Green will quote a number of things you haven’t read, some of them in foreign languages. Don’t let this throw you! You should still be able to grasp the point he is making with those texts, and relate them to what you do know, the *Legend of Good Women*. (All of the foreign language texts are translated; there are a few phrases he uses that aren’t, glossed below. The Middle English texts that aren’t translated for you are on the back of this handout.)

This is our first collective experience reading professional literary criticism, and reading it can help you develop your sense of what an argument about literature looks like. You may also find what Green has to say about *LGW* interesting. Consider how persuasive you find his argument about *LGW* and why. Particularly consider his use of evidence from the text and explanation of its significance.

Here’s a brief outline that may help as you read:

- Green’s thesis starts to emerge near the end of the second paragraph, and becomes more precise in the third. How is Chaucer’s treatment of women in *LGW* different from other authors’?
- Examples of French writers whose attitude contrasts with Chaucer’s (pages 340-42)
- How English writers in general compare to French on this point (pages 342-43)
- Comparison of treatment of Dido by Jean de Meun (a French writer) with Chaucer’s (343-346)
- Background on the concept of *trouthe* in English culture (346-47)
  - *aðwyrðe* = trustworthy
- Discussion of *LGW* in particular (347-48)
  - *verba de futuro*: (“words of the future”): a promise to marry someone, followed by sexual intercourse with that person, legally constituted marriage
  - *verba de presenti* (“words of the present”): saying something like the marriage vows, even if not presided over by a priest, legally constituted marriage
- Other writers influenced (?) by Chaucer (348-51)
Translations of ME texts in “Chaucer’s Victimized Women,” p. 343

Lut in londe are to leue,
Þah me hem trewe trouþe ȝeue,
for tricherie to Þere;
when trichour haþ is trouþe yplyht,
byswyken he haþ þat suete wyht,
Þah he hire oþes swere.

Few in the land are to be believed—
though one might give them a true pledge—
for [they are] too ready for treachery.
when a traitor has plighted his troth [made his solemn promise],
he has deceived the sweet creature,
although he has sworn oaths to her.

They told how there was more truth between them
than is now seen among men,
for truth and love are abandoned;
men now practice another craft.
Men [now] use words to make things seem true and stable,
But in their “fidelity” there is nothing but a fable;
Men make it steadfast with their mouths,
but there is no truth in their tales.

Tips for reading “The Feminization of Men in Chaucer’s The Legend of Good Women”

If the first and last few pages are confusing, just keep reading: Hansen is setting what she’s going to say in the context of some ongoing conversations. Focus more on the meat of her reading of LGW, which starts after the break on page 355 and runs through page 362. (But the points are page 354 about medieval concerns about effeminacy are interesting and may be useful as we get further into the Canterbury Tales.)

As you read, think about what Hansen and Green agree on and what they disagree on. Do you find one reading more persuasive than the other? If so, why? Are they compatible interpretations, or does one have to adopt one view and reject the other?