

**THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
ANKARA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF WESTERN LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
(ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE)**

**A NEW HISTORICAL APPROACH TO GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S RELIGIOUS
STORIES: *THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE, THE SECOND NUN'S TALE, AND THE
PARSON'S TALE***



M.A. Thesis

Rashida MEHTEROGHLU

Ankara, 2023

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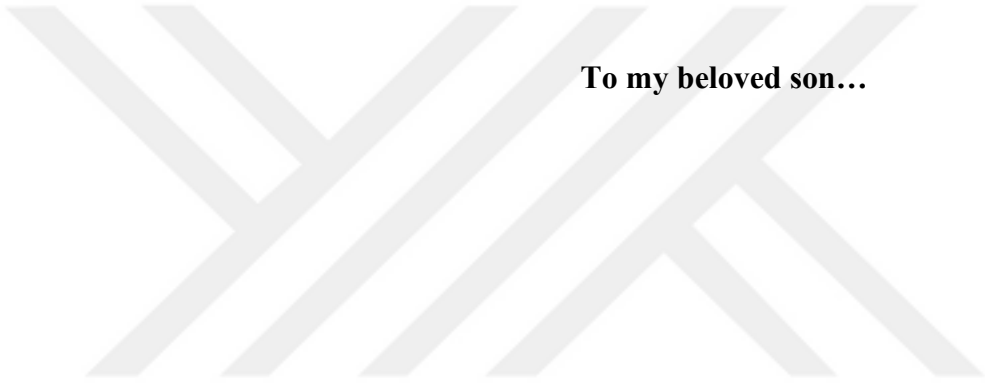
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Rashida MEHTEROGHLU



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To my beloved son...

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to scrutinize religious, moral values, and character images particularly the depiction of virgins or religious women in the works of medieval writer Geoffrey Chaucer, as a reflection of the cultural and social structure of the Middle Ages. This research will enclose how Geoffrey Chaucer challenges and potentially revises the gender politics of his day by giving a voice to women characters against the Middle Era and underlines the importance of virginity through their pure body images as well as the changes and novelties he makes in his writings. Philosophical and religious subjects were very important in the lives of people, who lived in the 13th and 14th centuries. Medieval writers provide the readers with insights into the cultural and social traditions of the medieval epoch linked with religious issues, by writing literary text that uses the mortal body or immortal soul images of the human being or about the Seven Deadly Sins. For Example, written in an allegorical narrative poetic manner, *Piers Plowman* by William Langland presents the body as mortal and the soul as immortal, the body leads the soul to be exiled from heaven by following the temporal whims of the world:

Nor livelihood to thy body that is life to the soul,
Believe not thy body for him a liar teacheth:
For the fiend and thy flesh follow thee together
This and that chaseth thy soul (2006).

Purgatorio 25, the second part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, also offers a basic Christian tenet, namely, God's direct integration of the soul into the newly formed baby, in which the new creature was inhaled by "spirito novo, di virtu repleto" (a new spirit filled with virtue, that is, the active virtue, forms one soul "un'alma sola" (being made a soul) and "che vive e sente e se in se rigira" (that now it moves and feels) which exists, feels and swirls around itself (2008, p. 165). In this perspective, medieval poems place a strong emphasis on the

construction of the human mortal body and the formation of the eternal soul. These views such as God directly produces the human soul, that when the body and soul are combined, they form one united person, and that soul remains to function after death, are founded on the ideas of Christian theologian Thomas Aquinas. Thomas Aquinas states that “body and soul are not two independently existing things, but from them is created one existing substance” (cited in Eberl, 2004, p. 335). The fundamental unity of body and soul that constitutes the human and should be reproduced as an ideal model of the Christian community served its purpose at the end of time through physical resurrection, and this unity of body and soul is extensively employed in the religious theme of literary works as an image or symbol. Another religious topic among medieval writers was about Seven Deadly Vices. In *The Parson’s Tale*, the depiction of the Seven Deadly Vices was inspired from the Bible by Chaucer. In *The Physician’s Tale*, Chaucer reveals his connection to Titus Livius and his distinction from his age. Chaucer employed the images of the virgins or religious women as a symbol of purity and unlike the source and the age of his time, he puts them at the center of the tales. He introduced new ideas and differences. The concepts of change, discontinuity, and power are all used in this context. The research objective is to investigate the role of religious women in religious subjects, as well as to identify Chaucer within his age. These key terms not only demonstrate Geoffrey Chaucer’s distinction from his time, but they also provide a broader view and allow the readers to get insight into the medieval period’s religion and faith-based themes of literary works. The study of religious and moral themes which was the focus of most of the literary studies of the Middle Age is used to assess the role of the religious officials and some women (Virgin, saints) in the medieval community.

