should found a city on Crete (*Aeneid* III.99-120); after plague strikes, a new prophecy from the Penates, confirming another prophecy made long ago by Cassandra (*Aeneid* III.182-188), instructs Aeneas to lead his people to Hesperia instead (*Aeneid* III.147-178).[36] The prophet Helenus promises the Trojans a new city and instructs Aeneas to seek further prophecies from the Sibyl in Italy (*Aeneid* III.356-462).[37] An omen of four white horses—indicating war or peace—appears when the Trojans first glimpse Italy (*Aeneid* III.537-543). Aeneas thus can

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story whose wills have ceased to be their own because external powers have taken control of them" (Camps, *Introduction*, 23).

[34] On Hector's appearance to Aeneas, see Lee Fratantuono, *Madness Unchained: A Reading of Virgil's* Aeneid (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2007), 44.

[35] Louden notes that, in response to this vision, "Aeneas is transformed ...He now accepts that Troy is lost, that he must think of his own family" (Louden, "Retrospective," 5). Likewise, Elisabeth Henry writes, "The gods' implacable verdict on Troy finally comes home to Aeneas when his mother Venus shows him the truth of what is happening…After this Aeneas cannot doubt that Troy is dead" (Elisabeth Henry, *The Vigour of Prophecy: a Study of Virgil's* Aeneid [Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989], 46).

[36] On these prophecies and on the vision of the Penates, and their connection with the earlier appearance of Hector, see Riggs Alden Smith, *The Primacy of Vision in Virgil's* Aeneid (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 61-70.

[37] Of Helenus, Emily Pillinger writes, "Virgil's Helenus owes debts to the central male prophets of Greek literature, Homer's Tiresias and (especially) Apollonius' Phineus. However, the temptation to align Helenus exclusively with his male predecessors obscures the fact that his prophetic voice does not fit neatly into the normal male/female patterns of prophecy…Helenus' characterisation as a *uates* (Verg. *Aen.* 3.358) plays with both domains of prophecy, masculine sign-reading and feminine inspiration. Helenus' inspiration is not even tempered by the blindness that offsets the unusual visionary skills of male prophets like Tiresias and Phineas" (Emily Pillinger, *Cassandra and the Poetics of Prophecy in Greek and Latin Literature* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019], 159).

comfort himself and his men in their suffering with the belief that he knows how the story will end: *per uarios casus, per tot discrimina rerum / tendimus in Latium, sedes ubi fata quietas / ostendunt; illic fas regna resurgere Troiae* ("through various misfortunes, through so many crises we direct our course for Latium, where the fates show quiet habitations; there it is right that kingdoms rise up again for Troy" *Aeneid* I.204-7).[38] The gods have told him the end of the story; he needs only to persevere, and he will see all prophecies fulfilled.

But prophecy is limited—as one prophet does admit.[39] After confirming that the gods are guiding Aeneas (*Aeneid* III.374-76), Helenus admits that he cannot tell Aeneas everything: *prohibent nam cetera Parcae / scire Helenum farique uetat Saturnia Iuno* ("for the Parcae prohibit Helenus from knowing the rest and Saturnian Juno forbids me from speaking," *Aeneid* III.379-80).[40] Helenus gives Aeneas much useful advice; as Elisabeth Henry writes, "His lengthy speech consists not of vision, but advice, of a most coherent and impressive kind."[41] His advice includes warnings about Scylla and Charybdis, instructions to seek out the Sibyl, signs to recognize where to found a new

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[38] His comfort strikes us as ineffectual and empty, and even Aeneas himself is not entirely comforted by these words: *Talia uoce refert curisque ingentibus aeger / spem uultu simulat, premit altum corde dolorem* ("He said such things aloud and, sick at heart with great cares, pretended hope with his face, pressed down the pain deep in his heart," *Aeneid* I.208-9).

[39] As Henry writes, "Helenus' knowledge then is limited, and he knows these limitations" (Henry, *Vigour of Prophecy*, 68).

[40] Henry notes that the prophecies "of Helenus in Book III are more specific and more orderly" than those of Venus and Creusa, and she claims, "His extended frame of awareness opens a clear view of places Aeneas has not yet seen, and of what will happen when he arrives there. Helenus is able to make these predictions because the gods allow him to do so, but what they reveal to him is not expressed in terms of numinous vision such as the revelations presented by Venus and by Creusa's shade. Helenus' predictions belong to the world of ordinary life, but extend the space—and time-span—of ordinary consciousness; they draw Aeneas' attention to the vastness of the world and of the ages, *aevi longinqua vetustas,* 'time's far-stretching antiquity' (III.415)" (Henry, *Vigour of Prophecy*, 10).

[41] Henry, *Vigour of Prophecy*, 67.

city for Troy, and a promise of *requies...certa laborum* ("a certain rest from your labors," *Aeneid* III.393). But Helenus does not tell all. He does not warn Aeneas in full of the suffering along the way, and he suggests that Aeneas can appease Juno through sacrifice (*Iunonis magnae primum prece numen adora, / Iunoni cane uota libens dominamque potentem / supplicibus supera donis*, "adore the power of great Juno first with prayer, celebrate gladly your vows to Juno, and conquer the powerful mistress of the gods with suppliant gifts," *Aeneid* III.437-39). Helenus emphasizes his truthfulness here (*si qua est Heleno prudentia uati, / si qua fides, animum si ueris implet Apollo, / unum illud tibi, nate dea, proque omnibus unum / praedicam et repetens iterumque ataurique monebo*, "if Helenus has any prudence or trustworthiness as a prophet, if Apollo fills my soul with truth, I will predict this one thing to you, son of the goddess, and before all others I will warn you, repeating it again and again," *Aeneid* III.433-436). But as Julia T. Dyson notes, "Subsequent events...reveal that Juno's wrath has cooled not one degree,"[42] and O'Hara declares, "Helenus tells Aeneas that Juno's opposition is important, but, after a *si non vana* disclaimer, says that Aeneas can overcome her with suppliant offerings. This is misleading…Aeneas himself will never win over Juno, and his offerings to her here and elsewhere are useless, or at least inadequate."[43] Aeneas never successfully appeases Juno; Helenus' advice here is futile. His prophecy can tell only part of the story: through Helenus, the gods tell Aeneas only what he needs to know to reach Italy; they do not fully explain the suffering he will endure.[44] Helenus admits his prophecies are limited, drawing

[42] Julia T. Dyson, *King of the Wood: The Sacrificial Victor in Virgil's* Aeneid (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 44.

[43] O'Hara, *Death,* 29-31.

[44] Helenus also fails to predict the death of Anchises—a point I will discuss below.

our attention to the tension between prophecy and its outcome, but the truth is that all prophecies in the *Aeneid* are similarly limited. No prophecy can tell the full story.

But though the gods do not tell everything in prophecy, Aeneas' story shows that they use prophecy to direct human beings, and whenever human beings are distracted from this divinely directed end, the gods interfere to get them back on track. In Book 2, when Anchises refuses to leave Troy, two omens appear: Ascanius' head burns harmlessly (*Aeneid* II.679-686), and a comet appears in the sky as thunder booms (*Aeneid* II.691-698). At the first omen, Anchises requests a second (*Aeneid* II.687-691); when the second appears, Anchises agrees to leave Troy with Aeneas and his family: *iam iam nulla mora est; sequor et qua ducitis adsum, / di patrii; seruate domum, seruate nepotem. / uestrum hoc augurium, uestroque in numine Troia est. / cedo equidem nec, nate, tibi comes ire recuso* ("Now there is no delay; I follow and am present where you lead, ancestral gods; preserve our home, preserve my grandson. This augury is yours; Troy is in your power. Indeed I yield, and, son, I do not refuse to go as your companion," *Aeneid* II.701-704). Anchises' lingering in Troy nearly means Aeneas' lingering in Troy, and so the gods interfere to make sure that Aeneas' mission does not fail before it begins.

We could see this interference and these prophecies as divine guidance, and so Aeneas reports it. But we also see that prophecy, in concealing part of the story, is used to manipulate. This theme is introduced on a merely human scale early in the *Aeneid,* with Aeneas's retelling of Sinon's deception: human beings repeat false or nonexistent prophecies to manipulate events. Sinon pretends that he has fled the Greeks because the prophet Calchas, himself manipulated by Ulysses, claimed the gods demanded him as a sacrifice (*Aeneid* II.77-144). But Sinon himself is lying, using his story to manipulate the

Trojans into taking pity on him, accepting his story, and letting the Greeks into Troy to conquer at last (*Aeneid* II.195-98).[45]

But as Aeneas retells his story, we see that the gods too use prophecy and omens to manipulate, most horrifically in the story of Laocoon. Laocoon distrusts the Trojan Horse, and he says to the other Trojans, *equo ne credite, Teucri. / quidquid id est, timeo Danaos et dona ferentis* ("Don't trust the horse, Teucrians. Whatever it is, I fear the Greeks even bringing gifts," *Aeneid* II.48-49). Laocoon's warning is true. But, while Laocoon is sacrificing at Neptune's altar, the gods send an omen of twin snakes (*gemini...angues*) to manipulate the Trojans into distrusting Laocoon (*Aeneid* II.203-4). These serpents slaughter Laocoon and both his sons before taking refuge behind a statue of Pallas Athena (*Aeneid* II.213-27). In response, the Trojans, fearful at the omen, drag the Horse into the city (*Aeneid* II.228-33), an act that leads directly to Troy's fall. As Aeneas himself notes, *et, si fata deum, si mens non laeua fuisset, / impulerat ferro Argolicas foedare latebras, / Troiaque nunc staret, Priamique arx alta maneres* ("And, if the fates of the gods and if our minds had not been against us, [Laocoon] would have pushed us to defile the Argive lairs with the sword, and Troy would now stand, and you, high citadel of Priam, would remain," *Aeneid* II.54-56): had the gods not manipulated the Trojans into trusting Sinon and distrusting Laocoon, Troy would still stand.

And as Aeneas retells these prophecies, we begin to suspect that the gods are still manipulating Aeneas by not telling him the full cost of his journey to Italy. Some of the cost we will not learn until later in the epic. As Aeneas recounts the prophecies he has

[45] For a comparison of Virgil's version of Sinon and Laocoon with that of Triphiodorus and Quintus of Smyrna, see Wendell Clausen, *Virgil's* Aeneid *and the Tradition of Hellenistic Poetry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 34-35.

received, we see that Hector tells Aeneas only that he will found a city in Italy (*Aeneid* II.293-95); we learn in the epic's second half that wars will attend him along the way. Likewise, as Aeneas retells his wife's prophecy, we see that, while Creusa does speak of long exile on the way to Italy (*longa tibi exsilia et uastum maris aequor arandum,* "for you, long exile and vast stretches of the sea to be plowed," *Aeneid* II.780), she speaks only of *res laetae regnumque et regia coniunx* ("happy times and a kingdom and a royal spouse," *Aeneid* II.783), not of war, upon Aeneas' arrival in Hesperia.[46] And when Aeneas tells of the Penates' prophecies in Book 3, we see that they promise *imperium* ("empire") in their *propriae sedes* ("own habitations," *Aeneid* III.159, 167) in Italy without warning Aeneas what that empire will cost. From prophecy, Aeneas receives only partial information about his future—never the full story.

In Aeneas' retelling of the fall of Troy in Book 2 and of his subsequent wanderings in Book 3, we see the way the gods guide and interfere through prophecy and omens. But the gods interfere and manipulate again in Carthage, throughout the events of Books 1 and 4: they first manipulate Dido and Aeneas into falling in love, and then manipulate Aeneas into leaving. Much of their manipulation remains unseen by Aeneas (and by Dido), but the narrator reveals the gods' workings behind the scenes: Aeneas and Dido, unbeknownst to them, are pushed and pulled by the gods' desires, and when they resist the gods' manipulation, the gods interfere through omens and prophecy to break them apart.

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[46] O'Hara notes what is absent from Creusa's words: "she makes no mention of the wars that will have to be fought to win the kingdom and bride that here seem only to await his arrival…The *res laetae* that Creusa predicts are not described in the *Aeneid*; at the end of Book 12 Aeneas has killed Turnus and won through blood and toil only a bride he has not met" (O'Hara, *Death,* 89).

The gods manipulate Dido and Aeneas behind the scenes into forming a romantic relationship in the first place. Through Venus' appearance to Aeneas as a Carthaginian huntress, they manipulate Aeneas into seeking Dido's aid (*Aeneid* I.314-414). They manipulate Dido into trusting Aeneas, sending Mercury to make sure Carthage lies open to the Trojans, regardless of the cost to Dido herself and her people: *Maia genitum demittit ab alto, / ut terrae utque nouae pateant Karthaginis arces / hospitio Teucris, ne fati nescia Dido finibus arceret...in primis regina quietum / accipit in Teucros animum mentemque benignam* ("He sent the son of Maia down from on high, so that the lands and new towers of Carthage would lie open in hospitality to the Teucrians, lest Dido, not knowing fate, protect her borders...the queen especially received a quiet heart and benign mind towards the Teucrians," *Aeneid* I.297-304). Through Cupid-as-Ascanius, Venus manipulates Dido into falling in love with Aeneas (*Aeneid* I.657-722), and Juno and Venus manipulate Aeneas and Dido into the cave where they first have sex (*Aeneid* IV.90-172). The presence of both goddesses—the goddess of marriage and the goddess of sex, one concerned with Carthage and the other with Rome—confuses the nature of the relationship: Juno manipulates the relationship towards her goals, and Venus towards hers. Dido and Aeneas are not free to fall in love in their own way, or to relate to each other as leaders in their own way; their relationship is formed through the conflicting schemes and interference of the gods. But Dido and Aeneas remain unaware of the gods' interference in forming their relationship; the readers know of the presence of the gods, but the characters do not.

But their relationship is ended by the gods' open interference. Again, Virgil gives us a glimpse of the gods' actions behind the scenes, as Jupiter complains of Aeneas'

failure to seek out his destiny in Italy: *non illum nobis genetrix pulcherrima talem / promisit Graiumque ideo bis uindicat armis; / sed fore qui grauidam imperiis belloque frementem / Italiam regeret, genus alto a sanguine Teucri / proderet, ac totum sub leges mitteret orbem* ("His most beautiful mother didn't promise us such a man and so twice saved him from the arms of the Greeks, but she promised that he would rule Italy, rich in empires and clamoring for war, that he would produce a race from the high blood of Teucer, and that he would place the whole world under law," *Aeneid* IV. 227-31). Jupiter then sends Mercury to Aeneas twice: first, to remind him of realm in Italy promised to him and to his descendants (*si te nulla mouet tantarum gloria rerum…Ascanium surgentem et spes heredis Iuli / respice, cui regnum Italiae Romanaque tellus / debetur*, "If no glory of your own moves you…consider Ascanius, rising up, and the hopes for your heir Iulus, to whom the kingdom of Italy and the Roman land is owed," *Aeneid* IV.272-76), and second, to demand he leave Carthage quickly before Dido creates a crisis *(heia age, rumpe moras. uarium et mutabile semper / femina*, "Quick, go, stop delaying. A woman is a fickle and changeable thing," *Aeneid* IV.569-70). Here the gods interfere openly to force Aeneas to leave Troy: they give him plain guidance, guidance that steers him towards their ultimate goals and aims. And as Aeneas prepares to leave, Dido too is afflicted with omens—but these omens are not clear messages, but vague visions of doom: sacrifices gone wrong, the voice of her dead husband, owls crying, the predictions of past seers (*uatum praedicta priorum*), and terrible dreams (*Aeneid* IV.452-73) that will ultimately drive her to despair and death. The gods manipulate Aeneas and Dido throughout their relationship, in ways they both can and cannot see; they bring them together and then break them apart without concern for anything but the foundation of

Rome.[47] Whatever individual human beings may desire—swayed by emotion, affection, or fury—the gods continue to redirect them, disregarding the suffering along the way.

Knowledge and ignorance in *Aeneid* 5-8

In Books 1-4, Aeneas has reported his belief in the prophecies he has been given on the way to Carthage, despite his ignorance of their cost and uncertainty of their meaning, and then, manipulated by the gods, he has left Carthage and abandoned Dido to her death. In Books 5-8,[48] Aeneas is given more knowledge and hope in the Underworld, but his ignorance remains, and when he arrives at last in the land promised to him and his people, we see the gap between prophecy and event, between what has been promised and what actually comes to pass.

The most significant of prophetic moments in these books is Aeneas' visit to the Underworld in Book 6; in Louden's words, this journey to the Underworld is "the *Aeneid's* turning point": "His descent to Hades frees him from uncertainty about his larger mission, what it is he will bring into being. What transforms him from a typical epic hero on an *Odyssey* of sorts to the protagonist of a foundation myth is what he *sees* when he meets with Anchises, and what his father *says it all means.*"[49] In Book 6, Aeneas

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[47] Or, in Juno's case, preventing the foundation of Rome.

[48] In Book 5, he receives these promises in way that suggests his increasing authority in his father's absence. A serpent appears to Aeneas as he prays to his father's shade (*Aeneid* V.80-99), and during Anchises' funeral games, Acestes' arrow, lit aflame as it flies, is taken as an omen indicating further honors for Acestes (*Aeneid* V.518-544). See Vassiliki Panoussi, "Aeneas' Sacral Authority," in *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition,* ed. Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J. Putnam [Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 56-57, on Aeneas' increasing authority through these books.

[49] Louden, "Retrospective," 1-2. Louden notes the resonance of Anchises' words in the Underworld for Virgil's original audience, writing, "Though the *Aeneid* presents it as a *prophecy* to Aeneas, everything Anchises says *has already happened,* as the original external audience of the poem knows" (Louden, "Retrospective," 1-2). Hardie, likewise, writes, "What for Aeneas is a mixture of memories and prophetic revelation is, for Virgil's reader, a matter of memory, because of Virgil's peculiar technique of conveying history in the form of prophecy, both in the Parade of Heroes in *Aeneid* 6 and on the Shield of Aeneas in *Aeneid* 8 with its scenes of Roman history" (Hardie, *Last Trojan Hero,* 24).

first hears the Sibyl's prophecy, predicting war in Latium (*Aeneid* VI.83-97)[50]; he then follows her instructions and follows her into the Underworld (*Aeneid* VI.124-263). He sees the souls waiting to cross Acheron, including his own helmsman, Palinurus (*Aeneid* VI.305-383),[51] before he crosses into the Underworld and sees the dead there, among them Dido (*Aeneid* VI.450-476) and others he knows. Then he comes at last to Elysium, is reunited with his father's shade, and sees the parade of Roman heroes (*Aeneid* VI.637-892). Here, especially, he is told the future for his people and for Rome, in what Lee Fratantuono calls "the most complete revelation of Roman destiny that Aeneas receives in the entire poem."[52] Aeneas' vision of Roman heroes in the Underworld clearly foretells the glorious future of Rome; Anchises declares as he begins, *'Nunc age, Dardaniam prolem quae deinde sequatur / gloria, qui maneant Itala de gente nepotes, / inlustris animas nostrumque in nomen ituras, / expediam dictis, et te tua fata docebo'* ("Now come, I will explain in words what glory then will follow the offspring of the Dardanians, what descendants will remain from the Italian people, and the illustrious souls about to go forth for our name, and I will teach you your fates," *Aeneid* VI.756-59), and as he draws

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[50] On the Sibyl throughout classical literature, including in Virgil, see H.W. Park, *Sibyls and Sibylline Prophecy in Classical Antiquity*, ed. B.C. McGing (London and New York: Routledge, 1988). Pillinger discusses the ambiguity associated with the Sibyl's speech and its context both in terms of Callimachean aesthetics and Roman religion; see Emily Pillinger,"A Walk in Vergil's Footsteps: Statius on the Via Domitiana," in *Walking through Elysium: Vergil's Underworld and the Poetics of Tradition*, ed. Bill Gladhill and Micah Young Myers (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), 38-39.

[51] Dyson writes that Palinurus's death has disturbing echoes of the tradition of Aeneas' own death: "Virgil has offered, in a sense, two 'versions' of Palinurus' death: first (we think) drowning, then being killed by natives and falling into the water. It is no coincidence that these correspond to the two strains of the tradition surrounding the death of Aeneas: in some versions he falls into a river, while in others he is killed (or mysteriously disappears) near the river, during or after a battle with the Aborigines" (Dyson, *King of the Wood*, 87).

[52] Fratantuono, *Madness Unchained*, 189.

near the end of the parade, he claims, *'tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento / (hae tibi erunt artes), pacique imponere morem, / parcere subiectis et debellare superbos*' ("You, Roman, remember to rule the peoples with power [these will be your arts], to impose your custom on peace, to spare the subjected and conquer the proud," *Aeneid* VI.851-53). Rome is destined to rule the world.

But of course even this moment, when Rome's glorious future is foretold, is tinged with sadness. Immediately after Anchises makes this triumphant declaration, Virgil draws our attention to Marcellus, Augustus' successor, a man who cannot escape his fate—*heu, miserande puer, si qua fata aspera rumpas* ("alas, pitiable boy, if only you could break your cruel fate," *Aeneid* VI.882)—and who, like so many of the young men and women of the *Aeneid*, would die too young.[53] And the moment when Aeneas reemerges from the Underworld through the gate of false dreams (*Aeneid* VI.893-98) is also tinged with doubt. O'Hara writes:

> In this prophecy…Vergil gives eloquent voice to his people's hope that the civil wars of the last decades would not be repeated, that Rome would prosper under Augustus, and that life would somehow be better than it had ever been before. But close reading of Vergil's prophecies shows his painful awareness—which the shrewd Augustus may have shared—that this could be just an illusion, just a fantasy (like the other more obvious fantasies in Augustan poetry), just a false dream.[54]

[53] Hardie writes, "Modern critics have pinpointed moments of doubt and criticism in the politico-historical message of the main body of the Speech of Anchises, but it requires no hermeneutic suspicion to register the grief and sense of loss in the coda, the threnody for the younger Marcellus, nephew of Augustus, whose premature death in 23 BC cut off a promising future" (Hardie, *Last Trojan Hero*, 25). But Barbara J. Bono writes, "At its heart Anchises' prophetic vision dissolves into mourning for the premature death of Augustus's successor Marcellus; the meaning of the entire *nekuia*, the descent to Hades, is cast into doubt by the ambiguous leave-taking through the ivory gate of 'falsa...insomnia' ('false dreams' 6.896)" (Barbara J. Bono, *Literary Transvaluation: From Vergilian Epic to Shakespearean Tragicomedy* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984], 10).

[54] O'Hara, *Death*, 172.

Aeneas' journey through the Underworld and the prophecies he receives there proclaim the glory of Rome to come, but they also suggest the cost of that glory.

When Aeneas leaves the Underworld and the story reaches Latium at last, numerous omens attend the search for Lavinia's husband: bees hang from the top of a sacred laurel (*Aeneid* VII.59-70), Lavinia's hair catches on fire (*Aeneid* VII.71-80), and Faunus appears to Latinus in his sleep, telling him to wed his daughter to a foreigner (*Aeneid* VII.81-106).[55] The river god Tiberinus likewise appears to Aeneas in his sleep, promising him an omen of a white sow on the site of Ascanius' future city (*Aeneid* VIII.26-65).[56] Once the war begins, the gods continue to prophesy to Aeneas. Most notably, Vulcan, aware of the future—*haud uatum ignarus uenturique inscius aeui* ("not at all ignorant of the prophets and not lacking knowledge of the future age," *Aeneid* VIII.627)—at Venus's request makes Aeneas a shield that reveals Rome's future (*Aeneid* VIII.626-29). Aeneas, not fully comprehending, marvels at the sight: *Talia per clipeum Volcani, dona parentis, / miratur rerumque ignarus imagine gaudet / attollens umero*

[55] On the omens in Latium in book 7, see Agathe Thornton, *The Living Universe: Gods and Men in Virgil's* Aeneid (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 106-7. For a discussion of Lavinia's hair catching on fire, and a potentially darker interpretation than the one offered within the epic, see Mihoko Suzuki, *Metamorphoses of Helen: Authority, Difference, and the Epic* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989), 129.

[56] Sergio Casali discusses the white sow, as well as the eating of tables, in other classical sources (Sergio Casali, "The Development of the Aeneas Legend," in *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition*, ed. Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J. Putnam [Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 45-46). Panoussi writes of the omen of the white sow, "Upon arrival in Italy, Aeneas' ability to interpret prodigies and perform rituals reaches its climax" (Panoussi, "Sacral Authority," 58), and Fratantuono writes, "The constant pattern in Aeneas' reception of prophecies has been their slow and steady expansion; Aeneas himself has dramatically improved in his ability to accept the news of his visions and carry out his instructions expeditiously (as opposed to his sluggish response to dreams and visions in Book 2)" (Fratantuono, *Madness Unchained*, 237). But John Watkins notes, "Transforming the Homeric *nostos* into the quest for a New Troy, Virgil suppresses the comforts of familiarity and restored acquaintance awaiting Odysseus in Ithaca. Throughout the *Aeneid*'s second half, fulfilled omens and prophecies replace Odyssean recognition scenes. Discovering a white sow and her thirty offspring on the long-awaited site of Alba might confirm Aeneas's faith in destiny, but it lacks the warmth of Odysseus's encounter with the dog he has not seen in twenty years" (John Watkins, *The Specter of Dido: Spenser and Virgilian Epic* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995], 27).

famamque et fata nepotum ("He marveled at such things on the shield of Vulcan, the gifts of his mother, and, ignorant of what it meant, rejoiced in the image, bearing on his shoulder the fame and fates of his descendants," *Aeneid* VIII.729-31).[57] Prophecy continues to guide the characters towards the gods' desire and to proclaim the future glory of Rome. But the gods also continue to use prophecy to manipulate the characters in these books. Most notably, they manipulate the Trojan women in Book 5 by using the appearance of the prophetess Cassandra, and they manipulate Amata and Turnus in Book 7 through the appearance of the goddess Allecto.[58]

Up to this point, the gods have made sure Cassandra is disbelieved every time she prophesies, whether she is warning the Trojans of the danger of the Trojan Horse (*Aeneid* II.246-47) or promising the Trojans a new home in Hesperia (*Aeneid* III.182-88). But the one time she is believed, it is not in fact Cassandra; in a doubled deception, the goddess Iris pretends to be the Trojan woman Beroe and to have heard a prophecy from Cassandra: *nam mihi Cassandrae per somnum uatis imago / ardentis dare uisa faces: 'hic quaerite Troiam; / hic domus est' inquit 'uobis*' ("for, in a dream, the image of the prophetess Cassandra seemed to give me burning torches: she said, 'Seek Troy here; here is your home,'" *Aeneid* V.636-38). And even though the Trojan women see through her

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[57] Notice the contrast between Vulcan, who is *haud uatum ignarus*, and Aeneas, who is *rerum ignarus.* On Aeneas' shield, see Fratantuono, *Madness Unchained*, 250-56, and Hardie, *Cosmos and Imperium*, 362-65. W.R. Johnson, contrasting Achilles' and Aeneas' responses to their shields, concludes that Aeneas' "awe here, like his awe in the underworld, is a function not only of the grandeur of what he sees but also of his necessary inability to comprehend the significance of what he sees. In a crucial sense, then, the beauty of the shield (and the beauty of the poetry), is equivocal, fails finally to enlighten or to redeem Aeneas (or us), however much it may awe him (and charm us)" (W.R. Johnson, *Darkness Visible: A Study of Vergil's* Aeneid [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976], 114).

[58] Pillinger notes that "Cassandra's prophecies could have played a central role in the *Aeneid*, with its complicated mytho-historical relationship between past and present. In fact, Cassandra is fundamental to the narrative of the *Aeneid*, but her part is obscured by Virgil's decision to silence her voice" (Pillinger, *Cassandra*, 149).

deception (as Pyrgo says, *non Beroe uobis, non haec Rhoeteia, matres, / est Dorycli coniunx; diuini signa decoris / ardentisque notate oculos, qui spiritus illi, / quis uultus uocisque sonus uel gressus eunti,* "You know this is not Beroe, mothers, this is not the Rhoeteian wife of Doryclus; note the signs of divine splendor and burning eyes, her spirit, her face and the sound of her voice and her step as she goes," *Aeneid* V.646-49), they still, manipulated by the gods, follow the prophecy's instructions: *tum uero attonitae monstris actaeque furore / conclamant, rapiuntque focis penetralibus ignem, / pars spoliant aras, frondem ac uirgulta facesque / coniciunt* ("but then, thunderstruck by the portents and led by fury, they shout, they seize fire from the innermost parts of the hearth, some despoil the altars, they throw foliage and brushwood and torches" *Aeneid* V.659-62). They burn the Trojans' ships well before they have reached the Tiber, and thus these women are left behind. Through Iris's appearance, Juno attempts to dishearten and delay the Trojans; but her actions mean that, ultimately, Aeneas and those Trojans who pursue the mission to the end must join with a new people, the Latins, in accordance with the will of the gods.[59]

Similarly, Allecto is sent to direct Amata and Turnus to seek war, as Juno again manipulates events in Book VII. When the Trojans and Latins seem to be coming to an alliance, Juno interferes, sending Allecto to stir up strife. Allecto first goes to Amata, who

[59] Pillinger writes, "Though the symbolism is fitting for Cassandra (the torches, the boats, the identification of a new home for the Trojans), her appearance in a dream is not the normal mode of her prophetic speech, and is the first clue that Iris is distorting Cassandra's voice. So too is the straightforward message contained within direct speech; the very clarity of expression is another sign of Iris' deceit. Yet, in one further twist, it transpires that Cassandra's value as a prophet still lurks behind this artificial image. Understood retrospectively (as Anchises has shown) Cassandra's words are always proven truthful, and Iris' fiction is no exception to the rule. The women *will* make Sicily their home, another Troy, when their disaffection induces Aeneas to leave them behind with Acestes. The prophecy Iris has invented in Cassandra's name inspires the Trojan women to reach for, and attain, its fulfilment. This performative dimension within speech that is characterised as prophetic will echo through the Roman successors to Cassandra's voice" (Pillinger, *Cassandra*, 157).

is already upset about her daughter's betrothal to Aeneas, and thrusts a snake into her breast (*Aeneid* VII.341-58). Amata then pleads with Latinus not to give Lavinia to Aeneas (*Aeneid* VII.359-372), and when that fails, she rages through the city (*Aeneid* VII.376-77) and hides her daughter away (*Aeneid* VII.385-90). Meanwhile, Allecto, disguised as an old priestess, attempts to convince Turnus to attack the Trojans (*Aeneid* VII.406-435); when Turnus resists, Allecto reveals her divinity and throws a torch into his chest (*Aeneid* VII.440-457). Turnus calls for war at once: *arma amens fremit, arma toro tectisque requirit: / saeuit amor ferri et scelerata insania belli, / ira super* ("mindless, he rages for arms, he demands arms from his bed and home: the love of the sword, wicked madness for war, and anger above all rages in him" *Aeneid* VII.460-62). Through Allecto, the gods continue to manipulate events in the second third of the epic.

And in their prophecies, the gods continue to conceal the full truth. Tiberinus promises a city on the Tiber's banks to Aeneas' descendants (*Aeneid* VIII.36-49), but does not warn Aeneas of his own future watery grave;[60] more importantly, he instructs Aeneas to seek out Evander and Pallas as allies (*Aeneid* VIII.49-58), but does not warn Aeneas that Pallas will die as a result. Aeneas sees Rome's future laid out on his shield in Book 8 but does not understand; he remains *ignarus* of the future. These prophecies may predict a glorious future, but they fail to tell Aeneas everything. As narratives of the future, prophecies are limited; no narrative can express every point of view. And these prophecies provide only the point of view of the gods, not of human beings who suffer loss and die without seeing the promised future.

(Un)fulfilled prophecy and poetry in *Aeneid* 9-12

[60] On the dissembling of Tiberinus concerning Aeneas' fate, see O'Hara, *Death,* 116-19.

All these prophecies will ultimately lead towards a divinely directed end as they repeatedly promise Aeneas and the Trojans a new city to rule the world. In Books 9-12, omens continue to promise glory to Troy's descendants and to guide both the Trojans and the Latins, and Aeneas and the Trojans remain committed to the promises of prophecy.[61] But as we reach the end of the story, we can see that the prophecies *will be* fulfilled—but they are *not yet* fulfilled when the text ends, and we see at last what their fulfilment costs. Aeneas is victorious, the Trojans have won, the gods have made peace with each other, and everything is prepared for the rise of Rome; but Pallas is dead, Turnus is dead—and still we have no peace, no kingship, no Rome. The *Aeneid* ends exactly as the prophecies and the narrative have prepared us to expect—Aeneas defeats Turnus—and yet, by ending without resolution, it also ends in a completely unexpected way. And, in human terms, the prophecies have concealed the cost of their fulfilment. The individual's suffering does not matter to the gods; they care only about the final outcome.

And so Aeneas remains ignorant throughout. Prophecy does not give him the full story; it skews his vision—and ours—towards future triumph, ignoring future grief and

[61] Juno sends Iris to appear to Turnus (*Aeneid* IX.1-24). A prophecy made to Cybele years before is fulfilled when Aeneas' ships, attacked by Turnus, are turned into nymphs (*Aeneid* IX.77-122); these nymphs then warn Aeneas about what is happening back at the Trojan camps (*Aeneid* X.215-248). Jupiter and Apollo both interfere to protect Ascanius, the symbol of Rome's future, while Ascanius is in battle—Jupiter by providing an omen as Ascanius shoots Remulus (*Aeneid* IX.621-37), and Apollo by telling Ascanius to stay out of the war (*Aeneid* IX.638-663). In *Aeneid* X, Jupiter calls a council; Venus asks for Ascanius' safety (pretending not to care what happens to Aeneas and the other Trojans, and in doing so drawing attention to the fate promised by Jupiter, *Aeneid* X.16-62), and Juno in turn questions the actions of the Trojans in following prophecy and in going to war against the Latins (*Aeneid* X.62-95); Jupiter responds by promising not to interfere *(Aeneid* X.104-12). Juno, with Jupiter's permission, draws Turnus away from battle through a phantom of Aeneas (*Aeneid* X.633-665). Juturna, at Juno's instruction, disguises herself as Camers, stirs up grumbling among the Latins, and sends an omen of an eagle, a flock of birds, and a swan to interfere in the combat between Aeneas and Turnus (*Aeneid* XII.222-256). Jupiter likewise sends one of the Dirae down to interfere in the fight between Turnus and Aeneas; she appears as an owl, a bird of ill omen, before Turnus, and thus prompts Juturna to depart from the battle at last (*Aeneid* XII.843-886).

present grief. The gods do not tell Aeneas that he will lose his father before reaching Italy; as Aeneas says to Dido, *nec uates Helenus, cum multa horrenda moneret, / hos mihi praedixit luctus, non dira Celaeno* ("Neither the prophet Helenus, although he warned me of many horrors, predicted these griefs for me, nor dire Celaeno" *Aeneid* III.712-13).[62] The gods do not care about Dido's suffering, afflicting her with omens without giving her any real guidance (*Aeneid* IV.452-73). Jupiter does not even tell Venus that Aeneas will die after three years—only that he will reign for three years: *tertia dum Latio regnantem uiderit aestas / ternaque transierint Rutulis hiberna subactis* ("while a third year sees him reigning in Latium, and a third winter passes for the conquered Rutulians," *Aeneid* I.265-66).[63] Of all the prophets, Celaeno alone, with her promise that the Trojans will eat their tables in hunger, gives Aeneas any real indication of suffering (*Aeneid* III.254-57), and her prophecy is repeatedly misinterpreted, assigned to other speakers, and finally turns out to be the easiest part of the journey of Latium to bear. And the act of prophecy itself bears a cost in human suffering; the Sibyl must suffer to prophesy: *At Phoebi nondum patiens immanis in antro / bacchatur uates, magnum si pectore possit / excussisse deum; tanto magis ille fatigat / os rabidum, fera corda domans, fingitque premendo* ("But the prophet, not yet willing to endure Phoebus, monstrous in the cave, rages, if only she could shake the great god from her chest; he fatigues all the more her rabid mouth, taking her fierce heart, and shapes her by

[62] Of Anchises' death, O'Hara writes, "Vergil has chosen this particular way of expressing Aeneas' affection for Anchises in order to bring this death into the pattern of deaths omitted from prophecies, to evoke again the idea that events repeatedly betray Aeneas' expectations, because of what he has been told by gods and prophets" (O'Hara, *Death,* 24-25).

[63] On Aeneas's death, see O'Hara, *Death,* 90-91, and Dyson, *King of the Wood,* 93.

overwhelming her," *Aeneid* VI.77-80). Prophecy is not a comfort for suffering; it shows the ultimate end of history, the triumph, not the cost to the individual.

But the cost is massive: the death of Pallas, the death of Camilla, the death of Turnus, the death of Amata, of Nisus and Euryalus, of Lausus, of scores of young Trojans and Latins. As Barbara J. Bono writes, once we have understood that "in this poem there is no *direct* return to Troy, no possible unshadowed embrace with Dido," we "must still confront squarely the immense cost for individual human beings…As for Aeneas, whose way is only relatively more clear, can the glorious future prophesied for his descendants compensate for his self-sacrifice?"[64] And O'Hara writes, "Aeneas' noble unselfishness may be given much of the credit for his perseverance in the *Aeneid*, but he must be misled repeatedly. Aeneas is told at almost every step that peace and rest from *labor* lie just ahead, when in fact every possibility for happiness for him in this world is sacrificed for the benefit of future generations."[65] The gods do not care about the cost to the young men and women slaughtered in the quest for triumph or about the cost even to their tool, Aeneas.[66] And if this slaughter and grief is what the gods' guidance looks like, do we really want the gods' guidance?[67]

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[64] Bono, *Literary Transvaluation*, 38-39.

[65] O'Hara, *Death,* 120-21.

[66] The only god who seems to care for any individual is Juno—the goddess whose rage drives Aeneas's suffering, who yet takes pity on both Dido as she lies dying (*Aeneid* IV.693-99) and Turnus when he is threatened with death (*Aeneid* X.628-32). But Juno does too little, too late: she cares only at the end of Dido's life, and Jupiter and fate have already forbidden her from acting to save Turnus (*Aeneid* XII.147-53). Johnson writes, "That Turnus' mistakes are more numerous and more grave than those of Aeneas does not prove that he is a bad man; it proves only that he is more radically deceived by Juno, more abused by her, than even Aeneas is" (Johnson, *Darkness Visible,* 119).

[67] This aspect of the *Aeneid* reads less like triumphant propaganda than like an Epicurean critique of religion. On the parallels between the critique of ideas of Fortune in Epicurean works such as Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* and in the *Aeneid*, see Camps, *Introduction*, 48.

But the individual's suffering does matter to the poet. The gods may care only for Rome's greatness, but Virgil's subject is the suffering of the individual, not just the rise of the empire: his interest lies as much, or more, in the perspectives and pains of human characters as it does in the divine view. Wendell Clausen writes, "Much has been made, and rightly so, of Virgil's humanity, of his sympathy for suffering and loss. Aeneas abandons Dido, he kills Turnus—or rather, he must abandon Dido, must kill Turnus, for so the logic of Virgil's fiction requires; still the reader experiences a certain disquiet, and a corresponding dissatisfaction with Aeneas."[68] Virgil may include the divine view of history through prophecy, but he also includes, plainly and painfully, the human view of such suffering.

And yet Virgil himself is a prophetic figure, a *vates*.[69] Virgil's status as *vates* allows him to raise further questions for the attentive reader. Like the prophets, he simultaneously reveals and conceals, stating the triumph outright while only describing, not openly critiquing, the cost. Like the prophets, he can see the gods' councils; we as readers must trust his vision of the gods, much as Aeneas must trust the prophets' visions

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[68] Clausen, *Tradition,* 83.

[69] In Book 7, as he calls on Erato to advise the second half of his work, he refers to himself specifically as a *vates*, writing, *tu uatem, tu, diua, mone* ("You, goddess, you, advise your prophet," *Aeneid* VII.41), before he promises, *maior rerum mihi nascitur ordo, / maius opus moueo* ("A greater order of things is born for me, I move a greater work," *Aeneid* VII.41-45). On this passage, O'Hara writes, "Even before explicitly calling himself a *vates* here, Vergil has implicitly likened his role as poet of the *Aeneid* to that of the prophet, by the way that he puts the reader in the position of the characters who receive deceptive prophecies, and thus challenges the reader to consider both whether the message of the prophecies of Rome is the message of the poem, and whether that message is true" (O'Hara, *Death,* 176). In discussing the term *vates,* Pillinger writes, "Virgil fashions himself as a priest of, and surrogate for, the Cumaean Sibyl: he reconstructs her powerful voice from obscure scraps of Greek oracular text. In doing so he aligns the silent authority of the Sibylline Books with the loud authority of the *Aeneid* itself, and positions both as equally deserving of their move towards canonisation in the Palatine complex at the heart of Rome" (Pillinger, *Cassandra*, 173). On Virgil's use of the term *vates* and potential competition with the poet Ennius, see Nora Goldschmidt, *Shaggy Crowns: Ennius'* Annales *and Virgil's* Aeneid (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 54-61; Goldschmidt argues that Virgil presents himself as a poet able to talk with authority about the past. On the Augustan poets' use of the term *vates,* see Hardie, *Cosmos and Imperium,* 16.

of the gods. Virgil as Rome's poet is parallel with Troy's prophets, and he raises the same questions of concealment and perspective for Rome that the prophets raise for Troy. And if the prophecies about Aeneas' arrival have concealed the cost of their fulfilment, have the prophecies about Rome also concealed the cost of their fulfilment? With the poet as *our* prophet, as our translator of the gods' will to us, the question is turned back on us: if the prophets conceal pieces of the truth from their audiences, is the poet also concealing pieces of the truth from us?[70]

In the end, it turns out that we, like Aeneas, are ignorant without recognizing our ignorance. We believe we know how the story will end; we know our history, after all, and we can predict the way a battle between our hero and his rival will conclude. Aeneas must defeat Turnus; this is what history and the narrative demand. But when Turnus, about to die, asks for Aeneas' pity—for the return of his body to his father—and for an end to hatred and strife (*Aeneid* XII.930-38), we are shocked by Aeneas' refusal, by his refusal to spare the humbled: *'Pallas te hoc uulnere, Pallas / immolat et poenam scelerato ex sanguine sumit.' / hoc dicens ferrum aduerso sub pectore condit / feruidus; ast illi soluuntur frigore membra / uitaque cum gemitu fugit indignata sub umbras,*

"'Pallas sacrifices you with this wound, Pallas takes revenge from your wicked blood.' Saying this, he buries the sword in his enemy's chest, raging, but Turnus' limbs are loosened with cold and his life, undeserving, with a sigh, flees under the shadows,"

[70] O'Hara notes the connections between prophetic and poetic falsehoods; see O'Hara, *Death,* 176-183. Pillinger writes, "The *Aeneid* constructs a forward-driving narrative in which Augustan Rome is the ultimate spatial and temporal goal, but it cannot ignore the anxiety of 'what comes next?' in its teleological conception of history" (Pillinger, "Walk," 52).

Aeneid XII.948-52).[71] And thus the epic ends—with the death of Turnus, and with nothing more. There is no resolution, no final peace.[72] Though history and the narrative demand Aeneas's triumph and Turnus's death, nonetheless we are surprised by the ending; it is and is not what we expected.[73] Our last view of *pius* Aeneas is of a bloodstained butcher, an avenger without mercy. Abrupt and brutal, the ending, though predicted and predictable, takes us by surprise; though forewarned, we are as ignorant as Aeneas.

Is the suffering caused by Troy's fall and Rome's rise worth it? Virgil answers with yes and no. He includes both voices, the triumphant and the critical, and through this tension, Virgil allows for questions. Prophecy cannot tell the full story, but in the gap between prophecy and event, we see that the triumphant interpretation offered us and the critical conclusions we must draw are both true. The contrasts raise possibilities: the Augustan regime may be both a good thing for Rome and a bad thing for Rome, a good

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[71] Note that Virgil uses the word *condit* to describe Aeneas' killing of Turnus—the same verb used for the founding of the city at the beginning of the poem (*condere*, *Aeneid* I.33). Aeneas essentially founds Rome in Turnus' blood.

[72] Of course, Virgil may not have intended for the epic to end here. The abrupt ending of the *Aeneid* has disturbed readers enough that, in the fifteenth century, Maffeo Vegio wrote a thirteenth book to bring about resolution. But many scholars see the end of the *Aeneid* as fitting. See James J. O'Hara, "The Unfinished *Aeneid*?" in *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition*, ed. Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J. Putnam (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), on the question of the *Aeneid*'s level of completion.

[73] Johnson writes, "It is no secret that there is a general dissatisfaction or uneasiness with this famous closure. One may try to rationalize the dissatisfaction by proving the villainy of Turnus or by showing that the death of Turnus, the manner of his death, symbolizes the defeat of Juno; for those who are content to read the poem as an ethical melodrama, such solutions are apparently adequate—once we have separated the good guys from the bad guys and the bad guys get what is coming to them, the beauty of the poem is found to be intact. Thus, a solution we would find banal in any ephemeral movie of our choice is found to be adequate in the hands of an acknowledged master of Western epic. By the same token, it does no good to make Aeneas a monster, for that is to do little more than play the same game in a slightly more fashionable way: find the villain but call him anti-hero. But in writing his poem, Vergil sought to imagine a world—or, rather, a complexity of worlds—that one or another kind of villain could not account for" (Johnson, *Darkness Visible*, 115-16).

thing for the world and a terrible thing for the world. Prophecy, as one of the many voices retelling the story of Troy, allows for the narrative to be both/and: both liberating and confining, both triumphant and critical.

