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Cover Letter

The process of synthesizing my three essays into one was not as easy as I had imagined it may be. I started by re-reading each essay, and recognizing the common themes throughout. Overall, each of my essays addressed the marginalization of women in Chaucer's texts, but it was harder to find more specific threads to tie together between each. I ended up using a white board to write out the main points of each essay and drawing the connections between these. I went in and removed the parts of the essay that felt ultimately irrelevant to my overall concept, and then played around with the order of the three essays within this larger essay. I ultimately decided to put them in order of their creation, because I felt like it helped show the flow and focus change over Chaucer's lifetime. Creating connections and transitions between each also took considerable work, and I used subheadings to help organize my thoughts more clearly before writing the newer pieces to connect all the content.

The Myth of Women's Subjectivity in Geoffrey Chaucer's Canon

Across Chaucer's canon, various societal questions are explored through tales of fairies, robbers, chickens, lovers, and flowers. One such theme that appears and reappears is the navigation of women's roles in society – obviously integral but often belittled and commodified. One question that repeats itself frequently importantly illuminates part of what so rigidly defines the 14th century gender binary: What constitutes a good woman? *The Man of Law's Tale*, *Troilus and Criseyde*, and *the Legend of Good Women* help illuminate the implications of society's standards of feminine goodness on women. Specifically, *Troilus and Criseyde* creates standards for women to be submissive and sexualized in their own intimate relationships, while ultimately presenting women as betrayers. In response to this, *the Legend of Good Women* aims to redeem women's trustworthiness, but its prologue sets a sexualizing tone that presents women as powerless and defines their quality in relation to men. Lastly, in *the Man of Law's Tale*, the goodness of women hinges on their submission to both God and men, revealing misogynistic roots that lie under Christianity and inform its most central stories. The nuanced treatment of women across Chaucer's canon reveals the lack of acknowledgement of women's complexity in 14th century society, which coincided with their objectification and expectations to cater to men's wishes at the expense of their own freedom.

The Body Defining Feminine Goodness

At the start of *Troilus and Criseyde*, we encounter Criseyde abandoned and vulnerable, fearing persecution after her father's desertion of Troy. But, instead of learning about her fear, her sadness, or her anxieties, we learn about her radiant looks. She's the most "fair" creature in all of Troy, and "so aungelik was her natif beaute, / That lik a thing inmortal semed she, / As

doth an hevenyssh perfit creature / That down were sent in scornynge of nature”¹ (I, 99-105). She’s an angelic, everlasting thing, so beautiful she seems to contradict nature itself; while this hyperbolic praise seems to elevate her status, it also serves to remove her from reality and contradict recognition of her actual, complicated, human situation and feelings. Hector attempts to assure Criseyde her problems are taken care of, saying, “youre body shal men save” (I, 122). He continues the trend of ignoring Criseyde’s inner turmoil, focusing on her body’s safety. Simultaneously, it insinuates the classic gender roles which inherently push the narrative: the strength of men and the innocent vulnerability of women. Our introduction to Criseyde asserts her body’s status as near-divine, and implies the importance of keeping it this way, at least outwardly, through the chivalric feats of men.

As Troilus first catches sight of Criseyde, her physical description reveals what he considers most important about her: femininity: “all hire lymes so wel answeyng / Weren to wommanhod, that creature / Was nevere lasse mannyssh in semyng”² (I, 282-84). Where her first description suggested a lofty divinity within her being, here, we’re harshly brought back to the earthly realm. Chaucer deconstructs Criseyde, specifically calling attention to her “lymes,” which can mean limbs or organs, sometimes exclusively referring to animals’ body parts (*OED*, s.v. limbs). In a single word, Chaucer diminishes Criseyde to a collection of organs and parts, perhaps not even human ones. The overarching praiseworthy quality of all of her parts is their identification with womanhood. Troilus lauds not her individual beauty, but the beauty of the female form, something which exists entirely outside of her being that she just so happens to fit the criteria for. And this very criteria is inherently based only on a *lack* of something: manly qualities like strength and combativeness (*OED*). Furthermore, the word “mannish” can often be

¹ So angelic was her natural beauty that she seemed like an immortal thing, as does a heavenly, perfect creature sent down in contempt of nature.

