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關於「女人議題」:《玫瑰的羅曼史》,《女人城市之書》與《特伊勒斯與克莉賽緹》

On the “Women Question”: *Romance of the Rose*, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*

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Abstract

In 1405 Christine de Pizan writes *The Book of the City of Ladies* to challenge the misogynist conceptions in *The Romance of the Rose* which derives from religious as well as classical sources. Christine argues that it is "virtue and morality" that makes one superior to the other, rather than sexual difference. Chaucer chooses a different way to present his concerns about whether women should be equal to men and be regarded as individuals. Chaucer thinks that denying women as individuals is inhuman; however, he is also troubled by the consequence if women are considered individuals. This thesis aims to present Chaucer's ambiguous position on the "women question" through both of his protagonists in *Troilus and Criseyde*. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer applies Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* to explain the relationship between Fortune and free will. According to Larry Scanlon, the function of Fortune in *Troilus and Criseyde* is to show the inevitability of the patriarchal power. On one hand, Criseyde is able to show her free will and ability to judge and act when she confronts Fortune/patriarchy in Chaucer's Trojan story. On the other, all the choices Criseyde makes turn out to benefit men, the central power of patriarchy. On the contrary, Troilus as a part of the patriarchal system reveals that the hierarchy in the designation of Fortune/patriarchy is unbreakable. The reactions of Troilus and Criseyde to Fortune/patriarchy are gendered and disclose Chaucer's hesitation about whether women should be free from the control of patriarchy. Chaucer's ambiguous position on the "women question" not only shows his personal viewpoints but also represents the troubles and contradictions in the Middle Ages.

Keywords: Chaucer, *Troilus and Criseyde*, Boethius, Fortune, patriarchy, Christine de Pizan, *The Romance of the Rose*

摘要

在 1405 年克莉絲汀德皮桑撰寫《女人城市之書》挑戰在《玫瑰的羅曼史》中眾多的反女性觀點，其觀點不僅源自於文學經典也源自於宗教經典。克莉絲汀主張「性別的差異無法辨別個體之間的差異，只有美德與道德才能讓人有所高下」。有別於克莉絲汀，喬叟選擇不一樣的方法來呈現自己對於「女人是否應該跟男人同等地被視為個體」這個問題的觀點。喬叟認為否認女人也是個體是非常不人道的。然而，他也非常困擾於女人被視為個體之後所可能產生的後果。這篇論文旨在透過喬叟《特洛伊斯與克莉賽緹》的兩位主角來呈現作者在「女人議題」上的矛盾立場。在《特伊勒斯與克莉賽緹》中，喬叟應用波伊提烏的《哲學的慰藉》來解讀命運與自由意志的關係。根據賴瑞史蓋倫的說法，命運在《特伊勒斯與克莉賽緹》的功能是彰顯了父權體制的不可逃避性。在喬叟的特洛伊故事中，雖然克莉賽緹在面對命運即為父權的情況下尚能夠運用他的自由意志與能力來判斷與行動；但事實上克莉賽緹所做的決定最後都使男人受惠，而男人正是父權體制的中心。相對地，特伊勒斯作為父權體制的一份子，揭露了命運/父權中牢不可破的階級概念。特洛伊斯與克莉賽緹對命運即父權的反應是有性別之分的，這也揭露了喬叟對於「女人是否應該從父權的控制中解脫」這個問題的遲疑。喬叟在「女人議題」的矛盾立場不僅代表他個人的觀點，更象徵中古世紀對此議題普遍的困擾與矛盾。

關鍵詞： 喬叟，《特伊勒斯與克莉賽緹》，波伊提烏，命運，父權，克莉絲汀德皮桑，《玫瑰的羅曼史》

Chapter One

Introduction: the Tradition of Misogyny and *The Romance of the Rose*

Stephanie Trigg applies Charles Muscatine's address to the New Chaucer Society in 1980 about how we should read Chaucer and speak for him: "While it does look, as if it would be highly un-Chaucerian to be too solemn or too pious about Chaucer scholarship, none of us is under the obligation, after all, to be Chaucerian" (1). Trigg thinks that Muscatine's address releases all the Chaucerian scholars from the responsibility of reading Chaucer in a solemn or pious way. According to Trigg, Muscatine "reintroduces Chaucer as a moral authority, directing us to discover our own individuality… encourage[ing] us to be ourselves" (1). Trigg also points out the historical as well as literary importance of Chaucer and his poetic works. She mentions that the tastes in literature keep changing as time goes by, but Chaucer is always on the list of the canon (6). I believe that Chaucer's presence in the canon of English literature is the main reason for people's paying attention to him because I am also one of them. Enchanted by Chaucer's particular concern for women, I choose one of his most famous heroines, Criseyde, as my central topic of this thesis.

Born into a very traditional Chinese family, I frequently hear about how men are better than women because men can promise the continuation of the family as well as the property while women are belongings to other households once they are married. Hence, reading the texts about the debates about whether women are equal to men or women are also individuals as men are, reminds me of my own experience. From *The Romance of the Rose*, *The Book of the City of Ladies* to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, I see all kinds of struggles concerning the "gender" issues. I think it is very true that Trigg says about finding one's individuality in Chaucer's works because that is what I am doing in the process of writing this thesis. I wish I could say that I am now living in a family in which men and women are equally important. The truth is that many conservative elders like my grandparents are also troubled by the consequence if women are considered equal to men. People like my grandparents may feel that nowadays men and women have the same position in society, but they are still hesitant to women's equal importance to men. That is why on the day in the early April when Chinese family have to worship their ancestors, I can be absent from the great event, but my brothers cannot. If I say it does not occur to me as certain kind of sexual discrimination, I would be lying. Yet sometimes the inequality gives me the convenience of being a free person from the strong bond among most Chinese family. With such life experience, I start the journey of visiting the "women question" from reviewing the tradition of misogyny to the three major works I concentrate: *The Romance of the Rose*, *The Book of the City of Ladies* and, *Troilus and Criseyde*.

According to Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr., from ancient Greece to the Renaissance, "the questions of female equality and opportunity were raised that still resound and are still unresolved (ix)". In this thesis, the "women question" I focus mainly concerns two issues: Are women less human than men? Are women individuals as men are? Chaucer, who also writes about women in many of his works such as the famous Wife of Bath and Criseyde, is one of those who talk about the "women question". Therefore, to discuss Chaucer's position on the issues about women, it is important to give a quick review of the history of the subject, especially the history of how people and literary works in the Middle Ages deal with related issues. In fact, a lot of medieval literature is sexist. Many poems, stories and epics give negative portrayals of woman and *The Romance of the Rose* is one of them. David F. Hult points out that in the *Rose* there are many "misogynist, antireligious, and obscene passages" (12). In response to those anti-women ideas in the *Rose*, Christine de Pizan starts a series of debates with the supporters of the work, Jean de Montruil and Gontier and Pierre Col. According to Rosalind Brown-Grant, what

Christine mainly protests against is the idea suggesting women "as a race apart from men, a race which is less human" (13). Later in 1405, Christine finds a way to defend women. In her most famous work *The Book of the City of the Ladies*, Christine uses examples from the past as well as the present to argue that women can be equal to men in terms of virtue and morality. Christine de Pizan is the first woman to fight the misogynistic traditions (Brown-Grant 2) and therefore Hult calls Christine "the other voice".[1] Asides from Christine de Pizan, Chaucer presents himself as another kind of 'voice'. Christine tries to show that women in terms of virtue can be equal to men and Chaucer deals with the issues about women in a different way. Chaucer talks about women's freedom to choose in *Troilus and Criseyde* and shows his position on the "women question."

The Romance of the Rose

The Romance of the Rose is composed by two authors, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Since the text is written by two different authors, many discussions have been made about the relationships between the two parts of the *Rose*. The first three chapters are written by Guillaume de Lorris in between 1225 and 1230. The rest of it was continued by Jean de Meun between 1269 and 1278. [2] Jean takes Guillaume's work by himself and continues it with his own style. *The Romance of the Rose* is a best seller in its day. Frances Horgan in his introduction to *The Romance of the Rose* emphasizes that the *Rose* was one of the most influential works among all medieval texts, including *The Canterbury Tales* (1). The idea helps us understand the general points of view on women since in the *Rose* there are so many issues about women. It is one of the famous works which broadly deliver the messages about women's negative natures, mainly in the part written by Jean. In the part composed by

[1] It is the title of David F. Hult's introduction to his own volume of *Debate of the Romance of the Rose*.
[2] The translations of the *Romance of the Rose* in this thesis are from Frances Horgan.

Guillaume, the story does not stray far away from the traditional story of courtly love. It is a dream allegory in which the poet, the protagonist as well as the narrator, goes into a garden and finds a magic fountain. In the fountain is a reflection of a rose which the narrator longs for despite the many obstacles he later faces (King and Rabil xv). In Horgan's words, Guillaume writes his part as a certain kind of "textbook," following "the tradition of treaties on the theory of love, most notably exemplified in the Middle Ages by the twelfth century *The Art of Love* by Andreas Capellanus" (xiii). Guillaume's dream vision serves as a teaching model to show how the courtly lovers, taught by God of Love, should behave (Hult xiii).

However, the part written by Jean de Meun is on a quite different track. Hult points out that "Jean inserted lengthy digressions on a variety of topics [and] these digressions consist from learned Latin authors, both classical and medieval" (11-12). In the longer part of the *Rose* by Jean de Meun gives a general explanation of women's natures: "women are greedy and manipulative, marriage is miserable, beautiful women are lustful, ugly ones cease to please, and a chaste woman is as rare as a black swan" (King and Rabil xv). Charles Dahlberg in the introduction to his translation of the *Rose* mentions the major question concerning the two authors: "The existence of two authors separated in time gave rise quite naturally to the question of whether or not the two parts form a united whole" (2). Before the nineteenth century, the question did not bother critics, but the differences lying in length as well as style started to encourage some debates (Dahlberg 2-3). According to Dahlberg, the debates gradually lead to a conclusion: "Guillaume and Jean were opposed in intent and treatment" (3). The first part celebrates "courtly love" while the much more lengthy part by Jean de Meun is an "anti-Guillaume" criticism of courtly love (3). Both Gérard Paré and C. S. Lewis agree on the notion suggesting that there is indeed opposition in the two parts of the poem (3). Dahlberg and Alan Gunn hold different opinions from the previous one. Gunn thinks that both Guillaume and Jean write the poem as a treatise on love and they all embody this "love" on the personification of the rose (21-22). The issue of 'love' not only signifies the unity between two parts in the *Rose* and its great influence on medieval people but also suggests the connection between Jean and Chaucer.

Recent critics tend to accept the idea that the two parts of the poem are unified and John Fleming is one of them (Dahlberg 4). Fleming reminds us that there is a central theme that both Guillaume and Jean share in their poems: love (12). In their introduction of *Rethinking Romance of the Rose*, Kevin Brownlee and Sylvia Huot also point out that the theme "love" is central to both authors of the *Rose* (5). Most importantly, it is the central theme, love, which brings forth all the issues that medieval people concern. Critics often neglect that "love is a central doctrine of Christianity and, as a theme, occupies a dominant place in much medieval poetry" (Dahlberg 12). The issues about the love of God in Christianity receive a lot of attention among medieval people, and therefore, the theme of love also brings forth the popularity of the *Rose*.

According to Brownlee and Hout, *The Romance of the Rose* is also one of the most important works in Old French literature. For medieval readers, though written between 1225 and 1275, the text is quite special and its influence is also extraordinary. Both in and out of France, the *Rose* receives much attention from medieval people and its popularity continued to the Renaissance. (1) Due to the popularity of the *Rose* in the Middle Ages, it is inevitable to give a review of how medieval people read the *Rose*. Huot in her own monograph dedicated to the research of numerous manuscripts of the *Rose* asks several crucial questions when it comes to the receptions of the *Rose* in different periods of time:

> What did a medieval reader find when he or she opened a copy of the *Rose*?

> We cannot assume that Machaut, or Chaucer, or Christine de Pizan necessarily read the text that we find in the modern editions…What aspects of it were considered important, or shocking, or difficult, or superfluous? What kind of text did people think it was, or want it to be? (8)

At the time people in the Middle Ages read various versions of the translations of the *Rose*, they pay a lot of attention to the issues about "love and marriage, gender and sexuality, about sin and free will, about language and power, about human society, nature, and the cosmos" in a wild range (Huot 9). Those issues are the ones that concern medieval people most, and in the *Rose* the descriptions and explanations concerning those issues all result from 'love,' the protagonist's love for the rose. That is the reason why people in the Middle Ages read the *Rose* to find answers or suggestions on those topics.

