

The Status of Women in the Patriarchal Society of Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale"

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Abstract

This paper aims at analyzing the status of women in a man-dominated society, as shown in Geoffrey Chaucer's "The Knight's Tale". To achieve such a goal, the paper analyzes the formation and development of some female figures of the tale, like Ypolita and Emelye. The paper discusses the various consequences of forcing such female characters to live in patriarchal societies, and it explains some strategies used by female characters to resist patriarchal dominance. I argue that Ypolita and Emelye's silence, for instance, is one of the main approaches adopted by the tale's female characters to resist Man's dominance, and that though silence seems productive for resisting and challenging patriarchy, it might spur Man's anger and cause him to view women as an enemy, and behave accordingly. In addition, the paper discusses the struggle between female characters' desire to be independent from Man as much as possible and the desire of male characters to dominate females. Nevertheless, arguing for and against such ideas, this paper concludes that "The Knight's Tale" discusses the patriarchy-dominated medieval society's viewpoint that women will always be dominated and controlled by men since the system of the whole universe is patriarchal.

Keywords: Women, patriarchy, Chaucer, "The knight's Tale", The Canterbury Tales.

1. Introduction

Portraying feminine identity through three main female characters, namely Emelye, Ypolita, and the Theban Widows, "The Knight's Tale" points out that women have been defined throughout history in light of their relationship to Man. Taking into account that "Augustine and Aquinas believe that [a woman's] state of life is defined by her relationship with [man]: she is bound to a husband in marriage, or she is released from his bound by widowhood; the virgin alone is independent" (Hallissy 11), Chaucer's approach of defining women in "The Knight's Tale" seems representative of England's fourteenth-century culture. The English poet suggests that Ypolita acquires her social status from her husband Theseus, the Theban Widows acquire theirs from their dead husbands, and Emelye acquires hers, though she is a virgin, through her resistance-submission relationships with the tale's patriarchy, represented by Theseus, Arcite, and Palamon.

Though defining women through Man seems rudimentary, socially speaking, from a fourteenth-century biblical perspective, as proved in *Genesis*, which says to women: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (3:16), Chaucer competently views women's relationship to Man in the antique community of "The Knight's Tale" as "...the great bataille for the nones/ Bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones" (...the great battle of that time/ between Athenians and Amazonians) (I.A.879-80). Due to

the historically brutal connotations of the word "bataille" (battle), the poet is potentially celebrating neither love nor harmony that might conjoin men and women. Rather, he is pointing out the hostility of the relationship between men and women. Taking into account that Chaucer, as proved in "The Wife of the Bath's Tale and Prologue", "The Man of the Law's Tale" (II.B.286-7), and "The Parson's Tale" (X.I.929), believes that the Man-women relationship becomes *hostile* when women resist patriarchy, this paper argues that "The Knight's Tale" is to document the traditional status of women in medieval patriarchal communities and to state that women could never win their "bataille" against Man. Regardless of whether Chaucer uses "The Knight's Tale" to point at or criticize the status of women in fourteenth-century England by discussing women's endless struggle against Man in ancient Rome, this paper focuses on the impact of "the great bataille...bitwixen Atthenes and Amazones" on women's "Amazonian" identity, a discussion that may help one clearly understand Chaucer's viewpoint of women and gender issues during his time.

2. Discussion

"The Knight's Tale" portrays a noteworthy part of womanhood through Ypolita, the sole head of the Amazonian matriarchal community. Ypolita is the Amazonian Queen who leads her maidens, who are known as powerful fighters, courageous rivals, and manlike warriors in their struggle against the Athenian patriarchal conquest. That is to say, Ypolita isn't part of a king's court, but an independent woman warrior whom Chaucer refers to as the "hardy queene of Scythia" (the gallant queen of Scythia) (I.A.882). Due to such a "hardy" (gallant) image, Ypolita should have viewed her marriage to Theseus as an embodiment of her loss of the resistance battle against patriarchal colonialism and oppression. The poet concisely refers to what happens to Ypolita after losing her battle against Theseus thus, "the tempest at hir hoom-comyng" (the storm of her home-coming) (I.A.884). Taking into consideration that Ypolita's uneasiness stems from her marriage that "originates in military victory and territorial appropriation, not love" (Laskaya 81), the "tempest", in addition to its highly symbolic attribution to the tale's war setting, obviously refers to Ypolita's bewilderment whether to love the courteous husband at the cost of her lost Amazonian kingdom, or to look at him as an oppressive colonizer, whom she should hate, even if doing that would cause her to violate the various codes of courtesy and royalty.