² All her body parts were so well answering to womanhood, that there was no creature less mannish in appearance.

taken to invoke the characteristics of the human race as a whole (*OED*). Thus, in contradicting this, Criseyde is once again separated from her humanity and pushed into an indescribable second category, which hinges on her physical form.

Demeaning Sexualization of Women in Intimate Relationships

As Troilus gets closer to Criseyde, the focus on her body begins to hint at her sexual exploitation. As the two lay in bed together for this first time, Troilus revels in her beauty: “Hire armes smale, hire streghte bak and softe, / Hire sydes longe, fleshly, smothe, and white / He gan to stroke, and good thrift bad ful ofte. / Hire snowissh throte, hire brestes rounde and lite”³ (III, 1247-50). Walking through each of these pieces has the effect of cataloging Criseyde. Even in their first intimate moment, to Troilus, Criseyde is a mere amalgamation of constituent parts, rather than a cohesive or complex whole. What’s more, the adjectives used to describe Criseyde could just as easily describe something inanimate, like a soft, white cotton ball or a smooth, long ceramic vase. Only one adjective sets Criseyde apart from lifeless materials: “fleshly.” This single indication of liveliness falls severely short of giving her any agency, individuality, or subjectivity. Often pertaining to sexual desires in Middle English contexts, this adjective insinuates her sexual consumability (*OED*, s.v. fleshly). The connotation here is of a carnal, barbaric, and hedonistic desire, and presenting Criseyde as mere flesh makes physically taking advantage of her possible, plausible, and even passable.

This sexual availability that Troilus has now discovered within Criseyde opens up a whole new depth of meaning for him: “Thus in this hevene he gan hym to delite, / And therewithal a thousand tyme hire kiste, / That what to don, for joie ennethe he wiste”⁴ (III,

³ Her arms slender, her back straight and soft, her sides long, fleshly, smooth, and white, he began to stroke and very often wished blessing upon her snow white throat, her round, light breasts.

⁴ Thus he began to delight in this heaven, and with that he kissed her a thousand times, he scarcely knew what to do with this joy on earth.

1251-53). Criseyde's body again indicates a heavenly plane, but this time only inasmuch as that it made one available to Troilus, thus implying her body's usability for the sexual and emotional exaltation of men, with no apparent benefit for the woman herself. It's her bodily existence that Troilus is once again so appreciative of, only showering her with kisses and affection as a result of the overwhelming pleasure elicited by her physical form. This, one of the most intimate moments in the couple's story, hinges on the desirability of Criseyde's body, and centers around the pleasure Troilus receives from it. Criseyde's actual psyche becomes a side-character and afterthought in the romance between Troilus and her physical form.

However, Criseyde's status as merely a sexual object becomes more complicated as the simultaneous expectation of her to be a life-sustaining force is hinted at. Having lost his means into sexual enlightenment, Troilus becomes distraught after Criseyde leaves, lying in bed and wondering, "Wher is myn owene lady, lief and deere? / Wher is hire white brest? Wher is it, where? / Wher ben hire armes and hire eyen cleere"⁵ (V, 218-21). It again becomes clear that what Troilus holds most dear about Criseyde is her body. Particularly, he emphasizes the loss of her breasts, asking a second time of them, "where is it, where?" With breasts being inherently related to sexuality, Troilus' extra concern over their absence further asserts his view of her as a sexual object. What's more, her breasts are tied to her ability to nourish and sustain him, as a mother would a baby, a responsibility forced upon her because of Troilus' infatuation. This notion coincides with Lambert's observation that "characters, especially the hero, retreat to bed remarkably often; bed as a place of Eros is, in [*Troilus and Criseyde*], ambiguously related to bed as the place of infantile refuge" (81). Here, the bed he once shared with Criseyde becomes the site of his lamentation of the loss of their passionate sexual connection (Eros) and his sanctuary

⁵ Where is my own lady, beloved and dear? Where is her white breast? Where is it? Where are her arms and her clear eyes?

created by Criseyde's love for him. This connection between sexual intimacy and live-sustaining nourishment is a strong undercurrent in Criseyde's objectification; as a she becomes removed from her personality and individuality in men's eyes, she is left with the overpowering expectations of being both a mother figure and sexual object. These two seemingly contradictory roles are forced upon women, pushing them into the impossible position of embodying two opposite facsimiles, which then become the primary standards by which to measure their value.