When it comes to the modern ages, the "orientations" of interpreting the *Rose* become richer and more diverse than it is in the medieval period (Brownlee and Hout). As Brownlee and Hout briefly conclude, there are three major orientations regarding the modern interpretations of the *Rose*. The first one is the "neo-patristic" perspective. Critics who read the *Rose* with this perspective treat it as Christian allegory and usually focus on the topics about morality and didactics. Robertson and Fleming are both critics of this scheme (2). The second one is from the "philosophical perspective". Critics taking this direction such as Winthrop Wetherbee and Thomas D. Hill consider the *Rose* is set in a "context of medieval neoplatonist poetics and mythology" (2). The third kind is a more purely literary one. Critics such as Stephen Nichols and Douglas Kelly of this group tend to concentrate on the "rhetorical organization, narrative structure, literary genre, and poetic discourse" of the *Rose* (2). The list of different orientations and receptions of the *Rose* may keep on going since the text has been discussed a lot since it was first published (Brownlee and Huot). What the first group of critics concentrate invites most attention. If people really follow the moral lessons and didactics in the *Rose*, then people would think that women are just greedy and lustful creatures. Do people in the Middle Ages actually regard the *Rose* as a book to offer moral instructions and a guidebook to show how they should deal with the questions about marriage, love and especially, about women? With the purpose of introducing the *Rose* as a guidebook dealing with certain issues in the Middle Ages, let us go back to the parts in the *Rose* where medieval people pay most attention.

It is mentioned earlier that both Guillaume and Jean have the same theme in their stories: love. Although the theme is common in the writings of the two authors, the interpretations of 'love' in the *Rose* are quite diverse. The various kinds of love elaborated in the *Rose* control the development of the whole poem. Dahlberg believes that "traditional Christian analyses of love offer the best background for our understanding of the theme and its structural development" (12). Dahlberg thus further gives the definitions of *amor*,[3] referring to the different kinds of love in the *Rose* which arouse many discussions. Dahlberg writes that "from the time of Augustine, this term…came to be used for both charity and cupidity" (12). Dahlberg applies the explanations of *amo*r from Alanus de Insulis who "defines amor, "in the strict sense," as cupidity, but also as charity, as the Holy Spirit, as Christ, and, most importantly, as "natural affection"" (12). The natural affection is the love of God which in the words of Reason is what the Lover should pursue. Reason tells the Lover that compared to the love of God, other kinds of love, such as friendship (72), the love for Fortune (74) and the love between animals which is created for propagation, are all not worthy being pursued (88). Reason criticizes that even the love between the animals is better than the one between the Lover and the rose: "You have embarked upon a far more foolish enterprise in the love that you have undertaken, and you

[3] Amor is 'love' in French.

would be better off abandoning it if you wish to seek what is good for you" (89). The Lover's love for the rose can do nothing but harm him (88). Dahlberg concludes: "the Lover's desire for the rose is the classic form of cupidity, a love for earthly object for its own sake rather than for the sake of God" (15). Hence such kind of love is foolish and is not worth pursuing.

This chapter which begins with Reason's advice to Fair Welcome also suggests the connection between Jean and Chaucer. Fleming in "Jean de Meun and the Ancient Poets" emphasizes that there are two classical poets who provide the intellectual contents in the Rose: Ovid and Boethius (85). In Fleming's explanation, both Guillaume and Jean take Ovid's *Art of Love* as their models for their parts in the *Rose*, (86). In terms of being "Ovidian," Jean's difference from Guillaume is that Jean applies Boethius's philosophy to the art of love (89). "Jean's first and most powerful move is to subject this 'Ovid' to the scrutiny of Boethius, which is the effect of the long dialogue between Reason and the Lover that begins Jean's continuation of the poem" (Fleming 89). For Jean, Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* offers him an agent that turns the eroticism in Ovid's *Art of Love* into a philosophical and moral theme (88). Furthermore in the *Rose*, Jean talks about people's relationship with Fortune: "It is that people that benefit and profit from Fortune when she is perverse and unfavorable than when she is gentle and gracious" (74). Reason takes the love of Fortune as an example to present all kinds of love and proves to Fair Welcome that his love for the rose is unworthy. The connection between Jean and Boethius shows another great influence of the *Rose* on Chaucer. In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer also elaborates the relationship between free will and Fortune which he derives from Boethius through his two protagonists. Both Jean and Chaucer take Boethius's philosophy as a medium for their portrayals of "love". The greatest difference between Jean and Chaucer lies in their female characters. The Old Woman in the *Rose* only speaks ill of women, but Criseyde in Chaucer's writing presents herself as an individual with the ability to judge and act while facing Fortune/patriarchy.

The chapter entitled "The Advice of Reason" is the first chapter written by Jean after the allegorical story of Guillaume. Reason gives many instructions and implies that the love of cupidity is not as noble and worthy as the love of God. Later, through other characters, Jean further explains why. In the chapter "The Advice of the Old Woman," Jean portrays the character, the Old Woman, to show that women have been the crucial problem in the issues about love. The Old Woman tells Fair Welcome that she wants to teach him "the game of love" and gives her advice when Fair Welcome answers with a silent consent (200). She tells Fair Welcome that in the game of love, he should never be generous:

> Never be generous, fair son; bestow your heart in several places, never just in one, and neither give it nor lend it but sell it very dearly and always to the highest bidder…if you wish to choose a lover, I advise you to give your love to the handsome young man who values you so highly, but let it not be fixed…It is good to frequent rich men if their hearts are not mean and miserly and if you are skilled at fleecing them. (201-02)

The Old Woman even provides many examples that explain that if a person has only one lover, he or she only suffers from tragical consequences like Dido, Phyllis, Oenone and Medea (203-04).

The reason why the Old Woman tells the stories of those women is not only to instruct Fair Welcome to play the game of love. The Old Woman's real purpose is to elaborate what she thinks about women. Earlier before the Old Woman starts to give advices, she talks about her own past: "[W]hen I was your [Fair Welcome's] age, I had been as wise as I am concerning the game of love—for I was very beautiful then, but now I must sigh and weep when I gaze at my ravaged face" (197). In Jean's writing, because the Old Woman had once been a beauty who had experienced the game of love, she knows exactly the skills and tricks women have in the love affairs. Superficially, the skills and tricks depicted by the Old Woman are devices to praise how women are good at the love game. Yet as a matter of fact, those descriptions only serve to present many negative images of women. First of all, in response to the stories of foolish women who give their love to only one man, the Old Woman suggests that a woman should have several lovers so that she can bring great sufferings to men as their revenge on deceitful traitors to love (204).

Later the Old Woman starts to describe what women should do to win the game of love. For example, the Old Woman thinks that women "should be familiar with games and songs, but avoid quarrels and strife. If she is not beautiful, she should enhance her appearance; the ugliest must be the most elegantly attired" (204). She suggests that women's tears are only "traps" (206). Also women should always pay attention to their table manners and even their breath (205). The Old Woman emphasizes that women should not wait too long before they take pleasures and should not live a "cloistered" life, either (207-08). After this, the Old Woman begins to speak out about more antipathetic aspects of women. She advises that women should never love poor men: "she will be interested only in what she can get. Any woman who does not fleece her lover of everything he has is mad. (211)" It seems that in the words of the Old Woman, women should be or are all very avaricious and evil. The Old Woman even proposes that if a woman senses that she can get nothing more from her lover, she should ask him for a loan and promise to return it one day but never will (212). Even more, women should be good at the skill of pretention: "And so a woman, if she is not a simpleton, should pretend to be alarmed, to tremble with fear and be tormented with worry whenever she is about to receive her lover"

(212). She uses Venus as an example to show women's pretension and speaks of Helen to point out that women are usually the "cause of battles" (213-14).

The examples and bad images of women provided by the Old Woman are quite lengthy. In her conclusion, the Old Woman says to Fair Welcome that women are not trustworthy: "Women have very poor judgment, and I was a true woman" (223). Women in the Old Woman's portrayal are just antipathetic and greedy. Lee Patterson in "Feminine Rhetoric and the Politics of Subjectivity: La Vieille[4] and the Wife of Bath" points out the great influence of the *Rose*, especially the character 'La vielle' on Chaucer's works: "If the Middle Ages is a culture of the book, then for vernacular writers its central text is the *Roman de la Roes*: to trace the *Roman*'s influence is virtually to write the history of late-medieval poetry. And of no writer is this more true than Geoffrey Chaucer" (316). Furthermore, within all the characters created by Chaucer, the Wife of Bath is the best model which reveals Chaucer's inheritance from the *Rose* (Patterson 316). In the *Wife of Bath's Tale*, the fate of the knight who involves in a rape is decided by the noble ladies in the court. Chaucer deals with the question of whether women have poor judgment or not in the *Wife of Bath's Tale*. Also the Wife of Bath talks about how women love men's wealth and how greedy they are: "Somme seyde women loven richesse/ Somme seyde honour, somme seyden jolymesse/ Somme riche array, sommeseyden lust abedde" (925-27).

In Patterson's viewpoint, the Old Woman in Jean's the *Rose* and the Wife of Bath in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* are the best examples to show a particular characteristic of the female figures in the literary discourse in the Middle Ages. They represent the position of women in the Middle Ages: "Throughout the Middle Ages, women were denied social conceptualization and even existence as social, and historical, beings" (341). From the similarities between the Old Woman in the *Rose*

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[4] The Old Woman

and the Wife of Bath in *The Canterbury Tales*, one can see the influence of the *Rose* on Chaucer's writing. Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde* also deals with whether women have good judgment or whether women are all selfish and greedy through the heroine, Criseyde. The differences between the Old Woman, the Wife of Bath and Criseyde present how Chaucer develops his ideas about women. What the Old Woman says in the *Rose* only lower women's position but the Wife of Bath achieves to speak out "the right of selfhood" (341). Criseyde, set between the antipathetic Old Women and powerful Wife of Bath, is a female character which shows Chaucer's ambiguous position on the "women question".

With Patterson's observations, the great influence brought by the *Rose* on the questions about women in the Middle Ages is clearly explained. Besides the Old Woman, Jean also conveys his ideas about women through other characters in the *Rose*. In the chapter "Nature and Genius," Genius offers to console Nature's troubles and finds the solutions for her. In his reply, Genius says: "it is doubtless true that women are easily moved to anger. Virgil himself, who knew a great deal about them, testifies that no woman was ever so steadfast as not to be fickle and inconstant" (252). Not only Genius judges women as fickle and inconstant. Elsewhere in the *Rose*, such as in the chapter "The Advice of Friend," Friend also tells the Lover that women are all "unchaste," no matter in thoughts or in action (140). Through the words of Friend, Jean even criticizes marriage as "an evil bond" (135).

With all the characters telling the bad images and antipathetic pictures of women, Jean de Meun leads the story of courtly love by Guillaume de Lorris onto a different path. And the indisputable popularity of the *Rose* in the Middle Ages encourages many interpretations as well as debates. Among all the issues, the ones about "love and marriage, gender and sexuality," as Huot emphasizes, bring about most attention as well discussions. Aside from Geoffrey Chaucer, who adapts the Old Woman for his

With of Bath, there is another writer who responds to the misogyny-oriented portrayals of women in *The Romance of the Rose* and makes her own argumentations: Christine de Pizan.

In fact, the misconceptions of women Christine de Pizan fights against have a long history. King and Rabil give a summary of it. The ancient Greeks understand female nature based on Aristotle's thoughts in duality about males and females. According to Aristotle, "the male principle in nature is as sociated with active, formative and perfected characteristics, while the female is passive, material and deprived, desiring the male in order to become complete" (328). Aristotle' dualism reveals a predominantly assumption that women possess inferior principles while men have superior qualities (King and Rabil x). According to King and Rabil, such dualism also has a social and political significance. "If the male principle was superior and the female inferior, then in the household, as in the state, men should rule and women must be subordinate" (xi). Although Aristotle's teacher, Plato, portrays in his Republic where men and women do not have to be separated into superior and inferior groups, the ideal of gender equality remains in his imagination while in reality the subordinate situation of women remains (King and Rabil xi). And such Aristotelian thoughts of women's nature become the basic perceptions in the Middle Ages (King and Rabil xii).

The concept of women's being subordinate to men does not only flourish in Aristotelian thoughts. Later in Rome's republic, the term "father" carries more than its biological meaning. It suggests the father of the family who "owned the household's property and, indeed, its human members" (King and Rabil xii). The idea of "father" follows the traditional views of women as men's subordinate objects. In such a fashion, women are further legitimately limited in their rights to inherit the property of their fathers or husbands. The laws limiting women's rights to the property become a means of excluding women from civil and public society. Under the influence of Roman laws, "women [have] only a private existence and [possess] no public personality" (King and Rabil xiii).