Nevertheless, the tale doesn't focus on Ypolita's confusion; rather, it points out that Ypolita and her Amazonian women warriors are finally defeated by Theseus and his Athenian men. The Amazonian Queen fails to escape Theseus's patriarchal dominance; therefore, she is no more the "hardy queene". She has become, after losing her battle against Theseus, "the faire queene" (the faire queen) (I.A.1685). It is true that Ypolita doesn't lose her historical social status, namely being a queen; yet the transition from being "hardy" into being "faire" should be very crucial for an Amazonian woman. The transition into being "the faire queen" results in new social roles, characteristics, and behaviors. For instance, after being the most ultimate power in her community or country, Ypolita isn't allowed by Theseus and the tale's masculine narrator any opportunity to speak herself. She is almost muted and completely marginalized, as she appears lead by Theseus. Keeping in mind that Ypolita does represent "the regne of Femenye" (the

kingdom of femininity) (I.A.866) in "The Knight's Tale," analyzing her silence might help one understand women's "great bataille" against men and its probable consequences.

Professor Margaret Montoya argues that silence is a form of resistance adopted by minorities, colored people, and women at certain oppressive situations. Montoya writes, "Silence, particularly that of...women, can potentially have centrifugal effects in the form of resistance to the oppressiveness of the indoctrination and professionalization" (300). For Montoya, Ypolita's silence seems a decision made by a revolutionary female whose pride may never compromise with oppressive patriarchy. While viewing Ypolita's silence as a form of resistance might be praiseworthy, her speech to men when she needs them might make her silence seem as a form of surrender and submission to patriarchy. Ypolita's appeal to Theseus not to kill Arcite and Palamon (I.A.1757) indicates that the woman *ironically* uses her power of speech in order to acknowledge her inferiority to patriarchy, instead of using such a "weapon", namely "language" (Laskaya 41), to challenge Man and resist his power. Considering that "language privileges the male... the female subject has particular problems in entering its symbolic order" (Martin 218), Ypolita's usage of language, though it may reflect the woman's merciful and noble personality, potentially causes one to think that the queen has already quitted her last Amazonian identity, on behalf of a patriarchy-dominated Athenian one. Ypolita's usage of language doesn't only undermine the idea that the woman's silence, after she has been taken by Theseus, represents a form of resistance and struggle against patriarchy; rather, it supports the viewpoint that the woman's silence reflects her shocked, sad, panic-struck, and depressed personality.

After being a self-motivated doer of actions and a decision-maker in the Amazonian Land, Ypolita finds herself transformed into an inferior, vulnerable object that is "brought" (I.A.869), "sente" (sent) (I.A.971), and "managed in conventional ways by [Theseus]" (Hansen 217). Possibly, Ypolita's sorrow and depression cause her to feel weak and estranged, and that is why she might have remained silent throughout the whole tale. Also, the woman might have seen no benefit of speaking to other people, especially Athenian men, which causes her to *take up* silence as a way of life in Athens. Nevertheless, David Wallace argues that Ypolita's silence has its own significance away from patriarchy in general, Theseus in particular. Wallace believes that Ypolita, whether silent or speaking, is powerful and therefore shares with Theseus his own throne (82). Although Wallace's viewpoint is remarkable, one should keep in mind that the "fictional women in the *Canterbury Tales* are all creations of men, and they will bear, in one way or another, traces of their creators" (Laskaya 43). That is to say, whatever Ypolita does, all her acts are theorized, formed, and manipulated by Man. Even when she is silent, her silence, instead of being a form of resistance against patriarchy, does potentially support Theseus's power by fulfilling his expectations for women. As a man, Theseus should have thought of women, including the Amazonians, as silent humans whose acts, including silence, are always in support of Man's dominance. As Laskaya puts it, "One reason silence was essential to the feminine ideal was, apparently, to guarantee or assist men's sovereignty" (41). In brief, whether silent or speaking, Ypolita is a female character introduced in "The Knight's Tale" simply for the sake of *supporting* patriarchy and representing women's inferiority to Man.

