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# A Study on Chaucer's Description of Nature in *Troilus and Criseyde* from the Perspective of Adjectives

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Yue Zhou

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## 1. Introduction

Chaucer included descriptions of nature in all his works, and nature plays a vital role in his *Troilus and Criseyde* (hereinafter *Tr*<sup>1</sup>), all key events there having some connection to nature. However, while many scholars have discussed nature in Chaucer and in *Tr*, no systematic studies have examined all nature-related adjectives in *Tr*.

Jimura (1997) is one of a few scholars who focus on adjectives to analyze the descriptions of nature in *Tr*. He highlights the function of nature in *Tr*, which reflects the characters' delicate emotions. Jimura categorizes nature-related adjectives into three: (1) those modifying natural objects, (2) those modifying plants, and (3) those modifying animals. The origin of this classification can be found in Masui (1967: 115), and since this classification covers all the adjectives collected by the present study, it is adopted as the study's main structure though this paper focuses on different points.

This study offers a detailed analysis of particular adjectives after providing a general overview of each category. This research has two major purposes: to provide some deeper meanings behind the adjectives and thus encourage new readings of the story and to understand Chaucer's writing techniques from his usage of adjectives.

## 2. Adjectives for natural objects

As mentioned above, this study follows Masui's classification, and "natural objects" here refer to "moon, rein, see, sonne, sterre, wynde," and others<sup>2</sup>—in

<sup>1</sup> As for the other abbreviations in this paper, *Anel* stands for *Anelida and Arcite*, *CIT* for the *Clerk's Tale*, *Fil* for *Il Filostrato*, *FranT* for the *Franklin's Tale*, *GP* for *General Prologue*, *HF* for the *House of Fame*, *KnT* for the *Knight's Tale*, *LGWF* for the *Legend of Good Women* (Text F), *MLT* for the *Man of Law's Tale*, *PF* for the *Parliament of Fowls*, and *SNT* for the *Second Nun's Tale*.

<sup>2</sup> The abovementioned Jimura (1997: 58–9) subdivides this category into "natural objects in the air" (including "cloude," "sterre," "Bole," "moone," and "sonne" and which are created by the

other words, not living creatures such as plants and animals. Out of the 195 nature-related adjectives in *Tr*, 155 belong to this category, and to further clarify the discussion, this study subdivided these 155 adjectives into those modifying God or pagan gods, such as Venus and Jupiter,<sup>3</sup> and those modifying other natural objects.

The instances in which the characters curse nature<sup>4</sup> have already been discussed in other papers of mine (e.g., Zhou (2021: 4-5)) and are therefore excluded from this section.

## 2.1. Adjectives for God or pagan gods

*Tr* contains 101 adjectives that modify 18 pagan gods and the Christian God. The three most common are “blisful,” which appears 14 times, “(al)myghty” (9), and “cruel” (8). Both “blisful” and “(al)myghty” are common modifiers for the deities, while “cruel” reveals the tragic tone of the story. In the following, these adjectives are first viewed from their collocations, and then those with negative meanings are highlighted because Troilus seems to curse the gods frequently. Table 1 shows the most frequently described gods, the adjectives modifying them, and their respective frequencies.

Although *Tr* is a pagan story, the Christian God is most frequently modified in it, followed by the two gods associated with love, Venus and Cupid, and the goddess Fortune, whose merciless wheel rules the protagonists throughout the story. Although many adjectives are used for each deity in the table, God and Venus are the only ones with frequently collocating adjectives: God is “almyghty (myghty),” and Venus is “blisful.” In fact, every character uses the adjectives “myghty” or “almyghty” when describing “God” and “blisful” when describing “Venus.” Therefore, it seems natural for Chaucer’s

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physical power of the former objects, such as “bemes” and “reyn” ) and “day and night.” This subdivision, however, encounters problems with objects such as “sea” (because it is not in the air) and is somehow contradictory (although this was clearly deliberate on the part of Jimura), for “day and night” are also caused by the physical power of the sun and the earth.

<sup>3</sup> Though this study places God under the category of “natural objects,” it does not mean that God is a natural object but rather that God is closely related to all natural objects. This is also true of the pagan gods. Most of the pagan gods in *Tr* have at least two names, one Greek and the other Roman, but this paper uses only their Roman names.