Besides the classical discussion, there is the biblical discussion which shows the negative nature of women. In Genesis, the fact that Eve is created from Adam's rib is clearly written, therefore the women's subordinate position is well secured. Furthermore, Eve is presented as the origin of human fall because she is seduced by the evil serpent:

> And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat... And the man said: The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat…Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. (Gen. 3: 7-17)

This passage is well known as 'the fall of mankind' and many theologians such as Tertullian and Thomas Aquinas maintains that Eve should be responsible for the act since she is easily seduced by the evil and deceived her husband. "From the pulpit, moralists and preachers for centuries conveyed to women the guilt that they bore for original sin" (King and Rabil xiv). Given both philosophical and biblical evidences, women's subordinate position to men is very secure.

Through the role of Christine de Pizan as "the other voice" in the Middle Ages, one can see that during the time when the misogyny tradition has its prevalence, there are always voices speaking for women. Chaucer, whose famous work *The Canterbury Tales* stands as a best seller with *The Romance of the Rose* in the Middle Ages, surely deals with the "women question," too. Many critics develop their analyses of Chaucer's position on the "women question" based on *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale* and Suzan Crane is one of them. In Crane's "Alison's Incapability and Poetic Instability in *the Wife of Bath's Tale*, she shows how Chaucer struggles between the two genres, romance and anti-feminist satire or, to be further addressed, the struggle between feminist and anti-feminist positions. Crane argues that both romance and satire contain many conventions about feminine ability and how they exercise their abilities to deal with "heart and hearth" and mentions that Chaucer often "illustrates the conventions of these two genres regarding feminine power" (21).

Crane suggests that in romance women always exercise their sovereignty in a way beneficial to men while anti-feminist satire centers on negative femininity such as mercenary dependence and overbearing sexuality (21). While anti-feminists would argue that women's emotional sovereignty is harmful, aggressive, and falsely exercised, the poet of romance would say that women's sovereignty actually derives from native feminine virtues (21). The question of whether women should have sovereignty or not in Chaucer's the *Wife of Bath's Tale* echoes one of Christine's troubles about why women cannot get involved in many public affairs (Christine 63). Should women have the sovereignty or do women have the mind and experiences to participate public affairs? The question remains the same: Is a woman equal to a man? When Chaucer in the *Wife of Bath's Tale* keeps shifting the narrative tone from an anti-feminist satire to a romance and back forth, he is trying to deal with the major "women question" in a very careful way. Chaucer's struggle between two genres, according to Crane, is also his struggle about how he would answer the "women question." For Chaucer, the shift is a strategy to avoid giving specific answers to the "“women question”. When Chaucer is ambivalent about anti-feminist satire and romance, he presents his ambivalent position on the “women question.” Sheila Delany in her “Techniques of Alienation in *Troilus and Criseyde*” also points out how Chaucer uses the technique of alienation to “goad the audience toward critical judgment of the conventions of medieval romance, and of character and action in the poem” (30). It can be seen that Chaucer is also aware of the complexity and ambivalence of making a voice for women.

In Crane’s opinion, even Christine choose the way of obedience because sometimes women writers can only defend their sex by partly accepting cultural models of female submission (21). Is Chaucer, as a male author, also troubled by the misogyny tradition prevailing in the Middle Ages as Christine is? If so, does Chaucer decide to speak for women as Christine does and grant women the equal opportunity to men? Or Chaucer chooses another way to present his position on the “women question”? To discuss Chaucer’s dealing with the patriarchal system and the misogyny tradition could be a huge task, but Larry Scanlon offers a clue to view Chaucer’s position on women in a very different way. To see how Criseyde reacts to Fortune is to see how Criseyde is portrayed as an individual woman. With Boethius’s explanation of the relationship between Fortune and free will, Chaucer presents that both Troilus and Criseyde show that they have the ability to exercise their free will while facing Fortune. In terms of free will and individuality, Criseyde is no different from Troilus. But is Chaucer’s Criseyde also one of the good wives who fit the descriptions of Christine’s ideal model: to have good judgment, to manage the household well and have possession of great minds? While the misogynist traditions derived from the religious aspect seem to be fully solved by Christine de Pizan when she turns the focus back to ‘morality and virtue,’ it is noteworthy to see that how Chaucer, as a contemporary with Christine, deals with the “women question” and the complexity of gendered issues through the reactions of Troilus and Criseyde to Fortune.

It is noteworthy that Chaucer does not only show his struggle for the "women question" in the *Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale*, but also his most famous tragedy, *Troilus and Criseyde*. In his portrayal of Criseyde, Chaucer presents himself as another kind of 'voice' other than Christine de Pizan. Larry Scanlon in "Sweet Persuasion: The Subject of Fortune in *Troilus and Criseyde*" offers an interesting view about how the idea of Fortune in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is portrayed as a symbol of patriarchy: "it would seem that Fortune's ultimate effect in this poem is to produce ideological control, to undergird the poem's final transcendence with a clear-eyed political recognition of the inevitability of patriarchal power" (223). In Scanlon's words, both Troilus and Criseyde are all in the hands of Fortune, the patriarchal system. Delany also mentions that even Chaucer is constrained by the patriarchal system: "Chaucer, too, as a bourgeois in the aristocratic court, was constrained by dominant (masculine) power, as were aristocratic women (72). The tradition of misogyny which Christine fights so hard against is also part of the patriarchal system. How Chaucer represents his most famous heroine, Criseyde, to face the 'generalized, mystifying, and hence invincible hostility' in patriarchy (Dickson 77) is worthy of further discussions.

The thesis begins with the introduction of *The Romance of the Rose* and its great influence on Christine de Pizan and Chaucer. It then moves on to the introduction of Christine's *The Book of the City of Ladies* brings forth how professional writers in the Middle Ages such as Christine and Chaucer are troubled by and deal with the "women question". The last part concentrates on Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. By closely analyzing how Troilus and Criseyde react to Fortune/patriarchy on the basis of Boethius's philosophy about the relationship between free will and fortune, one can view Chaucer’s position on the “women question” from a different perspective.

Chapter Two

The Defense of Women in *The Book of the City of Ladies*

More than a century later after *The Romance of the Rose* is finished by Jean de Meun, Christine de Pizan starts a series of debates with the supporters of the *Rose*. Christine de Pizan in 1405 publishes her *Christine's Vision* as a remark of how she starts her career as a professional writer: "Between the year 1399 when I began writing and the present year, 1405, during which I am still writing, I have compiled fifteen major works" (Hult 8-9). Christine declares that she begins with a "lighter nature" such as the topic of love and courtliness in her *God of Love's Letter* in 1399 and later moves to more sophisticated ones (9). In 1402 she writes the six-thousand line *Long Road of Learning*, in which Christine elaborates her comments on France's "war-torn" situation" in need of leadership (10). In 1403, she writes *The Book of Fortune's Transformation*, in which she talks about the influence of Fortune on the basis of her own life experience (10). Furthermore, the range of Christine's writing is not limited to courtly and philosophical sorts. Christine's works also reach the political area. From 1405 to 1414, Christine writes *Book of the Body Politics*, the *Book of Arms and of Chivalry*, the *Lamentation on the Ills of France* and the *Book of Peace* to convey her own political viewpoints (10-11).

As a professional writer, Christine deals with all kinds of issues. Due to the popularity of the *Rose* in fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Christine is also greatly influenced by the work. In 1399, Christine makes her position of opposing the negative images about women in the *Rose* through the voice of Cupid in her *God of Love's Letter* (12). Two years later, with the praise from Jean de Montreuil for the *Rose*, Christine decides to start a series of debates with the *Rose*'s defenders. In the debates, Christine mainly argues against Reason's immoral statements, the Old Woman's improper lessons for young ladies and Genius's instructions for men to flee from women (12). After the debates, Christine writes *The Book of the City of Ladies* which is set to be a model to show that it is in terms of virtue and morality, not of sexual difference that some people are superior to others.

In the very beginning of *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine talks about how she is troubled by the prevailing misogynist traditions in the Middle Ages. Being an intellectual woman, she is quite troubled by the negative assumption or even beliefs about women's evil natures. The fact that *The Romance of the Rose* by Jean de Meun also includes abundant classical materials and its being one of the best sellers at Christine's time suggests that her trouble may be quite common in the Middle Ages. In Christine's thoughts, what misogynists say or write is all formed by those learned men as famous scholars or philosophers. Hence, she finds herself in a very difficult situation—could those intellectual men be wrong? Or are the natures of women just like what they say (4)?

The history of misogyny can be traced back to the time of Aristotle, but the negative conceptions of women in the Middle Ages are aroused by one of the most popular books at that time, *The Romance of the Rose*. In the *Rose*, many negative portrayals of women are elaborated through many characters with strong images such as the Old Woman and Genius. As mentioned, Christine de Pizan, troubled by its popularity and all the misogynistic discourses in it, writes *The Book of the City of Ladies* as a response to show that women are not all like those pictured in the *Rose*. There are many similarities as well as differences between *The Romance of the Rose* and *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Both of them are indispensable for the discussions about how medieval people treat questions about women. The misogynistic descriptions of women in the *Rose* and the responses from Christine de Pizan to it give the "women question" in the medieval period a clear background for the further discussion of Chaucer's position on the "women question."

Maureen Quilligan in her *The Allegory Female Authority* introduces the life of Christine de Pizan:

> Married, apparently quite happily, since age fifteen to a courtier-bureaucrat like her father, she was widowed at twenty-five and thereby left responsible for the support of three young children and of her mother….Widowhood brought with it not only the need to take charge of her own destiny, but also the freedom to do so. (1)

Quilligan suggests that Christine's life experience is one of the reasons for her being a professional writer (1).[5] Christine's works have a wild range of topics. She st writes books about courtly love such as *God of Love's Letter* and later gets involved with political issues in her *Book of the Body Politics*, the *Book of Arms and of Chivalry*, the *Lamentation on the Ills of France* and the *Book of Peace*. In all her works, Christine shows that being a professional writer, she not only specifically deals with the question about women; but also concerned about the political issues about the country. Also, it is due to the sense of being a professional person of letters that Christine decides to start a series of debates as her responses to *The Romance of the Rose*.

In Christine's debates on the misogynist arguments in the *Rose*, she points out two major issues. First, Christine concentrates her objections to the characters created by Jean de Meun which carry all kinds of negative images of women, like the Old Woman. Second, Christine remarks that the misogynist concepts in the *Rose* may be dangerous for both men and women (Brown-Grant 11). She believes that the anti-feminism provoked in the *Rose* could lead to a disharmony between the sexes since it is quite immoral and anti-Christian (Brown-Grant 10). Brown-Grant suggests that Christine mainly tries to argue against the generalizations that castigate women

[5] For the life of Christine de Pizan, see also Charity Canon Willard's *Christine de Pizan: Her Life and Works, A Biography*. New York: Persea Books, 1984.

(13).[6] Although Christine tries very hard to attack the misogynist thoughts in the *Rose* with its supporters, she does not place women in the center of the argument. Christine in her debates about the *Rose* focuses on the issues "condemned by Christian morality—obscenity, blasphemy, immorality, pornography, deceit, carnality—that largely frame her criticisms of the text" (Hult 13).

Brownlee in his "Discourse of the Self: Christine de Pizan and *The Romance of the Rose*" from another aspect makes explicit analyses of the position Christine stands on to argue against the defenders of the *Rose*: "She attributes to literary discourse an inescapably exemplary character: literary texts by definition present themselves as models to be imitated, in behavior and in speech" (253). Such a moral notion about literary discourse is the point Christine takes to criticize the *Rose*. Most importantly, presenting literary works as models for people to follow in act as well as in speech is also Christine's "literary vocation" and her "female authorial identity" (254).

With the sense of responsibility to write literary works as models for people to follow, Christine de Pizan writes one of her most famous works: *The Book of the City of Ladies* in 1405. Christine's main purpose of writing this work is to find solutions to the questions about women which have troubled her for a long time. Being an intellectual woman, she is quite confused by the negative assumptions or even beliefs about women's evil natures:

> One day as I was sitting in my study surrounded by books of different kinds… My mind had grown weary as I had spent the day struggling with the weighty tomes of various authors whom I had studied for a long time…why on earth that so many different men, both clerks and others have

[6] See Blamires, *Women Defamed*, 1-15; and *Three Medieval Views*, 1-27. See also Katherine Rogers, *The Troublesome Helpmate*: *A History of Misogyny in Literature* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1996); R. Howard Bloch, 'Medieval misogyny', *Representation* 20 (1987), 1-24; and Alcuin Blamires, *The Case for Women in Medieval Culture* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

> said and continue to say and write such awful, damning things about women in their ways…that female nature is wholly given up to vice. (5-6)

Christine reads many works that convey many "awful and damning things" about women (6).[7] Christine asks why so many well-known scholars all talk about women in such an insulting way. One of the authors Christine reads may be Jean de Meun. Since Christine presents examples to show that women are indeed constant and have good judgment in responses to Jean's evil portrayals of women through the words of the Old Woman.