Elaborating on women's inferiority to Man, "The Knight's Tale" switches the focus from Ypolita's patriarchy-dominated wifehood into the Theban Widows' patriarchy-dominated widowhood. The narrator reports "A compaignye of ladyes, tweye and tweye,/ Ech after oother clad in clothes blake;/ But swich a cry and swich a wo they make" (A company of ladies two by two/ one after another dressed in black/ making such a cry and such a woe) (I.A.898-900). The Theban Widows seem aware of their inferior social status in a patriarchy-dominated community. Instead of being as silent or passive as Ypolita, the Widows express to Theseus their misery and suffering. By wearing black clothes, shedding tears, and crying loud, the Widows effectively express their need to get Theseus's help. They've succeeded in getting the man's attention and gaining his sympathy. Thus, in response to the Widows' request: "Have on us wrecched women som mercy" (Have on us, we wretched women, some mercy) (I.A.950), Theseus opens his heart, embraces them, and promises them to do his best on their behalf. The poet writes, "And in his armes he hem alle up hente,/ And hem conforteth in ful good entente,/ And swoor his ooth" (And in his arms, he embraced them all/ And comforted them in a good way/ And swore his oath) (I.A.957-959). The Theban Widows have influenced Theseus, probably because their act of petitioning speech embodies women's *natural* obedience and submission to patriarchy, from Theseus's perspective.

Theseus's patriarchal perspective, which supposes that women, when asking Man for help, fulfill the patriarchy-dominated society's viewpoint that women are subordinate and inferior to Man, is further explored throughout the rest of the tale. After introducing the scene of the Theban Widows, the poet ultimately introduces Ypolita as a woman learning special lessons from the Theban Widows about the gist of the man-woman relationship. Ypolita gets the lesson of the weeping Widows and modifies her passive, self-contained matriarchal personality accordingly. Setting her misery, silence, and despair in comparison to the Theban Widows' hopeful expectations from Theseus, Ypolita realizes that opposing Man or disregarding his power might be sterile, if not harmful, to women. As a result, instead of staying as silent as she appears at the beginning of the tale, Ypolita uses the Theban Widows' petitioning approach to contact Theseus and influence his decision about Arcite and Palamon. Trying to rescue the lives of both knights, "The queene anon, for verray wommanhede,/ Gan for to wepe, and so dide Emelye,/ And alle the ladyes in the compaignye" (Suddenly, the queen, for true womanhood/ began to weep, and so did Emelye/ And all the ladies of the company) (I.A.1748-50). Ypolita here is similar to the company of the Theban Widows, as she adopts their acknowledging-men-superiority approach. Ypolita addresses Theseus thus, "Have mercy, lord, upon us wommen alle!" (Have mercy, lord, upon all of us, women) (I.A.1757). The woman asks Theseus to save the lives of the two knights who have been fighting for the sake of Emelye's love. Ypolita is rewarded for behaving in light of the norms of patriarchy, as a husband-dominated wife. In response to her feminine appeal, which reflects the woman's acknowledgment of Man's dominance and superiority, Theseus saves the two knights' lives.

Still, though Ypolita's act of speech may be admired for its influence in "preventing masculine anger from rigidifying into masculine violence" (Wallace 245) and for embodying the woman's wise principle to "keep silent until it is necessary... to speak" (Albertano 6:239), "The Knight's Tale" proves that Ypolita's silence represents women's oppressed status in a very patriarchal society. The tale's masculine

narrator reports that Ypolita has been "riden [after her husband] royally" (riding after her husband royally) (I.A.1687). She *silently* follows her husband without asking him about their destination or purpose, a scene that may cause one to think of the woman's silence as "the metaphor of a suppressed female other" (Bruckner 867). Ypolita's silence is very connotative, when seen in light of Dinshaw's feminist principle in which she says, "Whoever exerts control of signification of language and the literary act, is associated with the masculine" (1). That is to say, the act of language is fully dominated by patriarchy; in consequence, the inability to use that act should be caused or decreed by Man too. Thus, Ypolita's silence probably refers to her inability to defend herself against patriarchy, the reason why she seems suppressed.

