

Pagan Gods and the Christian God in *Troilus and Criseyde*

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Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* is an epic poem which depicts the tragedy of the Trojan prince Troilus. Although the events of the story occur during the Trojan War and long before Jesus Christ was born, the main characters refer to the Christian God frequently as well as pagan gods. Akiyuki Jimura mentions the coexistence of the Christian God and pagan gods and their important roles in the poem (166). There seem to be some intriguing devices that the poet uses to compose this poem. My intention is to investigate the characteristic usages and functions of the words referring to gods in the contexts and to discuss how Chaucer differentiates the usages of references to pagan gods and the Christian God in describing the ancient tragedy of Troilus.

In this poem Chaucer mentions many pagan gods and allegories from the *Metamorphoses* at will, which undoubtedly adds charm and enables the audience to picture the gods acting in a lively manner just like the characters in the story. The poet uses pagan gods in order to describe the ancient scenes and to characterize the personæ. The characteristic of using pagan gods is that some pagan gods' attributes are associated with the main characters; "Love" is associated with Troilus, "Appollo" with Calkas, and "Venus", "Pallas" and "Fortune" with Criseyde. Among pagan gods "Fortune" plays the most significant role and she greatly affects Troilus's fate. "Fortune" is the most influential goddess in this poem.

The Christian God is mostly used for swearing or in order to promote the interactions among the characters, and the style of their interactions is that of the Middle Ages. Furthermore, to combine the two different periods, the poet occasionally uses allusions to the gods, such as "Jove" and the Christian God. The allusions to gods make it possible that this poem is not only about the ancient world but also about the medieval times; and that is one of the reasons why pagan gods and the Christian God coexist in harmony.

By means of such allusion, Chaucer achieves a dramatic conversion of the scenes. He changes the ancient scene to one of the Middle Ages. In the Epilogue Troilus's spirit ascends high to the eighth sphere. This belongs to the Narrator's times and the world of the Christian God. Troilus's spirit transcends

time and all the worldly affairs by which he has been tormented in life. The Narrator implies that his salvation is attained through the Christian God. Thus pagan gods and the Christian God coexist in this poem.

Work Cited

Jimura, Akiyuki. *Studies in Chaucer's Words and His Narratives*. Hiroshima: Keisuisha, 2005.