

## A DRAMATIC APPROACH TO *TROILUS AND CRISEYDE*

Jung-Ai Kim

### I

*Troilus and Criseyde* is often called a tragedy by several critics.<sup>1)</sup> In what sense can we possibly call *Troilus and Criseyde* a tragedy? The study attempts to find out the dramatic aspects in the *Troilus and Criseyde*, which can, in turn, establish a dramatic approach as one of the relevant studies to the *Troilus and Criseyde*.

Above all, we must notice that Chaucer himself called *Troilus and Criseyde* a tragedy:

Go, litel bok, go litel myn tragedye,  
Ther God thi makere yet, er that he dye. (T&C, V, 1786-1787)<sup>2)</sup>

Then, let us confer the concept of tragedy which Chaucer expounded in the *Canterbury Tales*:

Tragedie is to seyen a certeyn storie  
As olde books maken us memorie,  
And is yfallen out of heigh degree  
Into myserie, and endeth wrecchedly.  
And they ben versified comunely  
Of six feet, which men clepen exametron  
In prose eek been endited many oon  
And eek in meetre, in many a sondry wyse. (CT, B<sup>2</sup> 1973-1981)

From the above definition of tragedy by Chaucer, we can find a lot of similarity as that of Aristotle's. According to Aristotle, tragedy is:

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- 1) W.C. Curry, "Destiny in *Troilus and Criseyde*," *Chaucer and the Medieval Science*, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes and Nobles, Inc., 1960), p.241.  
R.K. Root, *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde by Geoffrey Chaucer* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), p.xlix.  
D.W. Robertson, Jr., "Chaucerian Tragedy," *ELH*, XIX (1952), pp.1-37.
  - 2) All the textual quotations are drawn from *The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer*, ed. F.N. Robinson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1933).

The imitation of an action that is serious and also, as having magnitude, complete in itself; in language with pleasurable accessories, each kind brought in separately in the parts of the work; in a dramatic, not in a narrative form; with incidents arousing pity and fear, wherewith to accomplish its catharsis of such emotions.... There remains, then, the intermediate kind of personality, a man not preeminently virtuous and just, whose misfortune, however, is brought upon him not by vice and depravity but by some error of judgment, of the number of those in the enjoyment of great reputation and prosperity.<sup>3)</sup>

The basic concept of tragedy as the fall of noble man from happiness to misery is adopted by Chaucer from Aristotle. Of course, Chaucer's concept of tragedy is very much simplified and influenced by the Medieval Christianity and various factors of his age. Nevertheless, *Troilus and Criseyde* can be asserted as a tragedy in many respects. Then the study will analyze and synthesize the dramatic elements of *Troilus and Criseyde* as a tragedy.

## II

First of all, *Troilus and Criseyde* consists of five books, which reminds the five act division of drama. The original text which Chaucer remolded in *Troilus and Criseyde* was Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*, that was made of nine cantos, comprizing 713 stanzas. Then what could be the Chaucer's intention in dividing the poem into five parts? Can the five books of *Troilus and Criseyde* be studied in terms of plot-structure for five-act play set forth by German critic Gustav Freytag: introduction, rising action, crisis, falling action, and catastrophe?<sup>4)</sup>

*Troilus and Criseyde* starts with the invocation to Tisiphone, of the Furies, telling the form and the theme of the poem. Calkas, the prophet of Troy, deserts to the Greeks, leaving behind her daughter Criseyde who seeks the protection of Hector. One day in April, Troilus sees Criseyde in the temple

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3) Aristotle, "Poetics" 1449b 24-28, 1453a 8-11, *Great Books of the Western World*, Vol.8-9 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952).