<sup>4</sup> The following are some examples: (a) Troilus curses his own birth (5.1699) and that of Calkas (4.334), (b) Criseyde curses her own birth (3.1103, 3.1423, 4.745, 4.763, 5.690, 5.700), and (c) Troilus and Criseyde curse their birth jointly (4.1251).

Table 1. Most frequently modified gods in *Tr*

Main gods	Adjectives	Freq.	Total freq.
God	al(mighty) (myghty*5; almyghty*2)	7	20
	blisful/ eternel/ verry	2	
	gret/ heighe/ holy/ most meke/ sothfast/ sovereign/ uncircumscrip	1	
Venus	blisful	7	17
	bryght	3	
	clere/ combust/ eternel/ goodly/ redy/ swete/ wel-willy	1	
Cupid	blisful	3	13
	benigne/ blynde/ holy/ digne/ immortal/ just/ myghty/ rowe/ verry/ wynged	1	
Fortune	cruel/ comone	3	13
	adverse/ dyverse/ foul/ gerful/ remuable/ trewest <sup>a</sup> / unkynde	1	
Phebus	bryghte/ brode/ cleene/ gold-tressed/ laurer-crowned/ rosy/ worthe	1	7
Jupiter <sup>b</sup>	almyghty/ amorous/ blisful/ cruel/ dyverse/ heighe	1	6
Diane	shene	2	6
	bryght/ clere/ cruel/ wrothe	1	
Mars	cruel	2	5
	Blody <sup>c</sup> / dispitous/ fierse	1	

Notes:

- a. "Trewest" in the context of "Fortune, / who seems truest when she wishes to deceive"<sup>5</sup> (4.2-3) is not a positive adjective.  
 b. Jupiter is often called "Jove" in *Tr*.  
 c. The word "bloody" is used to modify Mars's cope and is a common image of this god of war (see also *KnT*.975, 1747; *Anel*1).

characters and the narrator to consider God as "(al)myghty" and Venus as "blisful."

While each main character uses a similar number of modifiers for God,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Modern translations of *Tr* in this study, if without special reference, are quoted from Windeatt (1998).

<sup>6</sup> Five of the instances are used by Criseyde, Troilus, and the narrator and four by Pandarus, and the remaining one ("almyghty") (4.693) is used by one of the women who comfort Criseyde in Book V.

they differ in the number of adjectives they use for Venus. Specifically, Criseyde and Pandarus each use only one instance of "blisful" (4.1661, 2.234), and all the remaining ones are used by the narrator (nine instances) and Troilus (six instances). Since Venus is such an important goddess, this study also analyzed the scenes in which the major characters pray to her and compared some of them with those in *Fil*.

We find that, unlike Troilus, Pandarus and Criseyde do not consider Venus an important god. Pandarus seldom prays to Venus, and when he does, he almost always prays to other gods at the same time. For example, when he mentions Venus (2.234), he also mentions Mynerve (2.232) and Jupiter (2.233); in two other scenes, Venus (3.187) appears together with Cupid (3.186) and even with God (3.951). Criseyde prays to Venus only once (4.1661) and also prays to God (4.1664) and Jupiter (4.1683). Meanwhile, Troilus, who never believed in love before meeting Criseyde, seems to hold a much more sincere belief in Venus. In this story about his double sorrow, he truly considers Venus as a blissful goddess, praying to her in various scenes, each time full of hope. He first prays to her near the end of Book I when Pandarus promises to help him, and after being sorrowful for almost the entire Book I, he finally becomes "untormented" (1.1011). A similar scene takes place in the Italian source, but in that scene, Troiolo does not pray to Venus (see *Fil*.2.29).

After hearing that Pandarus has won Criseyde's love for him, Troilus is likened to one of the "flowers, closed up by the cold of night-time, drooping low on their stalks, straighten themselves up again in the bright sun and open out in their natural way in a row" (2.967-70), and again, he prays to Venus, full of hope and happiness. This scene has a counterpart in *Fil* where Troiolo also prays to Venus (see *Fil*.2.80, 7-8). Later, before and during the consummation of his love, Troilus prays to various gods (3.705-35; 1254-74), especially Venus (3.705, 712, 715, 1255, 1257). Chaucer added all these frequent references to Venus. Therefore, it is clear that compared with *Fil*, Chaucer amplified the significance of Venus in *Tr* as a goddess of bliss for Troilus.