The Imminent Disintegration of Feminine Goodness

Troilus' denial of Criseyde's complexity, born of his consistent treatment of her as a physically angelic object of his desire, undermines her ability to make real choices, feel complex feelings, and go against the wishes of the men. However, this constant exaltation of Criseyde's body is abandoned the moment she shows any physical signs of weakness or imperfection, revealing the double-sided nature of her identification with heavenly beauty. Distraught over learning she's being traded for Antenor, she shows signs of this distress: "Aboute hire eyen two a purple ryng / Bytrent, in sothfast tokenyng of her peyne, / That to biholde it was a dedly thyng"⁶ (IV, 869-871). True pain, so openly and constantly displayed by Troilus, becomes a "deadly thing" once shown on Criseyde's face. Her very human response to stress is so repulsive it makes her dangerous; no longer fulfilling the desires of the male gaze, Criseyde becomes an enemy to all male beholders. Thus, Chaucer reveals that it's the very denial of Criseyde's complicated humanity which allows her to be praised by men and take part in society.

This physical imperfection soon parlays into a moral one, as Criseyde breaks her commitment to Troilus and instead engages in a relationship with Diomedes. This leads to Troilus' deep distress and hatred of Criseyde for her betrayal. While the novel contains a considerable amount of Criseyde's subjectivity and inner thoughts, much of these go unnoticed

⁶ About her two eyes a purple ring encircles, in a true sign of her pain, that to behold it was a deadly thing.

and unconsidered by the men in her life, regardless of the space they're given by the narrator. Thus, the men around her can easily demonize her when her actions harm them, since they mainly base Criseyde's value in her body's ability to serve them. The very arrangement which separated her from Troilus demeans her to a piece in games among men, yet, when it comes time to judge her, the complicated politics and coercion of the situation she was forced into are ignored, with her ultimate morality being rooted in her servitude to Troilus, which started only thanks to her uncle's manipulative efforts.

A Misguided Attempt to Redeem Women

To counteract his misleadingly callous female lover in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Chaucer is tasked with writing of honorable women in *the Legend of Good Women*. In this dream vision, the narrator (who represents a fictional portrayal of Chaucer himself), encounters the god of Love. He's enraged by the narrator's previous literary excursions, which present love and women poorly. Thus, the god of Love's companion, Alceste convinces him to give Chaucer another chance. As penance, he's prescribed the task of writing stories of loyal women who were ruthlessly betrayed by their lovers. Alceste, a betrayed woman herself, tells the narrator he must, "the most party of thy tyme spende / In making of a glorious legende / of gode women... / that weren trewe in lovinge al hir lyves, / And telle of false men that hem bitrayen"⁷ (482-86). Thus, the task which is intended to correct the narrator's unfavorable depiction of women paradoxically centers around men. This split focus implicitly defines women in relation to men, making their 'goodness' a result of men's actions. Thus, female 'goodness' is not rooted within women's own choices and beings, effectively undermining female agency.

⁷ Spend the greater portion of your time in the composition of a glorious legend of good women... that were true in loving all their lives, and tell of false men that betrayed them.

Furthering this, Elaine Tuttle Hansen finds a similar problem within the poem's focus on men, claiming that the narrator's "treatment of his traditional heroes, his consistent debunking of men, and his increasingly harsh attacks on 'false lovers,'" serves as "a mask and a symptom of the narrator's overriding interest in his own sex" (353). Thus, the poem addresses not women but "two kinds of men: legendary heroes who become involved with women, and male authors who traffic in stories about women" (355). Essentially, *The Legend of Good Women* only symbolically claims to discuss women, while more meaningfully exploring the male psyche.

Feminine Vulnerability and Chastity

Returning to the beginning of the prologue, in his waking life, the narrator of *The Legend of Good Women* spends his time and energy in reverence of a daisy, rather than cultivating a real romantic relationship like those he writes about. In the only section of the poem that definitely resides within the material world, the narrator's emphatic, and perhaps obsessive, admiration of the daisy metaphorically reveals his attitudes towards beautiful women. Chaucer personifies the daisy as a woman, referring to her with female pronouns and giving her human-like actions and emotions (63, 64, 94). Further, he employs apostrophe and explicitly identifies the daisy as a woman, saying to it, "Be ye me guide and lady sovereyne"⁸ (94). This functions to establish the narrator's alleged submission to the flower, derived from his extreme love for her. As the narrator falls into a dream, he's confronted by the god of Love and a beautiful queen donned in green with a white crown, which "made hir lyk a daysie for to sene,"⁹ who ends up being Alceste (224). His subconscious converts the feminized daisy of his waking life into an actual woman in his dreamstate, thus physically realizing the symbolically established connection between women and daisies.