4) See Gustav Freytag's *Technique of the Drama* (Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1894), Trans. by Elias MacEwan.

of Palladion. Troilus who is struck by the beauty of Criseyde, thinks of her and sings of Love, complaining of his plight to the God of Love. Pandarus, the intimate friend of Troilus as well as the uncle of Criseyde, persuades Troilus to reveal what lady he loves. (Book I)

One month later, Pandarus rushes off to Criseyde, and reveals Troilus's love to her. He asks her to pity Troilus and reminds her of advancing age. Criseyde, alone, sees Troilus pass by her house, thinking the pros and cons of a love affair. Joining her women in the garden, she hears Antigone sing a song of love, then goes to bed and dreams of a white eagle who painlessly takes her heart and gives her his. On the other hand, Pandarus devises his plan as follows: he supervises Troilus's letter to Criseyde and talks her into answering it. And he urges to meet and speak with Troilus but she demurs. After delivering Criseyde's letter to Troilus, Pandarus visits Deiphebus to arrange a meeting with Criseyde. Then he advises Troilus to be present at Deiphebus's house but to pretend he has a fever and go to bed there. So he brings Criseyde to Deiphebus and suggests she sees Troilus alone and leads Criseyde in for the first meeting between them. (Book II)

Then, Pandarus brings Criseyde to Troilus's room in Deiphebus's house, where Troilus confesses his love to her. As time passes, they see each other and exchange more letters. At Pandarus's house, Pandarus invites her to dinner. There, Troilus, concealed, watches them dine. After supper there is a terrible rain, and Pandarus conceives Criseyde to stay the night. Pandarus puts Criseyde in a private chamber, brings Troilus to it through a trap door. As Criseyde begins to weep, Troilus faints, thinking Pandarus's trick has failed. Pandarus rushes back to the bed, helps to revive Troilus. Thus the lovers are now left in bed, after Pandarus retires. They exchange vows and spend the night in bliss and part regretfully at dawn. (Book III)

All of a sudden, the tone of the poem is changed, shadowing the sense of doom in their love. Calkas arranges to have Criseyde exchanged for Antenor, the warrior of Troy. Troilus complains against Fortune, collapsing into despair. Pandarus and Troilus discuss what is to be done. Pandarus suggests a new love affair but Troilus rejects the idea out of hand. Pandarus then suggest they elope, but Troilus explains why he cannot do anything to stop her departure on behalf of her honor. At her palace, Criseyde meditates upon this turn of events, while Troilus in a temple meditates upon predestination. (ll. 946-1082) Pandarus reassures him and sends him there. When Troilus visits Criseyde, she faints. Troilus, thinking she is dead, is about to kill himself but she revives and retains him. They speak of the exchange. Troilus at the last

moment suggests they elope, but she presents idealistic arguments against eloping and promises to deceive her father and return to Troy in ten days. (Book IV)

Three years have passed since Troilus first saw Criseyde in the temple. At last Troilus consigns Criseyde to the Greeks and Diomedes immediately offers Criseyde his friendship and protection. On the tenth day after leaving Troy, Criseyde entertains Diomedes, who speaks of love. Criseyde decides to remain with the Greeks and to accept Diomedes as her lover. On the other hand, Troilus slowly realizes that she will not return. He dreams of a boar embracing Criseyde and writes a letter. Troilus writes her often, but she sends a tasteless reply. One day Troilus finds on the captured coat of Diomedes his own brooch that he had given her and knows she is no longer to be trusted. While complaining his ill fortune, he dies in the battle with the Greeks. (Book V)

Seen from the brief synopsis of the poem, the Book I establishes the exposition of the poem. It provides the necessary background of the poem, i.e., the Troy War and starts the major conflict—the conflict of Troilus and Criseyde. Then the inciting force comes in the form of a new character, Pandarus, who stimulates new action and new responses. Thus all the main characters of the poem are introduced. In Book II and Book III, events advance the love affair between Troilus and Criseyde and they finally meet each other and share their passionate love which can be called the rising action of the poem.

In the beginning of Book IV, the happy mood suddenly changes into a gloomy atmosphere as the unexpected incident—the exchange of Criseyde for Antenor—happens. This is the crisis, i.e., the turning point from which the action flows in the downward direction. Once they accept the situation as unavoidable, Troilus and Criseyde promise to be faithful each other even though they are far apart. Still there is a possibility of reunion as far as Criseyde keeps her words that she will return to Troy within ten days. But, in fact, Troilus's meditation on predestination makes him realize his doomed fate because of his reliance on false felicity such as earthly love, i.e., his love for Criseyde. Troilus's awakening is the real climax of the poem.