Next, this study examines the following passage, which contains the phrase "laurer-crowned Phebus" (5.1107), to understand Chaucer's writing technique.

- (1) This Troilus, as I byfore have told,  
Thus driveth forth, as wel as he hath myght;  
But often was his herte *hoot* and *cold*,  
And namely that ilke nynthe nyght,  
Which on the morwe she hadde hym bihight  
To com ayeyn. God woot, ful litel reste  
Hadde he that nyght — nothyng to slepe hym leste.

The *laurer-crowned* Phebus with his heete  
Gan, in his cours ay upward as he wente,  
To warmen of the est se the wawes weete,  
And Nysus doughter song with fressh entente,  
Whan Troilus his Pandare after sente;  
And on the walles of the town they pleyde,  
To loke if they kan sen aught of Criseyde.

...

Now was his herte *dul*, now was it *light*. (*Tr*5.1100–13, 1118)

On the ninth night after Criseyde's departure to the Greek camp, Troilus is restless, and the adjective pair "hoot" and "cold" illustrates that he is suffering from a combination of hope and worry. A similar scene takes place in *Fil* (7.1–2), but it has no description of Troilus on the ninth night or a description of nature. Simply put, Chaucer added "laurer-crowned Phebus" and the song of Nysus the lark. Among other studies, Jimura (2005: 155) points out that the adjective "laurer-crowned," together with "gold-tressed" (5.8), which modifies Phebus, refers to "the superior and dignified aspect of nature." While this is true, this study considers that there is another piece of information hidden behind "laurel-crowned Phebus," especially since it is mentioned together with the character Nysus here. Chaucer uses the adjective "laurer-crowned" only twice: once here and once in *Anel*. In the latter, it modifies Thesus (*Anel*.43) and signifies his victory. However, a laurel crown holds special meanings for Phebus and reminds us of his tragic love story. Like Troilus, Phebus offended the god of love, Cupid, and was therefore doomed to be unable to receive love from the lady he loves, Dane. Phebus tries to chase her, but to escape from him, Dane is transformed into a laurel (see Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2.708–832).

Chaucer was familiar with this story, mentioning it in Book III: "O Phoebus, think of how Daphne shut herself under the bark and out of fear turned into a laurel tree" (3.726–7). Also, Chaucer tells the story of King Nysus's daughter, who is turned into a bird in the "Legend of Ariadne" (see *LGWF*.1902–19), in which Ariadne betrays her city to Mynos the besieger, who then betrays her back after conquering the city (see also Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 8.6–151). Therefore, it is within reason to say that Chaucer mentions Phebus, who cannot receive the love he desires because he offended Cupid (so does Troilus), and Ariadne, who betrayed her city (so will Criseyde), in this passage to indicate Troilus's tragic end in love. In this way, passage (1) proves that Chaucer's descriptions of nature contain important information.

In contrast with God and Venus, who are not described by any negative adjectives, other gods, especially Fortune, are frequently cursed in *Tr*. As Troilus states, "[A]ll the men that can ride or walk cannot withstand the harm done by her cruel wheel" (1.838–9), and since *Tr* is a tragedy, Fortune is inevitably cursed. To clearly illustrate this, Table 2 lists all the negative adjectives modifying the gods in *Tr*.

The table shows that among the main characters, only Troilus frequently curses the gods; there are no instances of Pandarus or Criseyde doing the same. Criseyde, despite feeling miserable at times (4.731–98), does not curse the gods but curses her own birth (4.744–5), her father Calkas (4.761), and her mother Argyve (4.762). Unlike Troilus, she never curses the gods directly.<sup>7</sup>

Troilus uses eight negative adjectives to describe Fortune, mostly in his monologues and mainly in two scenes, both in Book IV. The first of these scenes takes place immediately after he learns of the hostage exchange (4.219–343). Although he mentions several gods in this scene, such as Fortune, the god of love (4.288), and Jove (4.335), he curses only Fortune (4.266, 275, and 286). In fact, this scene strictly follows *Fil* as in the Italian source, Troiolo first complains to Fortune (*Fil*.4.30–2), then to the god of love (*Fil*.4.33), then to his soul and his eyes (*Fil*.4.34–5), then to Criseida (*Fil*.4.36), and finally to Calcas (*Fil*.4.38–40), but Jupiter is not mentioned anywhere.