Dares and Dictys: human folly and human limitations

In late antiquity, an openly and deeply pessimistic counter-tradition to Virgil emerges. This counter-tradition begins with two late antique Latin texts: the *Ephemeris belli Troiani* of Dictys Cretensis[74] and the *De excidio Troiae* of Dares Phrygius,[75] both supposedly eyewitnesses to the Trojan War (Dares is supposedly a Trojan ally, while Dictys is Greek).[76] These texts were not written together—the Latin translation of Dictys dates to the fourth century, while Dares dates to the fifth or sixth century[77]—but because

[74] For a list of the witnesses to Dictys, see Peter Gainsford, "Diktys of Crete," *The Cambridge Classical Journal* 58 (2012): 65-74. On the relationship between the Latin text of Septimius and the Byzantine Greek texts of the *Ephemeris,* see Elisabet Gómez Peinado, "The Greek *Ephemeris Belli Troiani* by Dictys Cretensis and its Latin and Byzantine testimonies," in *Revival and Revision of the Trojan Myth: Studies on Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius,* ed. Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso (Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 2018). Throughout this chapter, I focus on the Latin translation of Dictys by Septimius; Gainsford warns against "equat[ing] 'Diktys' with Septimius' Latin version" and writes that "Several episodes that Septimius elides or ignores are reported in detail in Byzantine sources: the youth of Paris; the descriptions of the Greeks and Trojans; much of Septimius Book 6" (Gainsford, "Diktys of Crete," 84). I will, nonetheless, following medieval English writers, refer to the Latin text as Dictys' work throughout.

[75] For a list of the manuscripts of Dares with descriptions, see Louis Faivre D'Arcier, *Histoire et Géographie d'un Mythe: La Circulation des Manuscrits du* De Excidio Troiae *des Darès le Phrygien (VIII^e^-XV^e^ Siècles)* (Paris: École des Chartes, 2006), 29-188; for the manuscript families for Dares, see D'Arcier, *Histoire et géographie,* 225-272.

[76] On the genre of Dictys' *Ephemeris,* see Mireia Movellán Luis, "Elements of Internal Cohesion in the *Ephemeris Belli Troiani:* Historiography, Rhetoric and Genealogy," in *Revival and Revision of the Trojan Myth: Studies on Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius,* ed. Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso [Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 2018], 143-45; Luis notes "that the *Ephemeris* combines three literary genres (epics, novel and historiography) in a single sort of narrative that has its roots in Hellenistic historiography" and refers to the text as "fake historiography" and "heir to a long tradition of forgers and also a representative of Greek imperial literature of its age" (Luis, "Elements of Internal Cohesion," 143). Gainsford writes of the genre of Dictys' *Ephemeris,* "The *Ephemeris* lies between genres. It is a pseudo-documentary historical romance; we might call it a 'quasi-novel'" (Gainsford, "Diktys of Crete," 60).

[77] On the date of Dares, see Leslie Diane Myrick, *From the De Excidio Troiae Historia to the Togail Troí: Literary-Cultural Synthesis in a Medieval Irish Adaptation of Dares' Troy Tale* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1993), 36-38. Karen ní Mheallaigh dates the Greek text of Dictys to "no later

both were considered eyewitnesses and correctives to the poetic 'lies' of Homer, Virgil, and Ovid, the medieval tradition that draws on them often mentions them together.[78] These texts were highly influential in medieval retellings of the Trojan War narrative. Marie Bedel notes that Dares and Dictys are the main source for the transmission of the Trojan narrative in the Middle Ages,[79] and Frederic N. Clark writes, "Though ultimately unmasked as a forgery by early modern classical scholars, [Dares] was long considered *the* authoritative account of Troy throughout the Middle Ages, faithfully memorializing a primordial event in the distant past."[80] Though both Dares and Dictys are often criticized

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than ca. 200 C.E., the *terminus ante quem* provided by the older of our two surviving papyrus fragments"; Septimius' Latin text "has been dated most persuasively to the fourth century C.E." (Karen ní Mheallaigh, "Pseudo-Documentarism and the Limits of Ancient Fiction," *The American Journal of Philology* 129.3 [2008]: 406). Stefan Merkle notes that some scholars have dated the Latin text earlier, but he agrees that the fourth century is more likely (Stefan Merkle, "News from the Past: Dictys and Dares on the Trojan War," in *Latin Fiction: The Latin Novel in Context*, ed. Heinz Hofmann [London and New York: Routledge, 1999], 163).

[78] Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso write that Dares and Dictys were increasingly linked as reliable, authoritative sources throughout the Middle Ages ("Introduzione," in *Revival and Revision of the Trojan Myth: Studies on Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius,* edited by Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso [Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 2018], 7). Sidy Diop notes that Dares virtually responds to Dictys (Sidy Diop, "L'image troyenne et sa fonction narrative chez Darès de Phrygie et Dictys de Crète," in *Reconstruire Troie: Permanence et renaissances d'une cité emblématique,* ed. Michel Fartzoff, Murielle Faudot, Evelyne Geny, and Marie-Rose Guelfucci [Besançon: Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité, 2009], 125). Merkle writes, "Dares' account, then, differs remarkably from Dictys' both in its structure and contents. While the *Eph.* presents a pessimistic picture of the Trojan War with the completely reprehensible behavior of the Trojans and the ethically deteriorating Greeks, the *Acta* quite neutrally report a military conflict between basically equal contestants. Dares' main concern apparently was to change the tradition as far as possible and to create a most surprising and unique 'true story' of the Trojan War. Nevertheless the close parallels between the two texts with regard to their 'Beglaubigungsapparat'...and moreover the authors' choice of the same fictitious genre, indicate that one author knew the other's text; as Beschorner has shown, it seems quite probable that Dictys' work is prior to Dares'" (Stefan Merkle, "The Truth and Nothing but the Truth: Dictys and Dares," in *The Novel in the Ancient World*, ed. Gareth Schmeling [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996], 576-77).

[79] Marie Bedel, "Portraits de femmes chez Guido delle Colonne," *Atalaya* 13 (2013): 1.

[80] Frederic N. Clark, "Reading the 'First Pagan Historiographer': Dares Phrygius and Medieval Genealogy," *Viator* 41.2 (2010): 203. Clark notes that part of the reason for the medieval popularity of Dares and Dictys was the belief that the Trojans were the ancestors of many European peoples (Clark, "First Pagan," 203-4). On the many adaptations of Dares, see Myrick, *From the De Excidio Troiae Historia*, 2-3 and 47-48.

as being of low literary quality, their influence on medieval Trojan literature was significant and long-lasting.[81]

The popularity of Dares and Dictys stems not only from the relative simplicity of their Latin—a factor which contributed to their use as classroom texts—but also from their apparent trustworthiness: "Both works contrast a plausible, rationalistic version of the events to the Homeric epic; the gods do not appear personally, and the superhuman heroism of the protagonists is reduced to human scale."[82] This trustworthiness springs in part from their contrast with Homer, particularly in their removal of the divine machinery;[83] the gods are essentially (though not entirely) struck from the Trojan War. Thus, whereas Virgil, following Homer, seems to blame the gods for the war, the almost complete absence of the gods in Dares and Dictys gives the impression that the gods have nothing to do with it—this is all human folly. And there is a great deal of folly: the Trojan rulers willfully choose warfare over prudence, and ultimately Troy falls by betrayal from within. Why does Troy fall? For Dares and Dictys, the answer is apparently

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[81] Robert M. Lumiansky defends the literary quality of both texts: "No commentator, to my knowledge, has felt that any literary characteristics of the *Historia* and the *Ephemeris* might have also contributed to the highly influential position they held for over a thousand years...Nevertheless, I am going to be so bold as to maintain here that Dares' skill in certain aspects of narrative technique and Dictys' fundamentally moralistic intentions should not be overlooked in this connection" (Robert M. Lumiansky, "Dares' *Historia* and Dictys' *Ephemeris:* A Critical Comment," in *Studies in Language, Literature, and Culture of the Middle Ages and Later*, ed. E. Bagby Atwood and Archibald A. Hill [Austin: The University of Texas at Austin, 1969], 200). And Merkle writes, "A thorough analysis of the works as literary texts was for a long time considered simply not worthwhile, since in the eyes of scholars they were 'Machwerke', 'artless and abrupt, barren of literary power'. The fact that the unpretentious style of the works is an essential part of their literary conception, was not taken into consideration" (Merkle, "The Truth," 564).

[82] Merkle, "News," 156.

[83] On Dares and Dictys' corrections of Homer, and the removal/rationalization of the gods, see Sarah Spence, "Felix Casus: The Dares and Dictys Legends of Aeneas," in *A Companion to Vergil's Aeneid and its Tradition*, ed. Joseph Farrell and Michael C. J. Putnam (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 134-35; Myrick, *From the De Excidio Troiae Historia*, 23-24; Frederic Clark, *The First Pagan Historian: The Fortunes of a Fraud from Antiquity to the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 15-16; and D'Arcier, *Histoire et géographie*, 6.

obvious: Troy falls because of human conflict and human folly.[84] In these texts, the warmongering of the Trojans appears tyrannical, and the story places the blame for the war and Troy's destruction less and less on the gods and more and more on the Trojans themselves.

And yet, a large part of the reason for the absence of divine machinery in these accounts is perspective: the limits of the narrator's perspective require the absence of divine machinery. An eyewitness to the Trojan War cannot see the gods' councils—not in the way the narrators of epic (such as Homer and Virgil) can—without breaking the fiction that the narrators are indeed eyewitnesses.[85] But prophecy is the one major exception to the absence of divine machinery. Prophecy translates the divine into human terms, and because the voice of the prophet is human, a prophet *can* appear in an eyewitness account in a way the gods themselves cannot.[86] Prophecy allows for the divine machinery to operate even in these eyewitness accounts. And prophecy, in these texts, is entwined with betrayal—the main cause of Troy's final destruction. I argue, therefore, that the presence of prophecy in these texts troubles the apparently simple answer to the question that haunts these texts: who is to blame for the fall of Troy?

The beginning of the war

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[84] As Diop writes, the cause of the war, for Dares, is the conflict between Laomedon, Priam's father, and the Argonauts; for Dictys, it is Paris's actions in kidnapping Helen (Diop, "L'image troyenne," 131).

[85] As Griffin writes, "These representations are given a further semblance of reality by the careful suppression of all particulars that could have fallen neither under the observation of Dares and Dictys nor of their informants, by the practically total elimination of all miraculous and supernatural agencies, and by the display of an apparently honest attempt to retrieve the reputation of heroes unduly neglected by Homer" (Nathaniel Edward Griffin, *Dares and Dictys: An Introduction to the Study of Medieval Versions of the Story of Troy* [Baltimore: J.H. Furst Company, 1907], 12-13).

[86] Likewise, omens—nature's translation of the divine, a translation which must then be translated again by the prophet or soothsayer—can appear in an eyewitness account in a way the gods themselves cannot.

In Dares, as mentioned, there is a distinct lack of divine machinery; the gods are mostly absent from Dares' narrative. But the text is rife with council scenes: Dares uses council scenes as a lever to shift narrative events. Two councils in particular frame the war, and the decisions made at these councils lead to disaster. These council scenes make it seem that human beings and their decisions, not the gods, drive the events of the narrative.[87]

In Dares, the Trojan War is a continuation of an earlier conflict between the Greeks—the Argonauts in particular—and the Trojans. In this conflict, Priam's father, the king Laomedon, was killed, and Priam's sister Hesione was taken as a concubine for the Greek warrior Telamon. Priam, now king, seeks vengeance for his father's death and the recovery of his sister from the Greeks. He sends Antenor to request Hesione's return, but Antenor returns unsuccessful. And so, Priam holds a council. This first council in Dares is a council of Priam's sons and friends, called by Priam himself, in order to debate what to do about Hesione's continuing captivity: *dixit eis se Antenorem legatum in Graeciam misisse, ut hi sibi satisfacerent quod patrem suum necassent, Hesionam sibi redderent, illos contumeliose tractasse Antenorem et Antenorem ab eis nihil impetrasse* ("he said to them that he had sent Antenor as a legate into Greece, so that they might make satisfaction to him for killing his father and that they might return Hesione to him, but they had treated Antenor insultingly and Antenor had obtained nothing from them," Dares 6). The council, at Priam's urging, decides on war: *verum quoniam suam voluntatem facere noluissent [Graeci], videri sibi exercitum in Graeciam mitti qui poenas*

[87] Lumiansky writes that, in Dares' *Historia,* Priam does make an effort "to fulfill his responsibilities as Trojan leader and to save his city," but, "Despite his meritorious intentions, he makes the wrong decision at almost every crucial point" (Lumiansky, "Critical Comment," 204).

repeterent ab eis, ne barbaros Graeci inrisui haberent... omnibus placuit classem comparare et in Graeciam proficisci ("but since the Greeks did not want to do his will, it seemed good to him that an army be sent into Greece who would punish them, lest the Greeks consider the barbarians a laughingstock...It was pleasing to all to prepare a fleet and set out against Greece," Dares 6-7). It is this council, not a council of the gods, that begins the war.

But prophets do play a role in this scene. In his description of the prophets, Dares stresses their knowledge and advisory roles. Furthermore, he draws a clear contrast between the prophet Helenus and his warlike brothers, between the prophetess Cassandra and her sisters. For instance, he notes, *Deiphobum et Helenum [esse] similes patri dissimili natura, Deiphobum fortem Helenum clementem doctum vatem* ("Deiphobus and Helenus were similar to their father but dissimilar in nature; Deiphobus was strong, Helenus was a merciful, learned prophet," Dares 12). Of Cassandra, he says bluntly, *Cassandram … [esse] futurorum praesciam* ("Cassandra foreknew the future," Dares 12). But when they prophesy, the fact that they are offering *prophecy* is not nearly so important as the fact that they are offering *counsel.* In this first council scene, Priam's eldest three sons—none of them prophets—give their advice before Helenus has a chance to speak: Hector agrees to war, though he doubts the outcome (Dares 6); Paris claims that he can lead the Trojans to victory and shares an apparently prophetic dream, but he does not claim to be a prophet, simply that he trusts the gods will favor him (*in deorum benignitate se confidere*, "he trusted in the kindness of the gods," Dares 7), and Deiphobus supports Paris's desire for war without any reference to prophecy. Only then does Helenus speak. His prediction is briefly described: *Helenus vaticinari coepit Graios*

venturos, Ilium eversuros, parentes et fratres hostili manu interituros, si Alexander sibi uxorem de Graecia adduxisset ("Helenus began to prophesy that the Greeks would come, that they would overturn Ilium, that his parents and brothers would die by a hostile hand, if Alexander got a wife for himself from Greece," Dares 7). But then Troilus, the youngest of Priam's sons, offers support for the war and dismisses Helenus' words as fearful (Dares 7). Shortly thereafter, Panthus, the son of the prophet Euphorbus, offers counsel parallel to Helenus's—*dicere coepit si Alexander uxorem de Graecia adduxisset, Troianis extremum exitium futurum* ("he began to say that, if Alexander got a wife from Greece, it would be the final destruction for the Trojans," Dares 8)—and Cassandra chimes in once the Trojans have begun to prepare a fleet (*Cassandra postquam audivit patris consilium, dicere coepit quae Troianis futura essent, si Priamus perseveraret classem in Graeciam mittere*, "Cassandra, after she heard her father's plan, began to say what the future would be for the Trojans, if Priam persisted in sending a fleet to Greece," Dares 8).[88] These prophets offer true advice, and yet they seem to be no more than prudent councilors: it should be obvious to anyone that this war will not end well for Troy. Certainly, after this council, it is hard to blame anyone but Priam and his sons; they bring this war, a war that they cannot win, on themselves.[89]

[88] Cassandra prophesies again after Paris steals Helen: *quam ut aspexit Cassandra, vaticinari coepit memorans ea quae ante praedixerat. Quam Priamus abstrahi et includi iussit* ("when Cassandra saw [Helen], she began to prophesy, remembering those things which she had said before. Priam commanded that she be dragged off and shut away," Dares 11).

[89] Diop writes that this council shows the authoritarianism of Priam's regime and, for the narrator, justifies the final destruction of a people who accept their leaders' manipulation (Diop, "L'image troyenne," 136).

Like Dares, Dictys reduces (though he does not eliminate) the divine machinery, and he emphasizes Trojan tyranny, folly, and barbarism much more than Dares does.[90] Thus the fall of Troy seems to be the Trojans' fault. And again, like Dares, Dictys emphasizes the role of council and of counsel, but bad counsel, coupled with tyranny, takes an even larger role. Even more so than in Dares, Priam's folly and tyranny are responsible for the fall of Troy: he allows his sons to break bonds of friendship (Dictys I.4), make political decisions based on lust and greed (Dictys I.7); tyrannize the Trojan council (Dictys I.8), and threaten and kill the common people (Dictys I.8). There is no need for the gods to punish Troy; from the first moments of the text, the reader can see that the destruction of Troy is a natural consequence of Priam's poor leadership.[91]

Dictys strengthens the idea that Troy's fall is Priam's fault by revealing that the Trojans have multiple opportunities to prevent the war but are prevented by Priam. Palamades comes as an envoy from the Greeks to request Helen's return (Dictys I.6); Priam rejects his suit, deferring the remainder of Palamedes' speech for another day, for fear that he will successfully persuade the rest of the Trojans (Dictys I.6). Likewise,

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[90] Merkle writes, "The picture the *Ephemeris* draws of the Trojan War is, in any case, a very pessimistic one; there seem to be no winners at the end. The *Acta* are quite different. Although they present much more radical alterations of the tradition than the *Ephemeris,* they are closer to Homer in one respect: Greeks and Trojans are more or less equal, both in military skill and in moral regard. Unlike Dictys, Dares, the 'Trojan', does not disparage the 'enemy'" (Merkle, "News," 162).

[91] Diop notes that the negative portrayal of the Trojans here may reflect negative attitudes towards Roman power (Diop, "L'image troyenne," 131). But Andreas Kraß notes that Dictys is not exactly friendly towards the Greeks either (Andreas Kraß, "Achill und Patroclus: Freundschaft und Tod in den Trojaromanen Benoîts de Sainte-Maure, Herbots von Fritzlar und Konrads von Würzburg," *Zeitschrift fur Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 114 [1999]: 73). Merkle compares the Latin of Septimius' translation of Dictys to that of Sallust, particularly in political moments such as this assembly (Merkle, "News," 158-60), and concludes, "To those readers who recognized most or all of the parallels, Septimius in my view offered a challenging, strictly Latin intertextual game...The conclusions such a reader could draw were, however, not very flattering. The Trojans, he could learn, were indeed surprisingly similar to the Romans; the same negative powers that ruined the Roman Republic had caused the complete destruction of Rome's predecessor" (Merkle, "News," 161).

Ulysses speaks persuasively to the Trojan assembly (Dictys II.21-22), but the Trojans are powerless to oppose Priam; Panthus says, *'Apud eos…Vlixe, verba facis, quibus praeter voluntatem mederi rebus potestas nulla est'* ("Ulysses, you speak among those who have no power except willingness to fix things," Dictys II.23), and Antenor adds, *'Omnia, quae memorata a vobis sunt, scientes prudentesque patiemur neque voluntas consulendi abest, si potestas concederetur. Sed, ut videtis, summae rei alii potiuntur, quibus cupiditas utilitate potior est'* ("We know all those things you have reminded us of, and we endure prudently, nor do we lack the will to take counsel, if only we had the power. But, as you see, others possess the power, and for them greed is stronger than utility," Dictys II.23). The Trojan people want peace, but Priam and his sons pursue war without concern for anything but their own wealth, lust, and power. Priam's folly makes the war's end easy to guess: there is a sense that any prudent counselor could predict the end of this war. But Priam refuses to listen, and the Trojan people themselves are powerless.

The end of the war

In both texts, the war ends in betrayal. But betrayal is portrayed specifically as a response to Priam's tyranny and folly; and in both texts, this tyranny is highlighted during a second council scene corresponding to the first.[92] The second major council in

[92] Aeneas and Antenor are the main traitors in both texts, and their betrayal is clearly a response to Priam's tyranny; James G. Farrow notes "that Aeneas and Antenor, in Dares and Dictys, show their hostility to Priam and Paris more for moral reasons than for local or tribal jealousies" (James G. Farrow, "Aeneas and Rome: Pseudepigrapha and Politics," *The Classical Journal* 87.4 [1992]: 348). For the literary history of both as traitors, but especially of Antenor, see Giampiero Scafoglio, "Antenore, il traditore," in *Revival and Revision of the Trojan Myth: Studies on Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius,* ed. Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso (Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 2018). For Aeneas as an implied traitor in the Roman tradition, see Myrick, *From the De Excidio Troiae Historia,* 41-42. For the influence of Dares and Dictys' version of Aeneas as traitor, see Spence, "Felix Casus," 133-34. Spence writes, "The tales of Dares and Dictys, and their representation of Aeneas as traitor, complicate the Vergilian tradition in the Middle Ages even as they offer an opportunity to medieval authors. ... The fall of Troy via the treachery (rather than the *pietas*) of the national hero affords a mechanism for representing not only the fall of the ancient world, but the rise of a future nation as well" (Spence, "Felix Casus," 145).

Dares essentially causes the destruction of Troy. At this point, the Greeks have surrounded Troy, and there is no escape. Priam himself does not immediately take leadership in this situation; instead, Aeneas, Antenor, and Polydamas request a meeting of the council in response to the current situation (Dares 37). Antenor and Aeneas first seek peace through the legitimate means of council with Priam, and Antenor tries to persuade Priam to make peace by returning Helen and the wealth Paris stole to the Greeks (Dares 37). When Priam's son Amphimachus curses Antenor, Aeneas refutes him "with gentle and mild words" (*lenibus mitibusque dictis*) and argues that they should seek peace from the Argives (*ab Argivis pacem petendam magnopere suadet*, Dares 37). Polydamas then echoes Aeneas. But Priam remains obstinate in his desire for war. He clings to the decision he made in the first council despite its increasing cost: *Quapropter certum sibi esse pacem non fieri. Imperatque uti omnes parati sint, ut cum signum dederit, e portis inruptionem faciant, aut vincere aut mori sibi certum esse* ("Therefore he had decided that peace would not be made. He commanded that all be prepared, when he had given the sign, to make an attack from the gates; he had decided they would either conquer or be killed," Dares 38). He even plots to kill those opposed to the war (Dares 38). Aeneas and Antenor's attempts of to make peace and save Troy fail; Priam wants to have them killed for giving such counsel, and tyranny wins out over wisdom.

Those who have sought peace, finding their king opposed to it, decide that their only recourse is betrayal. Antenor and Aeneas turn to dealing directly with the Greeks; they plot together, and when the time comes, they betray Troy: *Antenor et Aeneas noctu ad portam praesto fuerunt, Neoptolemum susceperunt, exercitui portam reseraverunt, lumen ostenderunt, fugam praesidio sibi suisque ut sit providerunt* ("Antenor and Aeneas

at night were present and available at the gate, they received Neoptolemus, they unbarred the gate for the army, they showed the light, they saw to it that there would be a means of escape for the guard and themselves and their own families," Dares 41). The first council precipitates the war, the second Troy's fall; in the first, all the Trojans agree (though some with reluctance) to war; in the second council, the Trojans are at odds; but Priam remains of the same mind throughout both councils. Sidy Diop writes that, in Dares, Troy's fall is the result of the sacrilegious acts of Priam and his family, that Priam's authoritarianism progressively changes into despotism, and that Troy is the victim of those in power.[93] Priam's stubbornness in clinging to the war, coupled with the willingness of Aeneas and Antenor to betray, seems directly responsible for Troy's fall, rather than some design of the gods: human folly, not the gods' will, guides the events of the narrative.

In Dictys, as in Dares, betrayal is behind Troy's fall: eventually the Trojans turn against Priam. As before, speeches and council-scenes play a role in advancing the plot, but towards the end of the text, these speeches move towards betrayal.[94] Antenor, as he plots with the Greeks to betray Troy, explains to the Greeks his belief that Troy's situation is Priam's fault (Dictys IV.22); in another speech before the rest of the Trojans, including Priam, Antenor openly blames Priam and Helen for the war: '*neque inferendo bellum quicquam prius temeratum ab his [Graecis], quam perfidiam in ipsa legatione insidiasque ab nostris experti sunt. In qua re, dico enim quod sentio, Priamus eiusque*

[93] Diop, "L'image troyenne," 136 and 138.

[94] Of this and other speeches in Dictys, Luis writes that "episodes in which these rhetorical scenes are inserted are not superfluous, they are not only a skill demonstration of the author, but important steps in the narrative (we should recall the declaration of war during the second Greek embassy or the immediate betrayal and fall of Troy after the last speech of Antenor)" (Luis, "Elements of Internal Cohesion," 137-38).

filii auctores…Haec omnia in gratia Helenae gesta, scilicet eius mulieris, quam ne Graeci quidem recipere gestiunt' ("These Greeks violated nothing by bringing in war until they experienced the faithlessness and plots in the very mission we sent. In this—for I say what I think—Priam and his sons were the originators…All these things were done, of course, for the sake of this woman, Helen, whom not even the Greeks are eager to get back," Dictys V.2).[95] Immediately after this gathering, Antenor and Aeneas go to the Greeks to make final arrangements for Troy's fall. Their betrayal is clearly motivated by the tyranny and poor leadership of Priam and of his sons.[96]

The role of the gods

Though the gods do not apparently drive narrative events, prophets, as mentioned, do play a small but significant role in offering advice and warnings. But, although prophets are present throughout these texts, the emphasis is on their counsel rather than their prophecies. The prophets seem to be no more than prudent councilors: anyone could see this war will end in destruction with simply a little forethought. When the prophets prophesy, neither they nor the narrator draws attention to the role of the gods. But this lack of attention does not mean the gods are entirely absent. Both Dares and Dictys' use

[95] Priam, in response, pities himself, blames the gods, and refuses to take responsibility for the wellbeing of Troy: *In quis Priamus dilanians caput fletu quam miserabili non solum iam se ait odio dis, verum suis hostem effectum, quippe cui non amicus antea, non propinquus, non denique civis inveniri posset, qui aerumnis suis ingemesceret* ("Priam—tearing out his hair with miserable weeping—said to them that he now was not only a source of hatred to the gods, but had been made an enemy to his own people, since to him before not a friend, not a relation, not even finally a citizen could be found, who would moan over his afflictions," Dictys V.3).

[96] In Dictys, though Priam is clearly at fault, he does blame the gods in conversation with Achilles. Achilles blames Priam for the results of the war (Dictys III.23). But Priam, when asked to explain himself, blames the gods (Dictys III.26). Priam speaks of prophecy warning him of the future, a future that he could not avoid even with the help of prophecy: Hecuba had dreamed of Troy's destruction while she was pregnant with Paris, but she had secretly given Paris up to be raised by shepherds rather than having him killed (Dictys III.26).

of prophets—specifically in connection with betrayal—suggests that the gods may have more to do with narrative events than it initially seems. Prophecy within these texts creates an opening, however small, for the possibility that divine interference, rather than human folly, is responsible for the fall of Troy. Prophets offer divine guidance; they are one potential way for the gods to direct human action. We do not see any councils of the gods directly. But, through the prophets, the gods do have a quiet role to play in both of these texts: they are much reduced, but they are not struck out entirely:[97] oracles appear all along, divine intervention clusters towards the end of the texts, and, most importantly, the gods are involved in betrayal, and betrayal is what causes, in the end, the fall of Troy.

The idea that the prophet is simply a prudent councilor is troubled by the appearance of Calchas. Calchas is a major entry point for the gods in both texts, and, in Dares, he betrays Troy much as Aeneas and Antenor do. In Dares, Calchas, a Trojan, goes to the oracle at Delphi to seek an answer from Apollo concerning the outcome of the war: *Et eo tempore venerat Calchas Thestore natus divinus. Dona pro Phrygibus a suo populo missus Apollini portabat, simul consuluit de regno rebusque suis. Huic ex adyto respondetur, ut cum Argivorum classe militum contra Troianos proficiscatur eosque sua intelligentia iuvet, neve inde prius discedant, quam Troia capta sit* ("And at that time Calchas, the son of Thestor, a priest, had come. Sent from his own people, he brought gifts for the sake of the Phrygians to Apollo, and at the same time he took counsel concerning his kingdom and affairs. To him the response came from the shrine, that he

[97] Farrow notes that the characters, at least, do acknowledge the role of the gods: "There is no euhemerism in the strictest sense of the term: gods are acknowledged as figures of worship, appearing in dreams and in prophetic visions" (Farrow, "Aeneas and Rome," 343-44). And Lumiansky claims that, in Dares, the gods do play an actual role in the text: "This direct chain of human events is supplemented by the role of the Gods, without undue complexity or confusion" (Lumiansky, "Critical Comment," 201).

should set out with the fleet of Argive soldiers against Troy, and he would help them with his understanding, nor would he depart from there before Troy was captured," Dares 15). Achilles is there at the same time, likewise seeking an oracle: *Achilles cum Delphos venisset, ad oraculum pergit: et ex adyto respondetur Graecos victuros, decimoque anno Troiam capturos* ("Achilles, when he came to Delphi, proceeded to the oracle: and from the shrine came the response that the Greeks would conquer and in the tenth year would capture Troy," Dares 15). Calchas and Achilles join together after they compare the oracle's responses, and soon Calchas is aiding the Greeks by interpreting omens and advising them what they should do to please the gods (Dares 15). He continues to prophesy for them throughout the war (e.g., at Dares 30). Calchas parallels Aeneas and Antenor, whose betrayals take place not through prophecy, but through councils and meetings. Nonetheless, though the gods do not guide Aeneas and Antenor to betray Troy, the gods do guide Calchas's betrayal; and one must note, first, that though the gods do not apparently guide the events of the text, both oracular responses are in fact correct as to the outcome of the war (suggesting that the gods at the very least do know the future), and, second, that it is only after comparing responses that Calchas and Achilles join together. Calchas' betrayal itself is in fact guided by the gods—and perhaps that guidance has more influence, behind the scenes, than can be seen in an eyewitness account.

In Dictys, again, the gods are quietly present throughout in the characters of Calchas and of similar prophets. Calchas is not specifically a traitor in Dictys; he is still, as he is in classical texts, a Greek and not a Trojan prophet, described as *Calchas, Thestoris filius, praescius futurorum* ("Calchas, the son of Thestor, who foreknew the future," Dictys I.15). Early in the war, he guides the Greeks to sacrifice and seek the help

of the gods (Dictys I.15). When, soon after, Agamemnon kills a goat grazing at Diana's grove and thereby displeases Diana, a woman "full of the god" (*mulier quaedam deo plena*, Dictys I.19) guides the Greeks to sacrifice Iphigenia to appease the gods.[98] Oracles continue throughout the war: Telephus' wound is healed due to an oracle's guidance (Dictys II.10), and Calchas explains that Apollo's displeasure with Agamemnon for keeping Chryses' daughter is the cause of the plague ravaging the Greek camp (Dictys II.30).[99] The gods do not appear before the characters' and readers' eyes, the way they do in Homer and in Virgil, but they do influence the events of the text. And as the war draws to an end, the gods play an increasingly important role, particularly in the Greeks' capture of the Trojan Palladium (Dictys V.8) and in an omen at a sacrifice, an omen of fire failing to burn and of an eagle stealing the entrails (Dictys V.8). Both Calchas and Cassandra interpret this omen: *Calchas, uti bonum animum gererent, hortatur, brevi quippe dominos fore eorum, quae apud Troiam essent…Inter quae tam sollicita Cassandra deo plena victimas ad Hectoris tumulum transferri imperat, deos quippe aspernari iam sacrificia indignatos ob commissum paulo ante scelus in Apollinem* ("Calchas, so that they would bear good courage, encouraged them [the Greeks] that indeed in a short time they would be the masters of what was at Troy...Among such worrisome matters Cassandra, full of the god, ordered [the Trojans] that the victims be carried to Hector's tomb, and indeed the

[98] On the sacrifice of Iphigenia in Dictys and drama, see Valentina Zanusso, "Ditti di Creta e il dramma attico: il sacrificio di Ifigenia e la morte di Aiace," in *Revival and Revision of the Trojan Myth: Studies on Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius*, ed. Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso (Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 2018). Traditionally Calchas, not an unnamed woman, tells the Greeks to sacrifice Iphigenia; Zanusso discusses the change on p. 320.

[99] Lumiansky claims that these hints of the gods strengthen the moral themes of the text: "The moral theme in connection with human behavior, which pervades most of the *Ephemeris*, is strengthened by frequent passages that treat the Gods" (Lumiansky, "Critical Comment," 208).

gods now spurned the sacrifices, indignant at the crime committed a short while before against Apollo," Dictys V.7-8). These omens show the gods' increasing displeasure with Troy and suggest that the gods have a role to play in Troy's coming destruction.

And the prophets begin to turn against Troy—to betray it—as the text draws toward an end: in Dictys, even before the theft of the Palladium and the omen at the sacrifice, the prophet Helenus, though a son of Priam, abandons Troy and his family and turns to the Greeks. When he explains his reasons to the Greeks, he tells them that he has left Troy for fear of the gods' anger: *non metu, ait, se mortis patriam parentesque deserere, sed deorum coactum aversione, quorum delubra violari ab Alexandro neque se neque Aeneam quisse pati* ("he said that he did not desert his country and parents for fear of death, but compelled by the abhorrence of the gods, the violation of whose shrines by Alexander neither he nor Aeneas could endure," Dictys IV.18). He blames his family for Troy's problems and aligns himself with Aeneas and Antenor, and he foretells Troy's fall: *De cuius oraculo imminentia Troianis mala cum cognovisset, ultro supplicem ad eos decurrere* ("When he knew from his [Anchises'] oracle the evils threatening the Trojans, he voluntarily hurried as a suppliant to [the Greeks]," Dictys IV.18). Helenus prophesies for the Greeks from that moment on,[100] and he both encourages the Greeks and suggests the famous Trojan Horse: *Ceterum donum Minervae fatale Troianis esse, equum ligno fabrefactum forma ingenti, cuius magnitudine muri solvendi essent, adnitente atque administro Antenore* ("For the rest, a gift to Minerva would be fatal to the Trojans, a horse made from wood with a huge form, by whose immensity the walls would be

[100] Dictys emphasizes that Helenus' powers are indeed prophetic: *Helenus cuncta, quae clam se gesta erant, ac si praesens adfuisset* ("Helenus [explained] all things, which they had done secretly, as if he were present," Dictys V.9).

broken, with Antenor striving as a leader in this," Dictys V.9). But Dictys also reveals that Helenus' sympathies are still with Troy, despite his betrayal and despite his commitment to the Greeks: *Dein recordatus parentem Priamum residuosque fratres fletum edit miserabilem, consternatus per dolorem atque obstupefactus ruit* ("Then, remembering his father Priam and remaining brothers, he wept miserably, and confounded and dazed by grief he fainted," Dictys V.9). Helenus' betrayal is motivated not by hatred of his family, but by the gods' anger at Troy, by divine wrath and by prophecy. As Calchas betrays Troy in Dares, so Helenus betrays Troy in Dictys: prophets turn out to be important participants in the betrayals that lead to Troy's fall.[101]

Narrative limits and eyewitness accounts

In both Dares and Dictys, the emphasis on human action (an emphasis required by the eyewitness accounts) makes the destruction of the Trojan War seem like no more than human folly. Certainly, that is the impression the reader gets from these accounts: Priam, through tyranny and folly, ignores good advice and drives Troy to destruction; Troy falls to betrayal from within; and, in Dictys, the Greeks suffer on their way home due to their own cruelty, folly, and failure to listen to counsel.[102] And it seems the gods are absent from these texts. There are no divine interventions of the sort we see in Virgil or Homer: no councils of the gods, no appearances of the gods to human beings, no interference of the gods on the battlefield.

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[101] Cassandra does not betray Troy, but after Troy's fall, she, *deo repleta* ("full of the god"), predicts Agamemnon's death at home (Dictys V.16). The final event of the text, the death of Odysseus, is precipitated by misinterpreted prophecy (Dictys VI.14-15).

[102] As Merkle writes, "Dictys' version of the destruction of Troy is the carefully prepared climax of the Greeks' increasingly immoral conduct towards their enemies, an unheroic combination of deceit and extreme cruelty" (Merkle, "The Truth," 571).

But this apparent lack of the gods is in large part due not to the gods' lack of action, but to the limits of the narrator. Dares and Dictys both present themselves as eyewitnesses, as common soldiers fighting for the Trojans or for the Greeks, and common soldiers do not see the gods on the battlefield. They do not, like Homer or Virgil, have the Muses inspiring their verse, tearing away the curtain to reveal the divine interventions behind the scenes. To preserve the fiction of the eyewitness account, Dares and Dictys cannot show the councils of the gods.

But the entrance of prophecy into the texts—an entrance allowed even by the rules of historiography and of eyewitness accounts—brings the gods back into the narrative: prophecy is an aperture for the divine to enter into these texts. The gods are present behind the scenes; the gods do enter the text through prophecy. Through the omens and predictions about the end of the war, we can see that the gods know how Troy will end from the very beginning of the text. And the presence of the gods, coupled with the interconnections between prophecy and the betrayal that leads to Troy's fall, raises the question of who is at fault: does Troy fall by human folly, or does it fall by the will of the gods? When both prophecy (in the case of Calchas) and tyranny (in the case of Aeneas and Antenor) motivate the betrayals that culminate in Troy's destruction, we begin to suspect that perhaps gods and human beings both have a part to play.

So, the gods are hiding behind the scenes. And as we read Dares and Dictys, we wonder: what else is hiding behind the scenes? To what extent is the fictionality of these texts on display? As Clark writes of Dares, "We still do not know who the actual author behind the mask of 'Dares' was. And the intentions of this actual author still elude us. Just how literally or earnestly did 'Dares' seek to deceive? Did he lie, full stop? Or did he

lie with a wink, with his tongue in his cheek?"[103] The texts present themselves as history, but they undermine their own sense of factuality in various ways: through their odd prefatory letters and claims of translation history, through Dictys' claim to be Cretan (famously the home of liars), through their moments of support for characters they later reveal as traitors.[104] These accounts pretend to be true, but their nature as pseudo-history is on at least partial display for the observant reader. When Dictys tells us that Antenor is a good man, and then, a few chapters later, Antenor betrays Troy, can we trust Dictys? When Dares adds at the end of the text that he remained with Antenor in Troy after the end of the war (Dares 44), can we trust what Dares has said about Antenor earlier in the text? Can we trust anything these heavily biased narrators say? When they blame Priam or his sons for the fall of Troy, can we believe them? Or do Dares and Dictys—soldiers with only a limited perspective on the war—miss the true causes of events entirely? These texts play with the fact that the Trojan War has already been retold multiple times,

[103] Clark, *First Pagan Historian*, 2-3.

[104] See Valentin Décloquement, "Feintise ludique et non pas leurre. Lire Dictys de Crète à la lumière de la παιδεία," in *Revival and Revision of the Trojan Myth: Studies on Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius,* ed. Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso (Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 2018), 180, 182; Silvio Bär, "Diktys und Dares vor dem Hintergrund des zweitsophistischer Homerrevisionismus," in *Revival and Revision of the Trojan Myth: Studies on Dictys Cretensis and Dares Phrygius,* ed. Graziana Brescia, Mario Lentano, Giampiero Scafoglio, and Valentina Zanusso (Zürich: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 2018), 168-69; and ní Mheallaigh, "Pseudo-Documentarism," 409, 414, on the ways these texts undermine themselves, particularly Dictys' claim to be Cretan. Luis, throughout her article, discusses the nature of the *Ephemeris* as forgery: "Taking all this into account, it is difficult to discern whether the *Ephemeris* was planned as a *fake forgery* (a pseudepigraphon), meant to induce an intellectual game with the readers, or as a *true forgery*, intended to truly deceive people" (Luis, "Elements of Internal Cohesion," 144). And Merkle writes, "Dictys and Dares are at pains to reduce the 'historically implausible' in their accounts to a minimum and to shape their works as authentic historical sources…All these texts most probably had readers who believed their historical ruse. Others certainly saw through this construction, and for them the works provided what E.L. Bowie in connection with Philostratus' *Heroicus* calls 'a self-indulgent *frisson* of satisfaction': On the one hand they were well aware of the fictional nature of the texts, but on the other hand they were allowed 'to toy with the notion that this source might really provide extra information that only the privileged readers of this work can share'" (Merkle, "The Truth," 579-80)

from multiple perspectives; by late antiquity, there is no single point of view of the Trojan War, but a multiplicity of views. But Dares and Dictys each have a purposely limited, purposely biased, single perspective on the war; and we should—we must—suspect that these limited perspectives miss pieces of the truth.

Neither Dares nor Dictys ever fully answers the question of whether human folly or divine direction is responsible for the fall of Troy. What they reveal suggests an easy answer, but the limits of the narrator's knowledge, the limits of our knowledge, and the limits of human knowledge in general mean that the question is in fact left unresolved. Prophecy breaks through the limits of the genre and raises new possibilities, new questions. Perhaps, as Priam claims, the gods *are* against him, and no wisdom, no prudence, no action on his part could have preserved Troy. With only these limited narrators to guide us, we cannot know, but the entrance of the gods through prophecy in this text troubles the simple answer.

Conclusion

In medieval and early modern England, both Virgil's version and Dares and Dictys' versions of the Trojan War narrative proved extremely influential. The *Aeneid* was read continuously throughout the Middle Ages, and the manuscript tradition of the *Aeneid* in England is rich.[105] Christopher Baswell, whose book on Virgil in medieval England is the most important on the subject, delineates "three major trends of interpretation" in the reception of the *Aeneid* in medieval England, trends which he calls

[105] Christopher Baswell describes the wealth of Virgilian manuscripts copied in or brought to England; see Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the* Aeneid *from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 30.

"the allegorical, romance, and pedagogical"[106]: as Baswell shows, the *Aeneid* was a frequent subject of commentaries,[107] and it was understood both historically and allegorically, used as a school text, and adapted into romance. But though Virgil was exceptionally popular, he was not read uncritically; he was, in fact, often seen as untrustworthy, a lying poet. As Baswell writes, "Virgil told lies, about the gods and about history. Even while its cultural and linguistic cachet remained undimmed, there grew up around the *Aeneid* a constellation of counter-traditions, some dealing with its paganism, and others offering alternate stories of Troy and Rome…The ambivalent rejection and reverence of the *Aeneid* so deeply ramify Christian Latin culture that they defy survey."[108] Though the English people claimed to be descendants of Aeneas, medieval England questioned Aeneas' fidelity to Troy and condemned him for his abandonment of Dido. And Virgil was particularly distrusted as a pagan author; Baswell notes that "any pagan writer, but especially a pagan writer who dealt with the gods, had to be the object of ambivalence in a Christian world. This ambivalence was only the more intense in regard to Virgil because of his stylistic prestige in what remained a Latin culture."[109] Virgil may have been popular, but he was often distrusted.

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[106] Baswell, *Virgil,* 9.

[107] Philip Damon, Marilynn Desmond, and Robert Edwards all discuss commentaries on and allegorical readings of the *Aeneid* in their respective chapters in *The Classics in the Middle Ages: Papers of the Twentieth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies*, ed. Aldo S. Bernardo and Saul Levin (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1990); see Philip Damon, "Allegory and Invention: Levels of Meaning in Ancient and Medieval Rhetoric"; Marilynn Desmond, "Bernard Silvestris and the *Corpus* of the *Aeneid*"; and Robert Edwards, "The Heritage of Fulgentius."

[108] Baswell, *Virgil,* 2.

[109] Baswell, *Virgil,* 2.

Dares and Dictys were, likewise, extremely influential in medieval and early modern England, whether directly or indirectly; but, unlike Virgil, they were seen as entirely trustworthy.[110] English readers saw Dares and Dictys as true and historically accurate, in opposition to Virgil.[111] C. David Benson writes, "To an English reader of history in the fourteenth century, Dares and Dictys would have appeared to be eyewitness reporters who preserved the truth of their own time just as contemporary clerical chroniclers were preserving the present…They had no rivals; no other complete version of the Troy story existed, except for various poetic fictions which were easily dismissed, and thus with the matter of Troy there was no need to combine or choose among sources."[112] We see the influence of Dares and Dictys particularly in historiographical texts and in universal histories; as Clark writes, "Throughout the Middle Ages, Dares served not only as a name to invoke, but also as a source to appropriate and rework: to insert into universal chronicles, append to Trojan genealogies, or render into epic verse."[113] Together, Dares and Dictys sparked an important counter-tradition to Virgil, a

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[110] Clark's *First Pagan Historiographer* delves into the reception of Dares throughout Europe in the Middle Ages and after. On the manuscripts of Dares, D'Arcier's *Histoire et Géographie d'un Mythe* is essential reading.

[111] Baswell writes, "Throughout the Middle Ages, Dares and Dictys were generally thought to be more historically accurate than Virgil" (Baswell, *Virgil,* 19). Damon, in a discussion of Donatus' commentary, writes of the tension between the two traditions, "Read Dares and Dictys, who were regarded as unimpeachable eyewitnesses, and you will find that as part of a generally suspicious performance at Troy, Aeneas conspired with Antenor to betray the city to the Greeks. Poets were still worrying about this in the fourteenth century. Vergil was assumed to be doing his best to cover these matters up on behalf of his ancestor. Even on the doctored evidence, it remained clear to Donatus that Aeneas fled from Troy because he was unable to defend it. It was equally plain that the gods were against the Trojans and consequently against him, another incriminating fact" (Damon, "Allegory and Invention," 121-22).

[112] C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's* Historia Destructionis Troiae *in Medieval England* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1980), 11.

[113] Frederic Clark, "Authenticity, Antiquity, and Authority: Dares Phrygius in Early Modern Europe," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 72.2 (2011): 185. In another article, Clark discusses the reception of Dares in England, particularly his influence on historiography and his usefulness for genealogical interests; see Clark, "First Pagan."

counter-tradition essential to medieval English versions of Troy.[114] The authors I study in the remaining chapters of this dissertation participate in this counter-tradition.[115]

I began this chapter by claiming that Troy must fall. The idea that Troy *must* fall raises two further questions: *who* is at fault? and *why* must it fall? At first glance, Virgil's answers and Dares' and Dictys' answers seem worlds apart. Classical poets such as Virgil show the gods in control even of human mistakes: human beings choose what the gods have already ordained. The gods are at fault in the fall of Troy, and though there is plenty of human suffering along the way, the outcome will ultimately be triumphant and glorious. Thus, for Virgil, Troy must fall, by the will of the gods, to allow for Rome's rise. But for late antique writers such as Dares and Dictys, human beings are increasingly at fault in Troy's fall. For these writers, Troy falls because of human folly and tyranny, and if not for folly and tyranny, perhaps Troy would have survived.