Then, the falling action and the catastrophe fall in Book V. There comes the events that convince Criseyde's betrayal and gradually Troilus gives her up. Lost the incentive to live without Criseyde, Troilus dies in a battle. Through analyzing the poem in terms of five-act plot structure of drama — exposition, rising action, crisis, falling action, and catastrophe—we can say that the plot of *Troilus and Criseyde* is very dramatically constructed.

## III

Let me turn to the character analysis. The main characters of *Troilus and Criseyde* are Troilus, a young prince of Troy, Criseyde, a young widow, and Pandarus, Troilus's friend as well as Criseyde's uncle. Chaucer's effective depiction of characters shows his shrewd observations of human nature. One of the most important aspects of the poem is the elaborate psychological development of its characters. Before Chaucer, the most advanced way of representing psychological states in literature was to abstract feelings and emotions. The tendency in earlier literature was to make the protagonist a type, as is *Everyman* in the morality play. But the characters in Chaucer's poem are in no sense types. The point is that they are like us, and their strength and weakness are fully human.

Likewise, Professor Price points the dramatic quality of *Troilus and Criseyde* in its characterization:

Chaucer, in his poem, is dramatic, not because he allows actions to dominate or run riot in his work, but because he deduces action with a profound psychological skill, from the working of emotions.... He is dramatic, because with intense realism of effect, he has made each spoken word of character, and each action of each character... spring as inevitable necessity... from the soul of the character that he has imagined. And, in the highest sense of all, Chaucer in this poem is dramatic, because, in tracing the emotional life of his chief characters, he has led that play of passion to its final expression in definite action.... And so, in this great poem, we have, as nowhere else in our literature, the evolution of literary form from narrative to drama.<sup>5)</sup>

As a whole, *Troilus and Criseyde* is governed by Chaucer's wish to emphasize the sorrow of Troilus. At first, Troilus is introduced scoffing at love and deriding lovers, but Nature-as-destiny is preparing his inevitable subjugation to her laws:

"I have herd told, pardieux, of your lyvyng,  
Ye lovers, and youre lewed observaunces,

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5) T.R. Price, "Troilus and Criseyde; A Study in Chaucer's Method of Narrative Construction," *PMLA*, XI (1896), p.311.

And which a labour folk han in wynnyng  
 Of love, and in the keypyng which doutaunces;  
 And whan youre prey is lost, woo and penaunces.  
 O veray fooles, nyce and blynde be ye!  
 Ther nys nat oon kan war by other be."  
 And with that word he gan caste up the browe,  
 Ascaunces, "Loo! is this naught wisely spoken?"  
 At which the God of Love gan loken rowe.  
 Right for despit, and shop for to ben wroken.  
 He kidde anon his bowe nas naught broken;  
 For sodeynly he hitte hym atte fulle;  
 And yet as proud a pekok kan he pulle. (I. 197-210)

Troilus's love develops from his cynical and prideful disbelief. As such the character of Troilus is not formed all at once, rather he exhibits symptoms of growth and change and becomes by the end of the poem different from what he was at the beginning. Actually Troilus's perspective has been changing continuously throughout the poem. The ascent to the eighth sphere begins when Troilus first sees Criseyde in the temple, and his final perspective of the world and its transitory experiences would not be possible if he had not first won and then lost Criseyde. Outwardly Troilus is not inactive; he fights the Greeks, rides through the streets, writes passionate letters, works his way into Deiphebus's guest room. But the dramatic action centers in the mind and heart of Troilus; the conflict of the earthly love, i.e., the love of Criseyde, and the love of God.