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<sup>7</sup> As Jimura (2005: 109) notes, "Criseyde never invokes 'Mars,' 'Neptunus,' 'Fortune,' 'Furies,' 'Mercurie,' 'Imeneus,' 'Latona,' or 'Minerve'.... This may show that Criseyde speaks a polite, non-violent language and does not make use of the variety of oaths used by the male characters."

Table 2. Gods described by negative adjectives

Gods	Addressers	Addressees	Adjectives (line nos.)	Freq.
Fortune	T	P	cruel (1.839)	8
		— <sup>a</sup>	cruel (4.266)/ unkynde (4.266)/ foule (4.275)/ gerful (4.286)/ adverse (4.1192)/ dyverse (4.1195)	
		(N) <sup>b</sup>	cruel (4.1189)	
Mars	N	—	cruel (2.435)/ cruel (4.25)/ fierse (3.22)/ dispitouse (2.435)	4
Jupiter	T	—	cruel (4.1192)/ dyverse (4.1195)	2
Furie	N	—	cruel (1.9)	1
Diane	Cas	T	cruel (5.1468)	1

Notes:

- a. The mark “—” means that there is no addressee, so in the case of the characters, the adjectives are used in monologues.
- b. (N) indicates that although the adjectives appear in the narrative parts, they are used to share the characters’ feelings. Therefore, T(N) is classified among the adjectives used by Troilus.

Meanwhile, the second scene occurs when he thinks Criseyde is dead and intends to commit suicide (4.1156–1211). In this scene, he mentions God (4.1175), Atropos (one of the Furies) (4.1208), and Jove and Fortune (4.1192, 1195) and curses both Jove and Fortune. The previous scene shows Jupiter still “blisful” (4.335) to Troilus, but now he seems “cruel” (4.1192) and “diverse” (4.1195) to him, indicating that Troilus feels sadder in this scene than in the previous one. This scene also follows its source closely (*Fil.*4.121–3). For Chaucer inherited Boccaccio’s first adjective “crudel” (*Fil.*4.121, 2) about Jupiter and changed the expression “tolta m’avete Criseida mia, /... con altro ingegno” (*Fil.*4.121, 3–4) (“Ye have bereft me of my Cressida... with trickery of another sort”)<sup>8</sup> into “falsly have ye slayn / Criseyde... / Fy on youre myght and werkes so diverse” (4.1193–5). Here, Chaucer seems to be treating Jupiter as an accomplice of Fortune. The Italian “altro” (“other, different”) was translated as “diverse,” a commonly used adjective to describe Fortune in Middle English. In *MED*,

<sup>8</sup> The modern English translations of the passages from *Fil.*, if without any special explanation, are taken from Griffin, Nathaniel, and Arthur Myrick (1929).



there is even a definition “of Fortune, the weather, etc.: adverse, unfavorable” (s.v. *dīvers(e)*, adj. 5(b)). This adjective rhymes with “adverse” (4.1192), which Chaucer translated from “ria” (wicked) (*Fil*.4.121, 2), and “werse” (4.1194), forming a trio that clearly expresses Troilus’s desperation more intensely than the original “with trickery of another sort.”

Meanwhile, the four negative adjectives describing Mars (two instances of “cruel” (2.435; 4.25), one “fierce” (3.22), and one “dispitouse” (2.435)) commonly modify this god in Chaucer (see also *KnT*.2369, *MLT*.301, *Anel*.1), so they do not need to be closely studied.