But the inclusion of prophecy in all three of these texts troubles these simple answers: perhaps Rome's rise is not so glorious as it seems, and perhaps the gods are manipulating events to their own ends. Prophecy troubles both narratives: it allows for both celebration and criticism, for both blame and exoneration. The gods may be guiding Aeneas towards a glorious end—or they may be manipulating him for their own purposes, regardless of the cost. Priam and his sons may be entirely responsible for

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[114] See Baswell, *Virgil*, 18. Benson outlines the history of this counter-tradition from Dares and Dictys to Guido delle Colonne (Benson, *History of Troy*, 3-5).

[115] Admittedly, the authors I will examine in the following chapters were more influenced by adaptations of Dares and Dictys than by Dares and Dictys themselves. The works of Dares and Dictys, and especially of Dares, were adapted in the twelfth century into Latin poetry by Joseph of Exeter and into French romance by Benoît de Sainte-Maure; Benoît's *Roman de Troie* was then adapted by Guido delle Colonne back into Latin prose history in the thirteenth century. Guido's *Historia destructionis Troiae* is the source text for multiple English tales of Troy.

Troy's fall—or the gods may lie behind the text, forcing Troy to a destruction it does not deserve.

The interplay of Virgil's combined celebration and critique with Dares and Dictys' question of fault makes space for the complexity of their medieval adaptors and translators. These and other classical translations of Troy—with their multiplicity of genres and of points of view, with their multiplicity of purpose—allow for the medieval proliferation of the text and for the manifold treatments of the questions of fate, fortune, past, and future within the narrative. The story has already been told from so many perspectives and angles that it has become malleable, changeable; the writers of the Middle Ages can do whatever they like with it, put it to whatever purpose they choose—so long as, in the end, Troy is destroyed. And this knowledge of Troy's fall—the inevitability of destruction—is where medieval Troy legends must begin.

Chapter 2. The futility of knowledge: experience and authority in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*

Much of Chaucer's work explores the nature of knowledge: in particular, the distinction between experience and authority. "Experience," the Wife of Bath begins, "though noon auctoritee / Were in this world, is right ynogh for me / To speke of wo that is in mariage" (*Wife of Bath's Prologue,* 1-3), and *The Legend of Good Women* begins with a meditation on authority, experience, and our knowledge of death:

> A thousand tymes have I herd men telle,
> That ther ys joy in hevene and peyne in helle;
> And I acorde wel that it ys so;
> But natheles, yet wot I wel also
> That ther nis noon dwellyng in this contree
> That eyther hath in hevene or helle ybe,
> Ne may of hit noon other weyes witen
> But as he hath herd seyd or founde it writen;
> For by assay ther may no man it preve. (*Legend of Good Women,* Text F, 1-9)[116]

This interest in epistemology is no less present in *Troilus and Criseyde*, a tale of love and betrayal set during the Trojan War.[117] *Troilus and Criseyde* explores intersecting questions of knowledge and of time,[118] and it does so in part by contrasting experience

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[116] I will be using *The Riverside Chaucer* throughout this chapter (Larry D. Benson, ed. *The Riverside Chaucer,* 3rd ed, [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987]).

[117] For the date of *Troilus and Criseyde*, see Barry Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* Oxford Guides to Chaucer (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 3-9. For a discussion of the manuscripts of *Troilus and Criseyde,* see Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 12-36.

[118] As George Lyman Kittredge writes, "Neither Troilus nor Cressida suspects what is to come; but we know all about it from the beginning. There is no escape for anybody. We are looking on at a tragedy that we are powerless to check or to avert" (George Lyman Kittredge, "Troilus," in *Chaucer's Troilus: Essays in Criticism,* ed. Stephen A. Barney [Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1980], 3). And Paul Strohm writes, "*Troilus* executes writing's most solemn cultural assignment, which is to connect the past with the future. It is always about the burdens of its own prehistory: the abduction of Helen, the narrowed options imposed by the precondition of the Greek siege. And it is no less about its own unhappy future: the end of love, the fall of Troy, Troilus's own death" (Paul Strohm, *Theory and the Premodern Text,* Medieval Cultures, Volume 26 [Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2000], 81).

and authority, emotion and intellect, embodied in the characters of the lovers and of the prophets.

Moments of prophecy complicate the epistemological questions already present in the text. The poem depicts two prophets: Calchas, Criseyde's father, is a traitor who flees Troy rather than share his prophetic knowledge with the Trojans, and Cassandra, Troilus's sister, prophesies once without revealing the future or offering any advice.[119] These prophets are hardly the text's focus, but they serve as both parallels with and contrasts to Troilus and Criseyde themselves. The prophets and lovers are bound by family relationships, marked alternatively by faithfulness or betrayal: Troilus and Cassandra are siblings, both of whom remain faithful Trojans, and Criseyde and Calchas are father and daughter, both of whom betray Troy for the Greeks. They are split in their reliance on experience or on authority: the lovers both learn through experience and rely on emotion, whereas the prophets learn through authority and rely on intellect. And they are divided in their sources, potential or realized, for authoritative knowledge: the men, Troilus and Calchas, both have the opportunity to learn through divine revelation—the answer of Apollo and the messages of dreams—while the women, Cassandra and Criseyde, both have the opportunity to learn through old books.

In these characters, we see a contrast between authority, grasped intellectually, and experience, grasped emotionally. Authority is taught knowledge—the knowledge of others, handed down from an *auctor*—grasped with the mind and not through lived experience. In the poem, authoritative knowledge is associated with clerks and with prophets, namely Calchas and Cassandra, and it obtained through either divine revelation,

[119] Another prophet, Amphiorax (discussed below), is mentioned, but he does not appear as a character within the text.

such as Apollo's oracle and prophetic dreams, or old books, particularly books about Thebes. Experience, however, is lived knowledge, experienced emotionally and personally. The characters who rely on experience, namely Troilus and Criseyde, distrust or ignore the cold logic and passed-down knowledge of their prophetic counterparts, Calchas and Cassandra.

But for both prophets and lovers, knowledge holds no power. The prophets' knowledge cannot save: prophetic knowledge is limited,[120] and it grants the prophets no power to change events. And though the lovers have the opportunity to learn their futures through the same intellectual and authoritative means as the prophets—namely, divine revelation and old books—they reject the authority of such knowledge and rely on their experiences and emotions for understanding, and they do not understand until it is too late. Knowledge, whether authoritative and intellectual or experiential and emotional, is powerless. Neither the prophets' knowledge nor the lovers' experiences can save: Criseyde is doomed to a ruined reputation, and both Troilus and Troy are doomed to fall. The poem suggests ultimately that knowledge, whatever its source, has no power. No knowledge can save Troilus—or Troy.

In this chapter, I explore the epistemological questions of the poem: how knowledge is gained, how it is limited, and what it can and cannot accomplish. Throughout the chapter, I will discuss Calchas's abandonment of Troy, Troilus's initial ignorance of love, Criseyde's reading of a romance of Thebes, Calchas's demands for

[120] As Windeatt writes, "Chaucer's introduction into *Troilus* of references specifying the methods of divination brings into the poem an awareness of the range of means by which men strive to see the future, and thereby makes both the craving and the feasibility of such prediction part of the thematic preoccupation of *Troilus* with the boundaries of human knowledge and freedom" (Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 259).

Criseyde's return and the subsequent council of Troy, Criseyde's predictions of her ruined reputation, Troilus's Boethian speech, Troilus's dream and Cassandra's explanation thereof, and Troilus's death. Each of these moments connects in some way with prophecy, fate, or knowledge, and in tugging on these ideas, we realize the messy interconnections between these moments: between Criseyde's and Cassandra's divergent readings of Thebes, between Troilus's and Calchas's opportunities to learn their futures, between Criseyde's and Calchas's predictions and betrayals, between Troilus's and Cassandra's ultimate acceptance of what is. In addition, these moments gesture, however subtly, to Troy's final destruction, sometimes in ways Chaucer clarifies (as at the council of Troy), and sometimes in ways he hides (as at Troilus's first glimpse of Criseyde at the festival of the Palladium).

In discussing these moments, I explore the sources, uses, implications, and consequences of knowledge, in particular the intersections of knowledge with faithfulness, betrayal, and acceptance. Both Calchas and Cassandra rely on authoritative sources and enter the text already knowledgeable, but Calchas uses this source as reason to betray Troy, whereas Cassandra embodies dispassionate acceptance of what is. Both Troilus and Criseyde ignore such authoritative sources of knowledge and rely instead on experience and emotion, but Criseyde uses the understanding she gains as reason to betray Troilus and despair of her reputation, while Troilus uses this as reason to remain faithful to Criseyde and (eventually) laugh at earthly matters. I then turn to the conclusions the text seems to draw about the nature and utility of knowledge, and I argue that *Troilus and Criseyde* is about the fact that cities do not last, love does not last, and life does not last; about the fact that knowledge is always tinged with uncertainty and

often impotent; about the fact that knowledge gained in hindsight comes too late to change anything. Knowledge is no defense against the finality of death; it serves only to remind us that all things must end.

Authority

I begin with the sources of authoritative knowledge. The first method for gaining authoritative knowledge in *Troilus and Criseyde* is through divine revelation, whether through the oracle of Apollo or through dreams. The question of the trustworthiness of such revelation at times takes a comic tone in Chaucer's works,[121] but the discussion is subtler in *Troilus and Criseyde*, taking shape through the paralleled opportunities and opposing attitudes of Calchas and Troilus. Both men have the opportunity to learn about and interpret the present and future through divine revelation in the poem: Calchas receives a prophecy and an answer from Apollo's oracle, and Troilus has both a prophetic dream of his own and the opportunity to visit Apollo's temple. But while Calchas trusts such divine revelations, Troilus distrusts, avoids, or dismisses them, relying instead on his emotions and his experience.

Calchas's knowledge is authoritative and intellectual in nature. He has specialized knowledge of the sort that others lack, and he is the only prophet in this text who, as far as the reader knows, realizes that Troy is doomed to fall.[122] The narrator describes

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[121] As it does, famously, in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, in which chickens engage in learned debate on the nature of dreams.

[122] This knowledge has significance not only for the Trojans, but also for the text's readers; as Malcolm Andrew writes, "If, as I have argued, *Troilus and Criseyde* presents a sustained contrast between those outside the story, who know the future fate of Troy, and those within it, who do not, then the prophecy of Calchas takes on a special significance. It is the sole means by which the knowledge of future events—otherwise reserved to the author, narrator, and audience—may temporarily penetrate the fictional world of the narrative" (Malcolm Andrew, "The Fall of Troy in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *The European Tragedy of Troilus,* ed. Piero Boitani [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], 89). But Allen J. Frantzen diminishes Calchas's significance. He writes, "Calkas stands between two worlds, which he both divides as a traitor and bridges as a visionary. He is a framing force in the poem, and his

Calchas as "a lord of gret auctorite, / A gret devyn," who "Knew wel that Troie sholde destroied be, / By answere of his god, that highte thus: / Daun Phebus or Appollo Delphicus" (I.65-66, 68-70). Here, the narrator emphasizes both Calchas's *auctorite* and his relation to an authoritative god of prophecy. Furthermore, the narrator repeatedly mentions Calchas's knowledge: Calchas "Knew wel," he "knew by calkulynge," he "wel wiste…by sort," and he "Took purpos ful this forknowynge wise" (I.68, 71, 76, 81). Calchas is a man "in science so expert" (1.67); he knows both by Apollo's answer and by "calkulynge"—a word that puns on Calchas's own name—that Troy will be destroyed (1.71).[123] His knowledge is pure prophecy—he sees a future which no one has yet experienced—and he gains this knowledge through intellectual means—science, expertise, and calculation—and through one of the highest authorities, a god of prophecy.

Troilus, like Calchas, has divine revelation available to him—both through Apollo's oracle, which he claims he plans to visit, and through a dream—but he does not trust such revelations and rejects such authoritative knowledge. First, Troilus has the

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prophecy is influential—the Greeks believe him. But the narrator devotes little discursive space to it. Because we are not aware of how the vision is interpreted but rather learn only what its import is, Calkas's mediating function has little fictional significance" (Allen J. Frantzen, *Troilus and Criseyde: The Poem and the Frame* [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993], 50).

[123] Apollo, the source of Calchas's knowledge, is a divine authority, but one of questionable character, and Calchas's reliance on Apollo casts doubt on his own character; as Alastair Minnis writes, "Although credited with expertise in 'calkulynge' and 'astronomye' (*Troilus*, 1.71, 5.115), these sources of knowledge are described in ways which inextricably link them with Calkas' religious practices, the predictions which he solicits and receives from his god, a deity infamous for his ambiguous answers" (Alastair Minnis, "Other Worlds," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558),* ed. Rita Copeland [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 426). In *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*, Minnis writes, "Chaucer goes even further than Boccaccio in stressing the moral turpitude of Calkas…Chaucer was prepared to accept Calkas's science but not, it would seem, his brand of paganism" (A.J. Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity* [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer: 1982], 80). Stanley B. Greenfield likewise compares Chaucer and Boccaccio's versions of Calchas: "reverting to Benoit (and Guido), [Chaucer] re-introduces the Delphic oracle and then amplifies the expertise that Calkas possesses: the seer need not rely only on the oracle, but he brings *calkulynge*, or astrological computation, and *sort*, or divination by lots, to bear open the matter (ll. 68-77)" (Stanley B. Greenfield, "The Role of Calkas in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Medium Aevum* 36 [1967]: 143).

opportunity to consult Apollo concerning war with the Greeks, and he claims that he is doing so:

> That he was gon to don his sacrifise,
> And moste at swich a temple allone wake,
> Answered of Apollo for to be;
> And first to sen the holy laurer quake,
> Er that Apllo spak out of the tree,
> To telle hym next whan Grekes sholde flee—
> And forthy lette hym no man, God forbede,
> But prey Apollo helpen in this nede. (III.539-46)

But this is a mere excuse and a lie, to be made "If that he were missed, nyght or day" (III.537), while he is in fact hiding in Pandarus's closet and meeting Criseyde (III.533-46). Troilus might have learned of his fate at Apollo's temple, but he does not take the opportunity; instead he seduces Criseyde.[124] And once it is apparent he will lose Criseyde because of Apollo's prophet, he joins with Criseyde in denouncing Calchas, as he calls Calchas a "oold, unholson, and myslyved man," a traitor, and a man born "In corsed tyme" (IV.330-334). Later, in conversation with Criseyde, after she has dismissed her father's knowledge (she claims that, in comparison with his greed, "For al Appollo, or his clerkes lawes, / Or calkullynge, avayleth nought thre hawes," IV.1397-98), Troilus ties Calchas's knowledge to his betrayal:

> It is ful hard to halten unespied
> Byfore a crepel, for he kan the craft;
> Youre fader is in sleght as Argus eyed;
> For al be that his moeble is hym biraft,
> His olde sleighte is yet so with hym laft
> Ye shal nat blende hym for youre wommanhede,
> Ne feyne aright; and that is al my drede.
>
> I not if pees shal evere mo bitide;
> But pees or no, for ernest ne for game,

[124] On this scene, see Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde*, 174; and Jamie C. Fumo, *The Legacy of Apollo: Antiquity, Authority, and Chaucerian Poetics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 131.

> I woot, syn Calkas on the Grekis syde
> Hath ones ben and lost so foule his name,
> He dar nomore come here ayeyn for shame;
> For which that wey, for aught I kan espie,
> To trusten on nys but a fantasie. (IV.1457-1470)[125]

After distancing himself from Calchas, however, Troilus has a prophetic dream, which proceeds as follows: Troilus, after falling asleep, sees in a forest "a bor with tuskes grete" (V.1238), in whose arms "Lay, kyssyng ay, his lady bryght, Criseyde" (V.1241). Troilus, upon waking from this dream, turns to his usual adviser, Pandarus, crying, "My lady bryght, Criseyde, hath me bytrayed" (V.1247). But Pandarus misinterprets the dream to comfort Troilus:

> Peraunter, ther thow dremest of this boor,
> It may so be that it may signifie
> Hire fader, which that old is and ek hoor,
> Ayeyn the sonne lith o poynt to dye,
> And she for sorwe gynneth wepe and crie,
> And kisseth hym, ther he lith on the grounde:
> Thus sholdestow thi drem aright expounde! (V.1282-88).

Pandarus's interpretation is wishful thinking, and though Troilus accepts his comfort initially, the dream continues to haunt him. The narrator tells us that the dream

> May nevere outen of his remembraunce.
> He thought ay wel he hadde his lady lorn,
> And that Joves of his purveyaunce
> Hym shewed hadde in slep the signifiaunce
> Of hire untrouthe and his disaventure,
> And that the boor was shewed hym in figure. (V.1444-1449)

Troilus eventually turns to Cassandra for his dream's interpretation, but he is not seeking the plain truth; he looks instead for comfort: "And hire bisoughte assoilen hym the doute / Of the stronge boor with tuskes stoute" (V.1453). Troilus wants Cassandra to confirm

[125] Here he also expressed doubt that Criseyde will be able to escape her father and return to him—as though he is already suspicious that Criseyde will, like Calchas, betray him.

Pandarus's explanation, to remove his own doubts concerning Criseyde's betrayal. But Cassandra, in her bookish prophecy, offers no such comfort, and Troilus rejects both his dream and Cassandra's interpretation thereof. Troilus has the opportunity to learn his future through the same means as Calchas, but he does not trust or avail himself of authoritative or intellectual knowledge.

And thus I turn to the second means of obtaining authoritative knowledge in this text: through old books. Whereas Calchas prophesies through divine revelation, Cassandra derives her prophecies from books; and just as Troilus fails to learn from divine revelation, Criseyde likewise fails to learn from books.[126] Furthermore, both Cassandra and Criseyde engage with the Theban war in their reading, in particular with the prophetic figure Amphiorax—a prophet whose prophecies accomplish nothing. Here, I begin with the story of Thebes and of Amphiorax before turning to Cassandra and Criseyde's readings of the story.

Troy and Thebes, both fallen cities, were closely connected in the medieval mind.[127] Thebes, much like Troy, falls to Greek invaders, and in *Troilus and Criseyde*,

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[126] I must note here that Troilus's ignorance of authoritative sources is willful; Criseyde seems not to have much choice, as Pandarus distracts her from her reading.

[127] On Chaucer's use of the story of Thebes, see Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 121-124. On the connections Chaucer makes between Troy and Thebes, see Lee Patterson, *Chaucer and the Subject of History* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 98. Winthrop Wetherbee notes that Thebes, like Troy, "involves the same long history of confused dealings among humans and between humans and gods, conscious and unconscious breaches of trust and piety, and blindness or willful ignorance in the face of prophecy" (Winthrop Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets: An Essay on Troilus and Criseyde* [Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984], 116). Wetherbee also writes, "Chaucer's Trojans recall the Theban past with frequency and familiarity, but the cumulative effect of their allusions is to make clear that while there is evidently a meaningful correspondence between the destinies of Thebes and Troy, it is inaccessible to them" ("Statius," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558),* ed. Rita Copeland [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 239). Larry Scanlon writes, "The same transgressive desire for patriarchal power drives both the Theban story and the Trojan story. The only differences are that the Theban story is longer and its transgressions more extreme" (Larry Scanlon, "Sweet Persuasion: The Subject of Fortune in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism,* ed. R.A. Shoaf [Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992], 223). Richard Neuse, however, contrasts Troy and Thebes "as more or less starkly opposed

Thebes serves as a parallel, model, and exemplum for Troy. The Theban cycle begins with the story of Oedipus and tells of the civil war that follows Oedipus's death, and in *Troilus and Criseyde*, the prophet Amphiorax appears in both instances when Thebes is mentioned. Amphiorax foresees the destruction that will occur if Greeks attack Thebes: as a prophet, he knows that, not only will many of the Greeks die, but he too will perish. Desiring neither to deliver bad news nor to die, he hides when the Greeks come for him. Betrayed by his wife and forced to prophesy, he tells the Greeks their fate and counsels them not to attack, but he fails to persuade them; they mock his words and drag him off to war. There he dies a spectacular death: in the middle of battle, a chasm in the earth cracks open in front of him, and he drives his chariot straight down into hell.

In many ways, Amphiorax is both a parallel and a foil to Calchas. He foresees the destruction of his people and initially attempts to forestall his own destruction alongside them. But Calchas, upon learning the future, betrays his people; Amphiorax, upon learning the future, simply hides. His attempt to save his own life is no betrayal, and after first hiding from the Greeks, Amphiorax provides them with prophetic counsel and then goes to war alongside them with the knowledge of what it will cost him.[128] Calchas is

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paradigms of history" (Richard Neuse, "*Troilus and Criseyde:* Another Dantean Reading," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism,* ed. R.A. Shoaf [Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992], 209).

[128] T.E. Hill writes, "Although in the *Thebaid* he does, like Calchas, originally attempt to circumvent the future once he has seen it, in both narratives [the *Roman de Thèbes* and the *Thebaid*] he ultimately submits to his destiny freely" (T.E. Hill, *'She, This in Blak': Vision, Truth, and Will in Geoffrey Chaucer's* Troilus and Criseyde [New York and London: Routledge, 2006], 68). Hill continues by noting that "the fact that Amphiareus submits willingly to his fate may provide a clue as to why Criseyde and her ladies seem to have taken a special interest in him. For Amphiareus meets death by asserting his free will through his bodily performance of an act of assent, where assent and dissent are the only real choices he has. This willful and physical act therefore serves to frame those intellectual and scientific aspects of Amphiareus's character that are reflected by the figures on his chariot, as he employs this chariot to actively pursue his fate in a matter of trust in what has been ordained" (Hill, *'She, This in Blak,'* 69).

able to avoid sharing in Troy's fate by his betrayal; Amphiorax, on the other hand, remains loyal, and he shares in the Greek destruction and faces his death when it comes.[129]

In *Troilus and Criseyde,* Cassandra, in the prophecy she gives in response to Troilus's dream, draws on her knowledge of Amphiorax and of Thebes to explicate the present. This prophecy, which derives entirely from the intellectual and authoritative sources of old books, is Cassandra's only prophecy within the poem.[130] In other narratives of Troy, Cassandra and her brother Helenus predict Troy's downfall and try to save Troy from destruction; here, however, Cassandra says little of the public matter of Troy, but focuses—through a larger historical lens—on the private affairs of her brother.[131] Thus, though she and Calchas both learn the future through authority and not experience—Calchas obtains his knowledge from the god Apollo, and Cassandra obtains her knowledge through books—they prophesy to far different audiences: Calchas, a man,

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[129] In a way, Amphiorax may serve as a negative exemplum to Calchas of what happens to faithful prophets. Calchas, assuming he knows the story at all, does in a way heed the warning of Thebes, and rather than remain faithful to a doomed people, he gets away as quickly as he can.

[130] John V. Fleming and Windeatt both note that, in *Filostrato*, Cassandra is simply Troilus's sister and not specifically a seer; see Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 70-71; and John V. Fleming, *Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's* Troilus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1990), 226.

[131] Such a translation from public to private occurs throughout Chaucer's poem: the narrator translates the counsels, disasters, and betrayals of the fall of Troy from the public realm to the private realm. Pandarus is a fountain of advice—not on war, but on love. Criseyde betrays—but she betrays her lover, not her people. The disasters we expect from a Trojan War narrative are present, but they are small, personal, and private—though perhaps no less devastating. Cassandra's advice follows suit. But Jennifer Garrison argues "that, in the poem, the sharp division between private and public is largely an aristocratic fantasy. Right from the beginning of the love affair, Troilus's supposedly private love for Criseyde has clear effects on the Trojan community as a whole" (Jennifer Garrison, "Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and the Danger of Masculine Interiority," *The Chaucer Review* 49.3 [2015]: 331-32). She concludes, "The poem warns that aristocratic culture, especially the contemporary royal court, risks self-destruction if it encourages the nobility and the monarch to believe that they can achieve the masculine ideal: an interior self whose desire can be performed and fulfilled without regard to political consequences. For Chaucer, this narcissistic masculine ideal is socially and politically disastrous" (Garrison, "Danger," 343). Private matters always have public consequences.

prophesies about public affairs to an audience of Greek leaders, whereas Cassandra, a woman, prophesies about private affairs to an audience of her brother alone. And rather than predict the future, Cassandra uses her knowledge of the past to interpret the present.

Her knowledge here is not even, strictly speaking, prophetic, as it relies on no divine revelation and does not foretell the future; it is, however, intellectual, derived from authoritative souces. Cassandra predicts nothing. She interprets Troilus's dream using her own knowledge of the past without divine revelation. She gains her knowledge from book-learning[132]—the same book-learning, in fact, that Criseyde might have gotten herself in her reading of the romance of Thebes. Cassandra explains Troilus's current situation by explicating history; if Troilus is to learn the truth, he must know the history of Thebes:[133]

> O brother deere,
> If thow a soth of this desirest knowe,
> Thow most a fewe of olde stories heere,
> To purpos how that Fortune overthrowe
> Hath lordes olde, thorugh which, withinne a trowe,
> Thow wel this boor shalt knowe, and of what kynde
> He comen is, as men in bokes fynde. (V.1457-63)

This history comes from books, and Cassandra repeats the idea of book-learning throughout her prophecy ("as olde bokes tellen us," V.1478).[134] William A. Quinn notes

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[132] The contrast between Calchas and Cassandra's sources of knowledge—in astrology and pagan religion, on the one hand, and in books on the other—renders Cassandra more sympathetic and Calchas less so; as Minnis writes, "Troilus's sister Cassandre, who correctly interprets his most important dream-vision, is a creditable pagan prophetess of the kind praised by late-medieval writers, while Criseyde's father Calkas is a heathen 'astrologien'" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 70). Later he adds, "Cassandre is an enlightened and commendable sibyl while Calkas is a pagan 'astrologien' and fatalist of the kind so roundly condemned by John Trevisa" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 73). But, again, both Calchas's and Cassandra's knowledge derives from authority rather than from experience.

[133] On the sources for Cassandra's speech, see Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 123.

[134] Scanlon writes that Cassandra's response "is oddly mediated through textual tradition…This appeal to 'olde stories' is odd as a form of prophecy" (Scanlon, "Sweet Persuasion," 211).

that Cassandra, in her references to old books, "sounds…like the rehearser of *Troilus and Criseyde*…Cassandra's explanation of the boar's significance may sound boring or bored, pedantic or sympathetic, or some combination thereof. But there is nothing truly sibylline about her interpretation; it is merely learned."[135]

But Cassandra does not simply accept authority without question. Valerie A. Ross, like Quinn, compares Cassandra to the narrator, but notes their shared ambivalence towards authority:

> For his narrator, authority is a double-edged sword (or pen) to be both wielded and resisted, but never owned; it is a space of constant negotiation and re-positioning that challenges any fixed notion of authenticity on the simple, but conveniently shaky grounds of transcription: what gets 'lost' in his translation is never accidental, and it is in this intentionality, his desire for difference, that the narrator's agency resides. In her brief but significant appearance as an alternative narrator, Cassandra emerges as equally ambivalent towards authority.[136]

Cassandra seems to recognize the importance of interpreting and questioning one's reading carefully, rather than accepting knowledge at face value (as Calchas does). Ross writes,

> Cassandra is an authority on literary history who not only knows all the old stories, but—like Chaucer's narrator—she also willfully edits them according to her own sense of narrative coherence…Cassandra not only omits sections of the legend she deems to be too lengthy and irrelevant, she also implies that there is a possibility that old books occasionally lie—which is a fairly subversive suggestion, but one that reflects Chaucer's own strategic resistance to the notion of authoritative truth.[137]

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[135] William A. Quinn, *Olde Clerkis Speche: Chaucer's* Troilus and Criseyde *and the Implications of Authorial Recital* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), 162.

[136] Valerie A. Ross, "Believing Cassandra: Intertextual Politics and the Interpretation of Dreams in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *The Chaucer Review* 31.4 (1997): 342. Ross continues by noting that, "despite the fact that Cassandra always prophesies truthfully, no one ever believes her—no one, at least, in her fictional legendary world. But Chaucer's readers know that she tells the truth, and Chaucer exploits this irony in order to engage his readers in resistant complicity with him, his narrator, and Cassandra" (Ross, "Believing Cassandra," 342).

[137] Ross, "Believing Cassandra," 347.

Cassandra recognizes that her knowledge may be partial, and T.E. Hill writes of her prophecy, "The conclusion to be drawn from this reading is that books, and men, do lie—they present us with terms and images that indicate only partial truths at best. In order to be understood, they must be forgiven for the words they use, words, that, however, must nonetheless be considered carefully in a process that combines reason, memory, and will."[138] Her knowledge is purely bookish, and no book can be complete.

Cassandra's prophecy does not require any esoteric knowledge, only skill in interpretation. She explains Troilus's situation using book-learning that anyone could have. But she alone manages to explicate the situation correctly. After proceeding through the history of Thebes, she informs Troilus,

> This ilke boor bitokneth Diomede,
> Tideus sone, that down descended is
> Fro Meleagre, that made the boor to blede;
> And thy lady, wherso she be, ywis,
> This Diomede hire herte hath, and she his. (V.1513-1517)

Cassandra's knowledge is intellectual and authoritative, but it is not obscure; her sources are open to anyone who can read. All readers could be as prophetic as this Cassandra.

And Criseyde is in fact one such reader: she could very easily gain Cassandra's knowledge and, through such knowledge, an understanding of her own future. But, pushed by Pandarus, she sets aside her chance for knowledge in favor of experience. In book II, Criseyde is reading a romance of Thebes and is interrupted by Pandarus (II.81-84). Pandarus begs to know what the women are reading, hoping that they are reading about love: "For Goddes love, what seith it? telle it us! / Is it of love? O, som good ye me leere!" (II.96-97). But Criseyde and her women are reading of the very moment when

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[138] Hill, *'She, This in Blak,'* 82.

Amphiorax drives his chariot down into hell: "And here we stynten at thise lettres rede— / How the bisshop, as the book kan telle, / Amphiorax, fil though the ground to helle" (II.103-5). Pandarus hopes Criseyde is reading about love, but instead she is reading about death and destiny.[139] Pandarus then dismisses the reading, claiming he already knows this story (II.106-8) and demanding that Criseyde put aside the book, have some fun, and dance (II.111-12). Neither he nor Criseyde realizes the importance of Criseyde's reading. Jennifer Summit argues, "Since the *Thebaid's* subject, the fall of Thebes, was believed to presage and parallel that of Troy, Criseyde is proleptically reading what is in essence her own story."[140] Likewise, Emily Wingfield writes, "Had Pandarus not interrupted her reading, Criseyde might accordingly have learned of her fate."[141] The tale of Thebes contains a warning; but Pandarus ignores it, and Criseyde has no opportunity to learn from Thebes what her fate may be; Pandarus takes the opportunity from her.[142]

But gods and books are not the only way to learn, and knowledge does not equal understanding. Though the prophets both have intellectual and authoritative knowledge,

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[139] In much the same way, we as readers of *Troilus and Criseyde* believe that we are reading about love, but are warned (and eventually discover) that we, too, are reading about death and destiny. Windeatt notes that Criseyde seems to be reading a romance of Thebes, while Pandarus knows the story as Latin epic, "and this nicely shows an awareness of the double survival of the Theban material as both epic and romance, a mixture Chaucer's poem is itself trying to reflect" (Barry Windeatt, "Classical and Medieval Elements in Chaucer's *Troilus*," in *The European Tragedy of Troilus,* ed. Piero Boitani [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], 115).

[140] Jennifer Summit, "*Troilus and Criseyde*," in *The Yale Companion to Chaucer,* ed. Seth Lerer (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2006), 215.

[141] Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), 124.

[142] Andrew James Johnston links Criseyde's reading with Cassandra's prophecy; see Johnston, "Gendered Books: Reading, Space, and Intimacy in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Love, History, and Emotion in Chaucer and Shakespeare:* Troilus and Criseyde *and* Troilus and Cressida, ed. Andrew James Johnston, Russell West- Pavlov, and Elisabeth Kampf (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 173. Johnston argues that Criseyde may be "well aware of Theban history in general, and of the *Thebaid* in particular" (Johnston, "Gendered Books," 158).

they lack experience of the things of which they speak—Calchas, obviously, has not experienced the future, and Cassandra knows the fall of Thebes only from books—and they also remain emotionally uninvolved. Calchas forsakes not only his city, but also his daughter—an action he later seems to regret, at least in part—and Cassandra remains dispassionate throughout her speech. Calchas uses authority as a reason to betray Troy, whereas Cassandra embodies dispassionate acceptance of what authority has revealed.

Calchas initially dismisses emotion and human connection. Upon gaining knowledge of what will happen to Troy, he does not hesitate, but immediately abandons both his city and his daughter. Calchas is, it seems, a fatalist: he does not seem to believe that his knowledge will give him the power to save Troy. Thus, he makes no attempt; he does not try to use his knowledge to advise Priam, but instead he "caste anon out of the town to go" (I.75). The future is set, so Calchas believes; there is no point in trying to save Troy.[143] But he not only abandons Troy, but actively betrays his city: "to the Grekes oost ful pryvely / He stal anon," in order to advise them "In every peril which that is to drede" (I.80-81, 84). He receives honor from the Greeks, as "they, in curteys wise, / Hym diden bothe worship and servyce" (I.81-82). Though fear seems to motivate Calchas's initial betrayal, [144] Chaucer's narrator does not in fact inform us of Calchas's motivations; his knowledge is, apparently, purely intellectual. We simply know that Calchas learns

[143] George Edmondson claims that, for people in the late Middle Ages, "the future had already been sealed," and he writes, "What was there to do, then, other than to follow the course of history to its predetermined end?...Having been granted a vision of the imminent catastrophe that awaits Troy, Calkas simply turns his back on a present he knows is already in ruins" (George Edmondson, *The Neighboring Text: Chaucer, Boccaccio, Henryson* [Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011], 127).

[144] Criseyde's analogous betrayal of Troilus, combined with our knowledge of *her* fear, also suggests that Calchas is motivated by fear. Minnis writes, "Calkas and Criseyde, father and daughter, are in their different ways motivated by the same emotion, the emotion of fear which…was supposed to have permeated pagan society" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 73). Minnis discusses this sense of fear at length; see Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 83-85.

what will happen and immediately abandons the city; we learn of his daughter's fear, but not his. Though he loses goods and reputation, he takes his fate into his own hands, choosing to save himself if he cannot save Troy and translating his loyalties from the Trojans to the Greeks. At this point, he chooses knowledge over affection, loyalty, or love. But, as Stanley B. Greenfield writes, "Calkas, then, may see destiny steadily, but he does not see it whole in a Boethian sense. He responds to his perceptions actively and successfully in terms of this world—which involves betrayal."[145] Calchas has knowledge of the future, but his view is narrow; he sees no possibilities for the future beyond what he has been told.

Thus, though his actions may preserve his own life, his prophecy seems to be ultimately useless and ineffectual. Because Troy's fall is fated and it is not clear that Calchas does much beyond tell the Greeks what they are already planning to do, Calchas's actions may not have any actual effect on Troy's fate. Though his prophecies encourage the Greeks, the reader must question whether his prophecies need to be said. If Greece is fated to win, do the Greeks need a prophet to tell them so? Betraying Troy does not change the ending of the story. Chaucer emphasizes Calchas's knowledge, but Calchas's knowledge apparently gives him no agency; he can do nothing with his knowledge except save his own skin. He could simply have withdrawn from Troy and from the futile effort of giving counsel without also choosing betrayal. Though Troy's fall is necessary, Calchas's prophecies, apparently, are not.

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[145] Greenfield, "Role of Calkas," 150. Earlier, Greenfield claims that "the rhetorical repetition and paranomasia and the syntax" of Chaucer's verses about Calchas "devaluate the seer's activities and imply the Boethian attitude the reader-listener should adopt to one overly concerned with his own involvement in the fortunes of men and cities" (Greenfield, "Role of Calkas," 144).

But later in the poem, Calchas apprently undergoes a partial change of heart: either he regrets his initial attitude, or he uses the appearance of regret for further calculations. Claiming concern for Criseyde, he asks the Greeks for the Trojan prisoner Antenor in order that he may exchange him for his daughter. Here, he expresses "with a chaunged face" his "sorwe" that he abandoned his daughter (emphasizing "sorwe" through repetition, IV.68, 97-98). He calls himself an "olde caytif in destresse" (IV.104), and all the while "The salte teris from his eyen tweye / Ful faste ronnen down by either cheke" (IV.129-30). Perhaps he does regret that he chose knowledge over affection, but all these tears seem like rhetorical embellishment. Calchas can persuade the Greeks, but what does he actually feel? We do not know his motivations, only that he is "glad ynough" when the Greeks give him Antenor (IV.134). The narrator gives us no hint as to the sincerity of Calchas's feelings. Thus, though Calchas claims, essentially, that he should have attended to affection and relationship, it remains unclear whether he actually regrets what he has done. Is Calchas's desire to trade Criseyde for Antenor a recognition that basing his decisions entirely on authoritative knowledge, ignoring affection, was a mistake, or is it an example of extreme calculation (Calchas brings about the future he predicted by using his daughter as a tool)? Is he glad to have Antenor because it means he may get his daughter back, or is he glad to have Antenor because he can use Antenor to bring about Troy's fall?

And this suggests there is one exception to my argument that Calchas's prophecies are useless: Calchas initiates the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor, thereby releasing a (future) Trojan traitor back to the Trojans. Without Antenor, Troy might not have been destroyed. C. David Benson, following apRoberts, claims that this exchange

reveals a *lack* of knowledge on Calchas's part: Calchas "does not foresee that he is rescuing his daughter from Troy only to have her ruined by Diomedes."[146] But Jeff Espie and Sarah Star call Calchas "less a passive visionary, explaining a fixed Trojan destiny, and more a self-interested, active agent, orchestrating that very destiny," as he demands "two figures who will bring history to its supposed inevitable end."[147] Even so, as Espie and Star write, "To be sure, we can never definitively know Calkas's intentions—the poem never provides us access to his inner thoughts."[148] If Calchas's actions *are* based on knowledge—that Antenor will betray Troy—then his initiation of this exchange is the way he contributes to the destruction of Troy. But I do not think that this can be proven—or disproven—from the text. The point is that we as readers *do not know*. We do not know what Calchas accomplishes through his knowledge; we do not know if his knowledge has any effect on events. What seems to be true is that Calchas has no power to save Troy—only, perhaps, to destroy it.

Cassandra, on the other hand, remains dispassionate throughout the text, attempting to save neither Troy, nor Troilus, nor herself, and apparently feeling nothing about the entire situation. Though her prophecy deals with her brother's love affair, she demonstrates neither experience in love nor emotion concerning love. Cassandra delivers her interpretive prophecy in a disinterested manner: she simply presents the truth to Troilus and does not care what he does with it. She begins with a smile ("She gan first

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[146] C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's* Historia Destructionis Troiae *in Medieval England* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1980), 142.

[147] Jeff Espie and Sarah Star, "Reading Chaucer's Calkas: Prophecy and Authority in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *The Chaucer Review* 51.3 (2016): 383, 391.

[148] Espie and Star, "Reading Chaucer's Calkas," 391.

smyle," V.1457) and ends by dismissing his emotions ("Wep if thow wolt, or lef, for out of doute, / This Diomede is inne, and thow art oute," V.1518-19). Her only interest, it seems, is the truth.

Much has been made of her smile and lack of feeling. Jamie C. Fumo compares Cassandra with the crow of the *Manciple's Tale*, describes her prophecy as "condescending," and writes that Cassandra ends the prophecy "more than a little pleased with her meticulous exposition" as she "cavalierly dismiss[es] emotion altogether."[149] Henry H. Peyton III calls her smile "Ironic" and "diabolical," and he writes, "Cassandra speaks truth and evidences humor at a point in the tragedy when neither truth nor humor is appropriate."[150] Monica E. McAlpine claims, "In dramatizing Cassandra's character and fate as a prophetess, Chaucer shows that her prophecies are crudely accurate as to the 'facts,' but that she is rightly never believed for her prophecies are morally repugnant. Here she eliminates all that makes an act human: the intention, the circumstances, the whole process of moral decision, the web of freedom and fate."[151] Winthrop Wetherbee refers to Cassandra's prophecy as "dead poetry" and emphasizes her lack of emotion: "Cassandra bids her brother 'weep if thou wilt, or laugh' (1518), but she herself does neither: her view of the events with which she deals is neither comic nor tragic, and the effect of her detachment is to enhance the impression of inevitability which her summary conveys."[152]

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[149] Fumo, *Legacy of Apollo,* 220.

[150] Henry H. Peyton III, "The Roles of Calkas, Helen, and Cassandra in Chaucer's *Troilus*," *Interpretations* 7.1 (1975): 12.

[151] Monica E. McAlpine, *The Genre of* Troilus and Criseyde (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 171.

[152] Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets,* 132.

But some are sympathetic to Cassandra's prophecy. Ross writes that "Cassandra willingly, compassionately, and thoroughly interprets Troilus's dream,"[153] and A.J. Minnis writes, "Condescending that smile may be, to some extent, but their [*sic*] is nothing callous about it. It expresses affectionate recognition of her brother's habitual impatience with ancient lore (cf. I,759-60), especially at a time as tense as this."[154] Minnis acknowledges that Cassandra's "concluding statement is abrupt and perhaps tactless—possession of knowledge of the future world, doubtless, make one impatient with the vanity of human wishes…Yet her concern for and sympathy with her 'brother deere' are obvious."[155] Condescending, diabolical, detached, or sympathetic, Cassandra's only emotive moment is a smile which tells us little—or perhaps nothing—of her attitude towards her brother. In any case, Cassandra is not emotionally involved in Troilus's love-affair; she recognizes that all things end and is not bothered by it.

Cassandra prophesies bluntly, and Troilus denies her words ("Thow seyst nat soth,' quod he, 'thow sorceresse, / With al thy false goost of prophecye! / Thow wenest ben a gret devyneresse!" V.1519-1522) and wishes her sorrow ("Ther Joves yeve the sorwe! / Tho shalt be fals, peraunter, yet tomorwe!" V.1525-26)—sorrow that he himself

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[153] Ross, "Believing Cassandra," 346.

[154] Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 77. Minnis relates Cassandra's smile to those of other "superior female teachers (such as Dame Philosophy in the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* and the Pearl-maiden in *Pearl*)" who "do not wear their authority lightly" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 77).

[155] Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 77. Minnis considers Chaucer's Cassandra "a sympathetic character whose science and good character in general are not undermined by the limitations dictated by her historical position" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 78). He calls Cassandra and Troilus "the two most enlightened pagans in *Troilus and Criseyde*; they provide the norms of virtue and knowledge against which we may measure the other characters," and he writes, "Cassandre may not have managed to rise to a prophecy of Christ, as did some of the other sibyls, but of her science and wisdom there is no doubt; she may even be one of God's friends" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 77).

feels and with which she does not empathize.[156] Some scholars share Troilus's disapproval: Peyton calls Cassandra's prophecy "blunt to the point of being crude,"[157] and Lee Patterson writes, "And far from explicating Troilus's dream, her interpretation simply replays its dark emotions and helpless compulsions in a historical key. A gloss that replicates its text, her 'lesson' is necessarily doomed to rejection."[158] But her prophecy is nonetheless true: as Quinn writes, Troilus "rages at smiling Cassandra mainly because she has spoken the truth out loud…But, in truth, Cassandra has not lied, nor have men's books falsely reported that Criseyde was untrue."[159] Troilus dismisses authority, and especially when it is a woman's authority,[160] unaccompanied by advice, emotion, or compassion. Without emotion, Cassandra's knowledge does not accord with Troilus's understanding.[161] Only when Troilus finally knows for certain that Criseyde has betrayed

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[156] He even retorts with his own bit of book-learning, speaking of how Alceste "starf anon, as us the bokes telle" (V.1533). Though Cassandra's book-learning is clearly superior, Troilus dismisses it, and when Cassandra leaves, he is ruled by fury ("he with cruel herte / Foryat his wo, for angre of hire speche," V.1534-35). Of Troilus's rejection of this prophecy, Minnis writes, "Yet Cassandre is patently right, and as a sibyl she commands our respect; Troilus's emotional outburst constitutes a refusal to face facts" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 78). Wetherbee, on the other hand, writes that Troilus's "response to [Cassandra's] speech clearly exposes the inadequacy of her view of human life and gives us a new and significant insight into his own" (Wetherbee, *Chaucer and the Poets,* 141). But Troilus is not entirely off the hook; in "Statius*,"* Wetherbee writes, "Cassandra's speech…serves only to infuriate Troilus, who repudiates all that she has told him, and remains, like Troy itself, willfully blind to their common fate" (Wetherbee, "Statius," 239).

[157] Peyton, "Roles," 11.

[158] Patterson, *Subject of History,* 131.

[159] Quinn, *Olde Clerkis Speche,* 163-64.

[160] Carolyn Dinshaw writes that Cassandra "not only threatens to but does indeed know too much. Troilus explicitly scorns her reading of his dream. We might suggest that, in this text, feminine reading seems to male readers to be excessive: it goes beyond licit or proper awareness; it is potentially disruptive of orderly, logical, linear narratives that have well-delimited boundaries; and it is therefore curtailed, kept in check" (Carolyn Dinshaw, *Chaucer's Sexual Poetics* [Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989], 53).

[161] Calchas and Cassandra both seem guided by pure knowledge without pity. J.D. Burnley at several points discusses the need for both reason and pity in the philosophical and theological traditions on which Chaucer draws; see, for instance, J.D. Burnley, *Chaucer's Language and the Philosopher's Tradition* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1979), 116-118 and 134-136.

him does he realize, “The goddes shewen bothe joie and tene / In slep, and by my drem it is now sene” (V.1715).