Christine solves such confusion by describing a dream in which she is visited by three ladies: Lady Reason, Rectitude, and Justice. When Christine is in despair, she sees there is light coming up to her lap: "I looked up to see where the light had come from and all at once saw before me three ladies, crowned and of majestic appearance, whose faces shone with a brightness that lit up me and everything else in the place" (7-8). While Christine is still stunned by the bright appearances of the three ladies, Lady Reason speaks out why they show up to her: "Our aim is to help you get rid of those misconceptions which have clouded your mind and made you reject what you know and believe in fact to be the truth just because so many other people have come out with the opposite opinion" (8). Later Reason tells Christine that there is a more important reason for their visit. The three ladies tell Christine that the female sex has been defenseless for a quite long time and therefore they want noble ladies and valiant women can be protected in the future. Hence, they want Christine to create a building with strong wall, "sturdy and impregnable". Furthermore, only women with good reputation and virtues can be granted to enter the city (11).

It is obvious that Christine also writes *The Book of the City of Ladies* in the form of a dream allegory like the *Rose*. Choosing the same genre is not the only similarity

[7] The translations of *The Book of the City of Ladies* in the thesis are from Rosalind Brown-Grant.

between Christine and the authors of the *Rose*. In the following conversations between the protagonist, Christine herself, and the three ladies, Christine also writes many examples to show her purpose of setting models for women in the Middle Ages to get rid of the "misconceptions". In the beginning of her conversation with Reason, Christine asks her why so many authors give slanderous judgments on women: "Is it Nature that makes them do this? Or, if it is out of hatred" (17)? Reason replies: "Some of those who criticized women did so with good intentions: they wanted to rescue men who had already fallen into the clutches of depraved and corrupt women…They therefore attacked all women in order to persuade men to regard the entire sex as an abomination" (17). But are these good intentions good to women? Listening to Reason's reply, Christine at first thinks that Reason agrees with men's abusive descriptions of women. Yet Reason further explains that good intentions cannot justify wrong doings: "If I killed you with good intentions and out of stupidity, would I be in the right (17)? Reason also uses Ovid as the example to show that the men who pass slanderous judgments on women are those who have affairs with wanton women (20-23).

After this, Christine asks Reason then if it is true that female children are the result of the "weakness or deficiency in the mother's womb" (22). Reason provides Christine an answer from a biblical story: "He [God] put Adam to sleep and created the body of women from one of his ribs. This was a sign that she was meant to be his companion standing at his side, whom he would love as if there were one flesh, not his servant lying at his feet" (23). By telling the story of the creation of human, both men and women, Christine with her own interpretation of the biblical story tries to say that men and women are flesh of the same kind. Furthermore, Christine quotes Cicero by saying that "man should not be subject to woman…because it is wrong to be subject to one who is your inferior" (23). Reason's reply to Cicero's discriminatory thought is the central theme in the whole work: "It is he or she who is the more virtuous who is the superior being: human superiority or inferiority is not determined by sexual difference but by the degree to which one has perfected one's nature and morals" (23). Here, through Reason, Christine conveys the most important message to her medieval readers, especially female ones: it is the superiority of "virtue" which distinguishes the differences between people, not the nature of one's sex. While the sexual difference makes men and women different, the morality and virtue can offer them an equal stand.

Aside from writing her story in the form of a dream allegory, Christine also provides many examples as Jean de Meun does in the *Rose*. In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine lists many virtuous women, both religious and secular, to show that women are not all wanton or greedy as the Old Woman portrays in the *Rose*. There are numbers of examples. For instance, Christine mentions another author who says that "women are by nature weak-minded and childish, which explains why they get so well with children…because they're acting out of ignorance…rather than a natural instinct to be gentle" (25). Reason unfastens Christine's confusion by telling the story about Jesus Christ's answer to the question "who is the greatest one" among all his apostles. "He called a child to him and laid his hand on its head saying, "I tell you that he who is humble and meek like a child will be the greatest among you" (25). In addition to the biblical story, Christine also describes pious women in the religious history as great models to be followed, such as Saint Catherine who refuses to marry and devotes her entire life to God (203).

Besides those religious models, Christine writes about more secular examples to answer and explain all kinds of ideas against women. In the middle of her conversation with Reason, Christine asks if women are naturally endowed with good judgment: "can women distinguish between what is right and the wrong thing" (78)?

This part responds to what the Old Woman says in the *Rose*: "Women have very poor judgment" (223). Reason lists several women with good sense and judgment such as Gaia Cirilla, Queen Dido and Opis, Queen of Crete (81-86). For those women who give great love to their parents, Rectitude mentions Drypetina, Hipsipyle, and Claudine (103-05). After that, Christine points out to Rectitude that many authors accuse women of being the main cause of failed marriages. Those authors claim that women's "shrewish, vengeful nagging" becomes a "constant hell" to men. Therefore, in order to run away from such suffering and trouble, men are advised to not marry at all. Most importantly, no women are faithful and constant to their spouses and so marriages are not worthy to pursue (108). This resonates to Jean's accusation that women cannot be constant in the *Rose*. First Rectitude replies to Christine by declaring a simple fact that all those texts which tell bad images of women are not written by women (109). Later Rectitude gives a long list of good wives who maintain the status of their marriage in a good condition. On the list are Queen Hypsicratea, Empress Triaria, Queen Artemisia, and King Adrastus's daughter, Argia (110-16).

Christine is not the first one to make the moral lessons clear by giving a lot of examples. According to Brown-Grant, Christine's predecessors, Petrarch and Boccaccio, also use the same strategy of delivering moral lessons. In Brown-Grant's summary, the purpose of Petrarch's writing about the examples of the past is to encourage people to pursue the "earthly glory," while Boccaccio's is to admonish the idea that people should always avoid every chance of falling (137). Therefore, in Boccaccio's *Famous Women*, he writes about many bad women and declares that he is actually doing the female sex a favor so that they are rescued from historical oblivion (139). Although Christine also presents many virtuous women as examples like Petrarch and Boccaccio have done, she does not merely write an epitome or in a tone of castigating the falling race. Instead Christine sets up a guidebook like Jean de

Meun does, trying to offer a different viewpoint of women's inferior position.

Christine's dream allegory about virtuous women shows that women can also be moral and virtuous humans as good men are. Lynne Dickson, in her "Deflection in the Mirror: Feminine Discourse in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* and *Tale*," points out that Christine with her debates on the *Rose* and other works tries to offer medieval women another mirror to look upon themselves except for the one set up by patriarchy (64-65):

> Reason presents Christine with a mirror, offering her a more positive self-image…this mirror is *The Book of the City of Ladies*—the first history of women.[8] Throughout this book medieval women would find representations of the feminine that resisted the definition that discourses like antifeminism would thrust on them. (65)

These representations lie in Christine's numerous examples from the past as well as religious history. Christine expects that through those good models, women can finally realize that those misconceptions are by no means objective but subjective in a male-dominated society (Dickson 64).

It is surprising to see that there are not just women in Christine's long lists of good examples. Christine also talks about men who trust their wives and thus lead good lives such as Emperor Justinian, Belisarius, and King Alexander (128-30). There are many other virtuous women from the past as well as in the present in Christine's work such as Judith, Queen Esther, the Sabine women and Verturia (131-38). The examples in *The Book of the City of Ladies* are numerous and therefore it stops for fear of digression. Christine writes about so many good women who love their parents, keep faithful to their husbands or maintain their pious minds for the religious purpose to show that there is a chance for women to be good and virtuous. The examples she

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[8] Quilligan, "Allegory and the Textual Body," p.223.

represents in the text serve to confirm the idea that Christine wants to emphasize: it is not the natural sex which decides one's superiority or inferiority; it is 'virtue" that makes one higher than the other (23). Thus Christine with her own strong evidence successfully gives convincing ideas that women can also be treated as human beings in terms of virtue and morality.

In debating *The Romance of the Rose*, Christine emphasizes that a writer should take the responsibility of being a moral instructor and that is what she tries to achieve in *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Christine as a female writer does establish a text with instructive and inspiring messages. As a female author as well as a professional writer, Christine feels the urge and necessity to defend women from those misogynistic conceptions in the *Rose*. Christine deals with the "women question" by offering many examples of virtuous from the past and in the present, both secular and religious. By proving the possibility of women being virtuous, Christine shows that women in terms of virtue can be equal to men. From Christine's doubts and answers, one can see that the inferior position of women in the Middle Ages actually come from those works written by male authors such as Jean de Meun. Christine through her works shows that it is possible for women to attend the same position as men in terms of virtue and morality. Since for Christine, it is the most important thing for women to possess virtues, she later writes *The Book of the Three Virtues*, or the *Treasure of the City of Ladies*, in which she gives moral instructions for women to follow. According to Hult, this is the turning point where Christine stops her career as a defender for women (10).

The popularity of *The Romance of the Rose* brings the "women question" into hot debates and *The Book of the City of Ladies* in response to it reveals the possibility of women's sharing the same equality with men. Christine de Pizan chooses the importance of virtue to defend for women, then how does Chaucer as a contemporary of Christine and under the influence of the *Rose* react to the debates about whether women should have the right to be considered as humans like men? As it is pictured in Christine's description that she is troubled by some great literary works, it is very possible that Chaucer also encounters such confusion in his course of being a professional writer. For Chaucer, the "women question" is a more complicated issue than it is for Christine de Pizan. Like Christine, Chaucer is also troubled by the question about what the relationship between men and women would be if women attained the same position in society as men. But does Chaucer feel the urge to defend women as Christine does or he feels no need to do so? And if Chaucer does, what manners does he take to present his position on this "women question"? Does Chaucer also solve his trouble with emphasis on virtue and morality, or does he choose a very different method?

Chapter Three

Chaucer's Position on the "Women Question": the Gendered Responses in *Troilus and Criseyde*

In *The Book of the City of Ladies*, Christine de Pizan responds to the misogynistic ideas in *The Romance of the Rose* and argues that women should have equality and the same opportunity as men do in terms of "virtue" and "morality". Chaucer as a contemporary of Christine also finds himself in the aura of the debates about the "women question" in the Middle Ages. As a man, Chaucer may not feel the urge to defend the female sex, but he does engage with the misogynistic ideology of his time and society. According to Derek Pearsall, he is indeed "troubled" by –the "women question":

> A particularly insistent question for him is that of women's freedom and independence and their capacity to judge and act on the basis of a fully developed moral consciousness. All these faculties were systematically denied to women in the Middle Ages, and Chaucer is troubled both by the inhuman stupidity of the denial and by the consequences to men if the rights of women as individuals are allowed. (138)

It seems natural for Christine as a woman to take the position of defending women. Chaucer as a man, however, is still uncertain about whether women should be regarded as individuals in his society. And what may be the consequences if women are regarded as individuals as men are? If women are individuals, then the position of men and women will suffer from great changes. Chaucer is also very concerned about the issue. One can look at the famous women characters in Chaucer's writing such as the Wife of Bath for clues or even answers about how Chaucer responds to the "women question". In addition to characters like the Wife of Bath, Chaucer's other female characters such as his most famous tragic heroine, Criseyde, can serve as other examples to show the poet's hesitation and ambiguity on the issues of women. Compared to the With of Bath, Criseyde possesses more complex images. For example, Criseyde is a fine lady who attracts Troilus at his first sight but in the end becomes an unfaithful traitor to their love. Therefore, it seems to me that Criseyde offers more materials to define Chaucer's hesitant and ambiguous position on "women question" than the Wife of Bath.

Christine de Pizan responds to the misogynistic conceptions in *The Romance of the Rose* by offering secular as well as religious models in the past and at present. The examples include the Amazons who lead the country by themselves after their husbands are dead (37) and Anastasia who piously takes care of many martyrs (229). Chaucer in *Troilus and Criseyde* shows the gendered responses to Fortune as his response to the tradition of misogyny through his two protagonists. According to Larry Scanlon, Fortune in *Troilus and Criseyde* represents a social system, the patriarchal system--- It manifests itself as the power to trap both Troilus and Criseyde (211). According to Scanlon, Fortune in Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* represents the limits of the hegemonic power of the ruling class (211). Chaucer further defines the function of Fortune in social terms. Chaucer talks about the philosophical conception of Fortune in terms of society and compares Fortune to the patriarchal system. When Chaucer presents the love between Troilus and Criseyde as a mishap designed by Fortune, he implies that the lovers are actually trapped by the patriarchal power (211). Through the different and gendered responses of Troilus and Criseyde to Fortune, Chaucer elaborates on his own interpretation of patriarchy and his positions on the "women question". Troilus, as a man, in Chaucer's writing does not feel the strong necessity or urge to respond to Fortune/patriarchy. Instead of confronting Fortune/patriarchy face to face, most of time he just accepts its designation and follows it with unyielding will. On the other hand, Criseyde as a woman feels very different about Fortune as patriarchy. While Christine asserts that women can choose what kind of people they want to be like in terms of virtue and morality, Chaucer presents the matter of "choice" in another way. Through Criseyde, Chaucer shows that women's choices lie in their inner freedom and individuality to act and judge. Even so, Chaucer is still hesitant about whether the female sex should gain complete freedom and be considered as individuals as men are. Therefore, the decisions made by Criseyde, though they seem to be made through careful and discreet thinking, turn out to suit what will benefit the patriarchal system. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer offers his heroine, Criseyde, an equal stand to show her free will and individuality. Although Criseyde's free will is so limited that she is unable to subvert Fortune/patriarchy, Chaucer's intention of portraying women as individuals is discernible. Hence, Criseyde shows that the poet takes a quite ambiguous position on what consequences will be brought out if women are free to make their own decisions as individuals.