## 2.2. Adjectives for other natural objects

This section discusses adjectives that modify other natural objects, such as the sun, day, night, rain, the sea, and the wind. This category contains a total of 54 adjectives, but most of them are commonplace, such as “derke nyght” (1.951) and “salte see” (3.8). After a general observation, this study finds that 21 of these adjectives are included in the consummation scene (3.547–1533). In other words, though this scene represents less than an eighth of the total lines in the story, it contains nearly half of the adjectives in this category. In this scene, the natural environment—such as the weather—contributes greatly to the plot, so Chaucer’s descriptions of it will be examined in the following part.

In the Italian source, the night of the consummation is simply described as “oscura e tenebrosa” (dark and cloudy) (*Fil*.3.24, 1), but in *Tr*, Chaucer provides a more detailed description.

- (2) But Pandare up and, shortly for to seyne,  
Right sone upon the *chaungynge of the moone*,  
Whan *lightles* is the world a nyght or tweyne,  
And that the wolken shop hym for to reyne,  
He streight o morwe unto his nece wente — (*Tr*3.548–52)

The “chaungynge of the moone,” according to Root (1952: 472–3), “is the phase opposite to that of full moon, ... the Moon is in conjunction with the Sun, and is hence not visible. The sky was also overcast. The night would thus be a very dark one.” In this scene, Chaucer reduces the two Italian adjectives, “oscura e tenebrosa” (dark and cloudy), into the single word “lightles,” which is the only

instance of the word throughout all his works. “Lightles” is defined as “without any light, dark” in *MED* (s.v. *lightlēȝ*, adj. 1(b)), and as “receiving no light; unilluminated, dark” in *OED* (s.v. *lightless*, a.1). It is characterized by a strong nuance of not receiving light at all; therefore, the night must be extremely dark. On such a night, Criseyde is invited to Pandarus’s dinner party. After the party, when she is about to leave, it starts raining. The description is as follows:

- (3) The *bente* moone with hire hornes *pale*,  
 Saturne, and Jove, in Cancro joyned were,  
 That swych a reyn from heven gan avale  
 That every maner womman that was there  
 Hadde of that *smoky* reyn a verray feere; (*Tr*3.624–8)

Regarding this description, Windeatt (2003: 405) points out that “[c]onjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter were held to be portents of great events (including Noah’s Flood) and associated with heavy rain,” and Fyler (2000: 355) notes that “Chaucer means us to read [this rain] as an omen of the fall of Troy.” The rain is described as “smoky,” which is also an adjective that Chaucer never used anywhere else. *OED* quotes this line under the definition “Of vapor, mist, etc.: Having the character or appearance of smoke; resembling smoke; smoke-like” (s.v. *smoky*, a. and n.2); considering the scenes discussed below, we understand “smoky” as indicating that the rain is extremely heavy.

The rain is only part of Pandarus’s plan: this rain makes Criseyde stay, and that night, after Pandarus sends Criseyde and her servants to bed, he goes to get Troilus.

- (4) The *sterne* wynd so loude gan to route  
 That no wight oother noise myghte heere;  
 And they that layen at the dore withoute,  
 Ful sikerly they slepten alle yfere;  
 And Pandarus, with a ful sobre cheere,  
 Goth to the dore anon, withouten lette,  
 Ther as they laye, and softly it shette.

And as he com ayeynward pryvely,  
*His nece awook*, and axed, "Who goth there?" (*Tr*3.743-52)

Though the wind was so "sterne" that "no wight oother noise myghte heere," Pandarus still behaved with extreme vigilance. When Criseyde's servants "slepten sikerly," Pandarus, with "ful sobre cheere," went to the door, "shette" it "softely," and came back secretly. These repeated /s/ sounds reveal the silent environment inside the room and simultaneously form an interesting contrast with "stern," which indicates the fierce environment outside.<sup>9</sup>

Pandarus succeeds in bringing Troilus to her bed. However, seeing that she is angry with him, Troilus faints. The environment at that time is described as follows:

- (5) But al was *hust*, and Pandare up as faste;  
"O nece, *pēs*, or we be lost!" quod he,  
"Beth naught agast!" But certeyn, at the laste,  
For this or that, he into bed hym caste (*Tr*3.1094-7)

While most glossaries and dictionaries agree that "hust" in this instance means "silent, quiet, hushed" (*OED*, s.v. † *hust*, a. Obs.) and that "pēs" in the subsequent line is an interjection that means "Silence!, be quiet!, order!" (*MED*, s.v. *pēs* interj.), this study finds enough evidence to read the scene in another way. My discussion must start from the ambiguous "al was hust" (3.1094), for "al," as a collective noun, may refer either to the three characters or to the whole environment.