Cassandra’s prophecy, like Calchas’s, has no real power to enact change.[162] But it is not meant to: Cassandra makes no attempt to persuade or save anyone, and her prophecy offers no real advice.[163] Like the prophecies of Calchas, it changes nothing, but it was not intended to change anything, simply to deliver the truth: to tell a story.[164] Barbara Nolan writes that Cassandra “points to the inevitable end of things in destruction. But her smile is as important as her instruction. It reflects a philosophical attitude towards destruction and the workings of Fortune in the mortal world.”[165] She modifies Wetherbee’s view, claiming, “What is ‘dead’ about Cassandre’s poetry, if we adopt Wetherbee’s term, is not so much its matter-of-fact character as its impotence in relation to Troilus. Her account of the Thebes story and her correct implication of Troy in the tragedy of worldly history represents a wisdom—the wisdom of the ancients and their faithful medieval clerks—which cannot function for Troilus.”[166] Cassandra accepts the

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[162] As Benson notes, “not even genuine knowledge is a sure guarantee of control. Cassandra’s truths are disbelieved here as in the *Historia*” (Benson, *History of Troy,* 142).

[163] Minnis notes, “Chaucer’s sympathetic portrayal of her [Cassandra] is a radical departure from *Il Filostrato.* Boccaccio’s Cassandra offers unsolicited advice…By contrast, Troilus consults his sister as an expert” (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 76-77).

[164] In this way, Cassandra’s role as a narrator of Thebes comes nearest to Chaucer’s narrator’s own role in telling of Troy. Ross claims, “Similarly, the figure of Cassandra functions for Chaucer as an emblem of his own subversive poetics when he refashions her as an alternative narrative voice, directly undermining Boccaccio's misogynist representation of her in *Il Filostrato*” (Ross, “Believing Cassandra,” 340).

[165] Barbara Nolan, *Chaucer and the Tradition of the* Roman Antique (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 231. Similarly, Hill writes that Cassandra’s prophecy “presents an inescapable impression of the mutability of human life” and that Troilus rejects her prophecy “because Cassandre’s lesson in reading supports the conclusion that there is no constancy in human affairs” (Hill, *‘She, This in Blak,’* 80-81). But Hill also calls Cassandra’s prophecy “less authoritative than would at first appear” (Hill, *‘She, This in Blak,’* 80).

[166] Nolan, *Roman Antique,* 231.

truth of what is without attempting to enact change or persuade anyone. Other texts of Troy include prophetic counsel, but here, no prophet attempts to advise: Cassandra simply explains and accepts.[167]

Experience

In contrast to the prophets of Troy, neither Troilus nor Criseyde understands their fate in advance.[168] But the lovers, rather than rely on authority and intellect for knowledge, rely on experience and emotion—and both do learn from them. Criseyde moves from a lack of understanding through suspicion to certainty, while Troilus continues in his lack of understanding only until the moment of his death, at which point he is translated not only from a lack of knowledge to understanding, but from the transient world to the eternal.

Criseyde begins in a state of ignorance, and throughout the text, she is driven by fear. Chaucer's narrator contrasts her with her father through his emphasis on their respective states of knowledge: Calchas knows, whereas Criseyde does *not* know.[169] Criseyde does not, for instance, know of her father's betrayal (she was "Al unwist of this false and wikked dede," I.93), and she "nyste what was best to rede" (I.96). Benson

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[167] Helenus, usually Cassandra's masculine counterpart in advising Priam, is absent from the text.

[168] Andrew critiques the idea that the contrast between our knowledge and the characters' lack of knowledge "is to expose the folly and ignorance of the protagonists" (Andrew, "Fall of Troy," 87). He writes, "A more intelligent and sensitive reading would recognize the sophisticated literary possibilities which Chaucer so skilfully develops, and would conclude that his purpose is less to expose the foolish ignorance of his protagonists than to create in his portrayal of their fictional situations a rich and complex sense of the sheer difficulty of knowing, of choosing, of reaching decisions, and of making judgments" (Andrew, "Fall of Troy," 87).

[169] On the contrast between Calchas's knowledge and Criseyde's lack of knowledge at the poem's beginning, and again at the beginning of Book V, see Rosemarie P. McGerr, "Meaning and Ending in a 'Paynted Proces': Resistance to Closure in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism,* ed. R.A. Shoaf (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992), 190.

writes of Criseyde, "Beginning with her father's sudden desertion and continuing through his equally unexpected demand for her return, the future always comes to her as a surprise."[170] Nonetheless, her philosophy accords with her father's; as Minnis notes, "Criseyde may lack her father's learning, but she shares something of his fatalism. Hence, she is inclined to attribute her misfortunes to her horoscope."[171] But Criseyde continues in her ignorance, her chances at knowledge taken from her.[172] Though her father is a prophet, Criseyde cannot know the end of her story until it has already ended.

Criseyde begins her relationship with Troilus believing that she will be true, but she soon comes to suspect her own unfaithfulness, and when her story ends, she understands both her own nature and her future. When Criseyde rejoins her father, she is able to make her own prophecy: she understands that she will always be faithless. She laments,

> Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,
> Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
> No good word, for thise bokes wol me shende.
> O, rolled shal I ben on many a tonge!
> Thorughout the world my belle shal be ronge! (V.1058-62).

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[170] Benson, *History of Troy,* 141.

[171] Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 70. Jelena Marelj notes that many scholars seem to agree with Criseyde's fatalism; she writes that Troilus and Criseyde "oscillate between voluntarism and cosmic determinism" (Jelena Marelj, "The Philosophical Entente of Particulars: Criseyde as Nominalist in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,*" *The Chaucer Review* 47.2 [2012]: 206-7), but claims, "Criseyde, certainly, is the willful agent of her own actions: she is not, as critics have claimed, constrained or 'determined' by the imposition of greater forces beyond her control into loving Troilus, even though she does take these forces into account when formulating her rational decisions" (Marelj, "Philosophical Entente," 213).

[172] Dinshaw writes that, because the story of Thebes "adumbrates the outcome of *her* romance: it tells the ancestry of her future lover, Diomede," and because Criseyde is interrupted in her reading of Thebes, "It is as if, in this inaugural moment in the affairs of Troilus and Criseyde, Criseyde threatens to know too much, to get ahead of the narrative, to read things that must remain hidden from her" (Dinshaw, *Sexual Poetics,* 52-53).

She knows, as she betrays Troilus, that this act will ruin her reputation forever.[173] But this knowledge does not stop her. As Marjorie Curry Woods writes, "In the end, Calkas, Pandarus, and Criseyde are all realists; they perceive correctly the world around them and the possibilities that it offers, but with unattractive results. Calkas reacts by action, Pandarus by manipulation, and Criseyde by self-adjustment. Criseyde's 'crime' is foreshadowed by those of her relatives, and each member of this family is, in some way, 'slydynge of corage.'"[174] By the end of Criseyde's story, she values practicality above faithfulness, and she understands herself. As Fumo writes, "Our last image of Criseyde is brutally ironic: finally a prophet in her own right, Criseyde recedes from view only after bewailing her own textual 'future' with the accuracy of an accredited visionary (*Tr* 5.1058-66)."[175] And George Edmondson writes, "Yet what truly strikes one about Criseyde's prophecy is its utter certainty. In marked contrast to the narrator, who tries repeatedly to avoid confronting Criseyde's fate, Criseyde herself has no doubts about her future. She may regret it, but she makes no effort to deny it."[176] Unlike her father, who gains knowledge from the authority of Apollo, Criseyde does not understand her nature until she has experienced her own faithlessness. But when tutored by experience, Criseyde becomes as prophetic as her father.

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[173] Gretchen Mieszkowski notes that Chaucer's Criseyde makes a prediction about her future, whereas Benoît's Briseida "regrets a situation which has actually arisen" (Gretchen Mieszkowski, "The Reputation of Criseyde 1155-1500," *Transactions* 43 [1971]: 104). Mieszkowski connects this prediction to Criseyde's actual literary reputation during Chaucer's time.

[174] Marjorie Curry Woods, "Chaucer the Rhetorician: Criseyde and Her Family," *The Chaucer Review* 20.1 (1985): 34.

[175] Fumo, *Legacy of Apollo,* 133.

[176] Edmondson, *Neighboring Text,* 197.

Troilus likewise begins in a state of intellectual, emotional, and experiential[177] ignorance; he does not know his fate until it has come upon him and until he has experienced (and finally put aside) emotion.[178] He does not understand what love is until he has the experience of falling in love himself. He does not understand his lack of knowledge until he loses Criseyde, at which point he begins to consider what authoritative sources, such as clerks, might say, and even then, he is reliant primarily on his own feelings and experiences. But by the end of the text, through experience, Troilus has the fullest understanding of anyone that nothing lasts.

Troilus begins the text both intellectually and emotionally ignorant. Early in the text, at the Feast of the Palladium, he mocks all those who love (I.190-210), not understanding what love is, until he spots Criseyde and at last has the experience of falling in love himself.[179] After this inauspicious beginning, Troilus goes through the broadest range of emotional experience of any character in this text. Through his relationship with Criseyde, Troilus moves from inexperience to experience, from not-knowing to knowing.[180] Here, he continues to trust his own experience and emotion above the words of clerks.

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[177] He is even less experienced than Criseyde, never having loved before.

[178] Derek Brewer calls Troilus's tragedy "one of pure and simple feeling…we have the story of an absolutely stable, powerful, ultimately painfully frustrated passion" (Derek Brewer, "Comedy and Tragedy in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *The European Tragedy of Troilus,* ed. Piero Boitani [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], 107).

[179] On Troilus's initial inexperience in love, see Leonard Michael Koff, "Ending a Poem Before Beginning It, or The 'Cas' of Troilus," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism,* ed. R.A. Shoaf [Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992], 163-64.

[180] Though Criseyde is speaking here and not Troilus, it may be worth noting the euphemism of "knowledge" for "sexual experience" at III.806-7 ("'Horaste! Alas, and falsen Troilus? / I knowe hym nought, God helpe me so!' quod she").

But upon losing Criseyde, Troilus begins to consider, in a long Boethian speech on free will and destiny, what authoritative sources might say.[181] Even here, however, as he contrasts divine foreknowledge with his own lack, he remains reliant on his own feelings and experiences. The speech arises from strong emotion concerning his loss of Criseyde, as he laments: "For al that comth, comth by necessitee: / Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee" (IV.958-89). As he begins his internal debate, Troilus claims already to know—apparently through his relationship with Criseyde—that God has predestined everything:

> 'For certeynly, this wot I wel,' he seyde,
> 'That forsight of divine purveyaunce
> Hath seyn alwey me to forgon Criseyde,
> Syn God seeth every thyng, out of doutaunce,
> And hem disponyth, thorugh his ordinaunce,
> In hire merites sothly for to be,
> As they shul comen by predestyne.' (IV.960-66)

But then he turns to the arguments of clerks as he wonders what to believe:

> But natheles, allas, whom shal I leeve?
> For ther ben grete clerkes many oon
> That destyne thorugh argumentes preve;

[181] On Chaucer and Boethius, see Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 96-108; Jill Mann, "Chance and Destiny in *Troilus and Criseyde* and the *Knight's Tale*," in *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (Cambridge University Press, 1986, 2003), 96-98; and C. David Benson, *Chaucer's* Troilus and Criseyde (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 149-178. On Troilus's speech in book IV and its relation to both the philosophical issues of the day and to the philosophical musings of the poem overall, see Karl Reichl, "Chaucer's *Troilus:* Philosophy and Language," in *The European Tragedy of Troilus,* ed. Piero Boitani (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 135-38. Roger Ellis notes that "Chaucer uses Boethian material to complicate radically the relatively straightforward Boccaccian narrative of erotic passion and betrayal which he was principally translating…The ironies have partly to do with the parts of the *Consolatio* that he assigns to his principal characters. They have all, as it were, read the *Consolatio* only for confirmation of their own limited understandings of themselves" (Roger Ellis, "Translation," in *A Companion to Chaucer*, ed. Peter Brown [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000], 452). Rita Copeland writes that Troilus's speech draws specifically on arguments from the *Consolatio* which, by the end of Boethius's text, "Philosophy will prove…to have been incomplete arguments. It is their precision as dialectical deliberations, and their inadequacy as metaphysical arguments about God's essence and the nature of eternity, that makes them appropriate for depicting Troilus' struggle to conceive anything beyond the limits of his pagan reason" (Rita Copeland, "The Trivium and the Classics," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558),* ed. Rita Copeland [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 69-70).

> And som men seyn that nedely ther is noon,
> But that fre chois is yeven us everychon.
> O, welaway! So sleighe arn clerkes olde
> That I not whos opynyoun I may holde. (IV.967-72)

Nonetheless, even as he considers authority, he already begins to dismiss it, claiming that "clerkes olde" are "sleighe." Troilus then spends multiple stanzas debating between what he sees as the two opposing views of clerks. Throughout, he repeats the thought that these ideas are the ideas and opinions of others, particularly of clerks (for instance, "For som men seyn," IV.970; 'Ek this is an opynoun of some / That han hire top ful heighe and smothe yshore," IV.995-96; "They seyn right thus… but they seyn…" IV.997-99), and then he answers the opinions of others with his own thoughts ("Wherefore I say," IV.978; "but wel woot I, IV.1017; "I sey…than sey I this," IV.1030-31; "And I seye," IV.1041; "I may wel maken, as it semeth me," IV.1045; "And over al this, yet sey I more herto," IV.1072). He concludes by falling short of Boethius's final consolation, on the side of destiny rather than of choice (IV.1072-78). But his conclusion seems based more on his own experience of abandonment rather than on the arguments of the clerks he has considered, and, at this point, giving up hope, he simply prays that Jove will either return Criseyde to him or kill him (IV.1079-82).[182]

But at the end of the text, through experience, Troilus has the fullest understanding of anyone that nothing lasts: not cities, not love, not life. He chooses to remain faithful to Criseyde, despite his sister's bookish prophecy, and he finally

[182] Minnis writes that "the fatalism endemic to the pagan world of *Troilus and Criseyde* finds its most consummate expression in the fourth book of the poem, when Troilus concludes that human lives are governed by absolute necessity…But there is a considerable difference between what Chaucer's pagans think and what his narrator thinks. …Applying this to *Troilus,* one can say that, whereas Chaucer's pagans believe they are fated, his narrator believes in their free will. The pagans regard their supposed destinies as necessary facts; the Christian historian regards them as conditional facts. By being so utterly convinced that their actions are fated, the pagans determine their actions" (Minnis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity,* 70-71).

experiences the one fate all human beings eventually face. Thus, when Troilus does reach understanding through experience, that experience is final. In dying, Troilus gains understanding of the meaning (or meaninglessness) of his earthly past and eternal future. His knowledge embraces all the universe, as he "saugh with ful avysement / The erratik sterres, herkenyng armonye / With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie" (V.1811-13) and thence can look down on "This litel spot of erthe that with the se / Embraced is" (V.1815-16). He sees where he died and, Cassandra-like, "in hymself he lough right at the wo / Of hem that wepten for his deth so faste" (V.1821-22).[183] He "dampned al oure werk that foloweth so / The blynde lust, the which that may nat laste" as he recognizes what the prophets have known all along: that pleasures and labors come to an end (V.1823-24).

But Troilus's recognition of the impermanence of all things is a truer recognition than even that of the prophets. Greenfield writes:

> …in contrast to the implicit undercutting of Calkas's foresight throughout the poem, after his death Troilus receives hindsight, a perspective on the relative merits of heavenly and earthly felicity, from the vantage point of the eighth sphere (V.1814-19)…At the end of the poem he [Calchas] is counterpointed by Troilus's clearer view that one must operate outside Destiny's framework in order to apprehend Truth, or true felicity.[184]

Calchas sees only that Troy will end; Troilus sees all the universe. He sees that cities will not last, love does not last, and life cannot last.[185] The prophets have looked to the end—

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[183] Peyton—critical of Cassandra—writes, "It is as though [Cassandra's] diabolical grin were a strange and sardonic precursor of the disembodied laughter of Troilus when at the end of the poem he looks back on earth from his vantage point in the eighth sphere" (Peyton, "Roles," 12).

[184] Greenfield, "Role of Calkas," 150.

[185] As Strohm writes, "The *fin amour* of Troilus and Crisyede finally becomes an emblem of the frailty and vanity of attachment to the things of this world" (Paul Strohm, "*Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie*: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives," *Speculum* 46.2 [1971]: 357). John M. Fyler, in discussing Pandarus's artifices in the poem, writes that, at the end of the poem, "the real world *is* an illusion…The Trojan War, as much as Troilus's failed love, fades away to spectral outlines; and there comes to be little to choose between them, in value or in performance" (John M. Fyler, "The Fabrications

the fall of cities, the failure of love—throughout the text, and by the text's end, Troilus, through experience, understands the end of all things as well—or better than—the prophets. No authority gave him this epiphany; only the experience of death brings this knowledge. And even this knowledge may not be complete; Hill notes that "Troilus's view from heaven is not unlimited" and that, though "Troilus's heavenly vision of the universe is a Boethian one," nonetheless "it is unclear where it is that Mercury finally leads him."[186] Nonetheless, with death comes release from sorrow; Troilus's spirit goes "ful blisfully" (V.1808) to the eighth sphere, and as he laughs, he recognizes how needless his sorrow was for something so transient.[187]

Ignorance and futility

In his prophets and lovers, Chaucer's narrator suggests a distinction between experience and authority. But neither authoritative nor experiential knowledge grants any power to save: both Troilus and Troy must be destroyed. And while knowledge is apparently powerless, ignorance is powerful—but only to bring about destruction.

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of Pandarus," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism,* ed. R.A. Shoaf [Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1992], 119).

[186] Hill, *'She, This in Blak,'* 99.

[187] But we do not necessarily share Troilus's perspective. McGerr writes, "If anything, the retrospective view we receive reminds us that we have not left our earthly perspective behind, in spite of the narrator's suggestions that casting up our hearts to heaven (5.1825) will allow us to shed our blindness and share Troilus's new view of the world. Unlike Troilus, we have not yet escaped the elements to join the immutable world, but remain in a world in which the relationship of spiritual and temporal values is not clear. We may, like the narrator, appeal to a divine Alpha and Omega whose view transcends ours and provides true closure; but we must do even this in ambiguous terms" (McGerr, "Meaning and Ending," 198). She concludes, "In spite of the intense concern for meaning and ending exhibited in the process of the poem, *Troilus and Criseyde* ultimately makes clear the difficulty of determining meaning and the need for resisting the illusion of closure in our pursuit of understanding…*Troilus and Criseyde* is not the comfortable reading experience many readers expect it to be, for Chaucer experiments with a narrative mode that encourages us to read actively, to ask questions, to worry about the whole process of signification, and to reconsider the ultimate end of the reading experience in which we are engaged" (McGerr, "Meaning and Ending," 198).

Of all the characters in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Pandarus has the most complicated relationship both with knowledge and ignorance, with authority and experience. Pandarus is constantly seeking knowledge, but he seeks knowledge of emotions and relationships rather than authoritative knowledge: he presses Troilus to tell him what has been bothering him (I.547ff) and begs Criseyde to know what love affair she might be reading of (II.96-97). All of his knowledge seems to come from private affairs, not public: he knows gossip about love, but he does not seem to know or care much about the war. When, for instance, he teases Criseyde that he has knowledge she lacks, she at once asks if his knowledge is of the war—'Now, uncle deere,' quod she, 'telle it us / For Goddes love; it than th'assege aweye? / I am of Grekes so fered that I deye" (II.122-24)—and he responds by dismissing the war to talk about love ('Nay, nay,' quod he, 'as evere mote I thryve, / It is a thing wel bet than swyche fyve," II.125-26).

Clerical and authoritative knowledge, likewise, holds little interest for him. When Criseyde tells him that she has been reading of the siege of Thebes, as mentioned above, Pandarus claims he already knows the story, but he urges Criseyde to set such reading aside and to dance instead (II.106-112). If authoritative knowledge does happen to be useful to him in meddling with private love affairs—as, for instance, when Troilus asks for help interpreting his dream—Pandarus does *claim* to have such knowledge, but, as in his interpretation of the dream, his knowledge is mistaken, and he bases his interpretation on wishful thinking rather than on actual authoritative sources (V.1282-88). He readily disseminates knowledge he does not in fact have, sometimes knowledge that is downright false (as, for instance, when he tells Criseyde that Troilus believes she is in love with Horaste, III.792-98).

But, most notably, when he gives advice, he claims it is from ignorance, not from knowledge—and that, according to him, is why it is good advice. He claims that ignorance and foolishness can be a better guide than wisdom and knowledge. When advising Troilus, for instance, he openly admits his foolishness ("Though I be nyce," I.625), but then states, "it happeth often so, / That oon that excesse doth ful yvele fare / By good counseil kan kepe his frend therfro" (I.625-27). A few lines later, he says, "A fool may ek a wis-man ofte gide" (I.630), and he continues, "Thus often wise men ben war by foolys. / If thow do so, thi wit is wel bewared; / By his contrarie is every thyng declared" (I.635-37). Pandarus's point is, in part, that he is experienced in failure and thus knows what to avoid—a fair point—and he notes that he is experienced in love, even if he lacks knowledge ("I, that have in love so ofte assayed / Grevances, oughte konne, and wel the more, / Counseillen the of that thow art amayed," I.647-49). But a large part of his message is that the ignorant give the best advice.

But despite Pandarus's assurance that ignorant advice is good advice, the events of the text suggest that ignorance can only destroy. And chief among the examples of destructive ignorance is that of the Trojan council. The Trojans here seem ignorant of their fate; they are driven by fear, and they do not realize that their faithless actions will destroy them. Whereas prophetic councilors speak in most texts of the Trojan War, the council of *Troilus and Criseyde* lacks any such prophetic voice. No prophetic knowledge guides the council of Troy: many other Trojan War narratives feature the prophet Helenus, but Helenus makes no prophecies here. Without such a loyal prophetic voice, public councils at Troy go wrong: the Trojans make decisions that lead to their own

destruction, trading Criseyde, upon whose love their last defense, Troilus, depends, for Antenor, who will ultimately betray them.

In Book IV, in response to Calchas's request, the Greek ambassadors ask the Trojans to exchange Criseyde for Antenor, and the Trojans hold a parliament to deliberate what to do.[188] While Troilus silently debates whether he should speak up for his beloved or keep silent (IV.148-175), Hector alone offers good advice: "'Syres, she nys no prisonere,' he seyde; / 'I not on yow who that this charge leyde, / But, on my part, ye may eftsone hem telle, / We usen here no wommen for to selle'" (IV.179-82). But the Trojans refuse to listen to Hector; as Chaucer writes, "The noyse of peple up stirte thanne at ones, / As breme as blasé of strawe iset on-fire; / For infortune it wolde, for the nones, / They sholden hire confusioun desire" (IV.183-85). The Trojans immediately question Hector's advice, claiming that Antenor "is so wys and ek so bold baroun" and "ek oon the grettest of this town," mocking Hector's counsel as "fantasies" and demanding of Priam "to forgon Criseyde" and "to deliveren Antenor" (IV.190-196).

But Chaucer's narrator condemns this demand, claiming "That litel wyten folk what is to yerne, / That they ne fynde in hire desir offence; / For cloude of errour let hem to discerne / What best is" (IV.198-201). He reminds the reader that "This folk desiren now deliveraunce / Of Antenor, that brought hem to meschaunce, / For he was after traitour to the town / Of Troye" (IV.202-5). The Trojans' decision is unjust ("Criseyde, which that nevere dide hem scathe, / Shal now no lenger in hire blisse bathe," IV.207-8),

[188] For possible connections between this parliament and the parliament Chaucer attended in 1386, see Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 7, and Patterson, *Subject of History,* 157-59. On the complexities of the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor, see Molly Murray, "The Value of 'Eschaunge': Ransom and Substitution in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *ELH* 69.2 (2002): 341-43.

and the decision will destroy them.[189] Though their self-seeking and fear-motivated actions seem as reasonable as Calchas's defection—the Trojans hope to save themselves through Antenor, much as Calchas hopes to save himself by leaving Troy—they are in fact destroying themselves.[190] Benson writes, "What they do not know, what perhaps even Antenor himself does not yet know, is that their well-considered scheme will hasten their destruction. Instead of defending Troy, Antenor will be one of its betrayers."[191]

The narrator concludes the council with political language and repetition of the word "parlement":

> For which delibered was by parlement
> For Antenor to yelden out Criseyde,
> And it pronounced by the president,
> Altheigh that Ector 'nay' ful ofte preyde.
> And fynaly, what wight that it withseyde,
> It was for nought; it moste ben and sholde,
> For substaunce of the parlement it wolde. (IV.211-17)

Councils in *Troilus and Criseyde* reveal a world of little political wisdom and no possibility of peace. They lack both prophetic wisdom and, except for Hector's unheeded words, good advice. In exchanging Criseyde for Antenor, the council not only betrays Criseyde, but also sets in motion both Criseyde's betrayal of Troilus and Antenor's betrayal of Troy. In betraying Criseyde to save themselves, the Trojans destroy

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[189] As Karla Taylor notes, "By this breach of faith, the people of Troy bring about their own destruction since Antenor later opens the gates to the wooden horse. Chaucer's argument is that a civilization's existence depends on the faithfulness of its citizens" (Karla Taylor, "Proverbs and the Authentication of Convention in *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Troilus and Criseyde: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Stephen A. Barney [New York and London: WW. Norton and Company, 2006], 509).

[190] Benson writes, "The Trojans act reasonably, if ungallantly, in giving over Calchas's daughter to regain one of their chief leaders. They have no way of knowing what disastrous consequences will follow" (Benson, *History of Troy*, 142).

[191] Benson, *Chaucer's* Troilus, 175.

themselves. Their lack of knowledge, combined with their faithlessness and fear, leads to the opposite of what they desire. Troy must be destroyed.

And so too must Troilus be destroyed, in part through Pandarus's ignorance. Only at the text's end does Pandarus admit his ignorance has failed him. He does not know what to do: "My brother deer, I may do the namore. / What sholde I seyen?" (V.1731-32). Still he blames Criseyde, rather than himself ("I hate, ywis, Cryseyde; / And, God woot, I wol hate hire evermore!" V.1732-33). Still he wants to meddle, if only he knew what to do—"Right fayn I wolde amende it, wiste I how" (V.1741)—but he falls silent at last, unable to speak further: "I kan namore seye" (V. 1743). Pandarus's ignorant meddling had no real power to help, only to destroy: in helping Troilus gain Criseyde's love, he has in fact destroyed both of them.

Nonetheless, Chaucer's narrator, Pandarus-like, makes claims for his own ignorance. The difference is that, while he admits his ignorance, he does not try to use it as an excuse to give advice. Rather, his ignorance and inexperience, so he claims, are his reason for leaning so heavily on an authority, on his *auctor:*

> Wherfore I nyl have neither thank ne blame
> Of al this werk, but prey yow mekely,
> Disblameth me if any word be lame,
> For as my auctour seyde, so sey I.
> Ek though I speeke of love unfelyngly,
> No wondre is, for it nothyng of newe is;
> A blynd man kan nat juggen wel in hewis. (II.15-21)

What he says is remarkably similar to what Pandarus says of his own inexperienced advice ("I have myself ek seyn a blynd man goo / Ther as he fel that couthe loken wide," I.628-29); but Pandarus leans on his ignorance, whereas Chaucer's narrator uses his ignorance as a reason to lean on authority. And whereas Pandarus, excusing his own

meddling, blames Criseyde for the end of the relationship, Chaucer expresses pity for Criseyde: "Allas, that they sholde evere cause fynde / To speke hire harm! And if they on hire lye, / Iwis, hemself sholde han the vilanye" (IV.19-21). His statements here very well may be ironic—this narrator is Chaucerian, after all—but they form a marked contrast with Pandarus's blunt condemnation of Criseyde.

Despite—or perhaps because of—his reliance on authority, however, the narrator remains powerless to prevent the destruction of Troilus and of Troy. Nonetheless, he tries throughout the text to avoid writing of their destruction. As Allen J. Frantzen writes, "The historical is one of the largest but, curiously, also the least visible frames of the poem. We are reminded in every book that Troy is at war, but the war seems to be part of the background rather than the center of the plot. The frame of political conflict, although fully submerged in the text, is a frame that both enhances the love story and works against it."[192] The narrator focuses on love rather than on the Trojan War, and he avoids Troy's destruction in ending the story before Troy can fall. Even in book I, where he must set his stage, he includes a single stanza explaining the situation—

> The thynges fellen, as they don of were,
> Bitwixen hem of Troie and Grekes often;
> For som day boughten they of Troie it derre,
> And eft the Grekes founden nothing softe
> The folk of Troie; and thus Fortune on lofte
> And under eft gan hem to whielen bothe
> After hir course, ay whil that thei were wrothe. (I.134-140)

—but then he claims that the story of the war is a distraction from his larger purpose:

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

[192] Frantzen, *The Poem and the Frame,* 48.

> But the Troian gestes, as they felle,
> In Omer, or in Dares, or in Dite,
> Whoso that kan may rede hem as they write. (I.141-147)

Chaucer recognizes his tale's authoritative sources but considers their larger context a distraction from his focus. As Henry Ansgar Kelly writes, "He makes no attempt—at the beginning—to disguise the overall nature of the story he is about to tell…But after these gloomy forecasts of the ultimate downturn of events, Chaucer avoids referring to it again and immerses us in the present."[193]

But in telling the story of Troilus and Criseyde, the narrator cannot avoid telling the story of Troy.[194] The destruction of Troy lingers behind the tale: Troilus first spots Criseyde at the feast of the Palladium (I.155-322), the theft of which will lead to Troy's destruction,[195] and Troilus's very name ties him inescapably to Troy.[196] But neither

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[193] Henry Ansgar Kelly, *Chaucerian Tragedy* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1997), 94.

[194] As Summit writes, "Where the Trojan matter grounds the poem in history, Chaucer chooses to focus on the love story of Troilus and Criseyde, a focus that has struck some of his readers as an evasion of the political and historical implications of the Trojan War. It would be inaccurate to say, however, that the Trojan War disappears from the poem, since it enters and reenters the story in key moments to comment on the activities of the lovers" (Summit, *"Troilus and Criseyde,"* 216).

[195] Frank Grady writes, "That the story finally begins with a reference to the 'relik' whose theft in some accounts leads directly to the fall of the city is the final irony in an opening passage in which irony is, finally, inescapable" (Frank Grady, "The Boethian Reader of *Troilus and Criseyde*," *The Chaucer Review* 33.3 [1999]: 235). Likewise, Windeatt writes, "Troilus first sees and falls in love with Criseyde in the temple where the Trojans worship the sacred image of Pallas upon which the safety of Troy depends, and a medieval reader might see the irony that it was to be Diomede who would steal both Criseyde from Troilus and the Palladium from Troy, so destroying both the hero and the city with which he was identified" (Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 174).

[196] John P. McCall notes that "by 'medieval etymology' Troilus literally means 'little Troy'" (John P. McCall, "The Trojan Scene in Chaucer's 'Troilus,'" in *Chaucer's Troilus: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Stephen A. Barney [Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1980], 101), and Windeatt writes, "The identification of a hero called 'Troilus' with his city of Troy is part of the tradition: Troy would fall if Troilus did not survive" (Windeatt, *Troilus and Criseyde,* 174). Piero Boitani, discussing Troilus in the classical tradition, writes, "'Troilus' contains both the beginning and the end of Troy. In this sense he is not primarily a character but a 'function.' He is his death and the fall of Troy in that war which, being the first and most famous of all, constitutes the archetypal World War" (Piero Boitani, "Antiquity and Beyond: The Death of Troilus," in *The European Tragedy of Troilus,* ed. Piero Boitani [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989], 5). On further connections between Troilus and Troy, see Stephen A. Barney, "Troilus Bound," in *"Subgit to alle Poesye": Essays in Criticism,* ed.R.A. Shoaf (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts &

Troilus nor Criseyde knows that their story is part of a larger story, and the narrator does all within his power to avoid speaking of it.[197] And not only does he avoid speaking of Troy, but the narrator also *tries* to avoid speaking of Troilus's death or Criseyde's betrayal—but in telling us of his reluctance, he draws our attention to the conclusion of the love affair.[198] In the proem to Book IV, for instance, he expresses his hesitation to continue to tell the story: "For which myn herte right now gynneth blede, / And now my penne, allas, with which I write, / Quaketh for drede of that I moste endite" (IV.12-14). He claims he does not want to blame Criseyde (IV.19-21), but such is the story he committed to retell when he began to write this text. Marilynn Desmond writes, "In the course of the five books of the *Troilus*, the narrator becomes increasingly anxious about the tragic direction of the story, and he repeatedly laments the pathos of the plot that he claims he is bound to follow."[199] The narrator is apparently as haunted by fear and pity as any character in the text.

Chaucer may hide the destruction of Troy behind the story of his lovers' relationship, though the city's destruction is still present in the text. Though he wants to

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Studies, 1992),14. Andrew discusses the repeated image of shields as another way we get "an emphatic sense that the fate of Troilus is inextricably bound up with that of Troy" (Andrew, "Fall of Troy," 86).

[197] As Christopher Baswell writes, the narrator "constantly tries to push Trojan history aside and focus on the doomed affair of Troilus and Criseyde" (Christopher Baswell, "England's Antiquities: Middle English Literature and the Classical Past," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350-c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown [Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007], 236).

[198] In other words, the narrator actively avoids speaking of Troy's fate, but draws our attention to Troilus and Criseyde's fate by *claiming* that he is avoiding it. Sylvia Federico writes, "Knowledge of this tragic future is asserted throughout the poem in the form of the narrator's many asides to the reader. He frequently interrupts with reminders, however veiled, that Troilus's joy cannot last" (Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003], 74).

[199] Marilynn Desmond, "Trojan Itineraries and the Matter of Troy," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558),* ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 261.

write a love story, he is helpless; he can do nothing to avoid the story's end. But Chaucer's narrator parallels the prophets: he knows what will happen but cannot change events. Troilus and Criseyde are a characters in a text already told and retold; their fate is known. They have no power over what will happen. Troy's fall still hides beneath the text; the narrator is no more able to prevent Troy's fall than a prophet. He can only, like a prophet, report what is to come, not change it.[200]

Conclusion

In *Troilus and Criseyde*, all knowledge remains limited, and all meaning remains partial. Calchas's and Cassandra's knowledge accomplishes nothing, while Criseyde's and Troilus's knowledge comes too late to help. Complete certainty is impossible,[201] nothing and no one, not even the narrator, can prevent destruction, and everything has come or will come to an end.

The characters finally find their knowledge powerless against impermanence. When experience and authority are divorced from each other, knowledge is incomplete and can save nothing and no one; the characters cannot reach a state of full knowledge

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[200] As Morton W. Bloomfield writes, "Chaucer cannot change the elements of his story. As God cannot violate His own rationality, Chaucer cannot violate his data. Bound by his self-imposed task of historian, he both implies and says directly that he cannot do other than report his tale" (Morton W. Bloomfield, "Distance and Predestination in 'Troilus and Criseyde,'" in *Chaucer's Troilus: Essays in Criticism*, ed. Stephen A. Barney [Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1980], 76). But, of course, Chaucer *does* change the received narrative in some ways. Desmond notes that "the narrator emphasizes his role as 'translator' with asides such as 'as writen wel I fynde' (4.1415), 'in storye it is yfounde' (5.834), and 'the storie telleth us' (5.1037, 1051). Such comments impart the sense that the *Troilus*-narrator is at the mercy of his 'matere' (1.53, 144) and that he lacks the authority to re-write the narrative, when in fact Chaucer has made extensive changes to Boccaccio's plot and has introduced material from other sources…" (Desmond, "Trojan Itineraries," 261). Chaucer does not, however, change the basic structure of the Trojan story.

[201] On the determinism, necessity, free will, and the "epistemological problem of certitude" in medieval philosophy, see Hill, *'She, This in Blak,'* 6-9. Hill proceeds to discuss fourteenth-century developments of these ideas (9-16) and the ways in which *Troilus and Criseyde* uses light and vision to engage with these philosophical questions (16-19).

until destruction has come. Troy cannot be saved, nor can Troilus; the characters of the text can gesture towards meaning in this life, but they often find ambiguity instead. No one knows what will follow after everything ends; we know only that everything *will* end. But the characters do, perhaps, have some choice as to how they respond to this knowledge. Calchas and Criseyde end by looking to the future and despairing: Calchas knows that Troy cannot be saved, and Criseyde knows that her reputation will be ruined forever. But Cassandra and Troilus both, in the end, look to the past to explain the present, and though they see and know the same conclusion—that nothing lasts—Cassandra is able to smile, and Troilus is even able to laugh.

Troilus and Criseyde is, in part, about the fact that cities do not last, love does not last, and life does not last; about the idea that knowledge is always tinged with uncertainty and often impotent; and about the idea that knowledge gained in hindsight comes too late to change anything. In his prophets and lovers, Chaucer's narrator indicates the distinction between authority and experience; but neither type of knowledge grants power to change events—it only reinforces the idea that nothing lasts. By exploring these epistemological questions in the context of a doomed city, an ill-fated love affair, and inevitable destruction, Chaucer casts doubt on the utility of knowledge, whether gained through the authority of old books or through lived experience. Knowledge can do nothing about the impermanence of all things. But perhaps it can help us understand and accept that all things are impermanent.

Chapter 3. The futility of counsel: prophecy and poetry in John Lydgate's *Troy Book*[202]

Monk of Bury St. Edmond's and prolific poet, John Lydgate (1371-1449) concerns himself in his massive *Troy Book* (30,117 lines) with telling true history and with presenting advice for kings and princes.[203] The *Troy Book*, a translation and expansion of Guido delle Colonne's Latin prose *Historia destructionis Troiae* (1287) into Middle English poetry, was commissioned in 1412 at the behest of the future king Henry V, though it was not completed until 1420, by which time Henry had been crowned king, won the battle of Agincourt, secured the Treaty of Troyes, and wed Katherine of

[202] A version of this chapter originally appeared as "Futile Counsels: Prophecy and Poetry in John Lydgate's *Troy Book*," in *Essays in Medieval Studies* 35 (2021): 95-114.

[203] I will be using Henry Bergen's edition throughout this chapter (John Lydgate, *Troy Book*, [London: Early English Text Society, 1906 and 1908]). See Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, 79-80 for a list of the manuscripts of *Troy Book*. See Lesley Lawton, "The Illustration of Late Medieval Secular Texts, with Special Reference to Lydgate's *Troy Book*," in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1983); A. S. G. Edwards, "Lydgate Manuscripts: Some Directions for Future Research," in *Manuscripts and Readers in Fifteenth-Century England: The Literary Implications of Manuscript Study*, ed. Derek Pearsall (Cambridge, UK: D. S. Brewer, 1983); and Robert R. Edwards, "John Lydgate and the Remaking of Classical Epic," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558)*, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 479-82, on manuscripts and early print editions of Lydgate's work. For Lydgate's life, historical context, and poetry overall, see Lois A. Ebin, *John Lydgate* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1985), 1-3; and Robert J. Meyer-Lee, "John Lydgate's Major Poems," in *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 59. For Lydgate's background at Bury St. Edmond's, see Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1970), 22-32. For his influence and popularity in his own time, see Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 2; and Robert J. Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power from Chaucer to Wyatt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 53-54. For his subsequent decline, see Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 2-4. Scholars see Lydgate variously as either "typically medieval" or as "proto-humanist"; see Derek Pearsall, "Lydgate as Innovator," *Modern Language Quarterly* 53.1 (1992), 5, for Lydgate as typically medieval; and see Alain Renoir, *The Poetry of John Lydgate* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), for Lydgate as a proto-Renaissance figure. For further notes on Lydgate's role as a "transitional figure" between medieval and early modern, see Rita Copeland, "Introduction: England and the Classics from the Early Middle Ages to Early Humanism," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558)*, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 13; and Larry Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 322.

Valois.[204] Lydgate aims for the most part to translate Guido's text faithfully, but he expands upon the Latin substantially, adding lengthy moralization, commentary on his sources, praise of Chaucer,[205] and an envoy to his king. Although this poem—one of several Lydgate wrote on classical subjects[206]—was commissioned by Henry V and

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[204] For the commissioning of *Troy Book* by Henry V, see Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 65; and Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 69 and 125. Scattergood discusses the historical circumstances of Treaty of Troyes (V.J. Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* (London: Blandford Press, 1971), 70-71). For the references within *Troy Book* to the events of Henry's reign, see Derek Pearsall, *John Lydgate (1371-1449): A Bio-bibliography* (Victoria: English Literary Studies, 1997), 18; and Pearsall, "Innovator," 14. For a view of Lydgate's attitude towards Henry as positive in *Troy Book*, see Ebin, *John Lydgate*, 11. For Henry V's need to "legitimate himself both in the eyes of the public and in those of his father," see Robert J. Meyer-Lee, "Lydgate's Laureate Prose," in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006), 45 (see also Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power*, 64). Baswell writes that the *Troy Book* "explicitly links Trojan empire with English royal lineage and imperial ambitions" and that "The closing sections of *Troy Book* celebrate the Treaty of Troyes and Henry's marriage with Catherine Valois" (Christopher Baswell, "England's Antiquities: Middle English Literature and the Classical Past," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350-c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 237). Straker discusses how Lydgate uses the marriage of Henry and Katherine as a critique of Henry in the context of the *Troy Book*: "Far from considering Lydgate to be the naïve, uncontentious mouthpiece of his royal patrons, I see him offering Henry a firm admonition cloaked in eulogy. His celebration of Henry's victory is overshadowed by the cycle of calamity he narrates, militating against any hope that Henry might break this cycle. Among all the diplomatic successes he could have celebrated (such as Henry's military victories, the Anglo-Burgundian alliance, or the dauphin's disgrace), Lydgate chooses the royal marriage, a political manoeuvre that his narrative repeatedly discredits" (Scott-Morgan Straker, "Rivalry and Reciprocity in Lydgate's *Troy Book*," *New Medieval Literatures* 3 [1999]: 146).

[205] Seth Lerer's *Chaucer and His Readers* examines the construction of Chaucerian poetics by Lydgate and other fifteenth-century poets (*Chaucer and His Readers: Imagining the Author in Late-Medieval England* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993]). For Lydgate's references to Chaucer throughout his works, see David R. Carlson, "The Chronology of Lydgate's Chaucer References," *The Chaucer Review* 38.3 (2004). For a defense of Lydgate's use of Chaucer, see Renoir, *Poetry of John Lydgate*, 56; and C. David Benson, "Critic and Poet: What Lydgate and Henryson Did to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde,"* in *Writing After Chaucer: Essential Readings in Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Daniel J. Pinti (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 227-28. Nicholas Watson looks at Lydgate's misogynistic refashioning of Chaucer's Criseyde to examine the relation between the two poets; he claims, "In short, *Troy Book* imitates the structure and tragic tone of *Troilus and Criseyde*, but displaces it as a major historical poem by pushing its narrative to the periphery of its own sphere of interest, and by exposing its concerns as finally unworthy of the reader's attention" ("Outdoing Chaucer: Lydgate's *Troy Book* and Henryson's *Testament of Cresseid* as Competitive Imitations of *Troilus and Criseyde*," in *Shifts and Transpositions in Medieval Narrative: A Festschrift for Dr Elspeth Kennedy*, ed. Karen Pratt [Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1994], 100). Baswell sees Lydgate's relation to Chaucer as part of the *Troy Book*'s "imperial project;" see Christopher Baswell, "*Troy Book*: How Lydgate Translates Chaucer into Latin," in *Translation Theory and Practice in the Middle Ages*, ed. Jeanette Beer (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1996), 216-17.

[206] His *Siege of Thebes* (1422) presents a similar sustained narrative of the destruction of an ancient city, and *Fall of Princes* (1431-1438), though a collection of exempla rather than a sustained narrative, is rife with classical, as well as biblical and historical, tales. See *The Siege of Thebes*, ed. Robert R. Edwards

serves his interests by imagining a chivalric ideal, by legitimizing Lancastrian rule, and by establishing English as a viable poetic and national language, Lydgate's text, though apparently propagandistic in nature, does not simply or unproblematically praise Henry's imperialistic ambitions.[207] In the *Troy Book*, Lydgate adopts the roles both of court poet and of monastic historian, whence he can not only exalt, but also advise and critique his monarch in ways that might lead to peace—one of *Troy Book's* major concerns. In *Troy Book*, then, we see an ambiguous stance, one in which Lydgate ostensibly celebrates the warlike virtues of his king, Henry V, and yet aligns himself and his work with values of peace.

In this chapter, I examine the intersections between prophetic counsel and the work of the poet in the context of *translatio imperii et studii*, and I discuss what Lydgate's prophetic councilors reveal to us about Lydgate's own poetic project of reception and translation. Through his portrayal of prophets in the *Troy Book*, Lydgate

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(Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2001), and *Fall of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen (London: Early English Text Society, 1924-27). For Lydgate as a writer of epic on classical subjects, see Edwards, "John Lydgate," 465; for Lydgate in relation to classical reception, see Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 35.