1.1 The Subject of the Study

With the triumph over King Harold in the Hastings War, Normandy William marked the beginning of a new period in British Literature. The medieval civilization was a feudal society with a firm hierarchy, in which the nobility, clergy, and peasants were split into three classes, each of which was thought to be created by God. The most striking feature of the medieval community was the Catholic Church managed and regulated a human's life from birth to death, and it would continue to do so in the hereafter. The Church was the physical expression of the Divine's free will and power on earth, and that is why, its commands were not to be disputed, even though many of the priests were working much more persistently for their own benefits than in the favor of God. Medieval people believed that it was the only way to reach Heaven through the allowance of the Roman Catholic Church. Even the Catholic Church was troubled by the religious role which women undertook and their religious responsibilities. During the 14th and 15th centuries, the Church officially was hesitant to include women's saints among the saints. The writer of the book named *Revelations of Divine Love*, and the most blessed Julian of Norwich, was officially unable to rise to the categories of saints by the Catholic Church. Because female bodies were tainted with Eve's sin, they were more susceptible to the demon's influence than men's bodies, therefore women were not considered to be heavenly truth prophecies or suppliers. In her *Revelations of Divine Love*, Julian of Norwich incorporates a female image of Jesus, attributing motherhood to him "as verily God is our Moder" (1901, p. 147-149). As Julian, "Jesus is our very Moder in kynde, of our first makynge; and he is our very Moder in grace, be taking of our kynde made" (1901, p. 147-149). So, he is Christians' mother double: once in our formation and again in his incarnation, in which Jesus takes upon our humans, including body and spirit. Through his crucifixion, Christ integrates us into himself and gives us new life. Julian of Norwich does not merely render Jesus feminine or maternal by attaching prototypical feminine attributes to him, but rather considers women's individual experiences vital to the identity of the great savior of

all humankind. The use of feminine language for Almighty by Julian of Norwich was a daring gesture in such a conventional medieval society, where women were not deemed divine truth providers by the Catholic Church.

Some reformers, unable to endure the corruption and authoritarian attitudes of the Catholic Church at that period, began to make reactions. It was one John Wycliffe, who attacked the Church's immoral and unpromised behaviors, bravely criticized the wealth of the Church against the people's poverty, and demonstrated fearlessly a reformist attitude. He highlighted that theology should be simple, not the complicated hierarchy of the Church, which intended to exploit just the people it claimed to protect. He considered that the Pope and the Church's leadership were both completely under the control of Scripture. Most importantly, he claimed that everybody should be capable of interpreting the Bible for themselves through the common vernacular of the English people. Many from the ecclesiastical elite were terrified of placing the Bible in the hands of the public and in the hands of women. McGrath states that it would also end the priests' privilege of being able to ignore and deceive the community without fear of persecution (Ward, 2013, p. 15). One of the other features of the 14th-century medieval period was the high death rate caused by recurring epidemic diseases, which accounted for most of the social mobility. This virulent strain of dreaded plague aptly called Black Death produced a drop in the population of medieval England, a labor scarcity, and finally, resistance by the lower classes to the landowners from 1348 to 1375. This was a new invasion of England. The invaders were not men but germs. Most of the population of the island perished within months. Untended fields, abandoned children, and even whole villages depopulated come into existence. Some communities unscathed by the Norman Conquest vanished from the map, wiped out by the plague (Courtauld Institute, Manor Roll 77, c. 1360). Finally, in 1381, the Peasants' Revolt arose because of this unsteadiness, and the culminating uprisings. In the Peasants' Revolt a horde of