As stated above, Chaucer describes the stormy rain as so fierce that "wel neigh no man heren other koude" (3.679) and that "no wight oother noise myghte heere" (3.744). Since the rain continued throughout the night,<sup>10</sup> it is unlikely that "al" refers to the whole environment but rather the one inside the room. However, if all the characters are quiet and the weather is still fierce

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<sup>9</sup> For a further discussion of the sound /s/, which symbolizes stillness, a quiet movement, friction, and a feeling of clear coolness, see Ishii (1966: 155).

<sup>10</sup> In his speech to Criseyde the morning after the consummation, Pandarus says, "All night long it's rained so hard, alas, my sweet niece, that I'm afraid you've had little opportunity to sleep and dream" (3.1557-60).

outside, why is Pandarus's warning, "pes, or we be lost" (3.1095), necessary? This study deems it better to adopt another definition of "hust," which is "an adjectival use of 'hust' *int.*, as expressing the state which the *int.* produces" (s.v. † *hust*, a. *Obs.*), to make the whole scene more logical. Simply put, "al was hust" means that the time and place are not suitable for talking after Troilus has fainted rather than that it is quiet.

### 3. Adjectives for plants

Plants are not often mentioned in *Tr*, which uses only 30 adjectives to describe them. Subdividing these roughly into three categories, we obtain 14 modifiers for flowers, 13 for trees, and 3 for grass, among which, 21 are used by the narrator, 8 by Pandarus, and 1 by Troilus. This section will compare the two main plant descriptions from Books I and II to ascertain what Chaucer may have wished to convey by describing plants.

The first description of nature appears before the Palladian ceremony, and the second one is at the beginning of Book II.

- (6) And so bifel, whan comen was the tyme  
 Of Aperil, whan clothed is the mede  
 With newe *grene*, of *lusty Veer* the pryme,  
 And *swote* smellen floures *white* and *rede* (*Tr*1.155–8)
- (7) In May, that moder is of monthes glade,  
 That *fresshe* floures, *blew* and *white* and *rede*,  
 Ben *quike* agayn, that wynter *dede* made,  
 And ful of bawme is fletyng every mede,  
 Whan Phebus doth his bryghte bemes sprede  
 Right in the white Bole, it so bitidde,  
 As I shal syng, on Mayes day the thrydde (*Tr*2.50–6)

The first description is about April and mentions only white and red flowers, while the second is about May and talks of blue, white, and red flowers. Jimura (2005: 162) compares these two scenes and notes that through these two descriptions, "the narrator creates an atmosphere of cheerfulness and Troilus and Criseyde's love affair proceeds successfully." However, this study finds

that we can also read these lines from another perspective; in that way, we find that Chaucer is attempting to convey some other information in these lines.

In the first passage, Chaucer describes April as a season full of sexual passion, one of mating. Sexual innuendoes can be found in various places. For instance, when "Veer" is modified by "grene" or "lusty," as it is here, it indicates that spring is associated with "youth, freshness, regeneration, etc.; ... the season designated for mating, procreation" (*MED*, s.v. *vēr*, n.(1)). The flowers in Chaucer's description of spring may be interpreted as representing lovers.

Passage (6) is followed by the Palladian ceremony, in which people in Troy, dressed in their finest clothes, gather in the temple of Pallas both "for the seson and the feste" (1.162-8). Windeatt (2003: 357) comments on this scene: "First sight of the beloved in church or temple is a convention: Dante first saw Beatrice in church at Florence; Petrarch first saw Laura in church at Avignon; Boccaccio first saw 'Fiammetta' in church at Naples." In this way, Chaucer followed Boccaccio and prepared a perfect environment for his love story, that is, a season full of sexual passion and a temple suitable for falling in love at first sight. However, Chaucer's Troilus, who has not experienced love, is not yet a follower of the god of love and even scorns the god. Despite this, his love for Criseyde makes him a faithful believer, and at the end of Book I, he is portrayed as the best knight and best lover whose jests and cruelty are dead, and his loftiness and aloofness have morphed into goodness (1.1083-5). Book I ends soon after this description, and immediately (if the prologue is excluded), the opening of Book II, i.e., passage (7), tells us that besides the white and red flowers, some blue flowers have also emerged. This means that the appearance of the blue flowers coincides with Troilus's transformation into a follower of the god of love, and the description of the flowers, that they "Ben quike agayn, that wynter dede made" (2.52), coincides with Troilus's suffering before receiving Pandarus's assistance and his recovery after receiving it.