Investigating women's silence and social status, "The Knight's Tale" introduces Emelye as the "yongesuster" of Ypolita (I.A.871). While Emelye might be viewed, similar to Ypolita, simply as a representation of femininity, the masculine narrator's *sadistic* attitude against Emelye shouldn't pass unexamined. Without offering readers any background about Emelye, the narrator overlooks the maiden and decides to keep the focus of the narrative on Theseus and his victory. After the single-line introduction of Emelye (I.A.871), the narrator says, "And thus with victorie and with melodye/ Lete I this noble duc to Atthenes ryde" (And thus, with victory and celebration/ I'll leave this noble duke riding to Athens) (I.A.872-3). Emelye has nothing to do with war or victory, thus her likely main function, if she could have one, is only to experience the authority and dominance of patriarchy and support them. Instead of focusing on the maiden's virginity and on what that virginity might stand for, the narrator introduces her as a marginal and foolish character (Donaldson 64). For Coleman, Emelye is portrayed in Chaucer's narrative "as a two-dimensional character who lacks much of the interesting detail in Boccaccio's portrait of Emilia," in an attempt to sacrifice the woman's status and voice on behalf of those of Man (94). While Coleman's analysis of Emelye's portrait is interesting, such an analysis focuses on the status of Emelye after her final assimilation in patriarchy and doesn't take into account the female's Amazonian status. It might be normal, from a very patriarchal perspective, to view Emelye as obedient and submissive to patriarchy as Ypolita; nevertheless, it seems necessary to understand why Emelye, different from Ypolita and the Theban Widows, is overlooked and *indirectly* molested by the masculine narrator of the narrative.

In her attempt to explain the narrator's aggressive attitude against Emelye, Laskaya argues that virginity is the only feminine status that doesn't belong to the patriarchal world, "where men establish victory over adversaries by warring against them, imprisoning them, banishing them, or by building alliances and establishing political influences over them through marriage" (57). That is to say, due to her virginity, which embodies feminine independence and power, Emelye is positioned by the masculine narrator, if not the poet himself, in an inevitable opposition or conflict against patriarchy. Emelye is viewed as a target of patriarchal detestation, a target that Man should conquer and occupy. Relying on his narrative authority, the tale's narrator deploys different narrative strategies to marginalize and overlook Emelye. The narrator uses the passive tense when referring to Emelye, probably in an attempt to view the maiden as an object that is "broghte" (brought), "sente" (sent), and "sene" (seen) (I.A.869, 971, 1035). Also, he marginalizes the girl's beautiful visage by describing her from the back thus, "Hir

yellow heer was broyded in a tresse/ Bihynde hir bak, a yerde long, I gesse"(Her yellow hair was braided in a tress/ behind her back, a yard long, as I guess) (I.A.1049-50). Although the narrator celebrates the attractive length of Emelye's hair, his attitude might be seen as an attempt to marginalize the beauty of the virgin's face, which represents the pride of her independent feminine identity.