In *Troilus and Criseyde* Chaucer shows the way Criseyde exercises her free will and individuality while confronting Fortune as the patriarchal system. Criseyde does not resemble most of the good women in *The Book of the City of Ladies*. Criseyde is not one of those who bring great skills to the world, such as Pamphile who discovers the skill of gathering silk from worms or Minerva who invents the technique of making weapons from iron and steel (66-74). Does Chaucer mean to portray Criseyde as merely an unfaithful woman or does he try to set a different model to point out that women are also individuals? To elaborate Chaucer's intention of writing a heroine as an individual, it is necessary to return to Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* since in it the most important element of an individual is his/her free will. In *Consolation*, Boethius gives clear explanation of the relationship between Fortune and free will. According to Boethius, even though God foresees all, people still have the possession of free will: "For the nature of his knowledge… establishes a measure for everything, but owns nothing to later events. These things being so, the freedom of the will remains to mortals, inviolate." (433) Most importantly, with free will, people can be defined as individuals.

The idea of Fortune in Chaucer's writing derives from Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy* in which Boethius has a conversationwith Lady Philosophy about the relationship between human free will and Fortune. In response to Boethius's questions, Lady Philosophy offers detailed definition of fortune, fate, providence and free will. According to Lady Philosophy, Providence is:

> the divine reason itself, established in the highest ruler of all things that exist; but fate is a disposition inherent in movable things, through which providence binds all things together, each in its own proper ordering…so that this unfolding of temporal order being united in the foresight of the divine mind is providence, and the same unity when distributed and unfolded in time is called fate. (359)

In Boethius's definition, Providence represents the transcendent, reasonable mind of deity and fate is its designation when it relates to things that are movable and alive. In other words, people can react to fate since it deals with temporal and moveable things while Providence remains high above all things as a mere watcher.

According to Boethius's philosophy, although Providence foreknows all, the divine mind, God, is only an observer (433). Therefore people still possess free will under the reign of Providence. Taking a cue from Boethius's philosophy, Chaucer elaborates on his ideas about free will when the fate of the story is a certain necessity.[9] In *Troilus and Criseyde*, both protagonists represent different manners of how human

[9] In Boethius's philosophy, Providence foresees all and foreknowledge may be seen to be the sign of that necessity" (407).

beings react to fate. In the way of facing fate, the protagonists show their possession of free will. Howard. R. Patch in *Troilus on Determinism* also points out the significance of the relationship between human free will and fate. Patch thinks that when Chaucer talks about God's providence, he always refers to Aristotle's philosophy about free will of people, emphasizing that "freedom of thought, freedom of action, love of the beautiful, joy in living, incessant activity…all these are diametrically opposed to any fatalistic doctrine, to anything bordering or patient and unquestioning submission to the fixed and unalterable decrees of fate" (228). Under the reign of Fortune, human free will still exist.

What Chaucer wants to emphasize in *Troilus and Criseyde* is the freedom to think and act for individuals. Chaucer's concern for human free will and individuality also originates from Boethius's philosophical explanations about how people exercise free will while everything that happens or will happen seems to be a necessity under the rule of Providence. Derek Pearsall also summarizes how Chaucer adopts Boethius's philosophy and shows his concerns about "the questions of free will and the manner in which it is possessed by human beings: "Chaucer was drawn to the work because it asked serious questions about man's life, and about the freedom he has while choosing his destiny, and answered those questions without invoking the mysteries of the scheme of salvation" (161). The discussion of free will and how people can choose their fates has been one of the main concerns in Chaucer's poetry and he shows them in his Trojan story. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer presents the significance of one's freedom to choose, think and act, even the predicted fate fixed by Providence's power. Chaucer also presents two different manners through both of the protagonists.

Three scenes reveal how Chaucer characterizes the responses of Troilus and Criseyde to Fortune/patriarchy in terms of gender. While facing the designation of

Fortune, Troilus does not feel the urgency to fight with it. On the contrary, Criseyde has to go through a complex thinking process to reach her final decisions. Troilus's response to Fortune/patriarchy suggests that being a man, he is unwilling to break down the patriarchal system. Criseyde, on the other hand, though being an individual with free will, is unable to escape from the control of Fortune/patriarchy. In the end, Criseyde's free will, and individuality is too limited to subvert the patriarchal system. These three particular scenes are the ones which Chaucer adds or modifies from the original stories he translates from: Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, Benoît de Sainte-Maure's *Roman de Troie* and Guido delle Colonne's *Historia destructionis Troiae.*

The first one is the 'window scene" in which Criseyde sees Troilus passing by on a horseback. The second is the exchange scene and the last one is the ending of the poem. These particular scenes also reveal Chaucer's special designation of his two protagonists, presenting the different and gendered manners Troilus and Criseyde confronted Fortune/patriarchy. In order to talk about how Fortune/patriarchy works in Chaucer's Troilus, Jill Mann points out that in *Il Filostrato*, there is no such scene as the window scene in which Criseyde sees Troilus passing by on a horse back and starts to consider the possibility of accepting Troilus as her lover (75). Watching Troilus honorably pass by in front of her window is a crucial moment for Criseyde to think through what Pandarus has told her about Troilus' love for her. For Criseyde, it is not merely a question of loving a handsome warrior and an honorable man. Criseyde has to struggle between her social identity as a widow and her desire of being Troilus' lady. After seeing Troilus return from the battlefield, Criseyde thinks about what Pandarus has told her about Troilus's love for her and carefully analyzes the situation.

> She thoughte wel that Troilus persone
>
> She knew by sight, and ek his gentilesse,

…………………………………………

Ek sith I woot for me is his destresse,

I ne aughte nat for that thing hym despise,

Sith it is so he meneth in good wyse.

……………………………………..

Men myghten demen that he loveth me.

What dishonour were it unto me, this?

……………………………………….

I am myn owene woman, wel at ese

…………………………………….

Shal I not love, in case that me leste?

…………………………………….

Upon this knight, that is the worthiesete

And kepe alwey myn honour and my name,

By alle right, it may do me no shame. (II 701-63)

Criseyde carefully thinks through many aspects concerning Troilus and herself. She knows that Troilus is a noble and decent knight and Troilus's love for her only makes her worthy and honorable. For Criseyde, Troilus's love for her is not just destined. With Criseyde's deliberate considerations about the situation, Chaucer shows that he does try to give Criseyde the opportunity to make her own decision; though the decision Criseyde finally makes seems to be still under the patriarchal power.

Criseyde thinks that "I am my own woman" (II 750); still she fears that there will be judgment from society. "With Criseyde's respectable social station," Barry Windeatt suggests, "comes a keen concern for what society will think and say of her" (286). Windeatt also points out how Criseyde's being a widow has great influences on

Criseyde's decision about whether she should accept Troilus or not. According to him, "That widowhood for Boccaccio's Criseida was an opportunity for sensuality is for Criseyde a vulnerable state, and she is understandably more concerned with *sikerness* and with avoiding *jupartie*" (286). As a daughter of a traitor to Troy and a window in society, Criseyde is "shaped, limited, and changed by her circumstances" (278). Therefore, she has to think very carefully about what Pandarus asks her to do. Though Chaucer writes in a positive way to show how Criseyde tries to make a good use of the circumstance, the circumstance, if scrutinized more closely, is actually structured by the standards set by the patriarchal system. Here Criseyde almost becomes one of the models Christine de Pizan sets in her book, a model which should follow certain standards to be a "good woman".

After Criseyde ponders upon the social positions of Troilus and herself, she hears Pandarus persuade her steadily by saying that time flies so fast that she should take the chance of being a lady of a noble man.

> Thenk ek how elde wasteth every houre
> In ech of yow a partie of beautee;
> And therefore er that age the devour,
> Go love; for old, ther wol no wight of the.
> Lat this proverbe a loore unto yow be:
> To late ywar, wuod Beaute, whan it paste;
> And Elde daunteth daunger at the laste. (II 393-99)

Pandarus pressures Criseyde to make her promise to accept Troilus's love. Criseyde yields to the fact that the fading youth and beauty will lead her to a life with no person loving her. Besides that, there are other concerns involved in Criseyde's choice. C. David Benson in his article "The Opaque Text of Chaucer's Criseyde" points out that Criseyde's opaqueness makes the character an open text (17). Criseyde's opaqueness is due to the lack of the information about her. We know that Criseyde is a widow, but we do not know when her husband dies or how she becomes a widow. Also the question about how Criseyde manages to run the household: whether she has children or how she earns money to pay for the living expenses is never explained in the poem. As Benson points out, "Chaucer incites us to speculate about what his heroine is thinking and feeling while preventing us from certain knowledge." (17) It is Criseyde's opaqueness that makes Criseyde's being persuaded by Pandarus a reasonable choice. It is possible that Criseyde decides to accept Troilus's love because in this way Criseyde can find herself a social position and function. With a man in her household, Criseyde may have a more advantaged position in society.

Later Pandarus even asks Criseyde to accept Troilus by threatening her with his life. "For this forth shal I nevere eten bred/ Til I myn owen herte blood may see; / For certeyn I wol deye as soone as he" (II 443-45). Criseyde has to save her uncle (II 470-76). Pandarus also tells Criseyde that Troilus is dying for her love. Being the only cure to Troilus, Criseyde is supposed to give her "pitee." Windeatt gives detailed explanation for how Criseyde shows a lady's pity for her love: "[I]t is very much as a concession of pity and mercy that Pandarus persuades Criseyde to show her favor to Troilus. The point is not lost on Criseyde…To Criseyde Pandarus condemns a beauty that is without a quality of pity ('Wo worth that beaute that is routhless! (ii.346))" (238-39). Once again, Criseyde yields to his uncle's threats. On one hand, Criseyde shows herself as a virtuous woman with pity and mercy. On the other, Criseyde's decision to save both Pandarus's and Troilus's lives also suggests that Criseyde asserts the central power in the patriarchal system since Pandarus and Troilus are men. Most significantly, Criseyde does fit in the standard set by Pandarus—a noble woman should be in the possession of mercy and pity.

D. W. Robertson criticizes Criseyde as a selfish lover and implies that the reason why Criseyde accepts Troilus's love is that she might benefit from the love affair (22). In Robertson's opinion, in the course of her love affair with Troilus, Criseyde just "seeks the favor of fortune…[she] will always be true to herself; she will always seek to escape from the fear of misfortune, no matter what effects her actions may have on others" (22). Roberson may be harsh on Criseyde; however, it is also undeniable that Criseyde indeed struggles to make the best out of the circumstance. Even though the situation is destined, Chaucer already gives his heroine the same stand to think before she makes her own decision. Chaucer's intention is obvious of depicting Criseyde as a free and independent individual. In the meantime his ambiguous position on the "women question" lies in the further consequence of Criseyde's decision. Eventually, Criseyde decides to follow Pandarus's advice and fulfill Troilus's desire. In other words, Criseyde fulfills what the patriarchal system always wants from women: the submission to men.

If we say Chaucer shows his gendered responses to the issues about Fortune/patriarchy, how about Troilus? The way Troilus reacts to Fortune/patriarchy makes his response as well as Criseyde's gendered in Chaucer's writing. John Fleming in his *Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus* writes a lengthy chapter "Idols of the Price" to define Troilus's love for Criseyde as a kind of religious idolatry. Fleming uses A. J. Minnis's word to say that Chaucer is "a Christian historian"[10] who presents the love between Troilus and Criseyde in an ancient theological system (74). According to Fleming, "[t]he *idolatrous* nature of Troilus's love for Criseyde is presented not as neutral matter of historical fact, but as a morally engaged poetic theme" (75). The claim that Troilus's love is in an idolatrous way first comes from Robertson and has been argued by many other critics.[11] Minnis

[10] A. J. Mimmis, *Chaucer and Pagan Antiquity*.
[11] This idea is also mentioned in John Frankis' "Paganism and Pagan Love in *Troilus and Criseyde*".

points out that where Troilus sees Criseyde for the first time is at the feast of Palladium. It is a religious ceremony and it implies that Troilus sees Criseyde as a religious idol. Robertson also says that since Troilus "subject himself to Fortune," he is unable to "transcend" it (13). The saying about if Troilus's idolatrous love for Criseyde is either merely historical or moral would be another great issue debated. Let's here just focus on the interpretation of Troilus's love for Criseyde as "idolatrous." Troilus sees Criseyde as an idol, whether a religious or an amorous one. The point of view implies that for Troilus, Criseyde, a figure designed by Fortune/patriarchy, is a destined idol to admire and to pursue. Troilus, as a comparative model to Criseyde, feels very differently about the designation of Fortune/patriarchy. Troilus does not acknowledge Fortune/patriarchy as something he must confront or even subvert as Criseyde does. Such dissimilarity is gendered. The different reactions of Troilus and Criseyde to their love at the first sight indicate their dissimilar attitudes towards Fortune/patriarchy.