According to the above discussion, the "blew floures" (2.51) can be understood as love's new believers, represented by Troilus.<sup>11</sup> White and red are common flower colors in Chaucer's works (see *GP*.90, *KnT*.1053, *FranT*.1148, *SNT*.254, *HF*.135, and *LGWF*.42), but blue flowers only appear

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<sup>11</sup> See also the abovementioned 2.967-70, where Troilus is compared to a flower.

twice: here and in *PF*.186. Blue is “often taken as the color of constancy or unchangingness” (*OED*, s.v. *blue*, a), so Chaucer may have specially chosen it for Troilus to symbolize his faithfulness and loyalty.

#### 4. Adjectives for animals

*Tr* has only 10 adjectives that describe animals, most of which appear in the two dreams of the protagonists: Criseyde’s dream of exchanging her heart in Book II and Troilus’s dream of a boar raping Criseyde in Book IV. This section mainly focuses on Troilus’s dream to first examine how the boar in *Tr* is different from the one in *Fil* and then to determine what information is hidden in the description of this animal.

The boar in Troilus’s dream is modified by three adjectives, two of which are shown in italics below.

- (8) For which he for Sibille his suster sente,  
 That called was Cassandre ek al aboute,  
 And al his drem he tolde hire er he stente,  
 And hire bisoughte assoilen hym the doute  
 Of the *stronge* boor with tuskes *stoute*;  
 And fynaly, withinne a litel stounde,  
 Cassandre hym gan right thus his drem expounde (*Tr*5.1450–54)

This is how Troilus describes the boar to Cassandre when he asks her to explain his dream. If we compare this passage with the following stanza describing Diomedes, we find Chaucer’s renowned writing technique. In passage (8), the two adjectives alliterate with /s/, and in the one below, there are also two adjectives alliterating with /s/, and even their positions on the lines are similar.

- (9) This Diomedes, as bokes us declare,  
 Was in his nedes prest and corageous,  
 With *sterne* vois and myghty lymes *square*,  
 Hardy, testif, strong, and chivalrous  
 Of dedes, lik his fader Tideus.  
 And som men seyn he was of tonge large;

And heir he was of Calydoigne and Arge. (*Tr*5.799–805)

Since “strong” in *Tr* is used as an epithet of the Greeks (see the collocation “Grekis stronge” in 1.57, 4.30, and 5.688), and Diomede is also modified by “strong” (5.802), Chaucer skillfully connects the image of the boar with that of Diomede by using these two adjectives. In other words, even before we listen to Cassandra, Chaucer has already told us that the boar is Diomede.

Next, this section analyzes the third adjective, “grete,” which modifies the boar. Passage (10) describes the boar as having “tuskes grete,” which reminds us of Diomede, who is of “tonge large” (5.804). Since tusks (or teeth) and tongue are closely related parts in an animal’s body, and “great” and “large”<sup>12</sup> have some of their meanings overlapped, these two descriptions form another evidence that indicates Chaucer’s intention to connect the boar with Diomede.

Since the quote below closely follows its counterpart in *Fil* in passage (11), the following discussion focuses on the comparison between these two instances.

- (10) So on a day he leyde hym down to slepe,  
And so byfel that yn his slep hym thoughte  
That in a forest faste he welk to wepe  
For love of here that hym these peynes wroughte;  
And up and down as he the forest soughte,  
He mette he saugh a bor with tuskes *grete*,  
That slepte ayeyn the bryghte sonnes hete.