Trying to demonstrate the virgin's self-independence and, in consequence, harmfulness against patriarchy, the masculine narrator depicts Emelye in the garden thus, "The sesoun priketh every gentil herte, / And maketh it out of his slepe to sterte, / And seith, 'Arys and do thyn observaunce'" (The season spurs every gentle heart / to make it out of their sleep, to wake/ And it says, 'do your observance') (I.A.1043-5). Emelye is in harmony with May, which has potentially awakened the latent emotions of the shy maiden. The narrator says, "This maked Emelye have remembraunce / To doon honour to May, and for to ryse. / Yclothed was she fressh..." (This caused Emelye to remember / To honor May and to rise/ She was freshly dressed...) (I.A.1046-8). Also, "She walketh up and down, and as hire liste / She gadereth floures, party white and rede" (She walks up and down, and as she wants / She gathers flowers, both while and red) (I.A.1052-3). While such a description might seem as a patriarchal *lustful* praise of a *striking* virgin, it is hard to deny that the narrator's words view Emelye fully independent of Man. Emelye the virgin, influenced by May, pleases herself, makes her own decisions, and behaves the way she likes, without being accompanied or influenced by Man and without thinking of getting any man's permission. It seems that the narrator is trying to state that if Emelye the virgin is allowed to enjoy life and live happily away from Man and his dominance, then Man would have no opportunity to show his power and prove his sovereignty over the globe. The narrator is sending a warning message to patriarchy against women's independent by reminding patriarchy that women's independence is definitely a step for destroying Man and dominating him. The narrator celebrates, *ironically*, Emelye's self-powered and self-reliant attitude in the garden, focusing on how such an attitude reflects the woman's full awareness that "if a woman keeps her body intact, all her other defects are hidden and she can hold her head high" (Laskaya 34). Emelye isn't introduced as passive and submissive as Ypolitita. Emelye is an active subject that has the power for "Dividing men and threatening them, [she] does violence to their souls" (Laskaya 72). Pointing out Emelye's powerful influence over some masculine figures in the tale, the narrator quotes Palamon's declaration: "The fairnesse of that lady that I see/ Yond in the garden romen to and fro/ is cause of all my crying and my wo" (The fairness of that lady that I see/ roaming in the garden back and forth / is the cause of all my cries and my woe) (I.A.1098-100). He also quotes Arcite crying: "'Ye sleen me with youre eyen, Emelye! / Ye been the cause wherfore that I dye'" ('you slain me with your eyes, Emelye/ You are the cause for which I die') (I.A.1567-8). Whether the knight's *love confessions* reflect what Hallissy refers to as "sexual slavery" (23), it is noteworthy that both men are at the maiden's mercy.

Nevertheless, though Emelye has got the main components and qualifications to living freely and independently from Man's dominance, the overall patriarchal texture of the world in the tale annihilates her chances of obtaining and fulfilling her dream of independence. After reporting how seriously Emelye has tried to maintain her virginity by begging, "Chaste goddesse, wel wostow that I/ Desire to ben

a mayden al my lyf,/ Ne nevere wol I be no love ne wyf" ('Chaste goddess, you know very well that I/ wish to be a maiden all my life/ And never wish to be a beloved or wife') (I.A.2304-6), the masculine narrator stresses the fact that people, especially women, can never escape their own social realities. Regardless of one's own ambitions and dreams, the society has the final saying about people's attitudes and social statuses. The narrator indicates that Emelye lives in a completely masculine world in which "Among the goddes hye it is affermed, / And by eterne word writen and confermed, / Thou shalt ben wedded unto oon of tho" ('Among the gods high it is affirmed/ And by eternal words written and confirmed/ You [women] shall be wedded to one of those [men]') (I.A.2349-51). Therefore, regardless of what she may do in order to live independently from Man, she as well as other women will always be the target of Man's dominance.

Relying on such a logic, the narrator views Emelye's virginity as a reason for which the girl becomes a target for suitors whose main responsibility is to occupy and ravish the virgin in a very ceremonial way. The *independent* virgin, who has been enjoying May in the garden by herself and who has been begging Diana for protection, is treated by Theseus, the head of patriarchy in Athens, as the prize for which Arcite and Palamon should compete. Theseus declares, "wheither he or thow/ May with his hundred, as I spak of now, / Sleen his contrarie, or out of lystes dryve, / Thanne shal I yeve Emelya to wyve" (whether he or you / may with his hundred [knights], as I say now/ slay his rival, or drive him out of the contest/ Then I shall give [him] Emelye as a wife) (I.A.1857-60). After being an independent virgin who appears as fresh and free as spring season, Emelye is viewed as "the battle prize" (Russell 130). Then she is viewed taken by Theseus to the amphitheatre to witness the male figure who will dominate her. The narrator reports that Theseus rides his steed, "And after rood the queene and Emelye" (And after him ride the queen and Emelye) (I.A.2571). Emelye's journey to the amphitheatre is highly significant, as it indicates the virgin's transformation from a free self-independent status into an obedience patriarchy-dominated one.