Chaucer in the narrative structure of *Troilus* makes it obvious for the reader that Criseyde will eventually betray Troilus and lose her good name. In the very beginning, Chaucer says that the story is about the process of how Troilus finds his happiness and later loses it: "The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen / That was the kyng of Priamus sone of Troy, / In lovynge, how his aventures fellen / fro wo to weke, and after out of joie" (I 1-4). Troilus's sorrow comes from Criseyde's betrayal: "For now wil I gon streght to my matere, / in which ye may the double sorwes here / of Troilus in lovynge of Criseyde, / And how that she forsook hym er she deyde." (I 53-56). Chaucer shows in the beginning of the poem that the tragical ending of Troilus and Criseyde is inevitable. In this intervening process before Criseyde's final decision to be Troilus' lady, Chaucer shows how a human being, even a woman, can act with free will within a relatively restricted social status. The process of her analyzing the situation shows that Criseyde does exercise her free will while she has a crucial choice to make. Criseyde shows that it is her choice to submit to the destined love. On one hand, Criseyde shows herself as an individual with freedom to choose, judge and act. On the other, through Criseyde Chaucer shows his hesitation about how great a woman's free will would be. Is it great enough to change women's position in society? Hence, the consequences following Criseyde's decision such as the one of accepting Troilus's love turn out to benefit the male characters, Pandarus as well as Troilus. Pandarus is able to keep his promise to Troilus and Troilus fulfills his covetous desire of Criseyde once Criseyde accepts him as her lover.

The second difference between Chaucer's Troilus and his original stories is the exchange scene:

> Priam, the kyng, ful soone in general
> Let her-upon his parlement to holde,
> Of which th'effect rehercen yow I shal:
> Th' embassadours ben answerd for fynal;
> Th'eschaunge of prisoners and al this nede
> Hem liketh wel, and forth in they procede.
> This Troilus was present in the place
> When axed was for Antenor and Criseyde,
> For which ful soone chaungen gan his face,
> As he that with the wordes wel neigh deyde. (IV 141-51)

Matthew Giancarlo points out that in both *Il Filostrato* and *Roman de Troie*, the exchange scene never happens and Antenor's betrayal is never mentioned in *Il Filostrato*. Also in *Historia destructionis Troiae*, Criseyde's leaving for the Greek camp has no direct relation to the exchange (241-44). Chaucer, in the particularly innovative scene, describes how the protagonists react when they face the dilemma concerning love and life. When Troilus is at the court, hearing about the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor, he remains silent, considering the consequence of his interference with this exchange.

> Love hym made al prest to don hire byde,
> And rather dyen than she sholde go;
> But Reasoun seyde hym, on that other side,
> "Withouten assent of hire ne do nat so,
> Lest for thi werk she wolde be thy fo,
> And seyn that thorugh thy medlyneg is iblowe
> Youre bother love, ther it was erst unknowe
> For which he gan deliberen, for the best. (IV 161-68)

Troilus does not want to give up Criseyde, and his silence only shows his special way of keeping his 'trouthe' to her. It is very important for Troilus to keep his love affair with Criseyde in the private world as well as in secrecy because secrecy serves to maintain Criseyde's good name in a "disapproving society" and prevents her from being regarded as a "loose" woman (Windeatt 242). As a result, the secrecy of their love affair becomes the key point in the fulfillment and failure of the love between Troilus and Criseyde. It plays a fatal role in the exchange because "what is not acknowledged to exist cannot be taken account of when Criseyde's exchange becomes an issue (Windeatt 243). Under such a difficult situation, Troilus still fulfills his "trouthe" of being Criseyde's servant. Troilus is just unwilling to do anything against his lady's will or honor (Giancarlo 251).

Therefore, Troilus has to say nothing in the exchange scene. The most Troilus is able to do under such a circumstance is to make sure that he can keep his *trouthe* to Criseyde because he has made the promises: "in trouthe alwey to don yow my servise" (III 133). At least, he keeps his free will of serving his lady. He just exercises his free will with very restrained emotion and affection. According to Windeatt, Troilus is actually powerful enough to intervene in the exchange; however, he chooses to do nothing about it but remains silent. Chaucer in the exchange scene carefully how Troilus "observes" the situation. By doing so, Chaucer presents Troilus inaction actually shows his "devotion" to the ideal and the service of courtly love. In this portrayal, Troilus refuses to lay hands on Criseyde's fate. Therefore, "despite all the fatalistic rhetoric which presents Troilus as helpless before external forces—Chaucer has carefully shown how Troilus has given up choice and freedom rather than never possessing it." (266)

The exchange scene may serve as the perfect example of the existence, designation and execution of Fortune/patriarchy in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*. The way Troilus reacts to the exchange is the way he deals with the matters concerning Fortune/patriarchy. Carolyn Dinshaw in her *Poetics* points out the importance of patriarchal control in this exchange scene. In Dinshaw's idea, the patriarchal order in this poem is everywhere and the most manifest plot is the exchange scene. Including the first proposed exchange of Helen, the double exchanges of women show how patriarchy operates in the aristocratic society (56-58). In order to protect Criseyde from further castigation for being an unfaithful woman since no one knows about the love affair between them, Troilus's consideration about Criseyde's social status shows that he is actually confronting the patriarchal system while he is witnessing the exchange plan. Troilus's position in the exchange scene and how his not reacting to it shows that there is a hierarchy even in the patriarchal system. Being a part of patriarchy, Troilus, is not clearly aware of the very existence of Fortune/patriarchy, and he institutionally behaves with the sense of hierarchy. Furthermore, "the illicitness of his secret love [for Criseyde] leaves Troilus no ground on which to resist the demands of the state" (Scanlon 219). Troilus may not acknowledge that he is also part of the patriarchal scheme, but he is certainly aware of the hierarchy. A king cannot violate the demand of a country and a prince cannot violate that of the king. For Troilus, he cannot balk at the decision made by the king. Therefore, he knows he can do something about the exchange but he chooses not to. In a word, he decides not to react to Fortune/patriarchy.

In fact, Troilus is in the trap of patriarchal hierarchy from the moment he first sees Criseyde. In Scanlon's words, Troilus is unable to give his love for Criseyde a noble stand because it is the patriarchal power which brings Criseyde at their first sight on each other. At every stage of their love, the patriarchal power takes its participation: "Through Pandarus's double role as Criseyde's fatherly protector and Troilus's procurer…On the one hand Criseyde is a God [and] on the other hand, she is a social subordinate, whose powerlessness he and Pandarus exploit (219-20). Although Troilus's love for Criseyde is idolatrous, it still cannot fight with "the position of social superiority." (Scanlon 220) Ironically, it is Fortune/patriarchy that brings Criseyde to Troilus, and it is the same designation that takes his love away from Troilus (Scanlon 220). Eventually Troilus is unable to break the hierarchy of the patriarchal system. Or he simply is not aware that he has the chance to do so? Perhaps one should say: Chaucer does not want to break down patriarchy.

When Troilus meets Criseyde after the exchange deal is made, Criseyde promises that she will come back to Troy for him. Troilus believes that once Criseyde sees her father, she will never come back; therefore, he offers to leave Troy with her:

> So rueth on myn aspre peynes smerte,
> And doth somwhat as that I sal yow seye,
> And lat us stele awey bitwixe us tweye;
> ………………………………………...
> And vulgarly to speken of substaunce

Of tresour, may we both with us lede
Inough to lyve in honour and plesaunce
Til into tyme that we shal ben dede;
And thus we may eschuen al this drede. (IV 1501-03, 1513-17)

At first glance, Troilus' suggestion about leaving Troy gives critics the right reason to accuse him of recklessness. In Catherine Sanok's words, "Troilus…obscures the significance of public, military for his personal affairs" (67). However, given more consideration to Troilus' obsession with being Criseyde's loyal knight, it is easy to understand that Troilus' decision to run away fully reflects his ideals about being a lady's knight. After Criseyde accepts him as her servant, Troilus practices the servitude of a courtly lover. His loyal service reflects on his suffering and endurance, implying the constraints on human freedom (Windeatt 229).

Troilus's constrained free will may be his strongest response to Fortune/patriarchy. He does not want to violate the patriarchal order and Chaucer, with a sense of compensation, gives Troilus an opportunity to present his desire and love for Criseyde. The proposal of running away with Criseyde implies Troilus's attempt to subvert the superior male power over him. In Scanlon's point of view, Troilus's proposal "reveals the extent to which that desire enacts itself precisely as a conflict of the Law of the Father, as an attempt to wrest control of a woman outside the normal channels of exchange" (221). In the end Troilus's attempt to subvert the patriarchal system is rejected by "the socially powerless and subordinate" Criseyde. Such a designation infers that while willing to praise human free will, Chaucer is unwilling to challenge the patriarchal system. As a man, Troilus's run-away plan is actually another way to possess Criseyde, and therefore it is not so different from the exchange plan. When Troilus reacts to Fortune/patriarchy, he is not aware that he ialso takes a part in system, practicing the same scheme.

After hearing Troilus's suggestion of leaving Troy, Criseyde immediately thinks about the consequence: "We may wel stele awey, as ye devyse, / And fynde swich unthrifty weyes newe, / But afterward ful soore it wol us rewe (IV 1529-31). Criseyde gives deliberate consideration to the idea of running away with Troilus and decides to dissuade Troilus from leaving Troy and abandoning his obligation of a Trojan warrior. Criseyde explains to Troilus why she has to refuse the runaway proposal:

> And if so be that pees here-after take,
> As alday happeth after anger game,
> Whi, Lord, the sorwe and wo ye wolden make,
> That ye ne dorste come ayeyn for shame!
> And er that you juparten so youre name,
> Beth naught to hastif in this hoote fare,
> For hastif man ne wanteth never care. (IV 1562-68)

Criseyde knows that running away is "unthrifty", foolish, but she also realizes that this foolish proposal may be the only way she can keep her promise with Troilus. Monica McAlpine explains Criseyde's choice: "she correctly interprets his public obligations" (215). Criseyde tries to protect Troilus' reputation and honor by walking towards her fate of being an unfaithful lover.

In Windeatt's words, Chaucer's designation of how Criseyde responds to the exchange and Troilus' suggestion about the runaway reveals another aspect of Chaucer's philosophy on Fortune and human free will:

> Chaucer devotes much space to her determination not to go along with Troilus' plan for escape. Instead she argues for an attempt to evade seeming necessity by stratagem and ingenuity; the tone is skeptical and represents the attempt of human will to overcome apparent necessity, to be lord over fortune (ib. 1587-9). In this way Chaucer—having earlier

> elaborated the characters' sense of fortune and fate—at the point of crisis and decision gives his Criseyde a confidence in the effectiveness of the human will (226-27).

In Chaucer's writing, Criseyde has to possess a "different inner will" to act and make a difficult decision to "get the better of circumstances" (Windeatt 227). While Breseida, according to Lee Patterson, has been written "in the terms of a virulent misogyny generated by injured male pride" (119), Criseyde, in Chaucer's writing, has the chance to present her free will and becomes the representative of showing the possibility of people's being lord over destiny. However, even though Criseyde is portrayed as totally free to exercise her will, the decision she makes is still under the shadow of Fortune/patriarchy. In a word, Chaucer tries to give women the equal stand with men by defining women as individuals while carefully limiting Criseyde's individuality so that it does not violate patriarchy.

While dissuading Troilus from leaving Troy, Criseyde in the meantime accepts her fate of being an unfaithful lady. Criseyde knows that she has a choice and she is also aware that there will be a consequence. It seems that in the face of Fortune/patriarchy, no matter what Criseyde decides (leaving Troy with Troilus or accepting the exchange plan), she cannot escape from the control of the patriarchal power. Criseyde either becomes an unfaithful woman in a male-dominated society or a victim who sacrifices in a men's war. In either way Criseyde is in the hand of the patriarchal power. On one hand, if Criseyde runs away with Troilus, she fulfills Troilus's desire for her. On the other, if she accepts the exchange plan, she helps to achieve the control of patriarchy over women. When it comes to the crucial point, Chaucer chooses to limit the heroine's free will and individuality so that she cannot break out from the constraints of Fortune/patriarchy. David Aers points out Criseyde's inferior position in the Trojan story and implies that Criseyde's choice is actually limited. Aers defines Criseyde as a victim because in Trojan society she takes the inferior position. The Trojan society as a whole denies Criseyde as a genuine individual through the exchange (83).[12] Or we should say, under the reign of Fortune/patriarchy, Criseyde's individuality is clouded and limited. Even though Criseyde is able to present her individuality and free will in Chaucer's Trojan story, the outcome of the exchange still shows Chaucer's concern and hesitation about whether women are allowed to be seen as individuals.