And by this bor, faste in his armes folde,  
Lay, kyssyng ay, his lady bryght, Criseyde.  
For sorwe of which, whan he it gan byholde,  
And for despit, out of his slep he breyde (*Tr*5.1233–43)

- (11) Erasi un dì, tutto malinconoso  
per la fallita fede, ito a dormire

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<sup>12</sup> “Large” in 5.804 means “Of persons: ~ of **tonge**, ~ of (in) **langage**, unrestrained or untruthful in use of language” (*MED*, s.v. *lārġe*, adj. 12. (a))

Troiolo, e 'n sogno vide il periglioso  
 fallo di quella che 'l faceva languire:  
 ché gli pareva, per entro un bosco ombroso,  
 un gran fracasso e spiacevol sentire;  
 per che, levato il capo, gli sembrava  
 un gran cinghiar veder che valicava.  
 E poi appresso gli parve vedere  
 sotto a' suoi piè Criseida, alla quale  
 col grifo il cor traeva, ed al parere  
 di lui, Criseida di così gran male  
 non si curava, ma quasi piacere  
 prendea di ciò che facea l'animale;  
 il che a lui sì forte era in dispetto,  
 che questo ruppe il sonno deboletto. (*Fil.7.23–4*)

One day all melancholy on account of the broken pledge, Troilus had gone to sleep, and in a dream he saw the perilous sin of her who made him languish. For he seemed to hear a great and unpleasant crashing within a shady wood. Upon raising his head thereat he seemed to behold a great charging boar. And then afterward it seemed to him that he saw beneath its feet Cressida, whose heart it tore forth with its snout. And as it seemed, little cared Cressida for so great a hurt, but almost did she take pleasure in what the beast was doing. This gave him such a fit of rage that it broke off his uneasy slumber.

We observe from the passages that the adjective “grete” clearly originates from the Italian “gran” (7.23, 8). Also, these quotes have similar contexts: Troilus (Troiuolo) is dejected because of his broken pledge with Criseyde (Criseida). One day, he falls asleep and dreams about a boar and feels desperate about it. However, some slight differences are seen between the two quotes.

For our concern, one significant difference between the two passages is that Chaucer avoids a frank description of their lovemaking. He omits the phrase “gran fracasso e spiacevol sentire” (great and unpleasant crashing) (7.23, 6) and the boar’s charging, with Criseida underneath. Instead, he places



Criseyde “by this bor... in his armes” (5.1240), and rather than charging, Chaucer’s boar constantly kisses her. In addition, he omits the description of Criseida’s heart wildly torn out by the boar and the fact that she felt pleasant about all this. One core difference between *Tr* and *Fil* is that in *Tr*, Chaucer never mentions that Criseyde has any kind of pleasant feeling when she accepts Diomedes. Instead, Chaucer tells us that “a woman never lamented more than she did when she betrayed Troilus” (5.1052–3), which is not found in *Fil*. These differences demonstrate that Chaucer is more sympathetic to Criseyde than Boccaccio is to his heroine.

## 5. Summary

This paper discussed nature-related adjectives in *Tr* both qualitatively and quantitatively. Below are some of the major findings.

Though the gods are described by a total of 101 adjectives, only the Christian God and Venus have a representative epithet. There are clear differences between the characters in their use of adjectives for Venus. Compared with *Fil*, Chaucer increased the relevance of Venus, making her an important goddess of bliss for Troilus.

Next, this paper clarified that the use of “laurer-crowned” (5.1107) and the image of Nysus (5.1110) on the 10th day after Criseyde’s departure implies her betrayal and Troilus’s misfortune. This paper also examined the natural descriptions in the scenes before the consummation and offered another possible way of reading “al was hust” (3.1094).

When discussing the modifiers for plants, this paper focused on the two descriptions of nature in Books I and II and concluded that “floures blew” (2.51) should be reasonably understood as symbolizing the god of love’s new believers, represented by Troilus.

The final section analyzed adjectives that modify animals. First, after examining the adjectives for both the boar in Troilus’s dream and Diomedes, this study pointed out their similarity. Next, by comparing the boar in Troilus’s dream (5.1240) and its counterpart in *Fil*, and by seeing the description of the former eliminating some of the latter’s important adjectives, we clarified Chaucer’s sympathetic tone toward Criseyde.

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