To prove the maiden's new social status, the narrator focuses on how Emelye's behaviors have become fully controlled and influenced by Man. For instance, the maiden is depicted bursting with tears "bothe eve and morwe" (both evening and morning) for the injury of Arcite (I.A.2821). She is joining other women who have been wailing like widows for knights' death. The narrator says, "For in swich cas wommen have swich sorwe, / Whan that hir housbondes ben from hem ago, / That for the moore part they sorwen so" (For in such case, women have such a sorrow/ When their husbands are gone from them/ That [is why] for the most part they so sorrow) (I.A.2822-4). This scene refers to Emelye's transformation from her past Amazonian values of virginity into a patriarchy-dominated wifehood, and later on widowhood. As Minnis says, Emelye is left with "no freedom of action, other than freedom to ennoble what must be by accepting it bravely" (133). The virgin's sense of freedom, independence, and power is distracted by the same patriarchal power that has crucially tamed Ypolita's Amazonian identity; she thus ends up as a member of the social group to which Ypolita and the Theban Widows belong.

Again, as a member of the patriarchy-dominated class of women, Emelye is viewed as an object controlled by Theseus and other men, as proved in different scenes. First, she attends Arcite's cremation as his widow. The narrator says, "Ne how that Emelye, as was the gyse,/ Putte in the fyr of funeral

servyse" (Now how that Emelye, as was the tradition/ lightened the fire of teh funeral service) (I.A.2941-42). Emelye's participation in Arcite's funeral indicates her new social status, which has been decreed by patriarchy and in light of which the widow is expected to behave. Second, Theseus decides to *give* Emelye to Palamon, as part of Athens' political strategy: "To have with certein contrees alliaunce, / And have fully of Thebans obeisaunce" (To have with certain countries alliances/ And fully have Thebans' obeisance) (I.A.2973-74). Theseus decides the virgin-widow's future marriage without asking her opinion. He rather informs her that "'The Firste Moevere of the cause above'" (The First Mover of the cause above) sets the universe in a patriarchal order (I.A.2987), and that He wants humans "'To maken vertu of necessitee'" (To make use of the virtue of necessity) (I.A.3042). For Theseus, patriarchy is inevitable and unquestionable because it's supported by "The Firste Moevere"; therefore, all women should behave in light of patriarchy and its unquestionable conventions. Eventually, Emelye behaves in light of Theseus's instructions and regulations, which dominate her life and other women's. Implementing Theseus's decision, the virgin-widow, instead of resisting masculine dominance represented by Palamon, "hym loveth so tenderly" (loves him so tenderly) (I.A.3103) and happily lives with him ever after (I.A.3105-7). Her happiness with Palamon, although "[it] seems a fragile and questionable thing" (Burrow 158), does indicate the woman's loss of her feminine prime and does represent her complete assimilation into Athens' patriarchal world.

3. Conclusion

Evaluating Emelye's character and assimilation into patriarchy, Russell compares her to Theseus and concludes that she is more lovable and believable than the most authoritative figure of patriarchy. Russell writes, "She says nothing of glory, prays for peace and *amicitia*, that most spiritual of human loves... Emelye's 'pity,' unlike that of Theseus, is true pity, and it runs immediately--not just 'sone'-- in this gentle heart" (130). Undeniably, Russell doesn't seem to have any problem with Emelye's personality and transformation into patriarchy. Rather, he thinks that the various characteristics attributed to her in "this very male story" make her "disturbingly convincing as a human being" (130). Russell's praise of Emelye's femininity at the cost of patriarchy is interesting and seems reasonable; nevertheless, it doesn't apply to femininity represented by all female characters of "The knight's Tale". To view femininity in "the Knight's Tale" through Emelye is meaningful as long as she is taken as one phase of femininity, which has different phases represented by Ypolita and the Theban Widows. Rather than being simply various copies of Emelye's virginity, Ypolita and the Theban Widows represent different phases of femininity, namely wifhood and widowhood. Whereas Emelye is viewed for a considerable number of lines as a free virgin who is loved by many males, Ypolita is introduced as the obedient female character who represents ideal wives and their endless need for their husbands' protection and guidance. Also, the Theban Widows are introduced probably to represent the ideal behavior of women after losing their husbands and how losing the Man is never compensable. In short, to understand the status of women in "The Knight's Tale" accurately, one shouldn't ignore any phase of femininity at the benefit of another. It seems that Chaucer wants readers to view virginity, wifhood, and widowhood mutually related, since each one of them refers to the other two. Virginity is the past memory of wifhood and widowhood.