The endings of Troilus and Criseyde also present their gendered responses to Fortune/patriarchy. In the end, Criseyde decides to leave Troy and accepts Diomede's love. In Calkas' request for the exchange, the reason why Criseyde decides to leave Troy is presented:

> Thus al my good I lefte and to yow wente,
>
> Wenyng in this yow lordes to please.
>
> ……………………………………….
>
> Save of a doughter that I lefte, allas,
>
> Slepying at hom, when out of Troie I sterte
>
> O stern, O cruel father I was!
>
> ....
>
> My child with oon may han redempcioun (IV 87-88, 92-94, 108-09)

Calkas' pleading shows that the situation has been difficult for both Criseyde and him. From Calkas' deep sorrow, one can easily imagine that Criseyde also profoundly regrets the fact that she cannot be with her father. As a daughter, surely Criseyde feels the urge to be re-united with her father. Furthermore, to be a dear daughter and to put the family together by all means are also parts of Criseyde's social obligations as a woman. Criseyde tells Troilus that the reason why she decides to leave Troy is that to

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[12] See also David Aers's "Criseyde: Woman in Medieval Society." *ChauR* 13 (1979): 177-200.

get united with her family in the Greek camp: "Ye know eek how that al my kyn is here, / But if that onliche it my fader be, / And ek myn othere thynges alle yfreere" (IV 1331-33).

Besides, as long as Calkas stays in the Greek camp and Criseyde in Troy, the father and the daughter will be enemies to each other. Can we really say that Criseyde's behavior is out of her "fickleness" while it is deeply related to her pitiful and reminiscent feeling for her father? After all, what Criseyde does is what a daughter is supposed to do for her father. Criseyde thinks that the family should be "together" (yfeere) and so she has to be united with her father and other family members. In Criseyde's mind, she always knows that Troy is going to fall as Calkas has predicted. Therefore, all she can do is try her best to remind Troilus of his obligation to the nation and finds a way to survive the difficult situation. Criseyde thinks about all possibilities, including the choices Troilus has and tries to make the best of the situation.

In Criseyde's consideration about Troilus's reputation, her careful thought is well-presented. Criseyde does not merely accept the exchange plan. In Chaucer's writing, she makes her own choice. More importantly, in the process of making her decision, Chaucer gives Criseyde the chance to explain all her considerations and concerns like why she has to refuse Troilus's run-away plan and why she has to go the Greek camp. That makes Criseyde an individual with the capability to judge and act. According to Mark Lambert, Chaucer wants readers to see more complexity in human experiences so that they do not confine their judgment to the feeling of pity for Troilus (67). Criseyde's turning her love to Diomede has always been criticized as embodiment of fickleness,[13] while some critics, as Sealy Gilles summarizes, "seek to

[13] D.W. Robertson Jr., A Preface to Chaucer (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1962), pp. 498.

defend Chaucer as much as his heroine" (160).[14] Those critics argue that "that Criseyde's fear is "a natural response" to her positions, both in Troy and in the Greek Camp, and therefore, Chaucer's portrayal of her as fearful stands in opposition to "blatantly misogynistic inscriptions of the tale" (160). Some critics even take Criseyde's fickleness as "either a legitimate response to the threat of rape or as an inevitable collaboration with masculine systems of exchange" to defend for Criseyde's unfaithful choice (161). Although Criseyde is an individual, under the influence of the patriarchal system, she can only make her decision with limited choices.

Let's say Criseyde is really a fickle woman. First she accepts Troilus's love for her but decides to leave him when the situation becomes a dilemma. Later in the end she even turns to another man, Diomede, to move on with her life. Dinshaw in "Reading like a Man" suggests that Criseyde's fickleness means more than her being an unfaithful woman. "The 'slydynge' of Criseyde's 'corage,' as we shall see, turns out to work in conformity with masculine structures of control, to work as a function of her structural role as woman in Troy's patriarchal society" (57).[15] Dinshaw does not mean that Criseyde's identity fully lies in the control of patriarchal system. She means that Criseyde's subjectivity has to be considered with her function as a woman in a patriarchal society (57). Criseyde changes her mind and therefore she is regarded as a fickle woman because of her social position. Criseyde's fickleness is gendered since no description of Calkas's betraying Troy and running to the Greek camp indicates that Calkas is a fickle person. Criseyde makes a decision which benefits

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[14] Alastair Minnis and Eric. J. Johnson, "Chaucer's Criseyde and Feminine Fear" in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in late Medieval Britain. Essays for Felicity Riddy*, ed. Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Rosalynn Voaden, Arlyn Diamond, Ann Hutchison, Carol Meale and Lesley Johnson (Belgium: Brepoles, 2000), p.200.

[15] For an analysis of the poem that reads Criseyde in relation to the exigencies of Trojan society, see David, Aers, "Chaucer's Criseyde: Woman in Society, Woman in Love" Aers argues throughout his nook against readings that would de-psychologize Criseyde.

Fortune/patriarchy—for the exchange of Antenor and she is criticized as unfaithful. Calkas also follows the instruction of Fortune but avoids the blame of being a traitor. After all, Criseyde's decision to go back to Calkas is another example of how a woman fulfills a man's request, though in the meantime she breaks another man's. Here lies Chaucer's ambiguity of his position on the "women question". Chaucer wants his Criseyde to be an individual with free will, but that free will is limited. In Criseyde's case, her individuality cannot go so far that it can violate the supreme power of Fortune/patriarchy.

Criseyde's meeting with Diomede is another crucial and revealing moment during which Criseyde still cannot be free from the influence of Fortune/patriarchy.Criseyde meets Diomede at Calkas's tent and Diomede tells her that Troy will be destroyed and there is nothing Criseyde can do about it. Diomede presents himself to Criseyde, saying that he will love her more than all Trojans would do (V 883-924). After Diomede leaves, Criseyde thinks about what Diomede has told her and considers whether she should stay at the Greek camp and accept Diomede's love:

> Retornyng in hire soule ay up and down
> The wordes of this sodeyn Diomede,
> His grete estat, and perel of the town,
> And that she was alone and hadde nede
> Of frendes help; and thus bygan to brede
> The cause whi, the soothe for to telle,
> That she took fully purpos for to dwelle. (V 1022-29)

After considering her own situation in the Greek camp, about all her need and what kind of person Diomede is, Criseyde decides that she should stay in the Greek camp. She realizes that Troy is going to fall and no matter how badly she wants to defend

Troy, it will happen one day in the future. She understands that she needs to start a new life instead of voluntarily falling down with the city. In Minnis's point of view, this decision makes Criseyde's character as a practical and sensible one (82). Criseyde on one hand finds her available of choices, but on the other is confined in "circumstances," especially the circumstances with the patriarchal power getting involved.

Criseyde knows that her unfaithful ending is destined, and she thinks that accepting Diomede may be her best choice. As a matter of fact, Criseyde does not really have a choice. C. David Benson, concerning all Criseyde's situations throughout the poem, defines Criseyde as a person who lacks social identity and such gendered disadvantage limits her choices. When Calkas asks Criseyde to come back, Criseyde becomes a daughter instead of a noble lady or a lover. Later Criseyde renews her identity with her dependence on Diomede (20). In the end, whatever choices Criseyde makes, they are all in the hands of Fortune/patriarchy. Being a woman, all Criseyde's social statuses have to be defined by men. Criseyde has to be a widow, Troilus's lover, Calkas's daughter or Diomede's new prey rather than just a woman.

Knowing her disability to overthrow Fortune/patriarchy, Criseyde is prepared to face the consequence of her betraying Troy as well as Troilus:

> Allas, of me, unto the worldes ende,
> Shal neyther ben ywriten nor ysonge
> No good word, for this bokes wol me shende.
> ………………………………………………..
> And wommen moost wol haten me of alle.
> Allas, that swich a cas me sholde me falle. (V 1058-64)

It is likely that all the time Criseyde knows that her function and power in a patriarchal society is quite limited. Criseyde cannot escape the fate of being a disloyal woman because she cannot balk at the exchange plan. Neither can she save Troy which is going to be brought down in a men-controlled war. As a woman, there is nothing more for Criseyde to do. Lambert says that Criseyde's choice is only "human" (72). In C. David Benson's word, it is not just 'human', it is 'gendered'. The issue does not only concern the mankind, but the female sex. That is to say, in the end of *Troilus and Criseyde*, the individuality Chaucer grants Criseyde is conditional in terms of gender. Criseyde by all means is a representative of women with free will and individuality. Since her free will and individuality cannot violate Fortune/patriarchy, she can only exercise her freedom and ability to compromise with men on matters related to Fortune/patriarchy.

As for Troilus, his ending is a more melancholy one. After Criseyde leaves Troy, Troilus suffers from great sorrow. Troilus tells Pandarus that if Criseyde keeps staying in the Greek camp, he will die: "[T]he sorwe/ Which that I drye I may nat longe endure/ I trowe I shal nat liven tyl to-morwe" (V 295-97). He asks for God's help, hoping he can see Criseyde on his way home: "Now Lord me grace sende,/ That I may fynden at myn home-comynge/ Criseyde comen!" (V 502-04) He goes to Criseyde's house to reminisce every memory he has with Criseyde: "For whan he saugh hire dores spered alle, / Wel neigh for sorwe adoun he gan to falle." (V 531-32) Even when Troilus suffers from such great sorrow, he still believes that Criseyde will return to Troy eventually. Therefore, he is angry with Cassandra's interpretation of his dream since the interpretation becomes a cruel proof of Criseyde's infidelity which Troilus refuses to face (Ginancarlo 250):

> Thow seyst nat soth," quod he, "thow sorcresse,
> With al thy false goost of prophecye!
> Thow menest ben a gret devyneresse!
> Now sestow nat this fool of fantasie

Peyneth hire on ladys for to lye?

Away!" quod he. Ther Jove yeve the sorwe!

Thow shalt be false, peraunter, yet tomorwe! (V1519-26)

In Cassandra's explanation "Criseyde's behavior…is at once caused by and explicable in terms of the large movements of historical experiences, patterns…" (Patterson 130). It is historical and is a designed truth. It cannot be altered. All Troilus's belief is only self-deception.

In *Chaucerian Tragedy*, Robertson takes Mr. Curry's words to analyze Troilus state of mind: " [T]he man who does not exercise his free-will in the control of direction of his emotions, finds himself presently without free-choice upon him or when he comes in contact with the destinal force inherent in other people's influence" (236).[16] The "destinal force inherent in other people's influence" in Curry's word could mean the influence from Fortune/patriarchy. In his present position, Troilus believes that he cannot fight with Fortune/patriarchy; therefore, he keeps hoping that his destined love with Criseyde could carry on. Fleming finds a similarity between the protagonist in *The Romance of the Rose* and Troilus. Both of them do not believe in love at the very beginning, but get struck by the God of love. Both of them see the pursuit for their ladies as the ultimate goal in their lives (96). Some critics thus compare Troilus's insistent love for Criseyde to the blindness of Oedipus. Julia Ebel compares Troilus' blindness to Oedipus, thinks Troilus imitates Oedipus in similar historical situations, and accuses Troilus' of being passive in his reaction to fate.[17] The constant and idolatrous love may be similar; however, Chaucer does not try to make his *Troilus and Criseyde* a mere "melodramatic" story. Patterson points out that

[16] Curry, Walter Clyde. "Destiny in Troilus and Criseyde." Published by *Modern Language Association*, XLV, p. 161.

[17] This connection has been discussed in different terms by Julia Ebel, "Troilus and Oedipus: The Genealogy of an Image," *ES55* (1974): 15-21, and Chauncey Wood, Elements of Chaucer's Troilus, 153-63.

there is a significant disparity between Troilus' courtly love for Criseyde and Oedipus' blind love for his mother (135-36). Patterson concludes: "[I]n *Troilus and Criseyde* the self's compulsions are epitomized in Troilus' dream, its self-ignorance enacted in Cassandra's interpretation…to have the whole suppressed under the sign of Fortune" (136).