[207] Propaganda is of course never totally simplistic, but many scholars have implied or claimed outright that Lydgate wrote straightforward propaganda. Straker summarizes their arguments: "[Lydgate] also 'performed a semi-official role as apologist for the Lancastrian government'; he was a producer and disseminator of pro-Lancastrian ideology, asserting the legitimacy of the dynasty to rule over England and France in ways that conform to other royally sponsored discourses. He was, in other words, a propagandist" (Scott-Morgan Straker, "Propaganda, Intentionality, and the Lancastrian Lydgate," in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson [Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006], 98). Straker argues *against* this view of Lydgate as a propagandist, claiming that both Lydgate's work and propaganda generally are more complex. For views of Lydgate as flatterer, see Paul Strohm, "Hoccleve, Lydgate and the Lancastrian Court," in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature*, ed. David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 653-660; Strohm claims that "the characteristic Lancastrian pattern" is "an extreme surface deference to the monarch's aims and an attempt to accommodate all aspects of his programme" (Strohm, "Hoccleve, Lydgate," 659). For the promotion of English as a national language during this time, particularly as encouraged by Henry V and through Lydgate's poetry, see Baswell, "How Lydgate Translates," 215; Pearsall, *Bio-bibliography*, 18; Pearsall, "Innovator," 13; Meyer-Lee, "Laureate Prose," 46; and John H. Fisher, "A Language Policy for Lancastrian England," in *Writing After Chaucer: Essential Readings in Chaucer and the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Daniel J. Pinti (New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998), 88-92.

reveals his alignment with the clerical values of peace and of *translatio studii* over the martial values of war and *translatio imperii*—even though such values of war and empire are those of his patron, Henry V. I argue that his depiction of the failure of prophetic counsel as a means of peace destabilizes his text and undermines his work *as counsel*—while at the same time demonstrating an understanding that, while his own counsel and his prophets' counsel may be offered in vain, counsel alone is not the only function either of prophecy or of poetry. Ultimately, I suggest that both prophetic counsel and Lydgate's poetry, though ineffective as counsel, make space for memory and for imagination: though neither prophets nor poets can save Troy from destruction, both preserve the memory of the past for future generations, and both allow their readers to imagine alternate possible futures.

The *Troy Book* and *translatio*

The *Troy Book* is a translation and adaptation of Guido delle Colonne's Latin prose *Historia,*[208] but in addition to being a translation itself, it also considers questions related to the concept of *translatio imperii et studii.*[209] I use Latin *translatio* to denote

[208] For the medieval story of Troy and its sources, see Ebin, *John Lydgate,* 39-40; Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 122-126; and Benson, "Critic and Poet," 228-29. For Lydgate's minor sources, especially Ovid, see E. Bagby Atwood, "Some Minor Sources of Lydgate's *Troy Book*," *Studies in Philology* 35.1 (1938). Lydgate is not the only Middle English poet to translate Guido; John Clerk's *Destruction of Troy* and the *Laud Troy Book* also translate the *Historia*. For an analysis of these texts and comparisons between them and Lydgate, see C. David Benson, *The History of Troy in Middle English Literature: Guido delle Colonne's* Historia Destructionis Troiae *in Medieval England* (Suffolk: D.S. Brewer, 1980), 35; Alex Mueller, *Translating Troy: Provincial Politics in Alliterative Romance* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2013); and James Simpson, "The Other Book of Troy: Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* in Fourteenth and Fifteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 73.2 (1998).

[209] On medieval ideas concerning *translatio* and translation, see, among others, Batt, "Translation"; Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Lynn Staley, "Translating 'Communitas,'" in *Imagining a Medieval English Nation,* Medieval Cultures, Volume 37, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 261; and Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, 327. On *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii*, see Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1953), 28-29.

transfer, expansion, and movement; *translatio imperii* to denote the transfer of power and empire; *translatio studii* to denote the transfer of knowledge and culture; and English *translation* to denote the work of both translation and adaptation performed by the authors of the Troy legend. By translating a text about Troy, Lydgate inevitably engages with *translatio imperii et studii,* an idea intimately connected with the spread of classical culture and with the Trojan War. The *Troy Book* participates in *translatio studii* as it translates the classical past for the present, and it explores *translatio imperii* as it both supports and critiques Henry's expansion of empire.

As the *Troy Book* reveals, the primary martial values of *translatio imperii* are those of honor, courage, and vengeance; they are above all a warrior's manly virtues, but they are often accompanied by rashness and folly. The primary clerical values of *translatio studii*, however, are those of knowledge, prudence, and peace; though they could work to preserve *imperium*—if obeyed—they are instead often mocked by those who value *translatio imperii,* and, likewise, they often prove ineffective. The value of *translatio studii* as the transfer of knowledge and culture lies in part in its didactic nature, in its potential to keep the recipients of its knowledge from repeating the past's mistakes. Because the values of *translatio imperii*, the expansion of empire, seem opposed to those of *translatio studii*, the warriors of *Troy Book* often reject *studium* and its values, embracing *translatio imperii* instead.

The celebration of *translatio imperii* in Trojan War narratives can be traced back to Virgil's *Aeneid,* which translates the survivors of Troy to Latium as the ancestors of the Roman people. Throughout the poem, Aeneas receives prophecies that predict the

future greatness of Rome and of Augustus. Following Virgil, medieval narratives of the Trojan War ostensibly embrace the values of *translatio imperii*: not only do their narrators look to the past for exemplars of traits such as courtesy and chivalry, but they also—taking Virgil's celebration of Rome as their model—celebrate the Trojans as the originators of the authors' own peoples.[210] English writers perpetuate and adapt this idea:[211] by imagining themselves as descendants of the Trojans (through Brutus, himself a descendant of Aeneas), these writers define themselves as the heirs both to Trojan culture, *studium*, and to Trojan power, *imperium*.[212] But though such texts seem triumphant in embracing *translatio imperii*, their attitudes towards *translatio imperii* are more complex than they appear: *translatio imperii* is in fact accomplished through bloody

[210] In Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the Kings of Britain* 1.6, Aeneas's descendant, Brutus, much like Aeneas himself, must translate Trojan *imperium* to Britain (*History of the Kings of Britain,* ed. and trans. Michael A. Faletra [Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Editions, 2008]). On the Brutus legend and its use in support of *translatio imperii*, see James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution,* The Oxford English Literary History Volume 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 70-71; Matthew Giancarlo, "Speculative Genealogies," in *Middle English*, ed. Paul Strohm, Oxford Twenty-first Century Approaches to Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 355-6; Mueller, *Translating*, 20-21; Emily Wingfield, *The Trojan Legend in Medieval Scottish Literature* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2014), 6; and Thorlac Turville-Petre, "Afterword: The Brutus Prologue to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*," in *Imagining a Medieval English Nation,* Medieval Cultures, Volume 37, ed. Kathy Lavezzo (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 342 .

[211] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* for instance, tells of King Arthur's Trojan ancestry. But *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* is notoriously ambiguous in its attitude towards Arthur and his knights, including Gawain; that ambiguity is apparent in its initial and closing mentions of Troy, in which it is unclear even which traitor is referenced. For the writer of *Sir Gawain,* the English are the heirs to Trojan power and culture, but the merits of such an inheritance are questionable. For the Trojan beginnings of *Sir Gawain*, see Mueller, *Translating,* 167-205, and Turville-Petre, "Afterword."

[212] See, for instance, Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, 45. Troy's legitimizing function was not limited to England; see Marilynn Desmond, "Trojan Itineraries and the Matter of Troy," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558)*, ed. Rita Copeland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Many have argued that, in making England the inheritors of Trojan culture and power, Lydgate also legitimizes Henry V and the Lancastrian dynasty. The literature on the idea of Lancastrian poetics and Lancastrian legitimization—not only through the Troy narrative—is vast; on the idea that Lydgate's work serves to legitimize the Lancastrians or as a kind of laureate poetics, see Pearsall, "Innovator," 13-15; Strohm, "Hoccleve, Lydgate"; Meyer-Lee, "Major Poems," 64; and Fisher, "Language Policy." For cautions against taking this view too far, see Straker, "Propaganda," 99.

warfare and repeated betrayals, and varying levels of pessimism undercut any apparent celebration of martial values.[213]

But two competing traditions lie behind medieval retellings of the Trojan War and Lydgate's *Troy Book*: the apparently triumphant narrative of *translatio imperii* exemplified in Virgil's *Aeneid*, and the pessimistic critique of *translatio imperii* exemplified in the late antique texts of Dares and Dictys.[214] The versions of the legend promulgated by Dares and Dictys are expanded and adapted in the twelfth century by Benoît de Saint-Maure in his French *Roman de Troie*, which is then translated and adapted into Latin prose history by Guido delle Colonne. This text, the *Historia destructionis Troiae*, as mentioned above, is the major source for Lydgate's *Troy Book.* In this tradition, the warmongering of the Trojans is tyrannical, and the narrative blames the war less on the gods than on the Trojans themselves.[215] The Trojan rulers willfully

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[213] Scholars perennially debate the question of to what extent the *Aeneid* subverts its own agenda, and the violence, war, and death that accompany the Trojans' *translatio* to Italy suggests an understanding of the loss and sacrifice required for *translatio imperii*. Though Virgil celebrates the Roman *imperium*, he is not ignorant of its price.

[214] Dares is supposedly a Trojan ally, while Dictys is Greek. Simpson notes, "Precisely because the truth about the war is open to human manipulation, the Guido-tradition is aware of the ways in which Homer has skewed events to favour the Greeks; as eyewitnesses from different sides, the combined accounts of Dictys and Dares are a guarantee of truth" (Simpson, *Reform*, 86). For more on Dares and Dictys, see Baswell, "England's Antiquities," 235; Ebin, *John Lydgate,* 40; and Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 122-24. See also my fuller discussion in Chapter 1. On Benoît and Guido, and their influence on Middle English, see Ebin, *John Lydgate,* 40-41; Baswell, "England's Antiquities," 234; Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 124-125; Simpson, "Other Book," 406-7; Simpson, *Reform*, 77-81; Sylvia Federico, *New Troy: Fantasies of Empire in the Late Middle Ages* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), xvi-ii; Mueller, *Translating*, 3; and Wingfield, *Trojan Legend,* 3. Guido is the source for other English texts, including the *Laud Troy Book* and John Clerk's *Destruction of Troy*, both of which translate Guido's Latin prose into poetry; it also serves as one of Chaucer's sources in *Troilus and Criseyde*. Guido's original text betrays a deep pessimism about warfare and human agency; he presents the Trojan War as destructive and meaningless. The Middle English poets who translate him vary in the extent to which they share that pessimism.

[215] Whereas Virgil, following Homer, seems to place blame for the Trojan War (and thus the happier destiny of Rome) on the gods (see *Aeneid* 2.705-9 and *Iliad* 3.172-3), the almost complete absence of the divine machinery in Dares and Dictys and in the texts that draw on them seems to remove blame from the gods and place it on the shoulders of the Trojans. The influence of Dares and Dictys on medieval views of the Trojan War story was transmitted through texts such as Joseph of Exeter's *Ylias,* Benoît de Saint-Maure's *Roman de Troie,* and Guido's *Historia*. For Guido's views of the cause of the Trojan War and of

choose warfare over prudence, and ultimately Troy falls by betrayal from within. Thus English texts—even those, such as the *Troy Book*, that apparently celebrate their kings' conquests—suggest that the Trojan inheritance of violence, bloodshed, war, and treachery is not so noble as it might appear.[216] We discover that the logic of *translatio imperii* in fact involves, tragically, the destruction of the initial *imperium*. The tensions between these two traditions and their attitudes towards empire play out in the *Troy Book* in Lydgate's celebration of Henry V, a celebration comparable to Virgil's celebration of Rome and Augustus, and in his critique of warfare and violence, comparable to the similar critiques made by Dares and Dictys. Drawing on both traditions, *Troy Book* paradoxically celebrates imperialistic kings while critiquing the expansion of empire.

Thus, by translating a text about Troy, Lydgate necessarily engages with complex and conflicting ideas of *translatio imperii et studii*. But the larger historical and personal context of his translation—the relationship between himself and his patron—also reflects this tension between *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii.*[217] Lydgate translates Guido's work not only from Latin prose to English verse, but also from legendary history to a didactic mirror for princes, meant to guide kings in the correct way to rule; he writes *Troy Book* at the will of Henry V, and he addresses and advises Henry directly throughout the text.[218] This translation of Guido into a mirror for princes locates itself in

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its violence and imperialism, see Benson, *History*, 29; Mueller, *Translating*, 22; and Simpson, "Other Book," 422; see also my discussion in Chapter 1.

[216] See Mueller, *Translating* and Benson, *History* for other English poets' views concerning Troy.

[217] The tension between values of war and peace is in part created by the "division of power between aristocrats and the learned" which Simpson discusses as fundamental to the Guido-tradition (Simpson, *Reform*, 98-99).

[218] Watson writes, "Thus if we view the poem as a refashioning of the *Historia* into a work of advice for its young royal reader, it emerges as a serious and crafted exposition of princely virtue, and the dangers that threaten it" (Watson, "Outdoing Chaucer," 94-95). Pearsall claims that Lydgate "is arguably the first

the tensions between the values of *translatio imperii* and *translatio studii* through the relative positions of Lydgate and of Henry. As a monk and a poet, Lydgate aligns himself with the clerical values of *translatio studii*,[219] but Henry—a warrior-king famed for his military successes in France—is aligned instead with the martial values of *translatio imperii*.[220] The *translatio* of the story of Troy has the potential to guide its recipients, including Henry, in preserving *imperium,* and despite Lydgate's apparent celebration of Henry's martial prowess, Lydgate is more concerned with the preservation of Henry's *imperium* than with its spread. Thus, the *Troy Book*, as a mirror for princes and a work of counsel, must navigate these tensions between *translatio studii* and *translatio imperii*, offering counsel aligned with clerical values that is intended for those with martial values.

Prophetic counsel is a useful locus for examining such tensions.[221] In the *Troy Book,* moments of prophecy and of prophetic counsel complicate these ideas of *translatio*

English poet, or at least the first poet writing in English, to fashion his poems as instruments of royal policy" (Pearsall, "Innovator," 15). For Lydgate's work as a mirror for princes and as advice for rulers, see Watson, "Outdoing Chaucer," 93-95, 100-101; Ebin, *John Lydgate,* 44; Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry,* 287; Wingfield, *Trojan Legend,* 183; and Meyer-Lee, "Major Poems," 62. For mirrors for princes and medieval attitudes towards advice more generally, especially in England, see Richard Firth Green, *Poets and Princepleasers: Literature and the English Court in the Late Middle Ages* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 137-8; Judith Ferster, *Fictions of Advice: The Literature and Politics of Counsel in Late Medieval England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996); and Scanlon, *Narrative, Authority, and Power*, 82. On the giving of advice to Lancastrian kings, see Paul Strohm, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation, 1399-1422* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), in particular Chapter 7 ("Advising the Lancastrian Prince," 173-195).

[219] For Lydgate's preference for peace over war, see Ebin, *John Lydgate,* 43; Renoir, *Poetry of John Lydgate*, 100; and Scattergood, *Politics and Poetry*, 100-2. Simpson and Meyer-Lee both point out the contradictions inherent in Lydgate's attitudes towards peace and war; see Simpson, "Other Book," 419; and Meyer-Lee, "Major Poems," 63.

[220] On Henry V as a soldier and warrior-king and on his battles in France, see Edouard Perroy, *The Hundred Years War*, trans. W.B. Wells (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 235-44.

[221] On political prophecy and kingship in Lancastrian England, see Strohm, *England's Empty Throne,* in particular Chapter 1 ("Prophecy and Kingship," 1-31); Strohm writes of such prophecy, "Prophecy as prediction is best suited to those out of power and wishing for an amelioration of circumstance. For those *in* power, or even with a finger-hold on power and seeking its consolidation, a retrospective emphasis on

imperii et studii and of Lydgate's own poetic purpose in his translation. Like other medieval narratives of the Trojan War, *Troy Book* uses prophecy to explore the conflict between the martial values required for *translatio imperii* and the clerical values required for *translatio studii*. Lydgate uses those prophets who are faithful to Troy, namely Helenus and Cassandra, as mouthpieces of peace, and in describing the truthful counsel of these prophets, he seeks to provide similar counsel for English rulers such as Henry V. But in addition to describing prophets who attempt to save Troy from destruction, the *Troy Book* also provides a negative exemplum in depicting a traitorous prophet, Calchas, who abandons Troy rather than attempting to advise it, and who prophesies victory for the Greeks rather than advice for the Trojans. Through Calchas, Lydgate depicts not only the betrayal of one's kingdom, but also a betrayal of clerical values and a failure of imagination.

I argue that, in the *Troy Book,* the prophets' project of counsel within the narrative is analogous to Lydgate's project of counsel outside the narrative: Lydgate aligns the work of prophetic counsel with his own work of poetic counsel while simultaneously depicting the failure of such counsel. Much like the prophets of the Trojan War, Lydgate attempts to guide Henry in preserving *imperium* through the values of *translatio studii*. This emphasis on the values of *translatio studii* is, in the *Troy Book,* especially evident in moments where Priam and the other leading Trojans fail to listen to prophetic counsels of peace. The prophecies of Helenus and Cassandra are meant to preserve expansive *imperium* but often involve an attempt to prevent its *translatio*: the prophets recognize

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prophecy's fulfillment is far more serviceable. Lancastrian prophecy is therefore almost invariably retrospective, designed both to secure the throne and to pre-empt more visionary, and hence more dangerous, forms" (Strohm, *England's Empty Throne,* 6-7).

that any attempts to expand power and empire will lead inexorably to the destruction of Troy itself. In depicting such counsel, the text explores this conflict between the martial values required for *translatio imperii* and the clerical values required for *translatio studii*. The martial values of *translatio imperii* lead to destruction, but the clerical values of *studium*, while holding the possibility of protecting the *imperium*, fail to have any effect.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will examine the three major prophets who appear in Lydgate's text—Helenus, Cassandra, and Calchas—and what their counsels reveal about both prophetic counsel and Lydgate's poetic project. In Helenus, we see a prophet guided by reason and providing counsel in proper political channels. In discussing Helenus's political prophecies, I argue that prophecy as political counsel presupposes human agency: for counsel to have any effect, a king must be able to choose between different potential courses of action. In Cassandra, we find counsel guided by excess and emotion rather than by reason; nonetheless, Lydgate embraces her counsels as true. Here, I argue that the nature of prophecy as knowledge in fact undermines its work as counsel: counsel allows for multiple possibilities, but knowledge claims only one outcome is possible. Finally, in Calchas, we see Lydgate's rejection of the councilor who betrays not only his king, but also the values of peace and *translatio studii*; Calchas may recognize the futility of trying to save Troy through prophecy, but his betrayal represents a failure of imagination, one which Lydgate rejects.

Each of these prophets is in some way associated with the values of *translatio studii*: like other narrators of the Trojan War, Lydgate suggests a parallel between prophetic knowledge and the knowledge made available by *translatio studii*. Prophecy in itself is, of course, a form of knowledge, but these characters are also associated with

knowledge more generally. Lydgate draws an explicit connection between prophetic knowledge and knowledge writ large in the *Troy Book*; he describes Helenus as a scholar, "a man of greet science, / And renomed, þer-with in special, / In alle þe artis called liberal" (II.278-80),[222] and later he remarks, "Elenus in clergie and science / Was wel expert" (II.4858-59). He describes Cassandra in similar terms, claiming that she "ay in studie & contemplacioun / Of sondry bokis…wolde hir occupie, / And specially of astronomye" (II.5008-10).[223] I argue that these prophetic characters are associated with *translatio studii* and with knowledge more generally in part because their roles within the texts are similar to the role of those authors themselves who translate the texts and thereby participate in *translatio studii*: the prophets of the Trojan War serve primarily in an advisory role—providing their audience within the text with the knowledge needed to preserve Troy—much as the medieval authors of Trojan War narratives can provide their own audiences with the counsel needed to preserve Troy's descendants.

The prophets of Troy recognize the destructiveness of *translatio imperii* and try to warn their rulers away from such values. But in the *Troy Book's* prophecies, we see that these negative reactions of the Trojans to prophetic counsel derive in large part from the deep-seated conflict between martial and clerical values, between the values required for *translatio imperii* and those required for *translatio studii.* But, as Lydgate establishes, this martial rejection of clerical values is ultimately misguided: even though *studium* seems opposed to *imperium*, this transfer of knowledge is in fact meant to preserve *imperium*—even if that preservation means preventing its expansion, its *translatio.* In

[222] On the liberal arts in the Middle Ages, see Curtius, *European Literature*, 36-39.

[223] He also emphasizes her religious devotion (II.363-68) and calls her one of the Sibyls (II.5012).

Lydgate and in the Guido-tradition, the prophets' intention in prophesying is to avert the destruction of Troy. The structure of their prophecies—*if* we avoid Paris's counsel and pursue peace, *then* we can avoid destruction—suggests that Troy's fate is not yet settled and that their prophetic counsel, if heeded, could in fact save Troy.[224] Their knowledge places limits on the expansion of *imperium*: there is a possibility that Trojan *imperium* will remain powerful and strong if it does not attempt too much; it is Troy's excessive ambition that will destroy them. But Priam and his sons, Helenus excepted, ignore these prudential warnings; they send Paris to abduct Helen, and thus doom the Trojan *imperium* to destruction.

Helenus: reasonable counsel and the choices of kings

In the early council scene in *Troy Book*, Priam's sons debate whether or not to go to war with the Greeks and to abduct Helen as vengeance for the abduction of Hesione.[225] Lydgate depicts the prophets of this scene as attempting to guide Priam through reason and rational discourse so as to keep Troy safe; in this way, their function within the text is much like Lydgate's own in writing a mirror for princes. Lydgate aligns himself most nearly with Helenus, the son of Priam, and with other prophets who likewise give prophecies of political counsel clothed in learned rhetoric. Helenus is noted for his

[224] For moments when Helenus and Pentheus employ an *if-then* structure for their prophecies, see *Troy Book* II.2925-27, 2939-40, 2983-84, 3171-73, 3188-92, and 3205-06. Cassandra in *Troy Book* tends to ask the Trojans questions: *what* are they doing, *why* they are proceeding, and the like (see, for instance, II.3229-30, II.3245-3265). Note that Lydgate himself uses an *if-then* structure in affirming his prophets' counsels (II.3295-3306).

[225] This scene is described by Dares in *De excidio Troiae* 6-8; it is then adapted in Benoît de Saint-Maure and Guido and thus makes its way into a host of medieval and early modern texts, generally appearing in these texts before the war begins. Simpson, writing of the Middle English *Destruction of Troy* (another translation of Guido's *Historia*), notes that such "counsel sessions and diplomatic receptions are…of vital significance, pregnant as they are with different possible futures" (Simpson, *Reform*, 86). See Baswell, "England's Antiquities," 235; Edwards, "John Lydgate," 475; and Mueller, *Translating*, 66-68, on comparable council scenes in Clerk's *Destruction of Troy*.

knowledge and book learning. He gives his prophecies in council, as advice given alongside the non-prophetic advice of other councilors. He presents his prophecies with reasoned speech and rational rhetoric. The heroic characters, however, respond to his prophecies with mockery, and this response has implications for how we should read Lydgate's understanding of his own counsels of peace.

Lydgate gives these prophetic councilors ample space to prophesy[226] and emphasizes the truth of their counsel. These prophetic councilors speak most clearly in a council scene from book II, after the first sack of Troy but before the Trojan War proper has begun. In the first sack of Troy, the king Laomedon, Priam's father, was killed, and Priam's sister Hesione was taken captive as the concubine of the Greek warrior Telamon. Priam, away during the first sack of Troy, returns to rebuild his city in grand style. With that complete, and his reign established, he turns to the question of vengeance for his father's death and his sister's shame and of the recovery of his sister from the Greeks. He sends Antenor to request Hesione's return, but to no avail, and when Antenor returns dishonored by the Greeks, Priam wants to go to war. Thus, in this first council scene, Priam asks his sons what they should do about Hesione's dishonor.[227] In this scene, we find the clerical values of prophets such as Helenus opposed by the martial values of *translatio imperii*, namely honor, vengeance, and warfare; and the martial characters who oppose these prophets employ mockery and derision to persuade Priam to ignore prophetic counsels of peace in favor of hot-headed counsels of war.

[226] In general, Lydgate gives all of his speakers ample space to speak.

[227] Note the multi-generational nature of this conflict—reminiscent of fifteenth-century politics—as it passes from Laomedon to Priam and to Priam's sons.

The councilors of this first council scene are primarily Priam's sons Hector, Paris, Deiphobus, Helenus, and Troilus, whom Lydgate has already described at II.234-326. His descriptions of these sons clearly foreshadow the kinds of advice they will give their father. In Lydgate's description, Hector alone balances the values of *translatio imperii et studii*, both martial and clerical values.[228] He embodies what it means to be a good warrior and is "þe Rote and stok of cheualrie, / And of knyȝthod verray souereyn flour," but he is "Discret also, prudent and vertuous" (II.244-45, 251). Though a warrior, Hector is prudent. The other brothers also fall clearly into martial or clerical categories. Paris, Deiphobus, and Troilus are heroic warriors, while Helenus is described in purely clerical terms; he is

> Sadde and discret, and of hiȝe prudence,
> And was also a man of greet science,
> And renomed, þer-with in special,
> In alle þe artis called liberal,
> For he in hem was expert ariȝt. (II.277-81)

Unlike his warrior brothers, Helenus is serious, circumspect, wise, and knowledgeable,[229] an "expert"[230] in the liberal arts rather than in the art of war. The values of these brothers

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[228] Interestingly, Hector's martial prowess is spoken of through books: Lydgate begins his description of Hector with the phrase, "For liche as bokis of hym specefye" (II.243). For Lydgate's Hector as an exemplary figure, see Ebin, *John Lydgate*, 46; and Andrew King, "Romance," in *A Companion to Fifteenth-Century English Poetry*, ed. Julia Boffey and A.S.G. Edwards (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2013), 194-95.

[229] The *Middle English Dictionary* defines s*ad* as "grave, sober, serious; dignified, solemn; discreet, wise; stern" (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "sad," edited by Robert E. Lewis et al. [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1952-2001]). *Discret* means "morally discerning, prudent, circumspect" (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "discret"), and *prudence* indicates "wisdom, intelligence; discretion, foresight, shrewdness; knowledge, words of wisdom" (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v. "*prudence"). Middle English *science* can refer to book-learning, the seven liberal arts (mentioned again in the following line), or to knowledge more generally (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "science").

[230] Middle English *expert* can indicate having personal experience of a thing—as the Wife of Bath says when she claims she is an "expert" in "tribulacion in mariage" (Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, 3rd ed, ed. Larry D. Benson [Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987], *Wife of Bath's Prologue* 173-74)—or being well informed and skillful (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.*

determine their arguments in the council scene: Hector balances a desire for honor with the caution of prudence; Paris, Deiphobus, and Troilus push Priam to war; Helenus urges Priam to be prudent and embrace peace.

Thus, when Priam asks each son what to do, his first three sons give unsurprisingly warlike advice: Hector wants vengeance, but advises prudence; Paris suggests the rape of Helen and the invasion of Greece; and Deiphobus echoes Paris. Hector's speech moderates the values of honor and prudence: he establishes firmly his desire to take vengeance on the Greeks ("For Ire of hem I brenne as doþ þe glede; / I thurst her blood more þan othere mede," II.2221-22), before he suggests a more cautious approach, advising Priam to "prudently consyderen in ȝour herte / Al, only nat þe gynnyng but þe ende" (II.2232-33).[231] Hector, pitched by Lydgate as a model for Henry V, embraces martial values without rejecting prudence. But Paris immediately dismisses the prudential approach and demonstrates the power of misinterpreted prophecy: he describes his dream (the famous Judgment of Paris) and uses that dream to argue that Venus will favor their undertaking. He does not comprehend that his dream indicates only his success in taking Helen back to Troy and nothing about the disastrous

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"expert"); it can also indicate that a thing is evident or clear. Lydgate uses the word in all three senses in his writings.

[231] Lydgate often has his characters "consider"—inspect, examine, contemplate, attend, be concerned about—or invite those whom they counsel to "consider" such issues, especially questions of beginnings and endings (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "consideren"). Aeneas, for instance (when he still gives good counsel, long before his betrayal of Troy), advises Priam "Þat ȝoure noble, royal excellence / Consydre shulde, with ful hiȝe prudence / Þe final ende þat may after swe" in the question of what to do with Thoas, a Greek prisoner of war (III.3157). Cassandra "With-Inne hir silfe considered & beheld"—much as Priam is advised to consider "in [his] herte"—the armor of her brother Cassibellan at his funeral (III.2239); upon this consideration, she offers a true prophecy concerning the ending to which the war will lead. Miseres, a Trojan knight, calling on the Trojans to rescue Troilus, commands them, "Considereth now vn-to ȝour hiȝe fame…How þis day, þoruȝ ȝoure necligence...Of þe Grekis Troylus is I-take / Sool in þe feld" (III.1037-1041). Medea even "considereth euery circumstaunce / Bothe of his port, and his gouernaunce" upon Jason's arrival, when she decides that she wants him (I.1975-6).

consequences. Nonetheless, Priam accepts Paris's dream as prophetic, and in response, Lydgate-as-narrator interrupts to exclaim,

> But seye, Priam, allas! where was þi witte,
> Of necligence for to take kepe,
> þi trust to sette on dremys or on slepe!
> Ful þinne was þi discrecioun,
> To take a grounde of fals illusioun,
> For to procede liche þi fantasye
> Vp-on a sweuene meynt with flaterye!
> Allas! resoun was no þing þi guyde! (II.2812-19)

Paris's dream alone—incorrectly interpreted and intending "flaterye"[232]—is no basis for invasion and war. Without "discrecioun," Priam is incapable of distinguishing between true and false prophecy and thereby to make a sound judgment.[233] Afterward, Deiphobus's speech is a mere coda of additional support for Paris; he brings no prudence to the conversation.

But after Paris and Deiphobus speak, Helenus prophesies. He first reminds his audience that he has provided them with true and reliable prophecy (II.2913-2919) before he predicts that, if the Trojans follow Paris's advice, they will be destroyed: "ȝif Paris into Grece wende, / Trusteþ me wel, it wil vs alle schende" (II.2925-2926).[234] He therefore advises that Priam avoid this mission to Greece: "I seye ȝou pleynly, for me list nat glose,

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[232] Such "flaterye"—"dishonest praise" and "coaxing speech" (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "flaterie")—will reappear when the Greeks, pretending they want to offer the Trojan Horse to Pallas "þoruȝ holynes, vnder ypocrosye, / Falsly feyned by fraude & flaterie" (IV.6173-74), ask Priam for permission to enter Troy. Again Priam listens to flattery—and it leads to the destruction of Troy.

[233] Middle English *discrecioun* indicates here "the ability to distinguish between right and wrong, moral discernment or judgment" and "the ability to make sound decisions, practical judgment" (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "discrecioun"). Lydgate has already scolded Priam for his lack of *discrecioun* in wanting to war with the Greeks at all at II.1821-23 ("Discrecioun, so prudent and so sad, / Avisely þat schulde þe haue lad / From þe tracis of sensualite"), describing the trait of *discrecioun* in language similar to that used to describe Helenus at II.277.

[234] Note the emphasis on "schende" (to mislead, to ruin, or to destroy, *Middle English Dictionary s.v.* "shenden") through its placement at the end of the line and through its rhyme with "wende."

/ ȝe schal repente ȝif ȝe Paris sende / In-to Grece, þe whiche God defende!"[235] (II.2938-2940). Helenus's intention is not simply to proclaim his knowledge, but to persuade Priam to choose another path. To aid in his persuasion, he not only establishes his own trustworthiness and gives his own advice, but also attempts to invoke Priam's pity, claiming that Hecuba, Priam's wife, "Schal lede hir lyf, þoruȝ Grekis cruelte, / In sorwe & wo and in captiuite" (II.2967-68) and that "Innocentis mercyles schal blede" (II.2971). His intention is to persuade his father to follow his counsel of peace instead of Paris's counsel of war, and his advice seems nearly to persuade the Trojans: Lydgate writes that the rest of the Trojans "Sat in silence, stille as any stoon, / Powerles her hertis to reswme" in response (II.2990-91).

Why does Helenus' prophecy offer more reasonable advice than Paris's dream? First, Helenus has already established himself as a truthful and reliable prophet; he begins his speech carefully and reasonably, rather than with the emotive warmongering of Paris. Second, while both prophecies align with the speaker's own desires—Paris wants Helen, Helenus wants peace—Paris's desires are self-serving, while Helenus's desires are in the interests of all of Troy. Finally, Helenus considers the whole story, beginning to end, while Paris is short-sighted, concerned only with the immediate future.

But one brother remains: the youngest, Troilus, who proclaims Helenus a coward and echoes the advice of his more warlike brothers. Troilus is "ȝong, fresche, and lusty, & coraious also, / And ay desytrous for to haue a-do / In armys manly, as longeth to a

[235] To "glose" can of course mean to "comment on, interpret, explain, paraphrase," but it can also mean "to obscure the truth" or "to speak with blanishment, flattery, or deceit" (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "glosen"). When Helenus says he "list nat glose," not only does he indicate his intention to speak plainly and truthfully, without excessive commentary, but Lydgate also sets him in contrast to Paris's intention of "flaterye" (II.2818).

kny3t" (II.2995-97), and he is disgusted at the Trojans' reactions to his brother's prophecy. He appeals to their sense of honor and courage, calling them "noble & worþi, sittyng enviroun, / Of hi3e prudence & gret discrecioun, / Manful also, and of hi3e corage" (II.3001-3), and he belittles Helenus as a "cowarde prest" (II.3006), critiquing the priesthood as full of men who desire to live in lust and gluttony and who avoid travail and battle:

> Sith þei echon, as 3e schal euer fynde,
> Desyre more, verrayly, of kynde,
> To lyue in lust & voide awey traueyle,
> And dedly hate to heren of bataille;
> …þis her Ioye and þis is her delyte,
> In etyng, drinkyng, and in couetyse
> Is her studie,[236] and fully to deuyse
> How þei may folwe her lust, with-oute more,
> Of ri3t nou3t ellis sette þei no store. (II.3007-10, 3016-20)

He claims Helenus is "Ferful for drede as a litel mows" (II.3024) and belittles the very idea of prophecy: "Lat be, lat be!…Men may devine, but al is but folye / To taken hede; for þei don but lye" (II.3036-3044). Troilus's words, based very little in the desire to preserve Troy itself and fully dependent on a warrior's desire for glory, convince the Trojans to reject the advice of Helenus.[237]

When other prophets echo Helenus's prophecy, their prophecies too are rejected. First Pentheus addresses Priam, beginning, much like Helenus, by explaining why the Trojans should trust his prophecy as true and reliable (II.3161-83).[238] Again like Helenus,

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[236] Note how Troilus distorts the idea of "studie" here.

[237] For Lydgate's mixed attitudes of praise and doubt towards Troilus's—and Henry V's—"manly quality of prowess" and "victorious manliness," see Richard W. Kaeuper and Montgomery Bohna, "War and Chivalry," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350-c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 275 and 282.

[238] Technically speaking, Pentheus himself is not a prophet; he is reporting the prophecies of his aged father, Euphorbius, whose prophecies have never gone awry: Euphorbius knew "a-forn of euery þing / By

he then pleads with Priam to put aside his destructive intent and not send Paris into Greece (II.3188-3206); at the very least he should "In Paris stede lat som oþer wende" (II.3208). But whereas Helenus is met initially with silence and is not mocked until Troilus's speech, Pentheus is immediately scolded: "And sodeinly þei gan echon to chace / At Pentheus, & lowde ageyn hym crie, / Reprevyng hym and þe prophesye" (II.3212-14). The last prophetic attempt to stop Paris's mission to Greece is Cassandra's, who reacts not with rational counsel, but with emotional outburst. When she learns of Priam's plan to send Paris to Greece, she "with gret affray / Of sodeyn wo gan crye 'weyllaway:' / 'Allas!' quod sche, 'allas! what wil ȝe don?'" (II.3227-29). She weeps, she sighs, she wails, she swoons, she tears her hair, and "With woful rage & many pitous sown / Sche made a mortal lamentacioun: / For to be ded, sche myȝt hir nat with-holde" (II.3235-7). Lydgate describes no audience for her initial lamentation, but soon Cassandra goes to her father, where she "gan to clepe & crye, / Besechyng hym to schape remedy, / With pitous vois" (II.3271-73). But Lydgate notes that "al hir clamour was nat but in veyn" (II.3277).[239] Priam is set on his course and will listen to no counsel that does not confirm his purpose. After Troilus's speech against prophets, prophetic counsel has no power to persuade.

At this point, Lydgate's narrator intrudes, claiming that Priam should have listened to reason and to his prophets' counsel: if the Trojans had heeded Helenus,

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prescience and by for-wetyng, / To telle pleinly þoroȝ his philosophie" (II.3177-79). Pentheus claims that the Trojans should trust him both because of his father's foreknowledge and because of his own "feith" and "trouþe" (II.3165).

[239] Middle English *clamour* indicates not only making noise, but also lamenting, making an entreaty, disapproving, stating a grievance, or making a complaint (*Middle English Dictionary, s.v.* "clamour"); Cassandra's "clamour" fulfils all of these functions. The word can have a political valence, as when the Greeks make a "clamour" in disapproval of Amphiorax's prophecy in Lydgate's *Siege of Thebes* (III.2933).

Pentheus, and Cassandra, then "In swiche meschef þei had nat be lorn, / But floured ȝit in her felicite, / With-oute damage and aduersite" (II.3304-6). Troy, Lydgate suggests, could have been saved—except that, as he notes, "Fortune wil haue hir cours alwey" (II.3307). Though he indicates that counsel may have no effect, due to the workings of Fortune, Lydgate's narrator still falls on the side of prudence; he acclaims the rightness of counsel that opposes war and promotes peace. Lydgate's narrative intrustion indicates his support of such reasonable prophetic councilors and performs a similar function: through these prophets, Lydgate too offers counsels of peace to Henry V.[240]

As a clerical figure who emphasizes peace over war, Lydgate aligns himself and his poetry with the prophetic work of Helenus. Much like the prophets he describes, Lydgate's work—both here in *Troy Book* and in other works, such as *Siege of Thebes* and *Fall of Princes,* fulfills political functions as it praises, critiques, and advises rulers. He and Helenus both give counsels in alignment with the clerical values of *translatio studii* and in response to the martial values of *translatio imperii.* Their desire is not to expand the empire through war, but to preserve it in peace. Both prophet and poet use these values to advise those who lead the *imperium*. Helenus attempts to persuade Priam to reject the destructive values of *translatio imperii* in favor of the values of *translatio*

[240] The *Troy Book* does not contain Lydgate's only examples of such a rational prophetic councilor; his *Siege of Thebes*, written shortly after the completion of the *Troy Book*, likewise depicts a rational and reasonable prophet, Amphiorax. Amphiorax is a Greek who foretells the destruction the Greek army will face if they attack Thebes. He is dragged off to battle unwillingly, and when a chasm in the earth opens in front of him in the middle of battle, he proceeds to drive his chariot straight down into hell. Amphiorax, like Helenus and Pentheus in the *Troy Book*, speaks in favor of peace and is mocked as a coward; but for all his similarities to Helenus and Pentheus, he complexifies this idea of the rational prophet, for he is also a *reluctant* prophet, one who does not wish to deliver his prophecies, for he knows his prophecies will accomplish nothing. Amphiorax's prophetic counsel, like that of Helenus and Pentheus, goes unheard. Thus, the figure of Amphiorax, like the figures of Helenus and Pentheus, suggests not only that truthful councilors of peace are ignored by kings and rulers to the detriment of those kings, but also that, because fate cannot be avoided, the councilors are helpless to save society or themselves.

studii, as Lydgate advises Henry V to seek peace above war. As a monk, Lydgate also shares Helenus's concern for peace, and he concludes the *Troy Book* with both praise of Henry and prayers for peace.[241] Much like the prophets of the Trojan War, Lydgate attempts to guide Henry in preserving *imperium* through the values of *translatio studii*.

Furthermore, both Lydgate and Helenus offer their counsel from positions that lend their counsel credence. Helenus prophesies as one already valued among his father's councilors. He speaks with power and authority because, as Priam's son and as an established prophet, he does in fact have such power and authority. Likewise, Lydgate himself is perfectly placed, as a monk, both to offer advice to Henry and to legitimize his rule. As Meyer-Lee writes, Lydgate uses the humility *topos* to allow him to critique authority from his position as a monk.[242] Meyer-Lee likewise notes the ways in which Lydgate's position legitimizes Henry as king:

> A monastic historian owes his allegiance first to the Church, then to his order, and then to the tradition in which he writes…Any allegiance a historian may feel toward his sovereign is—in theory, at least—a distant fourth, and precisely because of this distance, a historian may effectively operate as legitimizer of a specific political regime…Possessing an entirely distinct basis of authority, Lydgate's monastic historical veracity finds a not-so-secret sharer in the prince's dynastic authenticity.[243]

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[241] Lydgate's concern for peace does not necessarily make him a pacifist. Udo Heyn delineates "three historical traditions" through which "peace—as both a moral imperative and a practical necessity—has been pursued through three historical traditions," namely "the just war tradition of acknowledging, but limiting, the conflicts of this world; the pacifist tradition of withdrawing from these conflicts; and the utopian tradition of restructuring the world so that the causes of conflict will wither away" (Udo Heyn, *Peacemaking in Medieval Europe: A Historical & Bibliographical Guide* [Claremont, California: Regina Books, 1997], 13). He notes the relation of pacifism to monasticism in "advocating a full or partial withdrawal from the world and its intrusions" (70), but he also points out monastic tendencies to support just war theory and claims that "pacifism was never in the mainstream of medieval Catholicism" (71). Lydgate's preference may be for peace, but he does not flatly condemn Henry's wars.

[242] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power,* 82.

[243] Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power,* 69-70. For more on Lydgate as a monastic historian, see Meyer-Lee, *Poets and Power,* 40-41. See also Lee Patterson, "Making Identities in Fifteenth-Century England: Henry V and John Lydgate," in *New Historical Literary Study: Essays on Reproducing Texts, Representing History*, ed. Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 74; Walter

Lydgate emphasizes this monastic role by depicting himself as just as concerned with truth as his prophetic councilors of peace. In the *Troy Book's* prologue, he distinguishes between the truthful prose sources he chooses to translate and the feigning and ornamental poets whom he apparently rejects.[244] He aims to remain faithful to his source in his translation (though he does expand Guido's *Historia* greatly)[245]; he is primarily concerned with the truth (or falsehood) of his sources and with preserving that truth in his own text. The sources he claims are trustworthy include Dares, Dictys, and Guido delle Colonne, whom he opposes to poets such as Homer, Virgil, and Ovid.[246] He portrays

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F. Schirmer, *John Lydgate: A Study in the Culture of the XVth Century*, trans. Ann E. Keep (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), 47; and Simpson, "Other Book," 420.

[244] Lydgate's narrator denigrates the lying nature of other poetic works. Though clerks have preserved the story truthfully (Prol.256-58), poets have "it transformed in her poysy / Thoruȝ veyne fables, whiche of entencioun / They han contreved by false transumpcioun / To hyde trouthe falsely vnder cloude" (Prol.262-65). He condemns Homer, Virgil, and Ovid for their poetic lies. The narrator does not denigrate these classical poets' skills *as poets*; he makes no claims for a better poetic style. Rather, his critique is based on the truthfulness (or, rather, the lack thereof) of their works. Lydgate's narrator expresses the view that poetic ornamentation hides the truth, and so he, more concerned with truth than with artfulness, distances himself from such lies.

[245] Pearsall compares Lydgate to a "candy-floss machine" in his expansive tendencies (Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 132). See also Ebin, *John Lydgate*, 42; and Benson, "Critic and Poet," 228-230 . Pearsall notes that this "expansive method can be intolerably tedious in exposition, narrative, or the development of ideas, but for anything of a set rhetorical nature—complaint, lament, apostrophe, invocation, description, formal oratory—it is well suited" (Pearsall, *Lydgate*, 142). Lydgate's tendencies towards prolixity have led to criticism of his structures, style, and syntax; for a defense of Lydgate's poetic structures as architectural rather than lacking, see Theodore L. Steinberg, "Poetry and the Perpendicular Style," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 40.1 (1981); for a defense of his style and syntax, see Phillipa Hardman, "Lydgate's Uneasy Syntax," in *John Lydgate: Poetry, Culture, and Lancastrian England*, ed. Larry Scanlon and James Simpson (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006). In addition to expanding the *Historia*, Lydgate also makes Guido's text more Chaucerian; as Edwards writes, "Lydgate in effect translates Chaucer into Latin in *Troy Book*—that is, he makes Chaucer an *auctor* within an imagined classical canon" (Edwards, "John Lydgate," 471-72).

[246] Lydgate cites Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae* as his major source, and for "classical" sources, he looks back to the supposedly eyewitness accounts of Dares and Dictys. Though Guido, his "maister" (Prol.372), does employ "many fresche colour / Of rethorik, and many riche flour / Of eloquence" (Prol.363-65), Guido is more truthful because he follows Dares and Dictys (Prol.356-359). Dares and Dictys write "moste trewly" (Prol.311) because they were present at Troy (Prol.313-16); their eyewitness accounts give the truth plainly and without ornament. By praising these prose historians for their attention to truth rather than for their ornamentation thereof, Lydgate's narrator aligns his project with the search for truth rather than with the quest for artistic beauty. For further discussion of Lydgate's

truth, not beauty, as the primary concern of his poetry, and he establishes his poetic authority by setting his work apart from the exaggeration and ornamentation of other poets and by aligning himself with the trustworthiness of prose history. He makes his concerns out to be moral and didactic rather than aesthetic. Likewise, he portrays himself as concerned with prudence, knowledge, and wisdom rather than with martial values.[247]

The prophecies of Helenus—much like Lydgate's own poetry—function primarily as *counsel*, which presupposes human agency and choice.[248] If a ruler's paths are predetermined by fate, there is no purpose to counsel. Advice is meant to direct a king or ruler to choose among the multiple paths and choices available to him. Each of the prophets in Lydgate's *Troy Book* casts himself or herself in the role of a medieval councilor, and Lydgate himself, much like Helenus, Pentheus, and Cassandra, is just such a truthful advisor as Priam and Henry V need, one to whom the king must listen in order

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devotion to historical sources above poetical lies, see Alan S. Ambrisco and Paul Strohm, "Succession and Sovereignty in Lydgate's Prologue to 'The Troy Book,'" *Chaucer Review* 30.1 (1995): 43-44. For Lydgate as historian, see Benson, *History,* in particular chapter V (96-129); Benson revisits the theme of Lydgate's devotion to historical truth in Benson, "Critic and Poet," 230. Ebin likewise writes of Lydgate's sense of "responsibility as a poet to the past" (Ebin, *John Lydgate*, 42), and Meyer-Lee describes Lydgate's commitment to "trouthe," meaning "historical veracity" (Meyer-Lee, "Laureate Prose," 47). But Meyer-Lee also notes that Lydgate "elevat[es] the occasionality of his works from the timebound to the timeless" (Meyer-Lee, "Laureate Prose," 52), and Pearsall claims Lydgate's purpose goes beyond history: "the ultimate purpose is to destroy history in the interests of truth, so that Hector, Achilles, and the rest may take their place in the universal diagram" (Pearsall, *Lydgate,* 129). But Lynn Shutters notes, "Despite Lydgate's efforts for a clear distinction between translators and transformers, truth-tellers and poets, the two categories often blur" (Lynn Shutters, "Truth, Translation, and the Troy Book Women," *Comitatus* 32:1 [2001]: 74). She connects Lydgate's concern with falsehood with concerns about the French language versus English (Shutters, "Truth," 77) and discusses this concern with poetic falsehood and truth overall through the lens of Lydgate's depiction of truthful and untruthful women.