⁸ Be my guide and sovereign lady.

⁹ Made her appear just like a daisy.

Through his praise of the daisy, Chaucer comments on women's sexuality, rooting female value in sexual purity and exposing their vulnerability. There are two main things which seem to set the daisy apart from other flowers, namely its whiteness and "how it wol go to reste" each night (62). This whiteness symbolizes purity, establishing the value and desirability of a woman's chastity. The daisy's routine of curling up each night, "for fere of night, so hateth she derknesse," protects the whiteness of the flower's petals from whatever may lurk within the darkness to dirty them (63). The narrator seems to be addressing women's susceptibility to sexual violence that endangers their chastity and cleanliness, once again calling out the daisy's fear of the night's darkness: "For derknesse of the night, the which she dredde"¹⁰ (199). Furthermore, once the daisy becomes Alcestis in the narrator's dream, her white crown becomes her signifying feature, mentioned seven times after her introduction (217, 220, 223, 242, 299, 303, 532). The congregation of women cites this white crown as the proof of Alcestis' honor when they identify her as the symbol of good womanhood; they sing, "To trouthe of womanhede, and to this flour / That bereth our alder prys in figuringe! / Her whyte coroun bereth the witnessinge!" (296-98). Thus, as the daisy, Alcestis' power, importance, and identity become rooted in her purity; through her depiction as a leader and idyllic woman, this then becomes a cornerstone of the standard for goodness in women.

Sexualization, Violence, and Objectification Veiled Through Reverence

However, the very purity and sexual innocence which the narrator admires about the daisy also excites him, and his extreme devotion often becomes sexually charged. He claims that, "ther loved no wight hotter in his lyve"¹¹ (59). Here, 'hotter' signifies intensity of feeling and passion. However, in both Modern and Middle English contexts, the word also indicates

¹⁰ Because of darkness of the night, which she fears.

¹¹ No person loved more passionately in his life.

something “full of or characterized by sexual desire,” thus implying that the daisy sexually arouses the narrator (*OED*, s.v. hot). Later, he connects his desire to the daisy’s purity, claiming that, “To seen this flour so yong, so fressh of hewe, / Constreyned me with so gledy desyre”¹² (104-05). Here, he attributes his passionate desire to the daisy’s youthful innocence and ‘fresh,’ or unharmed, status. The narrator’s treatment of the daisy depicts a nuanced perception of women which simultaneously celebrates their chastity while viewing them as sexually pleasing objects of desire.

The narrator’s implied sexual desires are then symbolically realized, when, before he goes to sleep, he “bad hem strawen floures on [his] bed”¹³ (207). Having established the connection between women and flowers, this represents the narrator choosing to have, and then simply receiving, a multitude of women in his bed, which he then lays upon, or sexually violates. Notably, these are not daisies; while he cannot choose to have dominion over the respectable daisy, he has laid claim to numerous other generic flowers, thus suggesting the greater vulnerability of lower class women, as well as the permissibility of taking advantage of them. While deep respect and reverence may be shown to one woman, deemed virtuous through purity, other women, presumably those born into less powerful or desirable positions, are left vulnerable to an almost assumed and natural violation.

Despite the fact that Chaucer’s narrator claims to submit his will to the honorable daisy, a mere recognition of the daisy’s actual physical status reveals that these are nothing but empty promises. As we’ve noted already, the narrator recognizes the daisy as his sovereign guide, and puts himself in a submissive position, kneeling before her: “And down on knees anonright I me sette”¹⁴ (115). However, this reverence is merely an extension of the narrator’s romanticized

¹² To see this flower so young, so brightly colored, filled me with a burning desire.

¹³ Instructed them to strew flowers on [his] bed.