On the other hand, Criseyde was intended to appear calculating, emotionally shallow, and a drifter from the first. Her love for Troilus begins in the vague feeling of interest. In the beginning of the poem she is in a dangerous position with her father Calkas deserted to the Greeks. She is a clever woman and is in no sense the victim of a plot. She has no strength of will and inconstant heart. Chaucer describes her amorous, gentle, affectionate and charming, but fatally impressionable and yielding:

Criseyde was this lady name al right.  
 As to my doom, in al Troies cite  
 Nas non so fair, for passynge every wight  
 So aungelik was hir natif beaute,  
 That lik a thing inmortal semed she,  
 As doth an hevenyssh perfit creature,  
 That down were sent in scornynge of nature. (I. 99-105)

Since Troilus can protect her socially and politically, when Pandarus approaches, Criseyde's complex reaction develops; fear, resistance, flattery, questioning, need, hope, and accepting. She shows herself in the process, capable of saying one thing while thinking another. She has the vitality and bewildering complexity that impress us as true to life. Her actions spring from a tangle of conflicting motives, desires, and impulses. Though she may in fact love rather suddenly and powerfully, Criseyde shares with Pandarus a tendency toward worldliness and a calculation in matters that Troilus conceives of as absolute and spiritual.

Pandarus is Troilus's friend and Criseyde's uncle. This double relation is the sum of his fate. But, more than a go-between, Pandarus is the manipulator par excellence. His energy and good will in Troilus's service are boundless, but practical in their goal; if one mistress proves untrue, why then "this town is ful of ladys al about.../ we shall recovere an other." (IV. 401, 406) Pandarus is entirely dependent upon the material world of time and space for his pleasures and values. But he always keeps in his mind his two ideals; friendship and faith in love:

I wol myself ben with the at this dede,  
 Theigh ich and al my kyn, upon a stownde,  
 Shulle in a strete as dogges ligen dede,  
 Thorough-grit with many a wid and bloody wownde,  
 In every cas I wol a frend be founde.  
 And if the list here sterven as a wrecche,  
 Adieu, the devel spede hym that it recche. (IV. 624-630)

Anyhow his admiration of Troilus remains to the end as steadfast as the hero, but his role in the poem is a catalyst who makes the events go without changing himself.

Other minor characters such as Diomedes, Hector, Antigone are introduced for the sake of the development of the story, so they are not fully described.

#### IV

As Chaucer indicates the subject of the poem as "the double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,/ That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,/ In lovyng, how his adventures fellen/ Fro wo to wele, and after out of joie, (I. 1-4) the theme of the poem is closely connected with Troilus's suffering and transfor-

mation. The theme lies in the poem's dramatizing the tragic conflict between Troilus and the destinal powers overshadowing him.

Troilus' long meditation on predestination is the crux to the understanding of the poem's theme:

"For al that comth, comth by necessitee:  
Thus to ben lorn, it is my destinee.

"For certeynly, this wot I wel," he seyde,  
That foresight of divine purveyaunce  
Hath seyn alwey me to forgon Criseyde,  
Syn God seeth everythyng, out of doutaunce,  
In hire merites sothly for to be,  
As they shul comen by predestyne.

"But natheles, allas! whom shal I leeve?  
For ther ben grete clerkes many oon,  
That destyne thorough argumentes preve;  
And som men seyn that, nedely, ther is noon,  
But that fre chois is yeven us everychon.  
O, welaway! so sleighe arn clerkes olde,  
That I not whos opynyoun I may holde.

"For som men seyn, if God seth al biforn,  
Ne God may nat deceyved ben, parde,  
Than moot it fallen, theigh men hadde it sworn,  
That purveiance hath seyn before to be.  
Wherfore I sey, that from eterne if he  
Hath wist byforn oure thought ek as oure dede,  
We han no fre chois, as thise clerkes rede.

"For other thought, nor other dede also,  
Myghte nevere ben, but swich as purveyaunce,  
Which may nat ben deceyved nevere mo,  
Hath feled byforn, withouten ignoraunce.  
For yf ther myghte ben a variaunce  
To writen out fro Goddis purveyinge,  
Ther nere no prescience of thyng comyng,

"But it were rather an opynyoun  
Uncerteyn, and no stedfast forseynge.  
And certes, that were an abusyon,



That God sholde han no parfit cler wytynge  
 More than we that han doutous wenyng.  
 But swich an errour upon God to gesse  
 Were fals and foul, and wikked corsednesse.