Wifehood is the bridge between virginity and widowhood, and widowhood is the inevitable future of both wifehood and virginity.

Nevertheless, by discussing the mutually-related three phases of femininity, "The Knight's Tale" might be speaking about simply the "destinee" and "fortune" of humanity in general (Librach 1), but understanding "...the great bataille" mentioned in the narrative from gender perspective requires that Ypolita, Emelye, and the Theban Widows are viewed as three different females surviving patriarchy. Then "The Knight's Tale" would seem like a social critique, which argues that women's relationships to Man are either positive or negative. They are positive and productive on behalf of women when women express their need for men to protect and guide them, while they are negative, if not harmful, when women try to set any sort of opposition or resistance against Man. Interestingly, the masculine narrator closes his narrative quoting Theseus saying that Man's dominance over women is decreed and supported by "The Firste Moevere of the cause above" (The First Mover of the cause above) (I.A.2987) and that "whose gruccheth ought, he dooth folye" (And whoever grumbles [against Him], he does a folly) (I.A.3045). For Theseus, it's very foolish for women to resist Man because resisting Man goes against the will of "The Firste Moevere" who is masculine and whose decisions are necessarily very patriarchal. In a nutshell, "The Knight's Tale", similar to Chaucer's other tales like "The Man of the Law's Tale," "The Wife of the Bath's Tale and Prologue," and "The Parson's Tale," portrays the world as a patriarchal institution in which "Wommen are born to thraldom and penance, And been under mannes governance" (Women are born to servitude and penance, And be under man's governance) (II.B.286-7).

مكانة المرأة في المجتمع الذكوري في "حكاية الفارس" لتشوسر

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قسم اللغة الانجليزية، جامعة اليرموك، اربد، الأردن

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل واقع المرأة في المجتمعات الذكورية كما طُرح في "حكاية الفارس" للشاعر الانجليزي جفري تشوسر. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف، تحلل الدراسة بنية بعض شخصيات الحكاية النسوية مثل يبوليتا وايملي وإظهار تطورها. وتركز الدراسة على التغيرات المتعددة التي تطرأ على تلك الشخصيات النسوية جراء اجبارها على العيش في مجتمعات ذكورية، وتحاول تفسير بعض استراتيجيات تلك الشخصيات لمقاومة السيطرة الذكورية. ويعتقد الباحث أن الصمت، على سبيل المثال، هو واحد من الأساليب التي تتبعها الشخصيات النسوية في الحكاية لمقاومة تلك السيطرة، ويناقش حقيقة أن الصمت قد يقود إلى نتائج كارثية ضد المرأة، بالرغم من كونه أسلوب مقاومة وممانعة ضد الرجل. زيادة على ذلك، فإن الدراسة تتناول النزاع الأبدي بين رغبة المرأة في أن تكون مستقلة تماما عن الرجل ورغبة الآخر في إبقاء المرأة في إطار زعامته. وبعد مناقشة مثل هذه الأفكار والمبادئ كما طرحها تشوسر في قصته، تخلص الدراسة إلى أن "حكاية الفارس" تناقش وجهة نظر المجتمع الذكوري في العصور الوسطى المتمثلة في أن نظام الكون بكامله نظام ذكوري ولهذا ستكون سيطرة الرجل على المرأة أبدية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المرأة، الذكوري، تشوسر، حكاية الفارس، حكايات كانتربري.

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