¹⁴ And down on my knees I immediately sat.

ideal of the flower. The reality of the situation is easily overlooked as the narrator gets carried away with his desire; even in this inflated, revered state, the daisy remains a fragile, inanimate object with no ability to travel, think, or choose. Identifying the daisy as the “eye of day” implies its sight, but this is notably an observant sense, one which fails to garner an ability for action. At the end of the day, the narrator is exponentially more physically capable than the daisy. If he so chose, he could simply pluck the daisy up from the ground, taking her as his own, but depriving her of her life source. This power difference is entirely unaddressed in the prologue, but it echoes throughout a majority of each of the legends. In many cases, once one of the poem’s heroines is ‘picked’ by a man, she is then doomed; she loses her power, status, and eventually her life, becoming a martyr for Love’s sake, losing everything as a result of her involvement with men.

Black and White Standards for Women in Christianity

Despite the fact that *Legend of Good Women* only tells stories of pre-Christian women, it’s written in the style of a legend or hagiography, which typically tells stories of saints’ lives. Particularly describing many of these women as ‘martyrs’ also inserts them into a Christian narrative; Chaucer projects pre-Christian women into Christian settings, and thus implicitly forcing Christian standards on them. Thus, Chaucer begins to explore the Christian ideal of self-sacrificing women who cater to the men around them, a trend which he furthers in the *Man of Law’s Tale* by presenting Custance as a version of Mary.

As one of the most well-known biblical women, Mary is a blueprint for Christian femininity, setting standards for the use of women as instruments in larger schemes. As the story goes, the angel Gabriel approaches Mary and says, “You will become pregnant, give birth to a son, and name him Jesus... The Holy Spirit will come to you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” (Luke 1:30-35). Through no choice of her own, Mary was forced to carry

God's son; God has taken possession of her body, treating her as a mere vessel and "overshadowing" her own will and selfhood. Ultimately, Mary is revered for this service, and becomes particularly notable for her exceptional chastity, which is so formidable she's known better by the title "Virgin Mary." The standards which Mary sets for Christian women are paradoxical: implying their need to be usable by society and men, as well as the necessity for them to remain pure.

Importantly informing this prototype for Christian women is Eve's transgression against God's will in the Garden of Eden, which led to the deliberate direction of Christian women to submit to men. Because of Eve's wrong-doing, her "desire will be for [her] husband, / and he will rule over [her]" (Gen. 3:16). Through this proclamation, God granted men governance over their wives, and simultaneously deprived Eve of the ability to determine her own desires. In the *Man of Law's Tale*, Custance notes that, as a woman and therefore descendant of Eve, this is her reality too, saying "Wommen are born to thraldom and penance, / And to ben under mannes governance"¹⁵ (286-287). This notion is presented as an inherent truth, and underscores all of Custance's actions and, or her lack thereof, as she continuously proves to be passive to the preferences of men, even conflating their desires to God's will. Even Mary is not exempt from the effects of Eve's misstep, which Custance notes in an emotional prayer to her: "'Moder,' quod she, 'and mayde bright, Mary, / Sooth is that thurgh wommannes eggement / Mankind was lorn and damned ay to dye'"¹⁶ (842-43). Custance lauds Mary for living through the suffering caused by Eve, particularly the crucifixion of her son for the salvation of man (844-47). Thus, Mary and Custance become connected in the *Man of Law's Tale*, both representing a New Testament form

¹⁵ Women are born into servitude and suffering, and to be under men's governance.

¹⁶ "Mother," she said, "and radiant virgin Mary, it is true that through woman's action mankind was abandoned and damned to die."

of femininity which accepts and allows all declarations that come, from God or from man, with grace and indifference.

Furthering her connection to Mary, Custance's innocence becomes her calling card. After being framed for Hermengild's murder, Custance is sent before King Alla for judgement: "For as the lomb toward his deeth is broght, / So stant this innocent before the king"¹⁷ (617-18). We see Custance's innocence take precedence over other characteristics, as 'innocent' is used as a noun to address Custance as a whole, rather than an adjective to describe a part of her. In the Bible, lambs are a symbol for sacrifice: objects slain to appeal to God. But these lambs are praised for their humility, with Jesus being revered as the "Lamb of God" (even by Custance), and lauded for his sacrifice that redeemed the human race. Custance, too, is rewarded for her lack of ego and knowledge, in this instance by being proclaimed not guilty by an ethereal voice (674-75). And once again, Custance's innocence is invoked as the King's court laments their accusation of "this sely innocent Custance,"¹⁸ and they then convert to Christianity, further proving Custance to be a vector for Godly plans, like Mary (683-86).