“Ek this is an opynyoun of some  
 That han hire top ful heighe and somthe yshore:  
 They seyn right thus, that thyng is nat to come  
 For that the prescience hath syn byfore  
 That is shal come; but they seyn that therfore  
 That it shal come, therefore the purveyaunce  
 Woot it byforn, withouten ignoraunce;

“And in this manere this necessite  
 Retorneth in his part contrarie agayn.  
 For nedfully byhoveth it nat to bee  
 That thilke thynges fallen in certayn  
 That ben purveyed; but nedly, as they sayn,  
 Byhoveth it that thynges whiche that falle,  
 That they in certayn ben purveyed alle.

“I mene as though I laboured me in this,  
 To enqueren which thyng cause of which thyng be:  
 As wheither that the prescience of God is  
 The certeyn cause of the necessite  
 Of thynges that to comen ben, parde;  
 Or if necessite of thyng comynge  
 Be cause certeyn of the purveyinge.

“But now n’enforce I me nat in shewynge  
 How the ordre of causes stant; but wel woot I  
 That it byhoveth that the byfallynge  
 Of thyng wiste byforen certeynly  
 Be necessarie, al seme it nat therby  
 That prescience put fallynge necessaire  
 To thyng to come, al falle it foule or faire.

“For if ther sitte a man yond on a see,  
 Than by necessite bihoveth it  
 That, certes, thyn opynyoun sooth be,  
 That wenest or coniectest that he sit.  
 And further over now ayeynward yit,  
 Lo, right so is it of the part contrarie,  
 As thus, — nowe herkne, for I wol nat tarie;

"I sey, that if the opynoun of the  
 Be soth, for that he sitte, than sey I this,  
 That he mot siten by necessite;  
 And thus necessite in eyther is.  
 For in hym nede of sittynge is, ywys,  
 And in the nede of soth; and thus, forsothe,  
 There mot necessite ben in yow bothe.

"But thow mayst seyn, the man sit nat therfore,  
 That thyn opynyoun of his sittynge soth is;  
 But rather, for the man sit ther byfore,  
 Therefore is thyn opynyoun soth, ywise.  
 And I seye, though the cause of soth of this  
 Comth of his sittynge, yet necessite  
 Is entrechaunged both in hym and the.

"Thus in this same wise, out of doutaunce,  
 I may wel maken, as it semeth me,  
 My resonyng of Goddes purveyaunce  
 And of the thynges that to comen be;  
 By which resoun men may wel yse  
 That thilke thynges that in erthe falle,  
 That by necessite they comen alle.

"For although that, for thyng shal come, ywys,  
 Therefore is it purveyed, certeynly,  
 Nat that it comth for it purveyed is;  
 Yet natheless, bihoveth it nedfully,  
 That thing to come be purveyd, trewely;  
 Or elles, thynges that purveyed be,  
 That they bitiden by necessite.

"And this suffiseth right ynough, certeyn,  
 For to destruye oure fre chois every del,  
 But now is this abusioun, to seyn  
 That fallyng of the thynges temporel  
 Is cause of Goddes prescience eternal.  
 Now trewely, that is a fals sentence,  
 That thyng to come sholde cause his prescience.

"What myght I wene, and I hadde swich a thought,  
 But that God purveyeth thyng that is to come  
 For that it is to come, and ellis nought?

So mighte I wene that thynges alle and some,  
That whilom ben byfalle and overcome,  
Ben cause of thilke sovereyne purveyaunce  
That forwoot al withouten ignoraunce.

“And over al this, yet sey I more herto,  
That right as whan I wot ther is a thyng,  
Ek right so, whan I woot a thyng comyng,  
So mot it come; and thus the bifallyng  
Of thynges that ben wist bifore the tyde,  
They mowe nat ben eschued on no syde.