[247] For Lydgate's commitment to moral truths and his frequent moral digressions, see Schirmer, *John Lydgate,* 47; Federico, *New Troy*, 99-100; Watson, "Outdoing Chaucer," 93 and 100-101; John M. Ganim, *Style and Consciousness in Middle English Narrative* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 110 and 116; and Edwards, "John Lydgate," 466 and 476-7, among others. For an thorough analysis of prudence as one of *Troy Book*'s major themes, see Colin Fewer's article, "John Lydgate's *Troy Book* and the Ideology of Prudence," *The Chaucer Review* 38.3 (2004).

[248] For medieval attitudes towards advice and counsel, see Green, *Poets and Princepleasers,* 161 and 165; and Ferster, *Fictions of Advice*, 2.

to preserve the nation. Such advice is meant to direct a king or ruler to choose among the multiple paths and choices available to him. By offering prophetic and poetic counsel, Helenus and Lydgate reveal a hope that their counsels will shift the king's actions and thereby the course of fate. In encouraging Henry and rulers in general to follow his advice, Lydgate presupposes the ability of rulers—and of human beings in general—to choose between multiple possibilities. Nonetheless, Helenus's prophecy is received with mockery because it does not conform to the warlike path upon which Priam is already half-decided. The failure of his prophecy, despite the similarities of both Helenus's prophecy and position to Lydgate's own poetry and position, indicates doubt concerning the efficacy of Lydgate's own work of counsel.

Cassandra: emotional counsel and prophetic knowledge

As evidenced by Helenus and Pentheus in the *Troy Book*, rulers are often unwilling to listen to counsels of peace no matter how reasonably and rationally these counsels are presented. But Helenus is not the only prophet to counsel Priam with peace, and not all such counsels take reasonable and rational form. Though the parallels are less explicit, Lydgate also aligns himself with Cassandra, Priam's daughter, whose prophecies are clothed not in learned rhetoric nor in reason, but in outcry, lament, and emotional excess.[249] Such excess is evidenced even in her initial prophecy immediately after the council scene discussed above; as mentioned, her prophecy is accompanied by cries of "weyllaway" and "Allas!…allas! what wil ȝe don" (II.3228-29), and Lydgate describes

[249] Smyth writes, "In Lydgate's *Troy Book* Cassandra is professed an 'outsider', ignored and imprisoned when she forecasts the Trojan defeat…Temporal processes are not the focus of concern; instead, the nature of prophecies is emphasized. Cassandra's experience is internal, involving the senses…her emotions are tested to the limit…The prophecy is not a rational, quantified insight but a sensual, emotional involvement in the time that has yet to come" (Karen Elaine Smyth, *Imaginings of Time in Lydgate and Hoccleve's Verse* [Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011], 76).

her prophecy as a "clamour" (II.3277). Nonetheless, Lydgate associates her with Helenus and Pentheus by affirming her prophecy and by claiming that Priam should have listened to his prophets. Cassandra has the same aim as her male counterparts, even if she employs different rhetorical strategies. Nonetheless, she, like Helenus, is disbelieved, and her prophecies have no effect.

In spite of Helenus's and Pentheus's—and Cassandra's—clear warnings both during and immediately following the council scene, Priam sends Paris to abduct Helen and start a war with the Greeks. The *if-then* structure of these prophecies indicates that *if* Helen is abducted, *then* Troy will be destroyed; and yet, even after Helen's abduction, we find there is still some chance of saving Troy. But we learn of this chance not through the reasoned counsel of those prophets who speak in council, but through Cassandra's emotional laments in her second prophecy. As Paris weds Helen, the Trojans learn that it is not too late to send Helen back, as Cassandra proclaims destruction *unless* Helen is sent back. She urges them to "take awey Eleyne from Parys, / As riȝt requireth, with-outen any more, / And to hir lord iustly hir restore" (II.4222-24). She warns the Trojans, "For to be war it is almost to late!"—almost too late, but not quite (II.4202). But the Trojan response is to lock her up and "bynde [her] fast, fetrid in presoun, / With-oute mercy or remyssioun" (II.4247-48),[250] silencing her prophecy and thus ending the possibility of averting their own destruction. Nonetheless, the language of this prophecy, as in Helenus's and Pentheus's prophecies, suggest that prophetic knowledge, if heeded

[250] Lydgate uses the same formula ("withoute merci or remyssioun") when describing the actions of Spartacus's men in *Fall of Princes* VI.807, and he again couples "mercy" and "remyssyoun" together in the story of Hypsipyle in the *Siege of Thebes* (3.3451).

at once, could potentially protect the Trojan *imperium*; the Trojans, however, refuse to heed such counsel.

Her third prophecy, after the Trojan War is already well underway, further exemplifies her manner of prophesying, her purpose, and her value as a councilor. This prophecy occurs during a situation that invites heightened emotion—the funeral of her brother Cassibellan—and again it depends primarily on lament and exclamation for its persuasive power. But again the prophecy goes unheeded, and as when she prophesies at Paris and Helen's wedding, her outcry is so irritating to Priam that he imprisons her (III.2294-95). Far from persuading her people or the king her father, Cassandra is silenced and locked away. This funerary lament shuttles back and forth between present and future, drawing connections between current grief for those already slain and the horrors to come. In her grief-filled prophecy, she attempts to persuade her people towards a new course of action, one which might avoid such destruction.

Again, her speech relies more on emotional appeal than on reason to persuade.[251] Lydgate gives the reader a glance into Cassandra's mind before she prophesies: he writes that she "With-Inne hir silfe considered & beheld" the offerings at Cassibellan's funeral (III.2238-39), and in response, "Of inward wo sche felt hir herte blede" (III.2242).[252] She speaks from a place of grief so great that "inwardly, sche myȝt hir nat restreyne /

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[251] For Lydgate's rhetoric in speeches, see Benson, *History*, 101. Hardman delineates three models of Lydgate's syntactical structures and how these structures are used rhetorically; Hardman, "Lydgate's Uneasy Syntax," 24-25. On rhetoric in the classical period and in the Middle Ages, see Curtius, *European Literature,* 62-78, and Copeland, "The Trivium," 58-63. On rhetoric, poetry, and emotion in the Middle Ages, see Anne Schuurman, "Pity and Poetics in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women," PMLA* 130: 5 (2015): 1306-07. On women's deliberative rhetoric and civic participation through letters in the Middle Ages, see Shawn D. Ramsey, "The Voices of Counsel: Women and Civic Rhetoric in the Middle Ages," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42.5: 9 (2012).

[252] Notice the emphasis on Cassandra's internal emotions and the image of her heart bleeding.

Furiously to cryen and compleine" (III.2249-50). This "inward" grief is a response both to the funeral's spectacle and her people's grief, as she responds to "þe noise and þe pitous crye, / Þe tendre weping & sorwynge outterly / Of hem of Troye" (III.2243-45).[253] But whereas her people look back to deaths that have already occurred, Cassandra looks forward to the deaths to come. She begins by acknowledging their grief on *this* day—"O woful wrecchis þat ȝe be þis day, / Vnhappy eke, and graceles also, / Infortunat and inly wo-be-go!" (III.2252-54)—then transitions to how much greater their grief will become: "How may ȝe suffre þe grete harmys kene / Whiche ȝe ar likly her-after to sustene / Durynge þe sege, in þis toun be-loke" (III.2255-57). Cassandra's speech does not take the form of reasoned persuasion and the careful weighing of options; it is a response to grief, a prediction of grief, and borne out of grief that cannot be restrained.

In her speech, Cassandra addresses the current grief of her people, tells them how much greater their sorrow will become, describes the destruction of the city, imagines the deaths and captivity of the innocent, and concludes by noting that all, rich and poor, shall come to an end when the Greeks gain victory. Throughout this prophecy, she makes her emotional appeal plain in the repetition of affective words such as *woe* and *pity*. She begins with a long list of all the ways the Trojans are already wretched, calling them "O woful wrecchis," "Vnhappy," "graceless," "Infortunat," and "wo-be-go!" (III.2252-54). Here, she refers primarily to their current sorrows for those already slain. But as she turns to the future, she again calls them "woful wrechis," (III.2266); she speaks of "myserie and…wo" (III.2277) and of an "ende…woful and pitous," (III.2285), and she interjects,

[253] Note Lydgate's emphasis on *pity* and *woe*; *pity* is a key concept in Chaucer's writing, and it is not surprising that Lydgate would echo it here. On pity in Chaucer's works, see Schuurman, "Pity and Poetics," and Wendy Harding, "The Function of Pity in Three Canterbury Tales," *The Chaucer Review* 32.2 (1997).

"allas, it is pite" (III.2279). By drawing connections between present and future events through repetition of words and ideas, Cassandra creates an emotional investment in future grief. Rather than prove to the Trojans that death is coming, Cassandra appeals to their fears of coming death by playing on their current emotional state.

Her appeal gains power from her descriptions of destruction. She demands the reason why the Trojans are not "besy…With þe Grekis for to seken pes, / Or þe swerd of vengance merciles / On hiȝe and lowe do execucioun?" (III.2265-69), and then she depicts in detail the destruction that will result from their failure. Here, Cassandra speaks less of the deaths of warriors than of the deaths of innocents, in particular of women and children. She may begin by lamenting for Cassibellan—the dead man they can see before their eyes—but then she turns to those the Trojans have ignored, asking why they have "nat consideren in [their] þouȝt" dead mothers with their children, maidens in captivity, and the destruction of the city by fire (III.2272). The Trojans have actually seen the deaths of warriors, but they have not yet even imagined the deaths of innocents. With these images of how "modres, with her childre smale / In stretis schal, with face ded and pale, / Lyn mordred here þoruȝ Grekis cruelte" (III.2273-75) and of how "ȝonge maydenes in captiuite / Be-wepen schal, in myserie and in wo / Her seruytude" (III.2276-78),[254] Cassandra forces the Trojans to consider the final outcome of their war. Speaking as she does from a position of feminine lament, her voice has special emotional appeal. As a young woman herself, her own body serves as an example of those who will suffer if the Trojan warriors do not act to obtain peace. Powerless as the maidens and mothers she describes and doomed to the same fate, she has only the power of her lament.

[254] Note the emphasis here on weeping: Cassandra both discusses weeping and actually weeps.

Cassandra, of course, is not merely a woman lamenting loss and fearful for an uncertain future. As a prophetess, she knows exactly what will happen; her speech is predictive, not wondering. Cassandra uses statements, exclamations, and questions to establish the state of her knowledge about the future. As she begins, she suggests rather than claims, drawing connections between present and future sorrow and hinting that the future may be changeable by asking how they will bear the suffering "Whiche ȝe ar likly her-after to sustene" (III.2256). But as she continues, her blunt statements indicate the certainty, truth, and prophetic power of what she says. By the end of her speech, Cassandra does not use the common prophetic structure *if—then*; she states bluntly that the Trojans *will* be destroyed: "I wot riȝt wel ȝe may hem nat eschewe, / þat þei ne schal vn-to þe deth pursewe / Ȝou euerychon, be-segid in þis place, / With-oute mercy, pite, or any grace!" (III.2261-64), and she informs them that she is speaking "sothly" (III.2281). By the end of the speech, she says plainly that all the Trojans will be destroyed:

> Eleyne of vs, allas! is bouȝt to dere,
> Sith for hir sake we schul euerychon,
> Pore & riche, I excepte noon,
> An ende make, woful and pitous:
> Þe Ire of hem schal be so furious
> Vp-on us alle, þer is noon oþer mene
> Sauf only deth vs to go betwene! (III.2282-88)

Cassandra returns to the theme of Helen's rape and shows that there is no longer room for other possibilities: by bringing Helen to Troy, the Trojans have ensured their own destruction. She may not begin by stating bluntly all that she knows, but by the end of her speech, she is prophesying, not suggesting.

Her exclamations of woe and pity wrap those certainties in emotional appeals. These exclamations are intended to stir the emotions of her listeners and thereby to

persuade them to act. Thus, though Cassandra knows Troy will be destroyed, the goal of her speech is to persuade the Trojans to act in ways contrary to her knowledge. She asks them why they do not "With þe Grekis…seken pes" (III.2267) and why they do "nat consideren" (III.2272) the deaths to come. Cassandra's persuasive purpose raises alternative possibilities to her prophecy: if the people listen to her advice, then perhaps events will turn out differently from what the certainty of her knowledge has claimed.

But the possibilities raised by Cassandra's speech are quickly shut down: though Cassandra fulfills a truth-telling and advisory role, her father, the king, has her "schettyn vp" (III.2295), thereby silencing her and denying alternate possibilities for the conclusion of the Trojan story. Priam does not silence and lock up all of his advisors who urge peace. Though he does not take their advice, he allows men, such as Helenus, to speak out against his aggressive plans. But Cassandra, unlike Helenus, is locked up and silenced. I would argue that Priam locks up Cassandra primarily because her speech is over-emotional and excessively feminine.[255] Though Cassandra begins her prophecy at Cassibellan's funeral, she soon begins to rage throughout the city. Lydgate describes her prophecy not as *speech*, but as "noise and…pitous cry" (III.2289), which she "so dredfully…gan to make aboute in euery strete / Þoruȝ þe toun, whom-euer sche myȝt mete" (III.2290-92). Her prophecy is so emotional that Lydgate claims she is "Lyk as sche had ben oute of hir mynde" (III.2293). It is in response to this excess that Priam locks her up: she rages "Til Priamus faste made hir bynde" (III.2294). Priam sees

[255] For Lydgate's attitudes towards women, see Renoir, *Poetry of John Lydgate*, in particular chapter 6 (74-94), and Shutters, "Truth." Renoir, who claims that Lydgate believes "there is no intrinsic difference in behavior between the sexes" (86), uses Lydgate's treatment of women to explicate his attitude towards human dignity in general, while Shutters examines the "division of women into opposing lines of truthfulness and falsehood" (70) and fits that division into Lydgate's "broader questioning of truth, and how truth manifests itself in literary, linguistic, and political spheres" (83).

Cassandra first not as an advisor, but as an emotional woman, distracting men from the real business of war with her cries of sorrow. Her prophecy appears to be pure lament, concerned with female matters of grief rather than masculine matters of war, and even within the words of her speech—apart from her feminine manner—she is more interested in the sufferings of women and children than the business of warriors. Priam silences Cassandra because of her apparently excessive femininity.[256]

But Cassandra is not, of course, merely an emotional and lamenting woman. As Lydgate makes clear immediately after Priam locks her up—within the same line, in fact—Cassandra, like Helenus and Pentheus, is exactly the kind of truthful, prudent advisor that Priam needs. Lydgate turns to the reader and explains that "it was þe more rouȝth— / Sche was nat herde, albe sche seide trouȝth" (III.2295-96). Lydgate makes it plain that his sympathies lie with Cassandra, both with the word "rouȝth"—emphasized through its rhyme with "trouȝth"—and by claiming that she was "cruelly y-þrowen in prisoun" (III.2316). Furthermore, while Cassandra's speech itself is fairly closely translated from Guido's *Historia,* Lydgate's moralizing statements following the speech—which deal with the nature of truth, prudence, and failures to listen to advice—are his own expansion of and addition to Guido's text, and this expansion emphasizes Cassandra's truthful and wise counsel.[257] While Guido skips straight from Priam locking

[256] On medieval views of women as emotional beings, see Lisa Perfetti's introduction to *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, in which she writes, "Emotionally unstable, moody, subject to emotional outbursts, unpredictable, cause of social upheaval: this was a common medieval view of woman" (Lisa Perfetti, "Introduction," in *The Representation of Women's Emotions in Medieval and Early Modern Culture*, ed. Lisa Perfetti [Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005], 1).

[257] The funeral of Cassibellan and Cassandra's subsequent prophecy occur in *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, Liber XVI. Lydgate does add to Cassandra's speech with exclamations of woe and pity and with images of pathos, but the structure is similar. See Guido de Columnis, *Historia Destructionis Troiae*, ed. Nathaniel Edward Griffin (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936), 148.

Cassandra up to the continued actions of the Greeks, Lydgate laments the failure of others to listen to wisdom and truth. He writes:

> For nouþer wisdam nor discrecioun,
> Counseil nor wit, prudence nor resoun,
> Trouth nor rede—with-outen any lye—
> Nor þe spirite of trewe proficye,
> Availeth nat,—nor al swiche sapience,
> In place wher þer is noon audience. (III.2297-2302)

In typically expansive style,[258] the narrator couches his plain moral—wise counsel is meaningless if no one will listen to it—in a long list of politically evocative near-synonyms.[259] Prudence, sound judgment, wisdom, and advice accomplish nothing when unheard and unobeyed.[260] Employing similar vocabulary, Lydgate continues to lament the futility of unheard counsel—"For vnfavored, wysdam vaileþ nouȝt, / Nouþer trouth, how dere þat it be bouȝt" (III.2311-12)—before he turns back to Cassandra. He explains that Cassandra's prophecy is just such "wyse rede" (III.2313), good advice; though her speech takes an emotional tone, it contains the prudent counsel that could possibly save Troy. Cassandra seeks not simply to share her knowledge of the future; she seeks to

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[258] See, for instance, his description of Andromache's dream in Book III, where he presents the reader with a veritable thesaurus of the different possible words for her vision:

> And she þat nyȝt, as made is mencioun,
> Hadde in hir slepe a wonder visioun,
> I not, in soth, what I may it nevene,
> Ouþer a dreme or verraily a sweuene,
> Or fro a-boue a revelacioun,
> —As whilom had þe kyng Scipioun—
> Or a shewynge, ouþer an oracle,
> Or of goddis a warnyng be myracle… (III.4909-4916)

[259] Strohm offers a discussion of the political values of *prudence*, *resoun*, and *disrecioun*, framed by the context of Lydgate's work (particularly the *Fall of Princes*) and legacy; see Paul Strohm, *Politique: Languages of Statecraft between Chaucer and Shakespeare* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2005), 98-105. For the complexities of meaning that the idea of *truth* had acquired even by Chaucer's day, see Richard Firth Green, *A Crisis of Truth: Literature and Law in Ricardian England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 8-31.

[260] See *Middle English Dictionary, s.v. wisdom, sapience, counseil,* and *red.*

change it through her good counsel. But despite her good advice, she is "Dispised" and "taken of noon hede / Of hem of Troye" (III.2314-15). Priam, in choosing to silence Cassandra, dooms Troy to its Greek conquerors; his failure to listen to good counsel leads to the destruction of Troy.[261] Thus Priam, in ignoring Cassandra's warnings, also serves as a warning to kings who choose to ignore their truthful advisors—whether they speak out of rational concerns and reasoned arguments or out of lament, outcry, and emotion.[262]

Part of the reason for the failure of her prophecies is her position. Though Cassandra is Priam's daughter, we see little of parental-filial affection between them; she prophesies primarily as a woman, one who is not allowed to speak in council. Her prophecies draw on this less-privileged position, as she repeatedly draws attention to what will happen to those without privilege. She attempts to invoke Priam's pity for the maiden, the child, and the widow. Her attempts fail, and as woman, she is locked up for her attempts to change politics, whereas her brother, with the same advice, is only mocked. Through her prophecy, we again recognize the impotence of *translatio studii*

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[261] For the silencing of prophetic voices in the Guido-tradition, see Simpson, "Other Book," 417.

[262] Cassandra is, of course, *Troy Book*'s main example of the feminine prophetic councilor, but for one scene, Andromache too becomes just such a prophet. Shortly before the death of Hector, Andomache has a dream depicting his death (III.4909-4928). Like Cassandra, Andromache attempts to use both her knowledge and her emotion to persuade Hector. When Hector arms himself, she falls at his feet (III.4939) and tells him her vision in particularly feminine ways: "Lowly declarynge hir avisioun, / With quakynge herte of verray wommanhede" (III.4940-41). Much like Priam with Cassandra, Hector "toke litil hede" of her vision (III.4942), and he mocks her (III.4944-55). But still Andromache persists, attempting to sway Hector with cries of "allas!" and with appeals as his "trewe wif" who "of so feithful hool affeccioun / Desireth ay ȝoure sauavioun (III.4960-62)." But Hector remains unconvinced, even as Andromache uses her womanhood and her status as the mother of his children to appeal to his emotions. She casts her appeal in specifically gendered terms, revealing her breasts, bringing her weeping children before him, and appealing to his "manhod" that he might have pity upon them (III.5049-5072). But she is incapable of convincing Hector: he rushes out to battle and is killed for it—and his death condemns Troy to ruin. Andromache's single prophesy demonstrates the same concerns we see in Cassandra's prophecy: woe, lament, a desire for peace, and a recognition that the warrior's embrace of martial values fails to take into consideration the fates of the women he leaves behind. See Benson, *History*, 22-23 for this scene in Guido's *Historia.*

and the destructiveness of *translatio imperii*. Cassandra's prophecies again reveal the consequences of rashly following the values of *translatio imperii,* as she recognizes the destructiveness of *translatio imperii*—not only for warriors, but for women and children as well—and tries to warn the king her father away from such values. Like Helenus, she embraces the values of *translatio studii* over those of *translatio imperii*. But Cassandra's prophecies, like Helenus's, are given in vain. *Translatio studii,* much like the women who will be slain or enslaved by the end of this war, is powerless; it accomplishes nothing. Nonetheless, Lydgate aligns himself with the clerical values of *translatio studii* in his emphasis on prudence, truth, good counsel, and peace. But even as he embraces clerical values and rejects the destructiveness of *translatio imperii,* Lydgate recognizes the impotence of *translatio studii,* and he demonstrates this recognition in part by making one of the mouthpieces of such values a woman without power who is locked up for her speech.

Through Cassandra, we also see that prophecy's utility is not merely as counsel, but as knowledge. Though Cassandra's prophecies beg and plead with Priam to change his ways, thereby offering an emotionally laden form of counsel, her counsel has very little chance of being heard by virtue of her position. Her prophecies function primarily as lament—as a way to grieve what is already to come—and as knowledge. Through Cassandra's prophecies, Lydgate emphasizes the role of fate in bringing about human affairs. Priam's choice to ignore the warnings of Cassandra and thereby to doom the Trojan *imperium* to destruction raises the question: could he have chosen otherwise? Could his prophets, through their counsel, have persuaded him to act in ways that would preserve Trojan *imperium*, or was Priam fated to act in ways fatal to Troy? Such

questions require an examination of the dual function of prophetic counsel as both possibility and certainty in these texts.[263] Prophetic counsel, I would argue, is inherently unstable. In its role as counsel, it functions as possibility—the knowledge of what could be. We have seen that such counsel presupposes the ability of humans to choose between multiple possibilities; it attempts to guide *imperium* in ways that will preserve it. But prophecy is not only the knowledge of what *could be*; in its role as divinely inspired statement, it functions as certainty—the knowledge of what *will be*, with no possibilities of averting what is to come. Fate is inescapable, and Lydgate emphasizes the roles of fate and fortune in bringing about human affairs.[264] Prophecy, despite its if-then structure,

[263] Note that this dual function—and thus this portion of my argument—applies specifically to prophetic *counsel*, not prophecy writ large and not unprophetic counsel. It is the intersection of the possibilities latent in counsel and the knowledge latent in prophecy that leads to this dual function. But I argue that the depiction of prophetic counsel does affect our understanding of unprophetic counsel.

[264] Lydgate's attitudes towards fate and fortune are complex. Benson discusses "three views of Fortune" in *Troy Book*: as "little more than chance," as a simplified version of Boethius's Fortune who "is still irrational, but not omnipotent—she controls only those who commit themselves to her,", and as "a more optimistic force…the simple working out of divine justice in earthly, material terms" (Benson, *History*, 120-22). Ebin writes of how Lydgate both follows and moves away from Boethius: "Echoing Boethius, Lydgate suggests that disaster comes to these men and women not by chance, but because they foolishly choose to submit themselves to her power…in book 5, Lydgate moves from the essentially Boethian argument that man must not put his faith in the false goods of the world to the notion that men have some control over their own Fortune and that Fortune is just and subject to God's will (*TB*, 5.3576-86)" (Ebin, *John Lydgate*, 44). Fewer proposes "that a significant part of Lydgate's project is to demystify the operation of Fortune, locating the origins of historical processes in the contingent sphere of human action and motivation—in the conduct both of great men and of relatively minor characters, and in the context both of parliaments and of entirely mundane, routine moments in the narrative" (Fewer, "Ideology of Prudence," 231). In Fewer's view, "history for Lydgate is simply plastic, and far from being helpless subjects of a totalizing Fate, individuals are also agents in the historical process" (Fewer, "Ideology of Prudence," 235). Carscallen examines how Lydgate "turns Guido's single-minded Fates into someone more mysterious as well as more fully medieval, the fickle lady Fortune, who at the same time is more than just fickle, since she is determined on our ruin as the Fates themselves. What makes her changeable is mainly that, in order to ensure a proper downfall, she first raises us up" (James Carscallen, "How Troy Came to Spenser," in *Fantasies of Troy: Classical Tales and the Social Imaginary in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Alan Shepard and Stephen D. Powell [Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2004], 24). Edwards notes,"The large forces that shape heroic action are another distinctive feature of Lydgate's remaking of classical epic. In vernacular writers like Benoît, the classical machinery of fate and destiny serves as a rhetorical colouring. Clear prophecies of catastrophe for Thebes, Troy, and Rome prove ineffective and are ignored. Guido offers a deeply pessimistic vision of the epic world. By contrast, Lydgate treats Fortune in multiple aspects—it is by turns an allegorical figure, a source for explanation and moralization, and a principle of mutability. … Lydgate does not offer a theory that reconciles fate, destiny, and fortune in a comprehensive system. Rather, he uses these elements pragmatically and rhetorically to

thus expresses what will happen: if we attack the Greeks (and we are fated to do so), then we will be destroyed (and we are fated to be). Thus, though counsel may seem to have value in exploring and choosing between various possibilities, prophecy itself, in its expression of what is fated, is ultimately futile in its attempts at persuasion. Knowledge of what will happen is incapable of changing what will happen. So Cassandra gives her counsel in vain: locked away, she may seem to raise the possibility of an alternate ending to the Trojan legend, but the war must end in Troy's destruction.

This certainty of prophetic knowledge, coupled with the possibilities of prophetic counsel, in fact undermines and destabilizes prophecy. The prophets at Troy *want* their prophecies to be false; they want to preserve Troy, even though their knowledge tells them otherwise. But whatever possibilities the prophets may try to create, fate and fortune are both at work in the fall of Troy, and though much of the blame for the war is shifted from the gods to the Trojans in medieval and early modern texts, fate still plays its role.[265] Furthermore, history itself does not allow for an unfallen Troy: Troy must fall. Without it, Britain would never have been settled by Brutus, and thus England as Lydgate and Henry know it would not exist. The fall of Trojan *imperium* is in fact necessary for *translatio imperii*. Too much is at stake in the fall of Troy. Thus, the prophets cannot be heeded, and Troy's fall cannot be averted. Though counsel may seem to have value in exploring and choosing between various possibilities, prophecy itself, in expressing what is fated, is ultimately futile in its attempts at persuasion.

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guide contemporary political culture. At the same time, he develops them to present a view of a secular chivalric world radically shaped by contingency" (Edwards, "John Lydgate," 475).

[265] For the variants between Virgil, Guido, and Guido's translators in terms of their views of fate, fortune, and destiny, see Carscallen, "How Troy," 24; Benson, *History*, 23 and 120-22; Mueller, *Translating*, 62-66; Simpson, *Reform*, 86; and Simpson, "Other Book," 411-12 and 417.

Calchas: treachery and the failure of imagination

In addition to describing faithful prophets and their counsel, the *Troy Book* also depicts a traitorous prophet in the character of Calchas, who abandons Troy rather than attempt to advise it. Before the war begins, Priam sends Calchas to inquire of the oracle at Delphi as to the outcome of the war (II.5976-78). Calchas, upon hearing Apollo's answer to his inquiry, at once abandons the Trojans for the Greeks. For the remainder of the Trojan War, he advises and encourages the Greeks, telling them how to appease the gods and reminding them of their fated victory when they despair.[266] In his depiction of Calchas, Lydgate rejects the voice of the treacherous councilor. This point may seem obvious. But I would argue that, though Lydgate's rejection of Calchas as betrayer of his king is a given, Lydgate also rejects Calchas for his betrayal of prudence and peace. Calchas betrays not only his king, but also the clerical values of peace in favor of the martial values of war; he flatters instead of giving meaningful advice. In Calchas, we see a prophet using the skills associated with *translatio studii*—knowledge and learning—in service not of the clerical value of prudence, but instead in service of the martial values of war and violence, of *translatio imperii*.

Of all the Trojan prophets, Calchas alone apparently does not give his prophecies in vain. He allies himself with the values of *translatio imperii* rather than of *translatio studii*, and he uses what he obtains through *translatio studii*—knowledge—in order to serve the values of *translatio imperii*—destruction and military expansion. Lydgate does initially describe Calchas, as he does other prophetic characters, in clerical terms: he is "a man of gret science" who "had experience / Specyally of calculacioun, / Of sort also and

[266] For instance, he tells the Greeks what to do when Diana is angry and sends a storm (II.6172-6204).

divinacioun, / And lernyd was in astronomye" (II.5981-85).[267] Helenus and Cassandra likewise are described as having "science" (knowledge) and skills in calculation, divination, and astronomy. But unlike Helenus and Cassandra, who both aim for peace despite their differences in language, Calchas embraces war.

Calchas's methods for obtaining prophetic knowledge are not only clerical, but also pagan—a fact that is touched upon with Cassandra and Helenus, but is more strongly emphasized with Calchas. Lydgate does not often openly attack his prophets' paganism—except when Calchas goes to Delphi. Just before Calchas goes to inquire of Apollo, Lydgate digresses for hundreds of lines[268] to translate and expand Guido's passage on the wickedness of Apollo and of ancient Greek and Roman religion. Apollo is no god, but a demon who leads people astray; he is false, lying, and treacherous himself.[269] Only after describing Apollo and denouncing non-Christian religion as demonic does Lydgate return to Calchas. With Apollo's treachery in mind, the reader sees Calchas inquire of the oracle in ways that emphasize the religious aspect of his inquiry:

> He entrid is in þe oratorie,
> Doyng his ritys & his obseruances,
> Like þe custom with þe circumstuances,
> And besely gan to knele and praye,
> And his þinges deuoutly for to saye,
> And to þe god crie & calle stronge. (II.5990-5995)

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[267] On Calchas's means of obtaining prophetic knowledge, see Smyth, *Imaginings*, 77.

[268] Specifically, II.5480-5940. Guido likewise digresses on the origins of idolatry at this point in the narrative.

[269] Lydgate describes Apollo and the oracle at Delphi in similar terms in his *Siege of Thebes*. On Lydgate's treatment of Apollo in *Troy Book*, see Jamie C. Fumo, *The Legacy of Apollo: Antiquity, Authority, and Chaucerian Poetics* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 108, 113-14. Fumo notes, "In medieval Trojan legends and histories, a number of pivotal events pertaining to the Trojan cause transpire in temples of Apollo, most notably the defection of Calkas, the embalming and burial of Hector, Achilles's first sight of Polyxena, and Paris's treacherous ambush of Achilles" (Fumo, *Legacy of Apollo*, 128).

Lydgate employs technical religious terms in this passage, referring specifically to an "oratorie" (a place of prayer), "ritys" (rituals or ceremonies), and "obseruances" (ritual acts or religious rites);[270] such terms emphasize Calchas's pagan and religious acts. And the oracle's response is instant ("And for Appollo wolde him nat prolonge, / Sodeynly his answere gan atame," II.5996-97) and unambiguous: Troy will fall ("In schort tyme it schal distroyed be— / þis is in soth, whiche may nat be denyed," II.6002-03), and Calchas must turn at once to counsel the Greeks ("Be riȝt wel war þat þou ne turne ageyn / To Troye toun, for þat were but in veyn; … Wherfor I wil þat þou be allyed / Wiþ þe Grekis," II.5999-6000, 6004-06). Calchas is thus associated with the treacheries of pre-Christian religion.

And Calchas does not hesitate ("And with þat worde roos him vp Calchas," II.6013); he at once betrays the Trojans, finds Achilles (conveniently also at Delphi), and throws in his lot with the Greeks. He proceeds to give the Greeks encouragement as needed, but his counsel primarily serve as a reminder of what fate has declared; such counsel appears mainly when the Greeks' spirits are lagging and they are tempted to quit this long and drawn-out war.[271] Calchas's prophecies confirm and encourage the Greek desire to fight.

Calchas's function as encourager raises the question: is his counsel, strictly speaking, necessary? Does his betrayal actively hurt Troy, or is his counsel as futile as that of Helenus and Cassandra? If the Greeks are already fated to win, as Apollo claims

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[270] See *Middle English Dictionary, s.v. oratorie, rite,* and *observaunce*.

[271] See, for instance, in book IV, when he scolds the Greeks for thinking of changing their minds (IV.1978-86), reminds them that Troy *must* be destroyed ("For, in soth, it wer an impossible, / Outterly, but Troye þe cite / Of ordinaunce and necessite, / Mut be distroied hennes but a lyte," IV.1990-93), and encourages them to stick "manfully" to their purpose (IV.2004).

("For þei schal han, as I haue disposid, / Victorie & honour, þat may nat be deposid; / For it is fatal and ne may nat varie," II.6007-09), and Calchas simply reminds them of that fact, would anything change if he did not prophesy—in other words, if he did not encourage the Greeks, would they eventually give up and leave? Apollo claims Calchas is necessary for Greek victory ("And þou to hem schalt be necessarie / In conseillyng and in ȝevinge red, / And be riȝt helpyng to her goode sped," II.6010-12), but the god seems already to have decided Troy's fate. Whereas Helenus and Cassandra, no matter how much they prophesy, accomplish nothing for Troy, we must ask whether Calchas actually brings about Troy's destruction through prophecy or if his prophecies make no difference. And if they makes no difference, then why bother with betrayal? Why does Calchas incur shame and threats of death if his counsel accomplishes nothing? One could argue that he does so to save himself, but he could do so by simply abandoning Troy without turning to the Greeks. Calchas's words, like Helenus's and Cassandra's, seem to be just that: words, impotent on their own without action to support them. And Calchas, Helenus, and Cassandra, stuck as they are in clerical or feminine roles, are incapable of mustering the martial support required to make anything happen. Calchas recognizes that Priam will not listen to his counsels, and so he goes to those who will listen; nonetheless, his role is simply that of a describer: he describes what will happen, but those events will happen whether or not he describes them.

And yet his betrayal parallels the betrayals of Aeneas and Antenor, two men who *do* make things happen. Aeneas and Antenor begin as loyal Trojans, but by the end of the war they recognize that Priam will not listen to good counsel, and so they, like Calchas, turn to the Greeks. They offer Priam new counsels of peace, but their counsel is false,

designed to lead Priam astray and to give the Greeks the opening they need to end the war and conquer Troy.[272] Lydgate, as much as he praises true attempts at peace, condemns their treason and false peace as worse than war: "For wers þan werre, sothly, semeth me / Tresoun cured vnder a feyned pes" (IV.4536-37). And the treasonous purpose which Lydgate condemns is self-preservation: Aeneas and Antenor will preserve their wealth and their families when Troy falls. For this they, like Calchas, are derided as traitors; their reputations are ruined, and they are reviled by both Trojans and by the narrator alike.[273] And yet they are successful as the other Trojans are not: they do preserve their families and their wealth, and the preservation of those families allows them to go forth from the ruins of Troy and populate the rest of Europe. Though Lydgate's narrator attacks Aeneas much as he attacks Calchas for their betrayals, Aeneas—through Brutus—is the ancestor of the British people. Without Aeneas's betrayal and the sack of Troy, England as Lydgate knew it would not exist, and Henry V would have no England to rule over. Thus, though the words of the narrator are denunciatory, the narrative and history itself require Aeneas's betrayal in order to achieve that which Lydgate most praises: the Lancastrian line of kings.

But does the narrative or history require Calchas's betrayal? Again, we remain uncertain. The Greeks are fated to win and the Trojans are fated to disperse and populate

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[272] In this council scene, Priam's sons are dead, and no prophet speaks in favor of peace. For discussions of Aeneas and Antenor as traitors in various medieval texts, see Sharon Stevenson, "Aeneas in Fourteenth-Century England," in *The Classics in the Middle Ages: Papers of the Twentieth Annual Conference of the Center for Medieval and Early Renaissance Studies,* ed. Aldo S. Bernardo and Saul Levin (Binghamton, New York: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1990); and Christopher Baswell, *Virgil in Medieval England: Figuring the* Aeneid *from the Twelfth Century to Chaucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18-21.

[273] Lydgate writes of Aeneas and Antenor's counsel to Priam: "But, o allas! of fals iniquite / þis counseil roos" (IV.4581-82).

Europe through the treachery of Aeneas and Antenor, but whether or not Calchas's prophecies bring that fate about is unknown.[274] Calchas's betrayal does not in fact mean much of anything. Calchas simply describes what will happen; his decision to go over to the Greeks hardly affects their actions, as they will conquer Troy no matter what Calchas says.[275] Thus, Calchas's prophecies, unlike those of Helenus and Cassandra, appear to have persuasive effect. But in reality the treacherous prophet's speech does as little good as those of the loyal prophets. Calchas's prophecies have no real persuasive power—he tells the Greeks what they want to hear and does nothing to change their minds. Troy will be destroyed whether or not Calchas prophesies to the Greeks. Though Calchas seems to have agency in switching sides, his defection has no actual effect on anyone but himself and his daughter. Thus, in Calchas, we see a failure of imagination—an immediate acceptance of fate without consideration of other possibilities.

Prophecy and the purpose of poetry

Many scholars have noted Lydgate's emphasis on the illuminating function of poetry: poetry, in Lydgate's view, is meant to illuminate historical and moral truths.[276]

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[274] And so our attention as readers is diverted to the betrayal not so much of Calchas, but of his daughter, Criseyde. Criseyde's betrayal occurs purely on the private level—she betrays only Troilus and only for Diomedes, and only after she herself has been betrayed by the Trojans in being handed over to the Greeks for the sake of Antenor (yet another traitor)—and yet she receives the same attention, or even more, than her father with his public betrayal.

[275] And Criseyde's betrayal of Troilus does not lead inevitably to his death (and thereby to the fall of Troy); she may give her love to Diomedes, but it is Achilles who will kill Troilus in response to Troilus's own actions in killing Greeks. Criseyde's private loves have little bearing on the actual battlefield. Private betrayal, like prophetic betrayal, changes little in the action of the narrative—but it changes the names and reputations of the traitors forever.

[276] Ebin's work especially focuses on Lydgate's view of poetry's illuminating function. In *Illuminator, Makar, Vates,* she writes, "He envisions the poet essentially as an illuminator who uses the power of language to shed light on the poet's matter and make it more significant and effective….Lydgate links the activities of the poet with the well-being of the state, suggesting the ability of the poet to turn humanity from chaos and disorder to harmony and order" (Lois A. Ebin, *Illuminator, Makar, Vates: Visions of Poetry in the Fifteenth Century* [Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1988], 19-20). Ebin delineates the critical vocabulary Lydgate develops in his work, explaining, "The most important of his critical ideals

These prophets and their counsel raise questions concerning the efficacy and purpose of Lydgate's own poetic project. If Lydgate's purpose is to provide counsel for Henry V, why does he so often depict the failure of counsel? I would argue not only that the obvious is true—that by depicting the failure of counsel and its negative consequences for those counselled, Lydgate doubly emphasizes the need for Henry to listen to his own good counsel—but also that, in depicting the failure of prophetic counsel, Lydgate suggests, first, that he recognizes the possibility that his own work will fail as counsel, and, second, that there are other purposes for his poetry beyond counsel.

In each of these cases, *translatio studii* advises and restrains *translatio imperii*. Both prophecy and poetry function to guide and advise the realm.[277] Helenus and Cassandra attempt to persuade Priam to reject the destructive values of *translatio imperii* in favor of *translatio studii,* while Calchas uses the knowledge gained through *translatio studii* in support of the values of *translatio imperii*. But prophecy has no real or tangible effect. If we consider the failure of these prophecies a failure of Priam to listen rather than a failure of the prophets to persuade, then, by depicting such prophecies, Lydgate does provide a warning to Henry. As James Simpson writes of the Guido-tradition overall, "The absence of effective clerical voices from within Trojan and Greek societies

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are embodied in eight terms—'enlumyne,' 'adourne,' 'enbelissche,' 'aureate,' 'goldyn,' 'sugrid,' 'rethorik,' and 'elloquence'—terms that are linked by strong metaphoric associations" (Ebin, *Illuminator*, 20). Ebin develops similar ideas in "Poetics and Style in Late Medieval Literature," in *Vernacular Poetics in the Middle Ages,* ed. Lois Ebin (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1984).

[277] Ebin writes that, in Lydgate's writing, the poet is "a civilizer and orderer of man" (Ebin, *John Lydgate,* 16; see also 18). She continues by noting, "Underlying his major works is a recurrent thematic emphasis on the importance of peace and stability, the dangers of war, the threat of civil discord and division in the realm, and a recognition of the fragile and transitory nature of earthly order. Reviewing the events of the past from the perspective of fifteenth-century England, he underscores the need for stability in the nation and virtue and harmony in man's daily life. It is the poet's role to inspire man to this order and to lead him to wisdom and truth" (Ebin, *John Lydgate,* 16).

is, however, made good by the presence of the prudential poet in the work itself. If these societies of the past failed for want of philosophical reflection, the work presents itself as saying, then *contemporary* readers might be able to avoid the same mistakes by attending to this very work, and to the clerical voice of its author and translator."[278] The onus then is on Henry to listen to good counsel in order to avoid such failure for his own kingdom. But Lydgate's depiction of prophetic failure also indicates a recognition that the failure of these prophecies is not just a failure of Priam to listen, but is also a failure of the prophets to persuade, and that therefore Lydgate's own poetic work may also fail to persuade. His advice of prudence and peace may have no effect on the actions of those with power.[279]

What, then, is Lydgate's attitude towards the value of narrative and poetry? The use of prophecy reveals an underlying doubt about the efficacy of narrative and poetry *as counsel*. But prophecy, narrative, and poetry all also serve roles in preserving the *memory* of events. Both prophecy and poetry serve as descriptions of events. The only real difference is the question of time. Prophecy takes place before the event, describing what will happen and containing expectations of the future; poetry takes place after the event, describing what did happen and containing memories of the past. Thus, even if they are incapable of changing the events—prophecy in its ineffectiveness as counsel, and poetry

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[278] Simpson, *Reform*, 99.

[279] Mitchell writes of both Lydgate and Gower, "What is still not widely recognized is that alongside their clear moral stridency the poets express considerable ambivalence towards their rhetorical practice; they are mindful of its risks and rewards. At their best Gower and Lydgate are conscious of the available means of persuasion, but also of their liabilities; responsive to different audiences and communicative situations, but also vulnerable to their unpredictability; and sensitive to the pleasures of verbal artifice and the pressures they release, while also anxious about the duplicity it may foster…both poets see rhetoric as holding promise for coping with vicissitudes and common vices, while unable to guarantee results" (J. Allan Mitchell, "John Gower and John Lydgate: Forms and Norms of Rhetorical Culture," in *A Companion to Medieval English Literature and Culture c.1350-c.1500*, ed. Peter Brown [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010], 570).

in being after the event and thus unable to serve as counsel—both preserve the memory of the past for future generations.[280]

By depicting the failure of prophecy as counsel while using it as a kind of memorial, Lydgate suggests that poetry may also fail as counsel, but that poetry can also serve as a memorial for the future. But in addition to serving as a memorial, prophecy's role in this text—even in its function as counsel—is also to imagine other possibilities. Both prophecy and poetry deal in questions of certainty and of possibility. The prophet is certain about what will happen if another event happens; the *if* allows for possibility. Likewise, the poet is certain about the events of the past to the extent that the poet's sources are trustworthy—if the sources are not, other possibilities exist. Thus, the work of prophecy and of poetry is also a work of imagination.

Such a role of imagination has important implications for a work of reception. In a work of reception, in particular of such a widely-known narrative as that of Troy, the narrative seems to contain few possibilities. The poet and reader both know that Troy must fall. To begin to compose or read a text of Troy is analogous to prophesying: we know what must happen, though in our experience of reading or of writing, it has not happened yet (though of course, at the same time, it has already happened historically). As Lydgate begins his compositions, he already knows how the story will end, and we as readers already know how the story will end. The work of reception in and of itself contains the certainty of prophecy: if we begin this text, then Troy will be destroyed.