commoners descended on London to force concessions, but Richard II calmed and dispersed them. Slavery has finally come to an end in the long run. The Black Death also profoundly altered the medieval world by attacking organizations such as the Catholic Church, which was intended to offer permanence and guidance to its people. During times of crisis, medieval Europeans turned to the Church and its leaders for solutions that offered a sense of order and stability. During the epidemic, laypeople's confidence levels and belief in the Church decreased. People could see the aspect of the human in the Church's inability to save humans from the plague's devastation. The plague also brought about two diametrically opposed reactions to the previously accepted religious and moral ideas. Some individuals dancing on the abyss of the black death abandoned the pretext of piety. At the same time, other individuals, with the onset of the plague, explored more profoundly than ever the debts of faith and the pious life and denounced materialistic and power-seeking clergy. As its priority turned to power and wealth, the Catholic Church had already evolved into more secular. As a result of its diminished status, the Church was already at handicap during this period. It is important to highlight that most Europeans did not experience a decrease in their belief in God, but rather a drop in their trust in the Church's abilities. This distrust towards the Catholic Church was growing at the time *The Pardoner's Tale* was written, and in *The Pardoner's Prologue* through his incapability to clarify human sins to save human souls in purgatory during the pandemic, which is well pictured via the writer's use of the complexity of irony, that also contains that double irony:

Therefore my theme is yet, and evere was,

Radix malorum est cupiditas.

Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice

Which that I use, and that is avarice.

But though myself be gilty in that synne,

Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne

From avarice, and soore to repente (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 425-431).

Despite the Church's domination in society, certain critical works, such as *The Canterbury Tales*, were written in Middle English that mocked the Church with a sense of humor. Geoffrey Chaucer is one of the figures who chastised the Church's attitude and actions. In his *Canterbury Tales*, he effectively attacked the church by introducing characters like the Friar, the Summoner, and the Pardoner (Toroujeni, Esmail, and Samani, 2017, p. 150). Chaucer's creativity in writing the *Tales* was to take well-known tales and convert them into characters using Middle English vernacular that would be accessible to the English people, resulting in the beautiful English poetry we can still enjoy today. When Chaucer created the characters in each Tale, it was clear that he meant to utilize humor, wit, and sorrow in each story, as well as a powerful dosage of morals. He also included local dialects into the characters' language where appropriate to add special taste.

Although Chaucer's initial vision for each of the 29 pilgrims is to tell two tales, one on the way to Canterbury and the other on the way back, the twenty-four tales that have survived are wonderful examples of Middle English poetry. Chaucer is known as the "Father of English Literature" because he wrote in the London accent of Middle English in the second half of the 14th century. Chaucer, as a well-educated man, would have had a thorough understanding of the Bible. He mentions and refers to the Bible in his *Tales*, and he does considerably more than simply repeat the most well-known passages in his *Tales*. The mounting interest in his works swelled his spectacular career as an unprecedented poet.

Four of the five churchmen depicted in *The Prologue of The Canterbury Tales* (the Prioress, the Monk, the Friar, and the Pardoner) were in various degrees dishonest to their vocation. As a result, it is feasible to assume that Chaucer conveys the inconveniency produced by the Medieval Church, particularly the individuals who serve the discipline, through his tales and humorous language. The humorous portrayal of the individuals and the

stories they tell gradually become a judgment. Through the depiction of the Prioress, who is a nun, in *The Prologue* the reader gets their first view of the critique of the Medieval Catholic Church through her behavior and appearance. Through the representation of the Prioress, the major concern is that the Church desires prosperity rather than loyalty to the religion and thus to God. Participants of the institution are required to be modest and humble in Christian rituals, however, the Prioress is concerned with her courtly behavior “And peyned hire to counrefete cheere / Of court, and to been estatlich of manere, (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 139-140) rather than the creator of her faith and her looks that is, her public image seemed to be her order of priorities:

Ful fetys was hir cloke, as I was war.
Of smal coral aboute hire arm she bar
A peire of bedes, gauded al with grene,
And theron heng a brooch of gold ful sheene, (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 157-160).