This is the ideal situation for a woman in the eyes of Christianity: to be controlled and therefore favored by God. In fact, we never see Custance get out of a situation without God's help. Even when Custance vigorously fights off a rapist, her achievement is belittled, as Custance is called a "wayke woman" [weak woman], and "it nas but Goddes grace"¹⁹ that Custance prevailed, since "sente he might and vigour to Custance"²⁰ (932, 938, 945).

Decisive and Nonconforming Women as Evil Women

¹⁷ For as the lamb is sent toward his death, so stands this innocent [woman] before the king.

¹⁸ this holy, innocent Custance

¹⁹ it was only by the grace of God

²⁰ he sent might and vigor to Custance

In direct opposition both of Custance's Mother-in-Laws, the Sultaness and Donegild, are the epitome of evil, represented through their lack of pious Christianity and submission. Where Custance often finds herself at the mercy of God's will or even the randomness of the tides, both of these women decide to take matters into their own hands. Directly opposed to the intrusion of Christianity on her circles, the Sultaness murders all those who convert, including her son, and sends Custance away on a rudderless boat. Similarly displeased with Custance's arrival, Donegild forges letters which end her relationship with King Alla, her son, and also sends Custance away by boat. With these being the only decisive and active women in the poem, the depiction of female agency is skewed, implying that it's necessarily a bad thing, that if women act, it will always be manipulative, violent, and harmful.

The Man of Law further complicates his dichotomy between evil and good women, asserting that the Sultaness is a "feyned womman," and Donegild is "mannish" (363, 782). Tying this all together, Jill Man connects these 'masculine' traits to a lack of passivity: "The Sultaness and Donegild are 'masculine' in their choice of action over suffering... they assert themselves in active opposition to whatever they do not like" (545). Innocent resignation, then, becomes a necessary condition for femininity, with female action implying condemnable evils.

Reaffirming women's status as both inferior and manipulative, the Man of Law refers back to Genesis again, calling the Sultaness a "virago" (359). As Susan Shibanoff explains, "the term '*virago*' initially indicated Eve's derivational and inferior status" as decreed by God in many biblical translations (574; Gen. 2:23). The word also invokes "woman's perverse desire to take over male roles" and "pejoratively...denote[s] a 'mannish' woman...a bold, impudent, or wicked woman" (574-75). The Man of Law criticizes the Sultaness (and perhaps Eve too) for her wicked grab for power, condemns her for any boldness she may exhibit, and accuses her of

perversely pursuing masculinity. Similarly, without femininity, the Sultanness lacks the innocence that makes Custance and Mary so favorable; in fact, she breeds the very destruction of all innocence and virtue (363-64). Now, even the female ability to create new life becomes corrupted, producing only destruction (reflected, too, in Eve's murderous son, Cain).

The Outcomes of Chaucer's Women

The three women's concluding situations delineate the Man of Law's final judgments of them. Both Donegild and the Sultanness are murdered for their treachery with no chance for redemption or space for consideration. They were doomed to an unrighteous death from the moment they took action. Meanwhile, Custance finds herself back home with her father, still a "holy creature," down on her knees, demonstrating her submission to a man (1149; 1153). Custance has returned to where she started, with no explicit lasting emotional effects of her treacherous journeys; presumably, she remains the innocent woman she has been all along, having never directly faced her challenges, always being protected by God. The Man of Law's one-note women are all deprived of the chance to grow and change, further reducing them to a predetermined prototype of a person and predestining them for a fate they have no say in.

Conclusion

The women Chaucer writes are all victims of a constricting gender binary of the Christian-driven, 14th century society Chaucer lived in. While Chaucer or his narrators may acknowledge or hint at these women's complexity on occasion, it typically goes unnoticed by the individuals they interact with, leaving them as one-note characters in their own worlds. In keeping with Christian values that necessitate men in positions of power, women are expected to submit to the will of others, only achieving 'goodness' through giving to others at the expense of themselves. As we've slowly deconstructed these expectations of women, they still lurk behind

typical stereotypes which expect women to be home-makers and care-takers, constantly catering to the needs of those around them. Centuries after his death, Chaucer still remains relevant through his discussion of complicated subjects such as this. While it may be nearly impossible to tease out his true feelings through layers of fictional tactics, it's no doubt that Chaucer recognized the significance of marginalizing women, and predicted that such a lofty problem wouldn't be resolved soon.

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