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[280] Meyer-Lee discusses Lydgate's use of his poems as "memorials" in "Major Poems": "As textual memorials, then, Lydgate's major poems exhibit nothing less than his ambition to fuse verbal art and public service in an attempt to transcend history by constructing, in these instances, monuments to historical catastrophe" (Meyer-Lee, "Major Poems," 61). He notes, "*Troy Book* speaks at length about the role of writers as preservers of the past and sculptors of fame" (Meyer-Lee, "Major Poems, 65).

(Even if we do not begin this text, we already know that Troy has been destroyed.) But the possibilities expressed by prophetic counsel (as opposed to prophetic knowledge) allow the poet and the reader to participate in imagining other possibilities. In advising Priam not to go to war with Greece, the prophet gives us the space to imagine a world in which Troy *did* avoid war with Greece and thus did not fall. Likewise, a poet or translator of a work of reception lacks the agency to change the major arc of their narrative. They may change minor details; they may choose the words they wish; they have the poetic freedom to embellish, moralize, expand, skip, adopt certain attitudes; they are free to select meter and form and dialect. But they cannot change the fact that Troy falls. Not only is their own truth at stake—they cannot change their sources without being as faithless to the narrative as Calchas is to Troy—but the very past/future of England is at stake. The purpose of poems about Troy is to preserve the memory of the past, not to change it, and so the poets are as powerless to change the ending of what happened in their past as the prophets are powerless to change the ending of what will happen in their future.

Nonetheless, by including prophets—prophets, I might add, who are just as powerless as these poets are—in their works, these poets include moments of imagining an alternate future, and they allow us, as reader, to imagine an alternate future as well. Prophecy, then, makes space not only for memory, but also for imagination. The possibilities expressed by prophetic counsel allow the poet and the reader to participate in imagining other possibilities. By including such prophets in his work, Lydgate includes moments of imagining an alternate future, and he allows us, as readers, to imagine an

alternate future as well. And if we can imagine a narrative of Troy where Troy does not fall, perhaps we can also imagine the possibility of an England at peace.

Chapter 4. The futility of vows: prophecy and oaths in William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*

Like other contemporary plays, including Heywood's *Iron Age* and Marlowe's *Tragedy of Dido,* William Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* deals with the matter of Troy.[281] Written in the early 1600s (possibly for an audience of the Inns of Court),[282] *Troilus and Cressida* is often called a problem play, described variously as a comedy, a tragedy, and a history.[283] At the time Shakespeare wrote *Troilus and Cressida*, tales of the Trojan War had been circulating for over two millennia, and in *Troilus and Cressida,* Shakespeare draws both on the more recent, medieval versions of Troy and on even newer translations of Greco-Roman works unknown to the Middle Ages: he draws on

[281] I use David Bevington's edition for the Arden Shakespeare, 3rd series, throughout this chapter (London: Thomson Learning, 2001). On the complexities of the quarto and folio editions of *Troilus and Cressida,* see Heidi Brayman Hackel, "'The Great Variety of Readers' and Early Modern Reading Practices," in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 145; and Thomas L. Berger and Jesse M. Lander, "Shakespeare in Print, 1593-1640," in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 403.

[282] R.A. Foakes dates the play's composition to "not later than 1602" (R.A. Foakes, *Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays: From Satire to Celebration* [London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971], 43-44). Ann Jennalie Cook writes that *Troilus and Cressida* may have first been performed at the Inns of Court (Ann Jennalie Cook, *The Privileged Playgoers of Shakespeare's London, 1576-1642* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981], 109-10), and A.D. Nuttall likewise notes, "*Troilus and Cressida* was probably written for a student audience, for one of the Inns of Court…So in this play Shakespeare is more intellectual, more technically philosophical in the full meaning of the word, than in any other" (A.D. Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker* [New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007], 207).

[283] For *Troilus and Cressida* as a problem play, see (among others) Lawrence Danson, *Tragic Alphabet: Shakespeare's Drama of Language* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), 69. Robert S. Miola notes that "*Troilus and Cressida* consistently evokes and upsets generic expectations" (Robert S. Miola, "Reading the Classics," in *A Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. David Scott Kastan [Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999], 184), and Alexander Leggatt writes that the play "breaks generic boundaries" (Alexander Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies: Violation and Identity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005], 84). Danson writes, "The play looks like a tragedy or, rather, as if it were going to *become* a tragedy; but confusion only gives way to greater confusion as each attempt at clarification—in council and debate scenes and in lovers' speeches—takes the situation farther along the road to the unformed and chaotic" (Danson, *Tragic Alphabet,* 75).

sources such as Chaucer's *Troilus and Cressida,* Lydgate's *Troy Book,* Caxton's *Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye,* and Chapman's translation of Homer for his narrative.[284]

But Shakespeare's play is more obviously cynical in tone than any of his sources. One of the more pessimistic plays in Shakespeare's corpus, *Troilus and Cressida* questions the worth of honor, warfare, love, speech, and language. Many scholars have noted the play's cynicism and skepticism; John D. Cox, for instance, describes the play's "pervasive mood of dispiriting cynicism, unrelieved by faithfulness, trust, or self-recognition of any kind," and Jill L. Levenson writes, "Blotting the extraordinary from his account, Shakespeare harps on the appetites that wring folly and pain from the human heart, and translates idealism into a chimera that inspires empty rhetoric."[285] Others have

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[284] Both Steven Marx and Nuttall claim that Shakespeare's use of medieval and classical sources is reflected in the contrast between parties and ideologies in the play; Marx writes, "The two major sources of the plot, Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* and Chapman's translation of the *Iliad,* suggest the two militaristic ideologies that the play continually invokes and mocks: medieval Christian chivalry and classical pagan policy" (Steven Marx, "Shakespeare's Pacifism," *Renaissance Quarterly* 45.1 [1992]: 71), and Nuttall claims that *Troilus and Cressida* "brilliantly entwines Chaucerian chivalric codes with a desolate Greek brutalism (quite unlike the 'virilism' of *Coriolanus*). Here Chapman's translation of Homer (or whatever Chapman had completed by this date) has clearly left its mark on the text…Roughly speaking, Shakespeare's Trojans are more Chaucerian, his Greeks more Greek, reflecting the line which links Troy, not Athens, to King Arthur and British history (a sequence variously exploded and subverted by Shakespeare's time but still mythically potent)" (A.D. Nuttall, "Action at a Distance: Shakespeare and the Greeks," in *Shakespeare and the Classics,* eds. Charles Martindale and A.B. Taylor [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004]), 215). Of the effect of the use of varying sources, Heather James writes, "Shakespeare endows the world of the play with partial awareness of the multiple sources that constitute the Troy legend as well as the politics and economics that underwrite the continual reproductions of its characters and events, and he presents this world as enraged at its own fragmentary, unauthentic, and exploited character" (Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997], 90-91).

[285] John D. Cox, "Shakespeare's Religious and Moral Thinking: Skepticism or Suspicion?" *Religion & Literature* 36.1 (2004): 50-51; and Jill L. Levenson, "Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and the Monumental Tradition in Tapestries and Literature," *Renaissance Drama* 7 (1976): 83-84. Similarly, Alfred Harbage writes, "In one play only by Shakespeare, *Troilus and Cressida*, does a spirit of mockery seem to prevail, and here if anywhere we might look for a satirist as Shakespeare's expositor" (Alfred Harbage, *As They Liked It: An Essay on Shakespeare and Morality* [New York: The MacMillan Company, 1947], 111-12). William M. Hamlin in particular discusses scepticism in the play (William M. Hamlin, *Tragedy and Scepticism in Shakespeare's England* [Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005], 168), and Engle, focusing on pragmatism, writes, "It is the more startling, then, to find in *Troilus and Cressida*—Shakespeare's 'earliest' play in terms of the putative date of its events—a rabid allegiance to market forces and an unrelieved economism with almost no residue of inherited absolutist conviction to work upon. Shakespeare has chosen to begin the Western tradition on nothing but appetite

attended to questions of time and fate in this play; Norman Rabkin, for instance, claims, "The incessant personification of time in *Troilus and Cressida* is astonishing. Time is a monster, a witch, an arbitrator, a robber, a fashionable host; it is envious and calumniating, grows old and forgets itself, and walks hand in hand with Nestor," and Elias Schwartz writes of the play, "Nothing lasts. Everything changes, everything is subject to Time."[286] Additionally, some have noted that the characters are bound by their previous textual history as by fate: they are fated to do what they do and to be what they are by the fact that they have done it before in poem after poem, story after story. R.A. Foakes, for instance, writes, "This concern with time is especially important in *Troilus and Cressida* because so many of the characters have an existence independent of the

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and ambition" (Lars Engle, *Shakespearean Pragmatism: Market of His Time* [Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1993], 148). M.M. Burns notes the objectification of characters within the play: "In the patterns of aggression which schematize this play, men are turned into objects of fear, to be cut apart physically, and women are turned into objects of scorn, to be cut apart figuratively" (M. M. Burns, "*Troilus and Cressida*: The Worst of Both Worlds," *Shakespeare Studies* 13 [1980]: 128).

[286] Norman Rabkin, *Shakespeare and the Common Understanding* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 47; and Elias Schwartz, "Tonal Equivocation and the Meaning of *Troilus and Cressida*," *Studies in Philology* 69.3 (1972): 315. Both Rabkin and Schwartz discuss time in the context of the play's discussion of value (Rabkin, *Common Understanding,* 36; Schwartz, "Tonal Equivocation," 319); Engle likewise discusses time in the context of the play's discussion of value and markets: "the play's insistence on market terms suggests that, like merchants, its characters approach instability of value in time and place as a risky opportunity for accumulation" (Engle, *Shakespearean Pragmatism,* 149). On the subject of time and fate, Jonathan Dollimore writes, "Here and throughout the play Time functions as a surrogate universal. It cannot confer universal meaning and value—indeed in one sense it actually erodes them. Yet by doing just that it retains in negative form a crucial attribute of the universal: the certainty which legitimates fatalism…" (Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology, and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and His Contemporaries* [Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1984], 45). Caroline F.E. Spurgeon also examines ideas of time in the play (Caroline F.E. Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery and What It Tells Us* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1961], 178-79) and claims, "Love is apparently killed by time, only because it transcends time; and its spiritual and infinite essence cannot be confined within the limitations of a material and finite world… The way is thus left open for the possibility of a condition or a consciousness beyond the temporal, where love may survive in a timeless reality" (Spurgeon, *Imagery,* 180). But Derrick R.C. Marsh notes, "Other critics have suggested a central concern with Time as the great destroyer, and contended that the play is tragic, because nothing human can withstand this process of decay. This, too, is a valid comment, but one that is only partially useful in a reading of the play, for while the story of love and war is seen against the background of Time's destruction, an awareness of the transience of all things, and particularly an awareness of man's vulnerability, is characteristic of all of Shakespeare's plays, and of many of the plays of the period" (Derrick R. C. Marsh, "Interpretation and Misinterpretation: The Problem of Troilus and Cressida," *Shakespeare Studies* 1 [1965]: 183).

play, as their names evoke the heroic values associated with the *Iliad*, and the legend of Troy as this has filtered through the imagination of Europe," and Linda Charnes writes, "No other of Shakespeare's characters are as 'convicted' as those in *Troilus and Cressida*. These figures have been thoroughly indicted in the repetitions of the story of Troy. We need not be persuaded that Troilus is 'true' and Cressida is 'false'—we are convinced before the play has even begun."[287]

Despite the play's continuous discussion of time and fate, Shakespeare reduces the role of prophets in his play—with the notable exception of Cassandra. Nonetheless, the play is filled with prophetic moments, and in this chapter, I examine the ways in which the characters of the play speak (or attempt to speak) about the future. Though prophetic speech plays a significant role in a number of Shakespeare's plays, I suggest that examining the prophetic moments of this particular play in conjunction with its repeated oaths and vows provides us with another way to understand Shakespeare's portrayal of certainty, contingency, agency, and self-knowledge, and thereby to reconsider the ways in which his work reshapes and is shaped by literary tradition. I begin with the characters' schemes and plots and the relative absence of prophets in Act I of the play. In Act II, prophets appear onstage during the Trojan council; Helenus, however, is notably reduced, rendering Cassandra the prophetic focus of the council. As the play progresses in Acts III and IV, vows and oaths proliferate. Here I explore the parallels and the contrasts between prophecy and oaths in the play. Both oaths and prophecies are speech-acts that attempt to predict and arrange the future; but oaths are absolute, requiring perfect self-knowledge and agency to be fulfilled, whereas prophecy,

[287] Foakes, *Dark Comedies*, 45-46; and Linda Charnes, "'So Unsecret to Ourselves': Notorious Identity and the Material Subject in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 40.4 (1989): 416.

at least in this play, is conditional. Thus Cassandra, in her prophecies, alone makes an accurate prediction of the future, because she alone allows for contingency and possibility. Finally, when the play draws to its close in Act V, both broken oaths and prophetic abilities spread; the characters of the play finally begin to understand a future which they cannot control. By the end of the play, everyone can predict the ending—everyone knows Troy will fall—but this knowledge comes too late for anyone to do anything about it.

Schemes and plots

The play begins with characters who are uncertain of their future and yet are determined to arrange it. In Act I the characters do not yet know what will happen; they can only scheme and plot in an attempt to arrange and determine their own future, and as Jane Adamson writes, "In these early scenes, as throughout the play, the characters' sense of being blocked or thwarted, which is expressed in images of checks and disasters, also generates further expectations that 'still it might, and yet it may' turn out as they desire."[288] At this point, they have no prophet to guide them, no certain knowledge of what will come, and yet they are involved from the start in trying to bring about the future they choose. In the love-plot, Pandarus and Troilus scheme to seduce Cressida, while in the war-plot, Ulysses schemes to get Achilles back out into battle.

From the first lines of the play, Troilus is eager to arrange a future in which he has Cressida for his own. We see immediately that Troilus's main concern is love, not war—"Why should I war without the walls of Troy, / That find such cruel battle here within? /

[288] Jane Adamson, "Drama in the Mind: Entertaining Ideas in *Troilus & Cressida,*" *Critical Review* 27 (1985): 11.

Each Trojan that is master of his heart, / Let him to field; Troilus, alas, hath none" (1.1.2-5). But, passive as he may seem in this moment, we soon find he is actively scheming (with some difficulty) to obtain Cressida through Pandarus: "I cannot come to Cressid but by Pandar, / And he's as tetchy to be wooed to woo / As she is stubborn-chaste against all suit" (1.1.91-93.) Troilus is not simply *hoping* for a future with Cressida; he is using "this sailing Pandar" as "Our doubtful hope, our convoy and our bark" (1.1.99-100); in other words, he is using Pandarus as a means to access Cressida. And Pandarus too, despite his repeated promise not to meddle (1.1.13-15, 63-65, 78-79, 83-84), is scheming from the beginning; indeed, he spends much of 1.2 recommending Troilus to Cressida. Even Cressida—though with less certainty—is aiming for a future in which she is prized by Troilus (though she attempts to become Troilus's love by "hold[ing] off"):

> Yet hold I off. Women are angels, wooing;
> Things won are done; joy's soul lies in the doing.
> That she beloved knows naught that knows not this:
> Men prize the thing ungained more than it is.
> …Then, though my heart's contents firm love doth bear,
> Nothing of that shall from my eyes appear. (1.2.277-86)[289]

These characters plot and plan for their futures: Cressida imagines that, if she holds off in her relationship with Troilus, he will value her more, and Troilus imagines that possessing Cressida will bring him a happy future.

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[289] While Cressida is scheming here, she does so in a very passive way. Lorraine Helms, discussing Cressida's rhymes in this soliloquy, writes, "Action is here performed at the expense of the performer and knowledge gained at the knower's cost. The rhymes deflect the speaker from action, for their gravitational pull toward the ends of the lines combines with a curious lassitude of the verbs. The speaker is the active subject of only three words…Cressida's soliloquies promise her the privileges of the countervoice and then mock her with a rhetorical agenda for quiescence. She is shadowed in ellipses, bound with rhyme, and haunted by the misogyny of both popular lore and learned tradition" (Lorraine Helms, "Acts of Resistance: The Feminist Player," in *The Weyward Sisters: Shakespeare and Feminist Politics,* eds. Dympna Callaghan, Lorraine Helms, and Jyotsna Singh [Oxford, U.K., and Cambridge, U.S.A.: Blackwell, 1994], 120-121).

Meanwhile, Ulysses and the other Greeks are attempting to win the war; in order to win, they must scheme and plot to draw Achilles back out into battle. They begin with a council to determine both the problem and its solution, and Ulysses' famous speech on the "specialty of rule" (1.3.75-37) diagnoses the reason they cannot defeat the Greeks.[290] He concludes his speech, "And 'tis this fever that keeps Troy on foot, / Not her own sinews. To end a tale of length, / Troy in our weakness lives, not in her strength" (1.3.135-37), and when Agamemnon then asks, "What is the remedy?" (1.3.141), Ulysses indicates the particular issue is Achilles (1.3.142-84). Before he can propose a cure, Aeneas interrupts with a challenge from Hector. Hector's challenge furthers Ulysses' scheming, so that, as the others depart, Ulysses tells Nestor, "I have a young conception in my brain; / Be you my time to bring it to some shape" (1.3.312-13). This "young conception" is, of course, to shame Achilles into fighting by granting the challenge to Ajax (1.3.368-87). Through Ulysses's schemes, the Greeks imagine that, with Achilles in the fight again, they can finally end this war and head home.

The characters of the play look towards a future which they do not yet know; they may plan and plot, but their efforts to shift the future are uninformed. Adamson notes that "the characters' lack of wit is absurd, pitiable and fearful not least because it is in image of our *own* possible 'unwittingness' in relation to our own experience….they are all of them innocent and ignorant of things that are possible or probable or actual, which the

[290] David Kaula writes of this speech, "He sees the basic senselessness of the situation more clearly than any of the other Greeks save Thersites…But though he sees the futility he cannot expose it directly, since his position commits him to the maintaining of appearances. Hence Ulysses' role is that of the ironist, the supersubtle rhetorical tactician, the skillful manipulator of 'opinion.'…Ulysses repeatedly modulates his mode of discourse to suit his particular audience; he also creates the situations through which he contrives to expose or influence the attitudes of other characters" (David Kaula, "Will and Reason in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 12.3 [1961]: 281).

play makes us aware of at every stage; and in their unknowing and their expectations we see how much is at risk."[291] But, as yet, the characters do not even have a prophet to guide them. The usual prophets of Troy—Cassandra, Helenus, and Calchas—are all mentioned, but not in their prophetic capacity, and none yet has any lines.

Cassandra is mentioned, but she is no more than Troilus's sister, and she does not yet appear onstage. Pandarus speaks, meaningfully, of Cassandra's wit to Troilus—"I will not dispraise your sister Cassandra's wit, but—" (1.1.44)—but Troilus at once distracts him and speaks again of Cressida.[292] Again Pandarus mentions Cassandra to Cressida—"And Cassandra laughed—" but when Cressida tries to learn more about Cassandra's role in the story ("But there was a more temperate fire under the pot of her eyes. Did her eyes run o'er too?"), Pandarus simply ignores her and continues on with the story ("And Hector laughed," 1.2.140-43). Both of these instances are simply a part of Pandarus's meddling in the lives of Troilus and Cressida: Pandarus does not mention Cassandra for her own sake, but in comparison to Cressida or as part of a story to get Cressida thinking about Troilus. Cassandra does not yet prophesy.

Helenus is mentioned as Cressida and Pandarus watch the Trojan heroes pass by from the walls, but he is no more than Troilus's brother and a priest, and he does not yet have any lines. At this point, he is mainly a distraction from Troilus; Cressida asks,

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[291] Adamson, "Drama," 14.

[292] Cassandra's wit (or witlessness) is of course a significant part of her later appearance in the play. O'Rourke notes, "Cassandra is first spoken of in the play as the exemplar of 'wit' as Helen is the pattern of beauty (1.1.43-49), but once Shakespeare equates the woman and the fool, Cassandra's prophecy is characterized as madness by Troilus (2.2.98) and as 'divination' by Hector (l. 114)" (James O'Rourke, "'Rule in Unity' and Otherwise: Love and Sex in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 43.2 [1992]: 142). Karen T. Bjelland also discusses ideas of 'wit' and madness in the play, with mention of Cassandra (Karen T. Bjelland, "The Cultural Value of Analytical Bibliography and Textual Criticism: The Case of *Troilus and Cressida*," *Text* 7 [1994]: 279-80).

"Who's that?" and Pandarus, distracted, responds, "That's Helenus. I marvel where Troilus is. That's Helenus. I think he went not forth today. That's Helenus." Cressida continues to ask about Helenus—"Can Helenus fight, uncle?"—and Pandarus continues to focus on Troilus: "Helenus? No—yes, he'll fight indifferent well. I marvel where Troilus is. Hark, do you not hear the people cry 'Troilus'? Helenus is a priest" (1.2.210-218). Helenus is so insignificant that Pandarus cannot even state clearly whether or not he can fight well, and the fact that he is a priest is only an afterthought.[293] At this point in the play, even as the other characters are eagerly attempting to arrange their futures, Helenus has no prophecy to offer.

Calchas is mentioned, but he is no more than Cressida's traitorous father, and he, like Cassandra, does not yet appear onstage. Pandarus, when he mentions Calchas to Troilus, speaks only of Calchas's departure to the Greeks, calling Cressida "a fool to stay behind her father; let her to the Greeks, and so I'll tell her the next time I see her" (1.1.76-78). Calchas is significant only in his relation to Cressida and in what he means for Troilus's chances with Cressida. He cannot yet offer any prophetic guidance.

With no prophets as yet to guide them, the characters can only attempt to arrange their future without true knowledge. They may, as Adamson writes, "willfully resist the limiting conditions of their lives."[294] But, in Camille Slights's words, the play overall "mocks human designs in a carefully structured form that prevents the audience from

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[293] Nuttall notes that, in Pandarus's pointing out the Trojan heroes to Cressida, Shakespeare adapts the Greek *teichoskopia,* or viewing from the wall (Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker,* 209). Of this scene in general, Burns writes, "Cressida is almost the only character in the play who notices the efforts of other soldiers besides the legendary heroes of Troy; Pandarus, in scurrilous contrast, dismisses from consideration everyone who does not come within the limited purview of his own advantage" (Burns, "Worst of Both Worlds," 109).

[294] Adamson, "Drama," 9.

responding with full emotional identification or with total contempt, but demands instead a delicate balance of derision and sympathy."[295] And unlike the characters themselves, the audience, if educated, does know the future—how the play must turn out—from the very beginning of the play. This is a tale of Troy, after all. The characters are bound by narrative logic and by their own textual history. The audience sees lovesick Troilus, and they know that Troilus will gain, then lose, Cressida. The audience sees that Achilles is mocking and sulking and that Hector issues a challenge, and they know that Achilles will have to fight Hector. Even from the play's first line—"In Troy there lies the scene" (Pr.1)—the audience sees Troy at war, and they know that Troy must fall.[296]

But the audience knows this only through their own prior knowledge of the matter of Troy. There are a few moments that we, with attention, can hear (or read) as ironic or as foreshadowing. There are mentions of prophetic flowers ("every flower / Did as a prophet weep what it foresaw / In Hector's wrath," 1.2.9-11),[297] of unarming ("Call here

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[295] Camille Slights, "The Parallel Structure of *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 25.1 (1974): 49.

[296] Richard D. Fly writes, "As intimations of doom gradually accrue in the language, the various characters manifest a curiously fatalistic self-consciousness about their actions. They seem at times to be acting out their gloomy destinies *as if* they did not already know the outcome, pretending they are determining their fates by authentic decisions when in fact they are half aware that it has somehow all happened to them already" (Richard D. Fly, "Cassandra and the Language of Prophecy in *Troilus and Cressida,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 26.2 [1975]: 158). Wallace A. Bacon, on the other hand, writes, "It is easy for us, with our prior knowledge of the story, to see that Hector is wrong in going out to battle on the day on which he dies; it is easy for us to see that Troilus is fatally wrong in his hope for Cressida's faithfulness. It is not equally easy, apparently, for us to do what the play seems to me to require—to say of them, 'You're wrong, but I understand you and I wish for your sake that things would work out the way you see them" (Wallace A. Bacon, "The Margery Bailey Memorial Lectures, I: The Diseased State in *Henry IV, Part Two*; II: Reason and Will in the Disordered World of *Troilus and Cressida*," *Speech Monographs* 40 [1973]: 99).

[297] Louis Marvick notes the irony of these lines: "the real prophetess of the play, Cassandra, foresees in Hector's wrath *Hector's* fall, as the bitter but condign result of his 'honorable' abandonment of the 'patient fixure' assigned to him by degree" (Louis Marvick, "Brecht, Shakespeare, and the Dynamics of Black Humor," *Studia Neophilologica* 78 [2006]: 42).

my varlet; I'll unarm again," 1.1.1),[298] and of oracles ("Ajax is grown self-willed…Bold as an oracle," 1.3.188-92); there are suggestions of Cressida going to her father and betraying Troilus ("She's a fool to stay behind her father; let her to the Greeks, and so I'll tell her the next time I see her," 1.1.76-78), and the very mention of Troilus's youth suggests his early death ("O admirable youth! He ne'er saw three-and-twenty," 1.2.226-27)—but these are all mere hints and ironies. And even though the audience does, presumably, have prior knowledge of Troy—even though they know how the play will end—they do not know how exactly these events will happen. As Charnes writes,

> The brilliance of this play resides in the way it at once pays its legendary 'debt' and prods us to anticipate that this time, maybe, Troilus will 'stand up' for Cressida and that she will 'hold out' for him. And it takes up the audience's double expectation—at once of seeing what it expects to see and seeing something 'different'—and builds it into the experience of the figures within the world of the play. So that the process of going to the theater to see this famous story reenacted produces the same affective disjunction in the audience that it imposes on the characters, who are subjected yet again to their notorious 'fates.'[299]

And, indeed, events do not turn out exactly as expected: rather than a heroic tale of war or a romantic tale of love, we have cynicism concerning both love and war.

Council

As the schemes and plots of the other characters begin to come together (without full realization) in Act II, prophets begin to appear onstage—and to prophesy. In 2.2 in particular, the council of Troy, two prophets appear onstage. And yet, compared with earlier versions of this scene in other texts of Troy, the role of the prophetic adviser is

[298] Troilus here, in the very first line of the play, speaks only of his own unarming, but Hector's unarming will be crucial at the play's climax.

[299] Linda Charnes, *Notorious Identity: Materializing the Subject in Shakespeare* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993), 101.

reduced, with the notable—and abrupt—exception of Cassandra. Her appearance onstage is thus highlighted for the audience, and her speech is essential for our understanding of the play. She first introduces knowledge of the future to the play and, with that knowledge, models for the other characters (and for the audience) how to interpret the present and understand the future. Cassandra's prophecies reveal that knowledge is never certain.

The council scene derives from the council scene in Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae*, though Shakespeare's version takes place much later in the war: Shakespeare transposes the council scene from before the war begins to near the war's end, and the question is not whether the Trojans should kidnap Helen and start a war in the first place, but whether they should *keep* Helen and *continue* the war.[300] Earlier versions of this scene in Lydgate and in Caxton proceed in orderly fashion—proceeding in birth order from brother to brother, with each brother getting time to speak—and allow prophetic characters such as Helenus to speak at length. But Shakespeare's characters speak out of order, interrupting each other, advancing and answering arguments willy-nilly; some characters speak only a few lines, and some go on at length.

[300] Shakespeare transforms his sources to make this scene uniquely his own: Hamlin mentions "how little Shakespeare owes to Caxton and Lydgate in fashioning the 'philosophical dialectic' of the Trojan debate" (Hamlin, *Tragedy and Scepticism,* 173-74), and the scene draws on contemporary ideas concerning oratory and of law disputations (W.R. Elton, *Shakespeare's* Troilus and Cressida *and the Inns of Court Revels* [London and New York: Routledge, 2000], 78-79, 94-95), "market-reasoning" (Engle, *Shakespearean Pragmatism,* 158, 159), natural law (Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy,* 42-43), and philosophy (drawing on Cicero's *De officiis,* Rolf Soellner, "Prudence and the Price of Helen: The Debate of the Trojans in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 20.3 [1969]: 256). Levenson, after discussing Benoît's version of the council (66-67), notes that "Shakespeare's scenes of council in *Troilus and Cressida*—ludicrous displays of self-indulgence—also measure the route from concupiscence to war…. In this scene, Shakespeare makes explicit what the medieval narrators had implied: that facile ratiocinations are the trappings of restless passion" (Levenson, "Monumental Tradition," 81-82).

Among those who speak only a few lines is the prophet Helenus. In earlier versions of the scene, Helenus speaks at length, laying out (with considerable rhetorical skill) his prophetic credentials, his knowledge of the future, and the implications of that knowledge. He dresses his rational and prudential argument with pathos and appeals to pity, and his speech silences the other Trojans until Troilus, the next in line, begins to speak. But in Shakespeare's play, Helenus is notably reduced. He has only a few lines in the entire play, all contained here in this council scene, where he rebukes Troilus for his lack of reason: "No marvel though you bite so sharp at reasons, / You are so empty of them. Should not our father / Bear the great sway of his affairs with reason, / Because your speech hath none that tell him so?" (2.2.33-36). He does not prophesy. Nor are his prophetic abilities clearly mentioned. Even his main argument in Lydgate and Caxton—that the Trojans should seek peace, not war—is given to Hector, who is not a prophet and who changes his mind at the end of the scene.

Helenus's prophetic abilities are indeed suggested, subtly, by Troilus, who speaks of Helenus's "dreams and slumbers" and addresses him as a "priest" (2.2.37). But Troilus is mainly calling Helenus a coward:

> You are for dreams and slumbers, brother priest;
> You fur your gloves with reason. Here are your reasons:
> You know an enemy intends you harm;
> You know a sword employed is perilous,
> And reason flies the object of all harm. (2.2.37-41)

These "dreams and slumbers" suggest prophetic abilities, but, equally, they suggest a simple concern for comfort and a desire to hide from the rigorous and "manly" task of fighting. Troilus does not make clear what he means by "dreams and slumbers," and his following words do not suggest he is thinking of prophetic abilities:

> Who marvels, then, when Helenus beholds
> A Grecian and his sword, if he do set
> The very wings of reason to his heels,
> And fly like chidden Mercury from Jove,
> Or like a star disorbed? Nay, if we talk of reason,
> Let's shut our gates and sleep. Manhood and honour
> Should have hare hearts, would they but fat their thoughts
> With this crammed reason; reason and respect
> Make livers pale and lustihood deject. (2.2.42-50)[301]

Prophetic knowledge is often scorned as mere cowardice, but here, in Troilus's mention of "dreams and slumbers," it is not entirely clear that Troilus is referring to prophecy at all, and it is not necessary to read prophetic ability into this line to make sense of it. In Troilus's view, Helenus is for laziness and cowardice, and his argument for reason is not worth heeding: Troilus stands against reason.[302]

The scene is not, however, devoid of prophecy, for here Cassandra bursts into the scene, and her appearance "has the effect of a terrible apparition, as if the ghost of the future has suddenly materialized in the very instant when her brothers are electing this frightful destiny."[303] The reduction of Helenus (and complete absence of Pentheus) renders her prophecy prominent, and Shakespeare highlights her role: she alone prophesies, her entrance is abrupt, and her style of speech differs from that of her brothers. Whereas in earlier versions of this scene, Cassandra speaks after the council, here she bursts into the council abruptly, interrupting the lengthy speeches of the men and

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[301] Arlene N. Okerlund notes the irony of Troilus's argument here: Troilus's "arguments in the Council must be viewed in the context of his earlier actions in the war—actions that were few, indeed" (Arlene N. Okerlund, "In Defense of Cressida: Character as Metaphor," *Women's Studies* 7 [1980]: 6).

[302] Soellner writes, "Early in the debate Troilus shows his utter contempt for reason, the most important of all traditional values. Corresponding to the sources, Shakespeare's Helenus counsels prudence, and Troilus ridicules his qualms as due to his occupational concerns as a priest with dreams and prophecies. But only Shakespeare makes Troilus ridicule all reliance on reason" (Soellner, "Prudence," 259-60).

[303] Adamson, "Drama," 15.

shrieking, "Cry, Trojans, cry!" (2.2.97).[304] Her entrance alarms the men; Priam at once demands, "What noise? What shriek is this?" (2.2.97). Troilus infers, "'Tis our mad sister. I do know her voice" (2.2.98), and Hector states, "It is Cassandra" (2.2.100), as Cassandra continues to shriek, "Cry, Trojans!" (2.2.99). They attempt to calm her—Hector says, "Peace, sister, peace!" (2.2.103)—but to no avail; "peace" is exactly what Cassandra is crying for. She proceeds to predict Troy's destruction ("Troy must not be, nor goodly Ilium stand; / Our firebrand brother Paris burns us all," 2.2.109-10), and she urges her brothers to let Helen go ("Cry, Trojans, cry! A Helen and a woe! / Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go," 2.2.111-12). Cassandra introduces the future to the other characters, and it is more than they can accept.

The contrast between her rhetoric and that of the men draws further attention to her prophecy. Her repeated cry of "Cry, Trojans, cry!" and the abrupt, concrete style of her speech, full of short sentences and imperatives, strikes a sharp contrast with her brothers' long, discursive, and philosophical speeches. Cassandra's speech is excessive—"Lend me ten thousand eyes, / And I will fill them with prophetic tears" (2.2.101-2)—and repetitive—"Cry, Trojans, cry!" she says, and again, "Cry, Trojans!" (Here she connects prophecy and lament, the thousand ships launched by the Greeks and the pain caused by the war, and she repeats the word *cry* about a dozen times in her brief time onstage here.) But she speaks not to warriors, but to "Virgins and boys, mid-age and wrinkled old, / Soft infancy, that nothing canst but cry, / Add to my clamour!" (2.2.104-6). She draws on the perspectives of other Trojans—not just the warriors here in council—and invites them to

[304] For the differences between the Quarto's, Folio's, and modern editions' placement of Cassandra's entrance, see Alan C. Dessen, *Recovering Shakespeare's Theatrical Vocabulary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 72-73.

shriek with her as she says, “Let us pay betimes / A moiety of that mass of moan to come” (2.2.107), in a line that in itself sounds like a moan of pain and that draws on the men’s financial metaphors. She calls for the Trojans to “Practice your eyes with tears” (2.2.108), thus drawing connections between their present debate and their future grief.[305] Cassandra’s speech, though excessive and repetitive in its imagery, is nonetheless marked by syntactical plainness in comparison with her brothers’ rhetorical flourishes. Her brothers speak formally, with complex sentence structures; Cassandra speaks bluntly and plainly, without the riddling speech we might expect of prophets. Though Cassandra’s entrance into the play here is brief, it is memorable as, say, Helenus’s is not.

Cassandra’s speech consists primarily of short, declarative statements, statements that indicate apparent certainty of the future. She appears to deal in absolutes: this is what will happen. But Cassandra’s final line in the scene—“Cry, cry! Troy burns, or else let Helen go” (2.2.112)—indicates that this prophesied future is not in fact certain. Here, I would argue, are the most important words in Cassandra’s speech: “or else.” Cassandra alone—though the most knowledgeable of characters within the play—admits a lack of perfect knowledge. She does not yet know what the Trojans will choose. She admits other possibilities—namely, the possibility that Troy could survive, if only they will let Helen go. Her speech allows for contingency and for possibility, and it recognizes her own lack of agency.

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[305] Fly writes, “The ten thousand eyes that Cassandra's grief could fill with ‘prophetic tears’ remind us not only of those flowers on the battlefield weeping prophetically at the sight of Hector's wrath, but also of the general lamentation which will soon overwhelm the Trojan city…They might as well start weeping now, Cassandra says, for ‘that mass of moan to come’” (Fly, “Cassandra,” 161). Elton, on the other hand, discusses the hyperbole of weeping throughout the play (Elton, *Inns of Court Revels,* 37).

As in other Trojan War narratives, the Trojans fail to heed prophetic warnings. Cassandra's unbound hair and excesses of speech suggest (but only suggest) that she is not reasonable, but mad.[306] And though Hector speaks of Cassandra's prophecy as "high strains / Of divination" (2.2.113), Troilus calls her prophecy "brain-sick raptures" (2.2.122), something the Trojans do not need to bother heeding:

> We may not think the justness of each act
> Such and no other than th'event doth form it,
> Nor once deject the courage of our minds
> Because Cassandra's mad. Her brain-sick raptures
> Cannot distaste the goodness of a quarrel
> Which hath our several honours all engaged
> To make it gracious. (2.2.118-25)

Troilus is on the side of valor, not reason, but even he sees Cassandra's prophecy, abrupt and emotional, as unreasonable. There is no rational prophecy here: prophecy is only madness.

But as we reach the end of the scene, it becomes apparent that this madness is not Cassandra's. As the brothers conclude their debate, Hector states plainly that, ethically speaking, Helen ought to be returned—"If Helen then be wife to Sparta's king, / As it is known she is, these moral laws / Of nature and of nations speak aloud / To have her back returned" (2.2.183-86)—but he then immediately proposes that they keep Helen nonetheless: "My sprightly brethren, I propend to you / In resolution to keep Helen still; / For 'tis a cause that hath no mean dependence / Upon our joint and several dignities"

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[306] On the stage direction "*enter with her hair about her ears* or *with her hair disheveled*," see Dessen, *Theatrical Vocabulary*, 43, and David Bevington, *Action is Eloquence: Shakespeare's Language of Gesture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), 85. Linda LaBranche connects Cassandra's appearance with "Cressida's mounting hysteria when she learns she must be separated from Troilus": "Though the two women rave for different reasons, they nonetheless present strikingly similar visual images of frenzied impotence and disorder, images whose similarity is made more apparent by the contrast they make with the usual orderliness of the stage picture" (Linda LaBranche, "Visual Patterns and Linking Analogues in *Troilus and Cressida*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 37.4 [1986]: 448).

(2.2.190-93). Hector's change of heart seems unmotivated and random, and the placement of this scene, juxtaposed with Thersites's mockery of leadership both before and after the council, further suggests the Trojans' irrationality.[307] The whole enterprise, as Ulysses claims, is sick—not only for the Greeks, but also for the Trojans. The Trojans are as irrational, disordered, and brainsick as (they believe) Cassandra herself.

Vows

The council of Troy introduces prophecy to the play, but it also introduces the subject of commitments, oaths, and vows. The very fact that this play concerns the matter of Troy necessarily brings the question of oaths and oath-breaking into its narrative. The Trojan War itself is fought both because of broken oaths and because of kept oaths: the Greeks go to war because Helen has broken her marriage vows and because Helen's suitors, before she wed Menelaus, all swore to defend her marriage vows.[308] But vows and promises are not so explicitly discussed until the council scene. Here Troilus uses the metaphors of marriage (2.2.61-68) and of merchandise (2.2.69-70) to argue for holding fast to commitment.[309] And Paris, likewise, states, "Were I alone to pass the difficulties / And had as ample power as I have will, / Paris should ne'er retract what he hath done / Nor faint in the pursuit" (2.2.139-42). Troilus and Paris both argue that a decision, once made, should be upheld, and though Hector may claim, "Thus to persist / In doing wrong

[307] On Hector's change of mind, see Elton, *Inns of Court Revels,* 100-101; John D. Cox, "The Error of Our Eye in *Troilus and Cressida,*" *Comparative Drama* 10.2 (1976): 166; and Slights, "Parallel Structure," 45. Both Leggatt and Bruce R. Smith connect Hector's change of mind in the council scene to his death; see Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies,* 89; and Bruce R. Smith, *Shakespeare and Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 144.

[308] Of these oaths, Helen's broken marriage vows are discussed in the council scene; the oaths of the Greeks to stand by Menelaus are less explicitly present, but lie in the background.

[309] On Troilus's metaphors here, see T. McAlindon, "Language, Style, and Meaning in *Troilus and Cressida,*" *PMLA* 84.1 (1969): 39; and Rabkin, *Common Understanding,* 40.

extenuates not wrong, / But makes it much more heavy" (2.2.185-87), ultimately the Trojans decide, against reason, to uphold one commitment (the war itself) while rejecting another commitment (Helen's marriage to Menelaus).

And after the council scene and its discussion of commitments, oaths take center stage, both in the love-plot and in the war-plot: vows and promises proliferate, and oaths become a major theme of the play.[310] Not only do Troilus and Cressida vow to be true to each other, but Hector also vows to fight, Ulysses promises that Troy will fall, and Achilles promises that Hector will die. These vows and promises, like the schemes and plots of Act I and the prophecies of Act II, are an attempt to use words to predict and arrange the future. Oaths and prophecy are both a form of testimony; Miriam Joseph writes, "Testimony, according to the Tudor logicians, proceeds either from men or from supernatural powers…The testimony of oracles, soothsayers, augurs, prodigies, dreams, apparitions, ghosts, witches, prophecies is supernatural. The testimony of men includes proverbs, apothegms, pledges, oaths. Both kinds have the character of witnesses and the force of argument."[311] But because words are slippery and all knowledge is partial, these vows and promises fail. Vows and oaths, unlike prophecy, are absolute, and if the person making the vow lacks either self-knowledge or agency, their oaths go unfulfilled.

The most important of these oaths are those of Troilus and Cressida. This scene, standing at the play's center, is as much the culmination of their love-affair as is their

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[310] T. McAlindon notes, "Soldiers and lovers traditionally take a solemn view of their own utterances: their characteristic words are oaths and vows; they are quick to swear. 'Word,' 'oath,' 'vow,' and 'swear,' a set of terms which occurs frequently in *Troilus and Cressida,* are therefore virtually synonymous in it" (McAlindon, "Language," 30-31).

[311] Miriam Joseph, *Shakespeare's Use of the Arts of Language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), 92. Joseph proceeds to discuss varying types of "oaths, vows, and pledges" in Shakespeare's works (Joseph, *Arts of Language,* 103-107).

sexual consummation: it *is* a sort of onstage consummation. They even speak of sex in the language of oaths: the pair understands that action falls short of intention in sex, as Troilus says, "This is the monstruosity in love, lady, that the will is infinite and the execution confined; that the desire is boundless and the act a slave to limit," and Cressida responds, "They say all lovers swear more performance than they are able, and yet reserve an ability that they never perform, vowing more than the perfection of ten and discharging less than the tenth part of one. They that have the voice of lions and the act of hares, are they not monsters?" (3.2.77-86). But action can fall short of intention in any undertaking—including the intention of fidelity. Nonetheless, Troilus and Cressida swear their vows to each other.

Troilus and Cressida draw on the language of prophecy alongside the language of oaths as they attempt to predict the future of their relationship. Troilus speaks of the oaths of other lovers—"True swains in love," with "their rhymes, / Full of protest, of oath and big compare" (3.2.168-70)—as he swears his own fidelity. He predicts his reputation for faithfulness as he uses similes of time ("as plantage to the moon, / As sun to day," 3.2.172-73), of war ("As true as steel… As iron to adamant," 3.2.72-74), and of authorship ("As truth's authentic author to be cited," 3.2.176), to show that all these similes are "truth tired with iteration" and that his own reputation for fidelity "shall crown up the verse / And sanctify the numbers" (3.2.177-78).[312] As Troilus swears faithfulness, he does not admit any contingency; he uses words such as *when* and *shall* to

[312] Stephen J. Lynch notes that Troilus makes "'many oaths' of which few are 'plain.' As in the opening scene, his language is overly labored, as if he were intent on being not simply a good lover but the most exceptional lover that has ever lived—an aspiration laden with egotism. Moreover, it is indicative of his self-obsession that he formulates his vow not in terms of fidelity to Cressida but in terms of loyalty to his own name as a synonym for truth" (Stephen J. Lynch, "The Idealism of Shakespeare's Troilus," *South Atlantic Review* 51.1 [1986]: 22).

indicate his commitment to fidelity. Cressida's response draws even more explicitly on the language of prophecy, as she hopes that Troilus speaks true: "Prophet may you be!" (3.2.178). She then swears her own fidelity. But Cressida's vows sound much different from Troilus's; she swears fidelity by cursing herself to a reputation for faithlessness if she betrays Troilus—and, significantly, by including the *if* of prophecy: "If I be false or swerve a hair from truth…" (3.2.179).[313] She employs similes of predatory relationship ("As fox to lamb, or wolf to heifer's calf, / Pard to the hind, or stepdame to her son," 3.2.188-89) and, in condemning herself, accurately prophesies her reputation for infidelity ("…let memory, / From false to false, among false maids in love, / Upbraid my falsehood! / …Yea, let them say, to stick the heart of falsehood, / 'As false as Cressid,'" 3.2.184-191). Cressida shows herself more conscious of her own lack of agency as she makes her vows; as Mihoko Suzuki notes, "These lines suggest Cressida's greater awareness of the contingency of her love on the larger epic background that impinges upon it…In her vatic mode—which she shares with Cassandra whose fate it is to speak and never be believed—Cressida also emerges as a figure who approximates the poet's consciousness more closely than does Troilus, whose limited and self-regarding awareness leads him to prophecies that are belied by his own later actions. Indeed, the fulfillment of Cressida's prophecy seems inescapable, since she compares herself to 'air,

[313] Both Charnes and James note the differences between Troilus's and Cressida's vows. Charnes writes, "Troilus sees his name as encoding authorship: to be the source of the citation 'as true as Troilus' is to claim the authority of being 'truth's authentic author.' Cressida, on the other hand, imagines her citationality in terms of the body. To 'stick' her name as the 'heart of falsehood' is at once to fix it and to stab it…Troilus becomes the writer and Cressida, the written; Troilus, the doer and Cressida, the done; Troilus, the artist and Cressida, the artifact" (Charnes, "So Unsecret," 422). James writes, "Cressida's oath, conditional and subjunctive, differs from Troilus' predictive precedent. She utters an indirect command, a proleptic performative which fulfills Troilus' fantasy of fixed identity, if only as figures of speech" (James, *Shakespeare's Troy,* 111).

water, wind, and sandy earth,' the elemental forces that destroy man's monuments."[314] Cressida's vows are nearer prophecy than oath.