“Thanne seyde he thus: “Almyghty Jove in trone,  
That woost of al this thyng the sothfastnesse,  
Rewe on my sorwe, and so me dey sone,  
Or bryng Criseyde and me fro this destresse!” (IV. 11. 958-1082)

This passage received much attention from the various critics either favorably or unfavorably. For instance, T.R. Lounsbury says:

It is the grossest instance of the failure on the part of Chaucer to comply with the requirements of his art.... The passage is a versification of the argument on the subject of God's foreknowledge and man's free-will that is contained in the fifth book of the treatise of Boethius. It utterly interferes with the movement of the story. It is tacked to it by the flimiest of fastenings.... The bad taste exhibited by the poet in such passages will be conceded by all. His most fervent admirers would be readiest to admit the justice of this censure.<sup>6)</sup>

A.W. Ward thinks the matter is “pendantically put, perhaps, and as it were dragged in violently by means of a truncated quotation from Boethius.”<sup>7)</sup>

T.R. Price is of the same opinion:

The passage is the chief artistic blemish, but has a special interest in showing us the settled determinism of Chaucer's philosophical conception of human life.<sup>8)</sup>

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6) T.R. Lounsbury, *Studies in Chaucer*, III (New York, 1892), p.372.

7) A.W. Ward, “Chaucer,” Vol. IX in *English Men of Letters Series* (N.Y.: MacMillan, 1909), p.92.

8) T.R. Price, *Ibid*.

On the other hand, there are several critics who defended the passage as relevant to the poem. R.K. Root says, "Prolonged beyond its due proportion it may be, but it is no more a digression than are the soliloquies of Hamlet. It is thoroughly in accord with the character of Troilus as Chaucer conceived him."<sup>9</sup>) G.L. Kittredge also concludes; "Doubtless the passage is inartistic and maladjusted; but it is certainly not, as some have called it, a digression. On the contrary, it is, in substance, as pertinent as any of Hamlet's soliloquies."<sup>10</sup>) B. Ten Brink says, "it is his tragic intensiveness that lead the poet into such depths, and makes him express ideas in sonorous verses, which agitated deeply the most eminent minds of his age, ideas which touch strongly on the doctrine of predestination."<sup>11</sup>) And H.R. Patch says: "Interested in a certain conception of philosophy, he may have seized an occasion to preach. After the story itself had grown cold for him, he picked up his manuscript and saw in one of the most intense scenes of the tragedy a splendid opportunity to point a moral."<sup>12</sup>)

Between the two categories of the critic's opinions I go for the latter. Because Chaucer is not writing a simple story as Boccaccio did in his *Il Filostrato*, he is evidently giving a very complex account of the intricate relations between the happy or miserable human being and the destinal forces which rule the universe through the mouth of Troilus. His whole argument represents a powerfully dramatic struggle in his mind to find some way out of the web of fate which seems to have been woven for him. There are some clerks who postulate an inescapable destiny, while there are others who hold that there is no such thing because man has been given the power of free-choice and is capable of directing his own life.

Wavering between the two opinions, his argument leads him to one inevitable conclusion. Since, as some clerks say, God foresees everything, He may not be deceived. Then everything must transpire precisely as He has foreseen it; if from all eternity He has known our thought and our deed, then we have no free choice. For if God's foresight is perfect, then we can have only such thoughts and deeds as he has foreseen and if the contrary were possible, then we should have to ascribe to God imperfect knowledge, which is heresy. There are other clerks, who assert that God's prescience does not

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9) R.K. Root, *The Poetry of Chaucer* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1922), p.117.

10) G.L. Kittredge, *Chaucer and His Poetry* (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1915), p.311.

11) B.T. Brink, *History of Early English Poetry*, II, trans. by W.C. Robinson (N.Y., 1893), p.92.

12) H.R. Patch, "Troilus on Predestination," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, XVII (1918), p.3.

cause the happening of events but that He foresees them because they are to happen. In that case, we have merely changed the order of causes without having altered the quality of necessity imposed upon everything that occurs; for it seems to Troilus that, whether God's foreknowledge is the cause or not, whatever He foresees, be it fair or foul, must come to pass by necessity. God's foreknowledge of coming events is governed by necessity and that which He foresees must transpire of necessity. Troilus is not greatly interested in the inevitability of events which compels God to foresee; he is interested mainly in the inevitability of events which happen to men and in the impossibility of free-choice. So he concludes that God necessarily foresees all things that come to pass, and whatever He foresees may not be escaped in any manner.