Troilus lets the whole situation be suppressed by Fortune/patriarchy. Even in this way, Chaucer does not try to depict Troilus as a merely tragical hero like Oedipus who blindly walks into his doomed end. Chaucer's omission of the suicide scene in *Il Filotrato* (Patterson 237) shows his intention to preserve Troilus' rationality and sense of free will. For Chaucer, even Troilus is incapable of breaking down the designation of Fortune and the hierarchy in the patriarchal system. Yet Chaucer finds a way to free Troilus from the control of Fortune/patriarchy. Troilus ends up in the eighth sphere and finally finds his happiness there:

> And whan that he was slayn in this manere,
> His lighte goost ful blisfully is went
> Up to the holughnesse of the eighth spere,
> In convers letyng everich element;
> And ther hs saugh with ful avysement
> The erratic sterres, herkenyng armonye
> With sownes ful of hevenyssh melodie. (V 1807-13)

Not until Troilus leaves the sphere with women involved can Troilus join the others in reading like a man (Dinshaw 67). Troilus has to get out the world controlled by Fortune/patriarchy to feel "blissful", happy. Up in the eighth sphere, he is able to see "ful avysment", unimpeded vision. Troilus in real life does not try to subvert Fortune/patriarchy and Chaucer gives him a chance to transcend it in the end of the poem. By doing so, Chaucer can preserve Troilus's free will and individuality. On the contrary, Criseyde does not have the same opportunity to transcend Fortune/patriarchy as Troilus does. In Chaucer's portrayal, Criseyde's individuality is not preserved but limited. Thus the ending of the poem, as Dinshaw puts it, is "a markedly gendered one" (64).

Fleming writes his book mainly on the 'ambiguity' in Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* such as the ambiguously sexual implications or the ambiguously moral suggestions.[18] Aside from what Fleming collects about the ambiguity in Chaucer's poem, Criseyde is another example of Chaucer's ambiguity. Throughout Chaucer's descriptions about how Criseyde thinks about her situation before she makes every decision, Chaucer's attempt to write a Criseyde with free will and individuality is clear. Alan T. Gaylord points out Chaucer's emphasis on the issue of "choice": "it is *choice* which is at the heart of Chaucer's lesson, as it is related to love, war, and destiny, and one's capacity to know…which determines the kind of choice one makes" (41). In the portrayal of Criseyde, Chaucer embodies the importance of "choice" in his female protagonist. Patterson even raises a series of questions to highlight Criseyde's individuality when she faces her destiny. Patterson mentions that can we really deny the fact that Criseyde is actually a "clear headed" woman who calmly faces all the situations until she can do nothing but deceiving herself. It is impossible to simply summarize Criseyde's paradox as mere destiny. Criseyde's candor is not meaningless though in the future course of action her candor only brings her unfaithful name (237).

Yet, all Criseyde's deliberate thoughts and actions all turn out to benefit men, the central power of Fortune/patriarchy. Chaucer's Criseyde is nothing like any models in Christine's *The Book of the City of the Ladies*. Criseyde is disloyal to Troilus. The

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[18] In John Fleming's Classical Imitation and Interpretation in Chaucer's Troilus, he talks about the sexual implication in the line "O thow lanterne of which queynt is the light" (V543) in his first full chapter and the morally ambiguous suggestions in the third full chapter.

love between Troilus and Criseyde is even legally undetermined. No one knows if Troilus and Criseyde are married or they simply tell no one (Fleming 117). The ambiguous martial status makes it hard to define Criseyde as a virtuous or an unfaithful woman. For Troilus and Troy, Criseyde is a traitor, but for Calkas as a father and Diomede as a lover, Criseyde is a dear daughter and a loving woman. Criseyde's joining her in the Greek camp makes the family united again and her acceptance of Diomede's love makes Diomede's desire fulfilled. Perhaps what Criseyde is categorized into is not that important. Scanlon introduces that no matter Criseyde is the lover of Troilus or Diomede, the possession of Criseyde shows Fortune's effect as an ideological power. In the end of the poem, Fortune represents itself as the recognition of the inevitability of patriarchal power (223). Therefore, Criseyde does have the possession of her free will and individuality. It is that the power of Fortune/patriarchy is greater than her individuality and therefore Criseyde cannot run away from the "inevitability of patriarchal power".

Since Criseyde is such a complicated character to show Chaucer's ambiguous position on the "women question," Chaucer determines to keep his Criseyde in a veil. The lack of information about Criseyde gives the female protagonist an opaque existence. Delany mentions that such alienation makes the evaluation of Criseyde difficult and gendered (36). No matter how difficult it would be, Criseyde still invites many critics and not each of them chooses an ambiguous way to write about a medieval woman. Decades after Chaucer writes his *Troilus and Criseyde*, Robert Henryson describes Criseyde as a leper suffering from betraying Troilus in *The Testament of Cresseid: A Sequel to Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde*:

"Thy crystal eyes mingled with blood I make,
Thy voice so clear--unpleasant, hoarse and hace
Thy lusty lyre o'erspread with spots black

And lumpis haw appearing on thy face.
Where thou com'st, each man shall flee the place.
Thus shalt thou go begging from house to house
With cup and clapper like a lazarus."
This dooly dream, this ugly visïon
Brought to an end, Cresseid from it awoke,
And all that court and convocatïon
Vanished away. Then rose she up and took
A polished glass, and her shadow could look,
And when she saw her face so deformate,
If she in heart was woe enough, God wate! (231-45)

Henryson does not bother himself with the question about whether Criseyde is a good woman or not. His position is quite clear. Since Criseyde betrays Troilus, she deserves a certain kind of punishment as her redemption.

Chaucer wants to give Criseyde the freedom, individuality and ability to judge and act, but he cannot fully get out of the ideological control of the patriarchal power. Hence, though Criseyde has the chance to show her individuality and free will, she has to exercise it under the reign of Fortune/patriarchy. While Troilus is under the same circumstance, Chaucer decides to let Troilus have full preservation of his free will by sending him to the eighth sphere. Dinshaw says that both Troilus and Criseyde become representatives of the poet: "They are the characters who understand constrained necessity; and they are the characters whom Chaucer, after all, had much in common" (72). In *Troilus and Criseyde*, even Chaucer is under the reign of Fortune/patriarchy (Dinshaw 72). Hence the poet writes his Trojan story in an in-between way. Chaucer grants Criseyde the possession of free will and individuality and meanwhile limits them in case Criseyde is able to overthrow Fortune/patriarchy.

By doing so, Chaucer actually “reflects the stress and contradictions of his time” (Delany 46).

Chapter Four

Conclusion

The fact that Chaucer is troubled by the "women question" prevalent in the Middle Ages intrigues me to scrutinize how Chaucer as a classical writer deals with the problem about whether women have the ability to judge and act. Or to put the question in a simpler way: if women can be seen as equal to men instead of considered as "less human" (Brown-Grant 13)? This thesis aims to reveal Chaucer's ambiguous attitude towards the "women question" by viewing the protagonists' gendered responses to Fortune/patriarchy in *Troilus and Criseyde*.

The difference between men and women has always been more than "nature" since Aristotle's dualism. Aristotle believes that men are active and women are passive and so the misconceptions about women have the philosophical ground. Aristotle's dualism reveals the very essence of the conception about the inequality in terms of gender: men are superior to women. With the assumption, women's position in society is limited to domestic affairs because women are considered to have no better judgment than men and therefore should be ruled by them (King and Rabil x-xi). Later in the republic of Rome, the term "father" carries further meaning than its biological one. A father in the family is claimed to have the property of the whole household, including human members. This suggests women's lose of subjectivity because women are only considered to be men's property. More importantly, the inferior position of women limits their sphere in the private and domestic world (King and Rabil xii-xiii). Asides from the classical misconception about women, the biblical explanation about women's evil nature also worsens women's social position. Since Eve has been said to be the very cause of "the fall of mankind" for being seduced by the evil serpent, women are judged to be guilty of their "original sin." (King and Rabil xvi)

With both philosophical and biblical discussions about women's inferiority and evil nature, it is no surprise that in the thirteenth century that Jean de Meun in his part of *The Romance of the Rose* writes a dream allegory in which he conveys misogynistic ideas through many strong characters like the Old Woman, Nature and Friend. Lee Paterson points out that Chaucer's Wife of Bath is based on the portrayal of the Old Woman in the *Rose* (316). Both the Wife of Bath and the Old Woman talk about whether women have sound judgment and if women's nature is all greedy and inconstant. From the similarity between the Wife of Bath and the Old Woman, Chaucer's inheritance from the *Rose* can be clearly acknowledged.

The Romance of the Rose is in fact composed by two authors, Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun. Both authors take "love" as the central theme in their stories, deriving from Ovid's *Art of Love*. The difference of the two parts lies in the way they deal with the issue of live. While Guillaume follows the tradition of courtly love, Jean talks about love by involving Boethius's philosophy. The issue about love and Jean's applying Boethius to explain the love for Fortune indicates another connection between Jean and Chaucer. In Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer also applies Boethius's *Consolation of Philosophy* to explain that even though God foresees all, there is still the existence of human free will. In Chaucer's depiction of this love story, both Troilus and Criseyde show their free will and individuality while facing Fortune/patriarchy; yet the different manners in which they react to Fortune/patriarchy reveal Chaucer's ambiguous position on the "women question".

Christine de Pizan, as a contemporary with Chaucer, is also greatly influenced by the misconceptions of women in the *Rose*. With the sense of being a writer as well as a moral instructor, Christine starts a debate with the defenders of the *Rose*. Later in 1405, Christine writes one of her famous books, *The Book of the City of Ladies* to solve her own confusion and set a model for women to follow. In *The Book of the City* *of Ladies*, Christine emphasizes that it is “virtue and morality” that makes one superior to the other, rather than the sexual difference (23). Christine writes many secular as well as religious models from the past and the present to point out that women can also have good judgment and be faithful. By offering the examples, Christine is able to solve the confusion from the misogynistic concepts in both classical and biblical writings.

Chaucer, also troubled by the consequence to men if the rights of women as individuals are allowed (Pearsall 138), shows his special concern about the “women question” in his works. In *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer talks about the philosophical conception of Fortune in terms of society and compares Fortune to the patriarchal system. Chaucer portrays the different manners of how Troilus and Criseyde react to Fortune/patriarchy. On the one hand, Troilus does not feel the strong urge to respond to Fortune/patriarchy. Instead of confronting Fortune/patriarchy face to face, Troilus mostly chooses to accept the Fortune’s designation with his constrained but unyielding will. Troilus’s love for Criseyde is criticized to be “idolatrous” (Fleming 75) and therefore Troilus never thinks about the possibility to escape from the destined love. When he witnesses the exchange event, he also decides not to make any moves (IV 161-8). For Troilus, the idea of fighting with Fortune/patriarchy never occurs to him as another option. On the contrary, Criseyde feels very different about Fortune as patriarchy.

In Chaucer’s description, Criseyde has the opportunity to make her own choices. The process of Criseyde’s thinking and making decisions suggests that Criseyde is indeed an individual with the ability to judge and act like men are. Although Criseyde is described as an individual in Chaucer’s writing, it is not all true that Chaucer feels comfortable about women’s being equal to men in terms of ‘individuality”. From all the choices Criseyde makes, one can see that Criseyde’s decisions eventually benefit the patriarchal system. Criseyde accepts Troilus's love for the sake of her uncle (II 443-445). She turns down Troilus's escape plan to protect his obligation and reputation (IV 1562-68). She accepts the exchange to fulfill what the male-dominated society needs. Eventually, Criseyde accepts her fate of being an unfaithful woman to be united with her father and to complete a family union (IV 1331-33). It is from the different reactions of Troilus and Criseyde in terms of gender that Chaucer's hesitation about the "women question" is presented.

For Chaucer, to deny women as individuals is stupid, but he is also unable to get rid of the doubts about what would happen to men if women are considered individuals. Criseyde, as a representative of Chaucer's position on the "women question", shows the poet's hesitation to fully grant women's equality to men. Chaucer writes a female character with careful thoughts and freedom to make her own choices but in the meantime he also makes Fortune/patriarchy strong and unaffected. Eventually, even Chaucer is constrained by the power of the patriarchal system (Delany 72).

Doing this project offers me an opportunity to carefully review my life experience and relate it to Chaucer's works. As people read Chaucer in so many different ways, we can also see the same social event from many dissimilar perspectives. When Jean de Meun writes the *Rose* with the tradition of misogyny in his mind, it is also due to certain Chinese traditions that those elders in my family deal with the gender issues in such a way. For Christine de Pizan, women can be considered individuals as long as they are moral and virtuous. For Chaucer, an individual has the freedom and ability to choose and act. For me, being an individual may have to combine both Christine and Chaucer: when one is free to choose and act according to his/her own free will, the choices he/she makes have to be moral and virtuous. After all, it is the basic concern of being human.

There remains plenty of work to do after the thesis. I try to explore the “women question” through three important literary works in the Middle Ages in the thesis, but the “women question” by all means needs further discussion. Since the issues involved in the “women question” are numerous but this thesis is limited to time and space to cover all of them. By deeply analyzing the “women question” in *The Romance of the Rose*, *The Book of the City of Ladies*, and *Troilus and Criseyde*, I hope I have offered another perspective to scrutinize the relationship between men and women in the Middle Ages and at present.

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