And here Pandarus too predicts his own reputation alongside that of the lovers, including, like Cressida, the word *if*: "If ever you prove false one to another, since I have taken such pains to bring you together, let all pitiful goers-between be called to the world's end after my name: call them all panders. Let all constant men be Troiluses, all false women Cressids, and all brokers-between panders! Say 'Amen'" (3.2.193-199).[315] The assumption is that Troilus and Cressida will be able to be true to each other, and if they cannot, there will be consequences. There is no acknowledgment—except from Cressida—of the fact that Troilus and Cressida may not have the agency to remain faithful to each other, only consequences if Cressida fails to be faithful.

Vows and oaths—or reminders of already-made vows and oaths—fill the war-plot as well. These oaths and promises contradict each other, creating a tangled web of promise and prophecy that cannot all possibly be fulfilled. Ulysses promises Hector that Troy will fall:

> Sir, I foretold you then what would ensue.
> My prophecy is but half his journey yet;
> For yonder walls, that pertly front your town,
> Yon towers, whose wanton tops do buss the clouds,
> Must kiss their own feet. (4.5.217-21)

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[314] Mihoko Suzuki, "'Truth Tired with Iteration': Myth and Fiction in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida,*" *Philological Quarterly* 66.2 (1987): 156-57.

[315] Maurice Hunt writes, "Ironically, Troilus, Cressida, and Pandarus turn themselves into the caricatures that they would later become in Western culture. Paradoxically, culture would come to depend upon three prototypes of lovers and agent who had only themselves upon whom to depend for self-definition. When Cressida exclaims, 'Prophet may you be,' and when all three characters seal their self-created identities with a fervent 'amen,' they signal the deification for which they search and which they cannot find in themselves. For them no god outside the self functions as an identity-forming mirror" (Maurice Hunt, "Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida* and Christian Epistemology," *Christianity and Literature* 42.2 [1993]: 256).

Ulysses's promise explicitly takes the form of prophecy. Achilles, like Ulysses, promises destruction as he tells Hector that he will kill him; his promise is more specific than Ulysses's, and it seeks further specificity, as he attempts to pin down exactly *where* he will kill Hector: "Tell me, you heavens, in which part of his body / Shall I destroy him? Whether there, or there, or there?... / Answer me, heavens!" (4.5.242-46). Like Ulysses's promise, Achilles's demands adopt the language of prophecy in his promise to kill. But this demand of the gods contradict his earlier oaths, as he has already sworn, for Polyxena's sake, not to fight against the Trojans:

> Here is a letter from Queen Hecuba,
> A token from her daughter, my fair love,
> Both taxing me and gaging me to keep
> An oath that I have sworn. I will not break it.
> Fall, Greeks; fail, fame; honour, or go or stay;
> My major vow lies here; this I'll obey. (5.1.38-43)

Nonetheless, Achilles demands to fight Hector and promises to kill him.

But Hector rejects—to varying degrees—both Achilles' and Ulysses' promises. He does not outright contradict Ulysses, but promises instead that the Greeks will pay for each drop of Trojan blood:

> I must not believe you.
> There they stand yet, and modestly I think
> The fall of every Phrygian stone will cost
> A drop of Grecian blood. The end crowns all,
> And that old common arbitrator, Time,
> Will one day end it. (4.5.21-26)

As Richard D. Fly writes, "Hector seems to share Ulysses' sense of destiny, for he does not question the truth of Ulysses' prophecy so much as he states the bloody price the Grecians themselves will be required to pay to realize it."[316] But whereas Ulysses and

[316] Fly, "Cassandra," 163.

Hector seem to come to some sort of understanding, Hector outright rejects Achilles' prophetic language: "It would discredit the blest gods, proud man, / To answer such a question.... / Wert thou the oracle to tell me so, / I'd not believe thee" (4.5.247-53). Hector and Achilles then promise each other to meet the following day in battle, as Achilles says, "Tomorrow do I meet thee, fell as death," and Hector responds, "Thy hand upon that match" (4.5.270). Rather than believe Ulysses's and Achilles's prophetic language, Hector attempts to make predictions and vows of his own.

These vows are, like prophecy, a way to predict and arrange the future. After all, a vow, a promise, is an attempt to predict one's own future behavior. When Troilus promises to be true to Cressida, when Hector promises to fight, and when Achilles promises to kill Hector, each is making a claim about their own future actions. All oaths are an attempt to predict one's future behavior, but Shakespeare strengthens the connection between oaths and prophecy in this particular play: these characters make these promises in language like that of prophecy. But vows and oaths, unlike prophecy, are absolute, and they require perfect self-knowledge and agency to be fulfilled. After Act II, the play's characters are constantly trying to predict their own behavior, but they show that they either do not know themselves well enough to make such a prediction or that they do not actually have as much agency as they think.

Thus, though Troilus and Cressida promise to be true to each other, they do not have the agency or self-knowledge to make such a promise. Even as Cressida swears fidelity to Troilus, it becomes apparent that neither she nor Troilus fully understands themselves or their circumstances. We see the irony of Cressida's promise even in the irony of her metaphors: though the audience knows that Troy itself will not be worn away

by drops of water, but burned, nonetheless Cressida speaks of a future "When time is old and hath forgot itself, / When waterdrops have worn the stones of Troy, / And blind oblivion swallowed cities up, / And mighty states characterless are grated / To dusty nothing" (3.2.180-84). Troy will never be worn away, nor will blind oblivion swallow Troy up; nor will Cressida have the agency to keep her own oath. But Cressida, using here the word *when,* does not recognize that she is wrong. And indeed, Calchas interferes immediately after they have made their vows—in the very next scene (3.3)—and they are unable to stay true to each other. Calchas wants his daughter to come to the Greek camp—whether out of affection, possessiveness, or a desire to save her from Troy's destruction is unclear—and so, when the Greeks capture the Trojan warrior Antenor, Calchas asks that the Greeks request Cressida as a trade for Antenor. His actions, of course, force Troilus and Cressida apart and lead to Cressida's switch of allegiance from Troilus to Diomedes.

In the juxtaposition of the lovers' oaths and Calchas's speech to the Greeks, we may expect to see again the contrast between oath and prophecy, but Calchas does not in fact prophesy in this scene, or at any point in the play. He may speak of "the sight I bear in things to come" (3.3.4), and though this line could refer simply to the ability to give good counsel, it is hard to miss the implication of prophecy. However, this is only one line, quickly stated, and we see no evidence within the play of any actual prophecy on Calchas's part. In his speech, he states that he has "abandoned Troy, left my possessions, / Incurred a traitor's name, exposed myself, / From certain and possessed conveniences, / To doubtful fortunes," simply in order "to do you service" (3.3.5-11).[317] What services

[317] J. Karl Franson notes that Calchas' services are "unspecified in the play" and are "presumably prophecies concerning the War's outcome and information about Troy's defenses (as in Chaucer)" (J. Karl

exactly these might be are left to the imagination or prior knowledge of the audience; within the play, he gives the Greeks very little actual advice. He does not actively prophesy within the play, nor does anyone—besides himself, here, in this single line—speak of his prophetic ability.[318] Though his speech suggests his prophetic abilities, nonetheless, as with Helenus, the audience must depend on their own knowledge of the Trojan War and must read between the lines to realize that Calchas is a prophet at all.

But his prophetic ability apparently has nothing to do with his request for Cressida; his betrayal of Troy is favor enough for the Greeks, and betrayal does not require prophecy. And Calchas requests his daughter not apparently out of any concern for her welfare (otherwise he might do more to protect her from the Greeks when she does arrive at the camp), but simply because she is his daughter and belongs to him.[319] Calchas has little purpose besides flattery and wheedling; he accomplishes virtually nothing—except turning his daughter into a whore.[320] He may bear sight of a sort—but

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Franson, "An Antenor-Aeneas Conspiracy in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida,*" *Studies in the Humanities* 7.1. [1978]: 44).

[318] Nonetheless, his speech is concerned with time; as Zdeněk Stříbrný writes, "He is especially clever in pressing the 'advantage of the time', i.e. of the present moment, which is most propitious for the exchange, and in stressing his sacrifice of old, when he abandoned his former certainties in favour of uncertain future, when he left all that had been made familiar to him by 'time, acquaintance, custom, and condition' (III, 3, 2-10). It should be added that although such a combination of the 'instant' with the 'customary' Time is quite convincing for the Greek leaders, it is rather exceptional in the play" (Zdeněk Stříbrný, "Time in *Troilus and Cressida,*" *Shakespeare-Jahrbuch* 112 [1976]: 115-16).

[319] C.C. Barfoot notes that "the traitor Calchas uses business jargon to promote the exchange that separates the lovers. For him, the recently captured Antenor represents currency with which to purchase his daughter, Cressida, as a means of receiving recompense for his desertion…this exchange at the heart of the play enacts the mercantile equation that hitherto had been expressed only metaphorically" (C.C. Barfoot, "*Troilus and Cressida*: 'Praise Us As We Are Tasted,'" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 39.1 [1988]: 47-48).

[320] Matthew A. Greenfield writes, "Calchas precipitates a similar crisis in his daughter, splitting her into a Trojan self, Troilus's lover, and a Greek self, which Troilus calls 'Diomed's Cressida' (5.2.135). Her roles develop in relation to the communities in which she resides and, more particularly, to the men who claim her as their property: Troilus and her uncle Pandarus on one side, Diomedes and her father Calchas on the other" (Matthew A. Greenfield, "Fragments of Nationalism in *Troilus and Cressida,*" *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51.2 [2000]: 193).

the characters of this play are always relentlessly looking to the future, and as we do not know what Calchas has seen, we do not know that his sight is really any clearer than anyone else's.

If Cressida had complete agency over her own life, perhaps she would be able to keep her oath; but she does not, and so she cannot. Upon learning of her father's actions, Cressida protests,

> O you immortal gods! I will not go…
> I will not, uncle. I have forgot my father.
> I know no touch of consanguinity;
> No kin, no love, no blood, no soul so near me
> As the sweet Troilus…
> I will not go from Troy. (4.2.95-110)

But she has no power to keep herself from going from Troy.[321] Nor does Troilus stand up for her or try to prevent her going from Troy; as Suzuki writes, "What Troilus has to offer Cressida in these parting words are just that—empty words unmatched by deeds. He betrays Cressida by his complicity with the Trojans in treating her as chattel," and later she adds, "In fact, in the majority of Shakespeare's plays, it is women who are victims of male forswearing. Seen in this light, Cressida emerges as a victim of Troilus' inability to live up to his extravagant professions of 'truth.'"[322] Troilus too fails Cressida. The two do not have the agency or self-knowledge they had hoped; immediately after making their oaths, they find themselves unable to keep those oaths.

Thus, these vows are attempts to predict the future, and they are variously successful. But they do not contain truth, prudence, or even reason in the way that

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[321] LaBranche writes, "The continual conveying of Cressida from one male to another makes a vivid visual statement of the girl's position in her world. She is essentially powerless to control and direct her own life, shown repeatedly to be in the hands of others" (LaBranche, "Visual Patterns," 440).

[322] Suzuki, "Truth," 156 and 165.

Cassandra's apparently mad prophecy does. The trouble with vows in this play, I would argue, is simply this: vows do not include an *if*, whereas prophecies do. Vows do not allow for contingency.

Again, a vow, a promise, is an attempt to predict one's own future behavior. But a vow does not take contingency, a lack of agency, or a lack of self-knowledge into account. A vow is absolute: I *will* act in this way, no matter what. Such an absolute statement requires perfect self-knowledge and agency to be fulfilled. And both this perfect self-knowledge and this perfect agency are impossible for the characters of the play, who do not know themselves and who cannot control their own destiny. But these characters act as though they *do* possess unmediated self-knowledge, and whereas Cassandra, in predicting the future, includes the *if* of prophecy, the other characters, in predicting the future, make absolute vows. As these characters make their vows, they show that they do not understand the *if* required for predicting the future. Cassandra alone makes an accurate prediction, because she alone allows for contingency and possibility.

Proliferating prophecy

But as the play draws towards its close—as the possibilities opened by the *if* of prophecy begin to narrow—both broken oaths and prophetic abilities spread; as Fly writes, "Cassandra's direct expression of approaching ruin functions as the common denominator for all these various prophecies of destruction, and as the play moves into its final stages of general collapse almost all the participants can find occasion to utter thoughts which remind us of her role."[323] In Cressida's betrayal of Troilus, we see the impossibility of keeping some oaths; in the death of Hector, we see the undesirability of

[323] Fly, "Cassandra," 163.

keeping others. But as absolute oaths fail, Cassandra's prophetic abilities, with their acknowledgement of contingency and possibility, begin to spread, and by the end of the play, the other characters—and the audience—are able to predict what will happen after the curtain falls.

Cressida's broken promises lie at the heart of her story. Calchas's betrayal has prepared us for Cressida's betrayal; as J. Oates Smith writes, "Shakespeare uses Calchas' abandonment of the Trojans to signal Cressida's coming infidelity. Just as the father betrays his native city, so Cressida betrays Troilus."[324] But we are not as prepared for her lack of agency among the Greeks: she cannot stay with the Trojans, though she desires it, and she is passed amongst the Greeks as a prize (4.5). Cressida's promises were more tentatively made than Troilus's, less absolute—reflecting, perhaps, her knowledge that she will not be allowed to keep her promises—and yet she *did* make such promises, and she *cannot* keep them, not amidst the Greeks. She "is and is not Cressid" (5.2.153)—is split into Troilus's Cressida, a woman who wants to keep her oaths, and "Diomed's Cressida" (5.2.144), a woman with no power to choose. As Troilus says,:

> Instance, O instance, strong as Pluto's gates,
> Cressid is mine, tied with the bonds of heaven;
> Instance, O instance, strong as heaven itself,
> The bonds of heaven are slipped, dissolved and loosed,
> And with another knot, five-finger-tied,
> The fractions of her faith, orts of her love,
> The fragments, scraps, the bits and greasy relics
> Of her o'ereaten faith, are bound to Diomed. (5.2.160-167)

Cressida's promises of fidelity cannot be kept; only her prophecy of what her reputation will become *if* (when) she is unfaithful comes true. She is and is not Cressida—she has

[324] J. Oates Smith, "Essence and Existence in Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*," *Philological Quarterly* 46.2 (1967): 179-80.

no control over who she is—and her words are nothing but words. And Troilus himself, in rejecting Cressida's letter at the play's end, arguably breaks his own oath to be true to her. He placed no conditions on his own oath—no promise that he would remain true to Cressida if and only if she remained faithful to him—and so, in rejecting her, he breaks his own promise, not knowing himself or Cressida well enough to keep his oaths. Oaths, like Cressida's final letter, are only "Words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart" (5.3.107).

It is impossible for the lovers to keep their oaths; but for the warriors, keeping oaths leads to destruction and death. In the war-plot, the warriors do indeed keep at least some of their oaths: Achilles and Ulysses promise Hector that Troy will fall and Hector will be killed; Hector is indeed killed, and Troy does indeed fall. Hector promises to make the Greeks pay in blood for slaughtering Trojans, and the Greeks do indeed pay. But before the warriors, keeping their foolish vows, go out and fight, prophecy again breaks into the play. Cassandra, after interrupting the council in Act II and giving us a model for how to look to the future (through the *if* of prophecy rather than the absolutism of oaths), eventually, in Act V, gives the other characters a model for prophecy too. She speaks *against* oaths, arguing that it is undesirable for Hector to keep his vow to fight. But Hector refuses to listen. Just as, in Cressida's betrayal, we see that some oaths *cannot* be kept, so in the death of Hector, we see that some oaths *should not* be kept.

Andromache is the first to share in Cassandra's prophetic ability as she dreams of Hector's death. She begs Hector, "Unarm, unarm, and do not fight today….My dreams will sure prove ominous to the day" (5.3.3-6). When Cassandra appears, Andromache begs her, "Consort with me in loud and dear petition; / Pursue we him on knees. For I

have dreamt / Of bloody turbulence, and this whole night / Hath nothing been but shapes and forms of slaughter" (5.39-12.). Cassandra at once supports Andromache: "O, 'tis true!...No notes of sally, for the heavens, sweet brother" (5.3.13-14). And as the scene continues, and as Hector continues to refuse to listen to his wife's and sister's counsels, even Priam joins in prophetically:

> Come, Hector, come. Go back.
> Thy wife hath dreamt, thy mother hath had visions,
> Cassandra doth foresee, and I myself
> Am like a prophet suddenly enrapt
> To tell thee that this day is ominous.
> Therefore, come back. (5.3.62-67)

But even Priam—Hector's father and his king—cannot persuade Hector, and Hector goes to fight—and to die.

Cassandra and Andromache argue that, rationally speaking, Hector should break his vows; as David J. Houser writes, "Hector has vowed and will not turn back, even as Paris and Troilus insisted on unswerving consistency…Cassandra and Andromache rationally puncture that argument…but Hector values 'Mine honour' (l. 26) above such considerations.'"[325] But Hector's main argument for fighting is not based in reason, but in the fact that "The gods have heard me swear" (5.3.15). Cassandra responds, "The gods are deaf to hot and peevish vows. / They are polluted off'rings, more abhorred / Than spotted livers in the sacrifice" (5.3.16-18), and Andromache adds, "O, be persuaded! / Do not count it holy / To hurt by being just" (5.3.19-22). Hector's vow was made without considering the *if* needed to predict the future, and Cassandra tells Hector to consider the vow's purpose: "It is the purpose that makes strong the vow, / But vows to every purpose

[325] David J. Houser, "Armor and Motive in *Troilus and Cressida,*" *Renaissance Drama* 4 (1971): 131-32.

must not hold. / Unarm, sweet Hector" (5.3.23-25). But Hector remains bound to the absolutes of his vow: "Mine honour keeps the weather of my fate. / Life every man holds dear, but the dear man / Holds honor far more precious-dear than life" (5.3.26-28). He is more concerned with his honor, with the absolutes of keeping his vow, than with keeping Troy safe from destruction: "I must not break my faith" (5.3.71).[326]

In response, Cassandra prophesies one final time:

> O farewell, dear Hector!
> Look how thou diest! Look how thy eye turns pale!
> Look how thy wounds do bleed at many vents!
> Hark, how Troy roars, how Hecuba cries out,
> How poor Andromache shrills her dolor forth!
> Behold, distraction, frenzy, and amazement,
> Like witless antics, one another meet,
> And all cry 'Hector! Hector's dead! O Hector!' (5.3.80-87)

Powerless to prevent the future she sees, she says farewell to Hector as though he is already dead. She ends with words of warning: "Farewell. Yet soft! Hector, I take my leave. / Thou dost thyself and all our Troy deceive" (5.3.89-90). Cassandra sees clearly through Hector's argument to its inevitable conclusion, and her earlier frenzy will soon be shared by the rest of the Trojans: all will join her in crying, "Hector! Hector's dead!" And though Hector claims that he is keeping his faith, Cassandra sees that he is deceiving himself, and Troy, as much as Cressida betrayed Troilus: his refusal to trust Cassandra's prophecy will lead to the downfall of Troy.

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[326] Elton discusses Andromache's and Cassandra's arguments for "the legitimacy of oath-breaking according to circumstances" and the "dialectic of oaths" within this scene, and he notes, "Yet vows are themselves sworn (cf. *KJ,* II.i.567-9) to withstand vicissitudes of purpose. While Cassandra here implicitly undermines her own sacred vows as priestess, Hector's wife implicitly subverts her own marital vows" (Elton, *Inns of Court Revels,* 156-159). Elton concludes "In sum, two circumstantial arguments are thus in V.iii launched against Hector's vow-absolutism: Andromache's ends-means, and Cassandra's vow-casuistry" (Elton, *Inns of Court Revels,* 156-159).

Hector, as he has promised, goes out to fight; Achilles, as he has promised, kills him; and it is clear by the play's end that Ulysses's promise of Troy's destruction will indeed be fulfilled. But it cannot be said that the results of their oaths are honorable or honorably portrayed.[327] When Achilles does finally fight Hector, Hector is unarmed, in the midst of stripping a body of its armor, and Achilles sets his Myrmidons to do the deed instead (5.9). As Heather James writes, "Dispatching epic, the play replaces heroic combat with a sordid, behind-the-scenes execution befitting an Elizabethan revenge drama."[328] Likewise, Foakes writes in *Shakespeare: The Dark Comedies to the Last Plays: From Satire to Celebration*, "Here Hector repudiates all that Nestor found in him, and in pursuit of 'honour' becomes a hunter after his kill, a mere butcher, and no better than the myrmidons of Achilles, who hunt him in turn," and in "*Troilus and Cressida* Reconsidered," he writes, "He is at last butchered when unarmed, but there is some justice in his death; it is the supreme irony of the play that the Trojans, who possess more romantic, more evidently attractive qualities than the Greeks, should be the ones to refuse an offer to end the war, and should prolong it for a dubious notion of personal 'honour.' As Hector is chiefly responsible for this, so he suffers for it."[329] The outcome of their

[327] For a moment, they do not commit to their vows; Hector and Achilles do briefly pause in their fighting because they are tired (5.6.14-22); but Achilles kills Hector soon afterwards.

[328] James, *Shakespeare's Troy,* 95.

[329] Foakes, *Dark Comedies,* 48, and "*Troilus and Cressida* Reconsidered," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 32.2 (1963): 147-48. J.C. Oates writes, "Hector's death and mutilation by an enraged Achilles are necessary within this dramatic framework, for Hector has violated the code of values by which his life was possible; he confronts in symbolic terms the appearance-reality mockery of the Trojan war, of life, of his own soul. Knowledge of the split between appearance and reality constitutes a death of the heart, to be followed by physical death; this pattern applies to Troilus as well" (J.C. Oates, "The Ambiguity of Troilus and Cressida," Shakespeare Quarterly 17.2 [1966]: 145).

oaths is only death and destruction, and not only for themselves, but for their allies and friends.

In the fulfillment of these promises, we see that keeping one's oath absolutely is not always an absolute good. Hector may have vowed to fight, but in committing to fight and in being killed for it, he leaves Troy defenseless: his entire reasoning for making the oath is abandoned in the keeping of it.[330] Because he is bound to absolutes, he is killed, and he dooms Troy to fall. Hector refuses to bend—and because of that he breaks.[331] Absolute oaths, broken or kept at cost, are impossible or undesirable in this play; only the *if* of prophecy, with its allowance for contingency and possibility, can begin to reach for truth.

Conclusion

By the play's end, Cassandra's prophetic abilities have spread. Everyone is a prophet; they all see what exactly Troy's future will be *if* Hector insists on keeping his vow. And by the end of the play, even Troilus sees—to some extent[332]—what will

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[330] Likewise Achilles, in having Hector killed, does nothing to restore his reputation. And though the fall of Troy and its aftermath do not appear onstage, the audience knows the cost of that aftermath to Ulysses himself, as he will spend the next ten years striving to reach home.

[331] Cox writes, "For though Hector dies ignorant of the part he has played in Troy's fall, the play nevertheless indicates that his part was determined by his failure to follow through on the alternatives he seems to see so clearly while arguing against his brothers in the Trojan council scene. Shakespeare gives us a strong sense, in other words, that Hector has a choice to labor for a more benign destiny, even though we know in advance that he will be destroyed before the end of the war" (Cox, "Error," 149).

[332] Troilus does not, however, understand that his pursuit of vengeance for Hector against Achilles will lead to his own death: "Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe" (5.11.31). Marvick notes that "Troilus's reaction to Hector's death" is "ambiguous": "On the one hand he approaches an almost existential affirmation in the face of divine will of his own power to avenge, and his rejection of Pandarus as a 'broker lacky' suggests that he has freed himself from the vicious circle of bartering and conniving which Pandarus represents. On the other hand, his new purpose is purely destructive and no less mindlessly passionate than was his former obsession with Cressida, and his words 'Hope of revenge shall hide our inward woe' (V.x.31) suggest that he will not acquit himself honestly of his new, more consequential purpose, but continue to *seem* other than he *is*" (Marvick, "Brecht, Shakespeare," 43).

happen, as he tells the other Trojans, "Hector is slain" (5.11.3), and begs the gods, "Frown on, you heavens, effect your rage with speed! / Sit, gods, upon your thrones and smite at Troy! / I say at once: let your brief plagues be mercy, / And linger not our sure destructions on!" (5.11.6-9). He knows that Hector's death means Troy's destruction:

> …Hector is gone.
> Who shall tell Priam so, or Hecuba?
> Let him that will a screech-owl aye be called
> Go into Troy, and say their Hector's dead.
> There is a word will Priam turn to stone,
> Make wells and Niobes of the maids and wives,
> Cold statues of the youth, and, in a word,
> Scare Troy out of itself. But march away.
> Hector is dead. There is no more to say. (5.11.14-22)

Everyone knows Troy will fall, but no one can do anything about it. Like Cassandra—who, as Cox notes, "can only see, she cannot act"—we are powerless to stop Troy's fall.[333] And yet the play does not, in fact, end with Troy's fall; the play ends instead with Pandarus's vulgar gesture towards a diseased future.[334] Troilus still lives; Troy still stands.[335] Cassandra's prophecy of the future has not come true—yet.

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[333] Cox, "Error," 157-58.

[334] Of Pandarus's final words, Margaret J. Arnold writes, "Shakespeare achieves ironic distance by permitting Thersites' and Pandarus' words to survive the action. In an orderly universe Thersites would observe his lowly rank, and Pandarus would not wander onto a battlefield to speak the epilogue. In a world in which appetite has killed Hector, disillusioned Troilus, and devalued Cressida, railers and panders survive unscathed" (Margaret J. Arnold, "'Monsters in Love's Train': Euripides and Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*," *Comparative Drama* 18.1 [1984]: 50-51). Leggatt connects Pandarus's diseases with Hector's "putrefied corpse" and the tradition that Cressida has leprosy (Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies,* 112). Rabkin calls Pandarus "a paradigm of all the play's characters" (Rabkin, *Common Understanding,* 53). Nuttall, contrasting Shakespeare's Pandarus with Chaucer's "middle-aged, fussy figure," writes, "The final effect of Shakespeare's play is nothing as warm as pity; rather, it leaves a sour taste in the mouth. His Pandarus is a figure of horror, riddled with venereal disease" (Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker,* 206).

[335] As James writes, "Troilus fights but fails to die. He never achieves the status of metonym for fallen Troy, as he does in kindlier sources…Shakespeare denies the eleventh-hour efforts of tragedy to deliver the play from irresolution" (James, *Shakespeare's Troy*, 95-96).

In a way, by keeping Troy's fall from us, Shakespeare makes it so that Troy never falls. By ending before the end, Shakespeare preserves Troy: it always exists, doomed to fall but never fallen, at least not in the world of the play. As Lawrence Danson writes, "But in *Troilus and Cressida* the promise [of an ending] is indefinitely delayed. History cannot be redeemed; all we are left with are the formless husks of oblivion."[336] The ending of Shakespeare's play remains open. In contrast, at the end of Lydgate's *Troy Book*, Troy has fallen and the Greeks have returned home; there is no prophecy left unfulfilled. And at the end of Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Troy may still stand, but Troilus has died and now looks back on the sublunary world with scorn. But, as A.D. Nuttall writes, "*Troilus and Cressida* has no natural beginning, no natural grand conclusion. The world it depicts is fractured, chaotic, indefinite. The passage of days here confers no shapeliness on the succession of events."[337] In filling his play with prophetic moments, moments that predict doom and destruction, Shakespeare has prepared us for a tragedy, and the very act of writing a play about Troilus and the Trojan War prepares us, to some extent, for a tragic ending. Both narrative logic and tradition make us, the audience, feel certain of the future, of the play's conclusion. We "know" that Cassandra's prophecies will come true. But we do not actually see it happen—we do not actually *know* how Troy falls in this play. And so, even here at the play's end, the possibility of Troy's survival remains. Even here, informed by centuries of tradition and by the words and actions within the play itself, our knowledge remains partial and incomplete. Shakespeare gives us no proper ending.

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[336] Danson, *Tragic Alphabet*, 90.

[337] Nuttall, *Shakespeare the Thinker*, 210.

Nor does he give us a narrator beyond the prologue, nor a prophet beyond Cassandra, to guide our interpretation of the play's events and what follows. James Simpson notes that, in the Guido-tradition, "the presence of the prudential poet in the work itself" makes good the failure of counsel within the text.[338] The interpretative work of the poet in the poems of Chaucer and Lydgate is like that of the prophet, guiding us and directing us. But *Troilus and Cressida* is a play, not a poem; outside of the brief prologue, there is no narrative voice guiding the reader (or audience), just as there is no prophet but Cassandra. Shakespeare gives us nothing but the characters and the actions themselves. He does not tell us what to think about his play, what lesson we should receive from it, what moral we should gain. Cassandra alone, mad and startling, is present to guide us. To understand this play, we ourselves must perform the work of interpretation: we ourselves must act as prophets. Shakespeare does not tell us what to do with this knowledge, with the knowledge of Troy doomed and yet unfallen. He leaves it up to us.[339]

And still, we all know that Troy will fall. By the end of the play, the audience has taken on Cassandra's role, seeing past current events to a promised future that has not yet come to pass. Like the prophets of Troy, the audience knows how the play will end, but

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[338] James Simpson, "The Other Book of Troy: Guido delle Colonne's *Historia Destructionis Troiae* in Fourteenth and Fifteenth-Century England," *Speculum* 73.2 (1998): 420.

[339] Of the audience's role in the ending, Leggatt writes, "If we are implicated in the tragedy—and is that finally too strong a word for a play in which people are destroyed before our eyes without the relief of dying?—it is because of our action as audience. The love-war conflict that tears the men apart may be confined, like Romeo's, within the play. But the action of reading and possibly misreading Cressida, performed by the men in the play, is our action too—as it was in the cases of Lavinia, Ophelia and Gertrude. As the feud pervades the love affair of *Romeo and Juliet*, interpretation pervades the love affair here, and in its own way it is just as damaging" (Leggatt, *Shakespeare's Tragedies,* 112-13).

they have no power to change the ending. But our knowledge, like Cassandra's, remains uncertain and open; the *if* of prophecy still remains.

Conclusion. Troy always and never fallen

"Tell me," he said, "have they come yet, the Trojans?"
A word I did not know. "Tell me who they are."
"You'll know who they are when they come, Latinus' daughter. I am—" He hesitated— "I am searching for my duty here. How much is it right for me to tell you? Do you want to know your future, Lavinia?"
"No," I said at once. Then I sought in my own mind for my duty, or my will, and finally said, "I want to know what's right to do, but I don't want to know what's to come of it."
"It's enough to know what ought to come of it," he said, gravely agreeing. I felt his smile though I could not see it.
-Virgil and Lavinia speak in Ursula K. Le Guin's *Lavinia*, 41

Ursula K. Le Guin's 2008 novel *Lavinia* adapts a piece of the Trojan War narrative into a novel for modern audiences: it retells the *Aeneid* from Lavinia's perspective. Most readers today would describe *Lavinia* as an adaptation or retelling, but Le Guin herself, in the Afterword to the novel, describes *Lavinia* as a translation: "a translator's yearning to identify with the text cannot be repressed. This is what urged me to take some scenes, some hints, some foreshadowing from the epic and make them into a novel—a translation into a different *form*—partial, marginal, but, in intent at least, faithful."[340] Her translation, then, is not so much from English to Latin as it is from epic to novel: a translation across genres.

This translation from epic to novel places new limits on the story; for instance, much as Dares and Dictys cannot include the gods as characters in their eyewitness accounts, Le Guin finds herself striking the gods from her work: "The Homeric use of quarrelsome deities to motivate, illuminate, and interfere with human choices and emotions doesn't work well in a novel, so the Greco-Roman gods, an intrinsic element of

[340] Ursula K. Le Guin, *Lavinia* (Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2008), 273. I will refer to *Lavinia* throughout this conclusion with parenthetical, in-text citations.

the poem, are no part of my story" (275). But the translation also opens up new possibilities, a chance to offer "a meditative interpretation suggested by a minor character in [Vergil's] story—the unfolding of a hint" (274). Like many recent retellings, Le Guin's adaptation of classical myth adopts a new point of view, taking on the voice of a previously silent character and seeing this old story from her perspective.[341] As a novel written in the first person, *Lavinia* limits itself to Lavinia's point of view, but Lavinia's point of view is much richer, much more far-seeing, than one might expect from such an apparently insignificant character.

Lavinia's view becomes even more expansive through her encounters with prophecy and poetry.[342] *Lavinia* as a novel plays deliberately with the idea of poet-as-prophet, and, in particular, with the idea of Virgil as *vates.*[343] To bring the poet and his character together, the novel plays inventively with time, blending together past and

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[341] Le Guin highlights this aspect of her novel by having Virgil comment on his own misunderstanding of Lavinia and his failure to portray her point of view. "Perhaps I did not do you justice, Lavinia...And I knew nothing of all that! I never looked at [Lavinia]. I had to tell what the men were doing," he says when they first meet (40). Later he says, commenting on both his misunderstanding and on the limits of his own genre, "I know very little. And what I thought I knew of you—what little I thought of at all—was stupid, conventional, unimagined. I thought you were a blonde!...But you can't have two love stories in an epic" (58).

[342] One might expect modern retellings of the Trojan War to forego prophecy and the supernatural, to adopt—like Dares and Dictys—a more historical viewpoint. Le Guin, as mentioned above, removes the gods, but not the fantastic. Some modern retellings do indeed try to strike a more realistic note—Wolfgang Petersen's film *Troy* (Warner Bros. Pictures, 2004) comes to mind—but prophecy plays an important role in many recent retellings. See, for instance, Madeline Miller's *Song of Achilles* (New York: Echo, 2012), Kerry Greenwood's *Cassandra: A Delphic Women Novel* (Scottsdale, AZ: Poisoned Pen Press, 2013), Margaret George's *Helen of Troy* (New York: Berkley, 2006), and David Gemmell's *Troy* trilogy (beginning with *Lord of the Silver Bow* and concluding with *Fall of Kings,* completed by Stella Gemmell after David Gemmel's death [New York: Ballantine Books, 2005-2007]). Though I am hesitant to mention her work due to the allegations of sexual abuse that have appeared since her death, Marion Zimmer Bradley's novel *The Firebrand* (New York: Pocket Books, 1988) takes Cassandra's perspective and thus, by necessity, deals heavily in prophecy.

[343] Virgil, speaking to Lavinia, tells her, first, "I am a poet, Lavinia." When he sees Lavinia does not know the word, he explains, "A vates." Lavinia tells the reader, "I knew that word of course: foreteller, soothsayer. It went with his being part Etruscan, and with the knowledge he seemed to have of what had not happened yet" (43).

future: Lavinia, seeking signs and omens for her own future, meets with the shade of Virgil centuries before his death. For Lavinia, the events of the *Aeneid* are still in progress, and she has not yet entered the story; for Virgil, the writing of the *Aeneid*, though incomplete, has come to an end, and he lies, dying and seeing visions of his own literary creations. "I am a wraith," he tells Lavinia. "I am not here in my body. My body is lying on the deck of a ship sailing from Greece to Italy, but I don't think I'll get to Brundisium even if the ship does. I am sick, I am dying, I am on my way to...to Acheron...Or else I am a false dream" (38). Because Virgil has taken his poem as far as he can—because, in his own timeline, he has all but finished the writing of his epic—he is able to tell Lavinia what her story will hold, even though this story lies in her future. He tells her that the Trojans will come, that she will marry Aeneas, that Aeneas will die after three years. He gives Lavinia the prediction—the prophecy—of her own future, a future that is undeniably literary in nature, an existence based in Virgil's own poetry.

Like other prophets, Virgil is powerless to change the future he has predicted for Lavinia (which lies in his own past). But he is equally powerless to change his own poetry, his own retelling of that past and future. When Lavinia challenges his telling of certain points—for instance, his depiction of infants in limbo—he expresses his desire to revise. "You're not thinking straight about the babies," Lavinia tells him, and he answers, "If it is wrong, I will take it out of the poem, child...If I am permitted to." But he recognizes he has power over neither his own fate or his own poem. Lavinia asks, "Who is it that permits or forbids you?" and his answer is telling: "The gods. My fate. My friends. Augustus… [The poem] was [my own] till I got sick...Then I began to lose my hold on it, and now I think I've lost it. They'll publish it unfinished. I can't stop them.

And I haven't got the strength to finish it" (61-62). In having Virgil express these desires, Le Guin references the unfinished state of the *Aeneid.*[344] But Le Guin also pulls Virgil into the realm of those prophetic characters—such as Helenus, such as Cassandra—who have no power to change the story of Troy. Not only is Virgil powerless to change what will happen (has happened), he cannot even change the manner in which he has told the story. His predictions for Lavinia are predicated entirely on his own poetry, poetry that he can no longer change: it is too late for him.

But, dying, Virgil sees further than his own poetry, as he also catches glimpses of his own literary future. Early in his conversations with Lavinia, he references the Latin literary tradition thus far, alluding to the beginning of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*[345]—a work that scholars point to as influential on the historical Virgil's own work. But as Le Guin's Virgil comes nearer to death and his vision of the future stretches far ahead, he catches a glimpse of his place in the literary tradition to come: he sees himself in a dark wood, in an undeniable reference to his role in Dante's *Inferno*: "What man did I guide? I met him in a wood, like this. A dark wood, in the middle of the road. I came up from down there to meet him, to show him the way...But when was that?" (61). Much like Aeneas in the *Aeneid,* Virgil here sees his own future and is *ignarus* of what that future means: he sees, but cannot understand, moments far beyond his own lifetime. He catches

[344] Le Guin states in her afterword that, though the *Aeneid* is unfinished, she believes "the poem ends where Vergil wanted it to end" (274). But she also uses the novel form as a way to explore the nature of the abrupt ending of the *Aeneid*. *Lavinia* proceeds past the events of the *Aeneid* and shows Aeneas' regret for his killing of Turnus. And his own death—which occurs, as Virgil predicts for Lavinia, three years after their marriage—is caused in part by his regret, his wish that he had had mercy on Turnus, as he has mercy on another young soldier who then kills him.

[345] He does not name Lucretius until later (67), but quotes the famous opening address to Venus: "There was a great poet who praised [Venus] in Latin. Delight of men and gods, he called her…" (66). Virgil, in Le Guin's novel, continues with Lucretius' proem for some lines.

a glimpse of his (literary) afterlife, but he does not comprehend that, in dying, he will become a guide for future poets through the thickets of literary work and through the imagining of death itself.

Neither Lavinia nor Virgil can understand Virgil's glimpses of his own future. But Virgil explains Lavinia's own future, and Lavinia both *understands* and *heeds* his prediction. In many narratives containing prophecy, the audience of the prophecy either fails to understand the prophecy, disbelieves the prophecy, or attempts to undo the prophecy. But Lavinia understands, believes (even with some doubts), and accepts Virgil's prophecy.[346] Though there are parts of his prediction she is uncertain of (she questions how long "three years" really means, hoping perhaps she will have Aeneas a bit longer[347]), and though there are words he uses (cynic, Augustus, poet) that she does not know, and though at times she wonders, even hopes, that the prophecy is wrong, nonetheless she understands in full the implications of the prophecy, and she sees even further in Virgil's words than Virgil himself intends. Virgil speaks of Camilla as his literary creation[348] and claims he did not see the reality of Lavinia, but Lavinia understands the truth: that she herself is also Virgil's literary creation. She comes to understand what Virgil means when he calls her "my dear...My unfinished, my incomplete, my unfulfilled. Child I never had" (68). She says, "[The poet] was a shadow,

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[346] For instance, knowing she is fated to marry Aeneas and not Turnus, she delays in choosing Turnus as a husband, though pressured by her parents, until Aeneas can arrive in Italy (75).

[347] "Then I would lie awake and my mind would gnaw and gnaw at the puzzle I could not solve. The poet had told me that Aeneas would rule for three summers and three winters. Was the summer we married the first of the three summers?...But at least he would have till the summer—through the summer—he would not die this spring!" (209).

[348] When speaking of Camilla, he admits, "I suppose I did invent her. But I liked her." Lavinia tells the reader that Camilla "sounded like a mere story to me" (43).

a whisper in shadows, a virgin's dream or vision, yet the author of all my being...And I remember, always, that I am contingent" (68). She cannot die, because she is only a myth: "But I will not die. I cannot. I will never go down among the shadows under Albunea to see Aeneas tall among the warriors...I will not speak to Creusa of Troy...or Dido of Carthage...They lived and died as women do and as the poet sang them. But he did not sing me enough life to die. He only gave me immortality" (271). And, as only a myth, she too is powerless to change *her* future. Though she knows what will happen—though she knows she will have Aeneas for no more than three years—she can do nothing to stop it. Ultimately, she fades away, until only her voice—the voice of the silenced character, the voice of her retelling, the voice of omen and of prophecy—remains.

In this dissertation, I have examined the ways in which prophecy in Trojan War narratives illuminates the nature of retold narratives. Like the prophet, both the poet and the reader of a retelling—and especially the poet and the reader of a retelling of a well-known narrative—already know the ending. To begin to write or read, to act or view, a text of Troy is much like prophesying: if we begin this text, then Troy will be destroyed. The very fact of retelling a well-known story contains the certainty of prophecy, as we know what has to happen even before it happens in the text. And in such retellings, the poets and writers are as powerless to change what happened in their past as the prophets are powerless to change what will happen in their future. The only difference is the question of time: prophets look forward to the future, and the writer and reader look back to the past. Prophecy thus becomes another way to understand what poets do in their own work of adaptation, and as a narrative tool, prophecy allows writers to raise questions, to

explore and enforce the limits of narrative, and to examine the utility and the futility of literature itself.

In the medieval and early modern periods, as today, literature was often put to use as a means of passing on knowledge or as a form of giving advice. The texts I have studied do pass along knowledge of the past and do offer advice for the present. But they also, through the failures of prophecy, question the ability of literature to do so. In the works of Geoffrey Chaucer, John Lydgate, and William Shakespeare, and in their classical and late antique sources, prophecy reveals the futility of knowledge, the instability of counsel, and the failure of oath-keeping. Knowledge, whether gained through experience or authority, is futile. Prophetic counsel is unstable: it wants what it predicts not to come true. And oaths, made by fallible human beings who lack both perfect self-knowledge and complete agency, are doomed to failure. The knowledge and counsel of the prophets make no difference to the ending of the story. Troy must fall. No one—not prophet, not warrior, not lover, not king, and certainly not author or audience—can stop Troy from falling.

And yet Troy does *not* always fall within the text itself. Even the earliest Trojan War epics do not depict Troy's fall as a part of narrative events: the *Iliad* ends before Troy's destruction, and the *Odyssey* begins after Troy's fall. And so it continues throughout the tradition. For Aeneas in the *Aeneid,* Troy's fall is only a memory. Chaucer's Troilus may die, but his Troy still stands; and for Shakespeare, even Troilus remains alive at the end of the text. Even the accounts of Dares and Dictys and Lydgate's *Troy Book*—texts that *do* depict Troy's fall—recognize their narrative limits: Dares and Dictys cannot speak outside of their eyewitness perspectives, and Lydgate, expansive as

he can be, knows that there is more to history than can ever be contained in a single narrative.[349] But the audience always knows that Troy must fall: if the story begins before Troy's destruction, that destruction is prophesied; if it begins after Troy's destruction, that destruction is remembered and retold. And even those texts that do depict the destruction of Troy are always looking forward and backwards through the lens of prophecy.

But while Troy must always fall—sometimes within the text itself, sometimes in its past or its future—Troy also lives on in its literary tradition:[350] in the poetry of Virgil, Chaucer, and Lydgate; in the prose of Dares and Dictys; and in the plays of Shakespeare.[351] These texts demonstrate that acknowledging the possible futility of knowledge, counsel, and agency—acknowledging contingency through the *if* of prophecy—is the only way to talk about the future, and they reveal that poetry has purposes beyond knowledge or counsel. The tension produced by prophecy's failure in these texts is a productive tension: the futility—and utility—of prophecy becomes a way to test both the limits and possibilities of literature. Through prophecy, these poets both

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[349] On Lydgate's understanding of the limits of narrative, see Taylor Cowdery, "Lydgate and the Surplus of History," *ELH* 85.3 (2018): 567-598.

[350] As Marilyn Desmond, discussing the medieval West's lack of knowledge of Homer, writes, "In the absence of a canonical source text, the matter of Troy in the Latin West sustains a vision of the city of Troy as ever present yet always already destroyed" (Marilynn Desmond, "Trojan Itineraries and the Matter of Troy," in *The Oxford History of Classical Reception in English Literature, Volume I (800-1558)*, ed. Rita Copeland [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016], 251). And Paul Rockwell writes of the romances of antiquity, "Troy is represented as capable of surviving into the present through mediation. It reappears, restored, better than before, with an entirely new population, sometimes displaced to a new locale, but without, however, losing an ill-defined continuity with the past. Despite destruction, restoration, or displacement, Troy is represented in the 'romans d'antiquitez' as always, somehow, remaining Troy" (Paul Rockwell, "Remembering *Troie*: the Implications of *Ymages* in the *Roman de Troie* and the Prose *Lancelot*," *Arthuriana* 7.3 [1997]: 20).

[351] In *Lavinia*, Virgil tells Lavinia, "I have been granted what few poets are granted. Maybe it's because I haven't finished the poem. So I can still live in it. Even while I die I can live in it" (51). But Virgil also lives on because the story of Troy is never complete, because there is space for poets and playwrights and novelists, to retell it: and so Le Guin can make Virgil live again in her own tale of Troy.

warn the reader of an ending they cannot change and suggest possible futures in which the prophets' counsels were heeded and Troy did not fall. Prophecies, like retellings, simultaneously shut down and open up possibilities; they give agency to and take agency away from author and reader. They demonstrate both the utility and futility of literature, speech, and language themselves. These prophecies, like the retellings in which they are found, are limited, but they nonetheless stretch the limits of narrative. Through prophecy, these poets examine the intersections between past, present, and future knowledge, and they call into question the efficacy of poetry—but in ways that ultimately reaffirm literature's power.

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