In other words, Troilus is a determinist. He does not raise the question of God's justice in thus imposing a dire necessity upon the lives of both good and bad men; nor does he emphasize his own merits or demerits. With calculating deliberation Chaucer fused such a fatalistic philosophy into the structure of his poem. The speech of Troilus on predestination is the most powerful element of the poem in confirming of that fatality which governs the tragic action; it makes clear that the ultimate power behind the destinal forces inherent in movable things is the arbitrary will of God, whose plans for the universe do not include human free-choice.

The whole speech is in character with Troilus and is dramatically appropriate. Since its philosophical import is in conformity with the settled determinism, its length seems to be proportionate to the great length of the poem's action. Consequently the climax as well as the theme of the poem falls on Troilus's soliloquy on predestination and free-will at the point where Troilus signally fails to capture the meaning of the necessity of destiny, and rushes forth to the doom prepared by destiny.

Therefore, the tragedy of *Troilus and Criseyde* may be defined as the representation in a dramatic story of an essentially noble protagonist of heroic proportions who is brought into conflict with the destinal powers and who is brought into subjection to adverse destiny and finally to his destruction because of his misconception of true happiness.

## V

As I have mentioned in the beginning of the paper, Chaucer defined tragedy in the medieval sense and has exemplified in the Monk's Tale of the *Canterbury*

*Tales*. Chaucer evidently understands the medieval conception of tragedy and has called *Troilus and Criseyde* a tragedy. Doubtlessly, *Troilus and Criseyde* is a tragedy in the medieval sense just as Chaucer translated the definition of tragedy in *De Consolatione* of Boethius as follows: "Tragedye is to seyn a dite of prosperite/ for a tyme, that endeth in wrecchidnesse." (Bk. II, pr.2) But W.C. Curry contends that Chaucer's tragedy, *Troilus and Criseyde*, transcends the conventional medieval ideas of tragedy – the story of a highly placed man's fall from prosperity into misery. Curry puts the poem "to a sort of middle ground artistically between the ancient Greek tragedy in which we sense a mysterious and unalterable Fate or Necessity back of human action and the modern tragedy of Shakespeare in which emphasis is laid upon the fact that a man is the architect of his own fortunes."<sup>13)</sup>

Nevertheless, in my view, the tragedy of *Troilus and Criseyde* could be understood as the medieval tragedy in the sense that the medieval concept of tragedy which Chaucer adopted was based on Aristotle. Aristotle traces the development of a tragedy to an essential weakness in the hero. He puts the causes of real tragedy in a flaw in the leading character rather than in the crushing power of external circumstances. It means that character, rather than forces outside the individual, is destiny. In fact, Troilus's downfall is the result of the action and inter-action of his own character.

In conclusion, the dramatic qualities of *Troilus and Criseyde* which has been discussed can be summarized as follows: first, the five books of *Troilus and Criseyde* are, like the five-act drama, developed in terms of five-act plot structure, i.e., exposition, rising action, crisis, falling action and catastrophe. Secondly, the essential element of drama, the conflict between Troilus and Criseyde, as well as the conflict in the mind of Troilus – the conflict between the earthly love, his love for Criseyde, and the love of God – is fully developed; the dramatic action of Troilus's desperate struggle to seize the meaning of life is the crux of the poem, which is expressed through the long meditation of Troilus on predestination and free-will. Thirdly, Troilus fits the category of tragic hero as being a noble man whose blindness of mind brings him to destruction. His tragic fault lies in his pride to scorn Love, and once fallen in love he mistakes the earthly love, false happiness, for true happiness, the love of God, because his passion overshadows his reason and judgment.

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13) W.C. Curry, *Chaucer and the Medieval Science*, 2nd ed. (New York: Barnes and Nobles, 1960), rpt. in *Chaucer Criticism*, Vol. II, ed. R.J. Schoeck & J. Taylor (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1961), p.66.

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**Assistant Professor, Department of English**

**Kyung Hee University**