She also keeps pets “Of smale houndes hadde she that she fedde” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 146) and wears diamonds, which put forward all forbidden nuns’ behavior in her. Her activities, in addition to her appearance, show that the Prioress is attempting to emulate courtly behavior instead of following humble Christian principles. Following the Prioress’ depiction, the Monk emerges, and, like her, it’s difficult to imagine him as a devoted man. He is more interested in earthly desires than monks, who are obliged to practice and study the religion. Rather, he simply ignores his obligations or just goes hunting, “Grehoundes he hadde as swift as fowel in flight; / Of prikyng and of huntyng for the hare / Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare”, which is a higher-status occupation (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 190-192). He is depicted as a guy with a chubby figure, “He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt” implying that the Monk is a symbol of indulgence, which is still another sign of his superficiality (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 200). As a manly man, he is a profligate, and domineering man who is a

ruffian. He is against celibacy. In comparison to assisting the impoverished, he prioritizes nourishing his physical appetite and gratifying his desire. In *The General Prologue*, the Friar also stands as an example of materialism and the consequences of passion. He chooses to live well and socializes with wealthy people because he is obsessed with wealth. Because of his own worldly gain, he undermines his institution's religious goal. Rather than committing himself to his religion and assisting those in need, he dresses up in luxurious clothes that are detailed in clarity: "For ther he was nat lyk a cloysterer / But he was lyk a maister or a pope / Of double worstede was his semycope," (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 259-262). With the portrayal above, Chaucer is criticising not only a man who has gone misguided but also the Church as a whole because of being wasteful and expensive. The misdeeds of friars or religious figures were just not known to Chaucer. Gower and William Langland, the author of *Piers Plowman*, agreed with Chaucer that friars were a threat to domestic life at the period, (Conerly, 1990, p. 11) that is, they had drifted away from religion's fundamental essence.

Written in the form of hagiography, prose, and moral allegory and considered to be one of the moral and religious tales of *The Canterbury Tales*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, *The Physician's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale* approach the subject of religion, faith, and sacrifice as a critical issue to be dealt with its different facets. These tales, which reflect the medieval period, are reshaped by being exposed to the changes made by the author. The critical attitude of Geoffrey Chaucer and the modifications he wishes to achieve in his literary works are accomplished by Chaucer's use of images, philosophical views, and characterization, some of which are influenced by his ancient historian and writers. The effect of prior works of some philosophers on the present material was admitted by the writers in the Middle Ages. Reading certain realities of history about the period of the writer can make them better appreciate his connection to his contemporary philosopher. Geoffrey Chaucer began writing in English at a time when French was regarded as the literary language. As Pearsall points out, by writing in

English, Chaucer was able to fully integrate English into the present stream of Italian and French, so Europeanising English poetry by incorporating it into the entire medieval vernacular and Latin tradition (Nemutlu, 2013, p. 2). As a precursor of literature, Chaucer's writings are influenced by his translations and studies of various cultures. He gained access to the writings of Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Dante because of his journeys to Italy (Nemutlu, 2013, p. 2). Cooper states that the shorter hymns to the Virgin which are contained inside the prologues of *The Prioress's Tale* "Lady, thy bounte, thy magnificence / Thy vertu and thy grete humylitee / For somtyme, lady, er men ppraye to thee, thou goast biforn of thy benygnytee," (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 474-480) and *The Second Nun's Tale* "Assembled is in thee magnificence / With mercy, goodnesse, and with swich pitee / But often tyme of thy benygnytee / Ful frely, er that men thyn help biseche, / Thou gost biforn and art hir lyves leche" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 50-56) are based on Dante, the greatest religious poet of the Medieval Period and who proclaimed God's judgment on humanity, which is depicted in *Paradiso* Canto XXXIII, the third part of *Divine Comedy*, "La tua benignita non soccorre, a chi domando, ma molte fiata / In te magnificenza, in te saduna quantunque in creatura e di bontate" (Dante, 2008, ll. 16-21). (Not only thy benignity gives succour / To him who asketh it, but oftentimes / In thee magnificence; in thee unites / Whate'er of goodness is in any creature. (Dante, 2008, p. 219). All these factors influenced Chaucer's literary works, which reflected his keen observation of the medieval community. He reflects on the community he lived in and recommends some religious practices must be evaluated in a developing world because of his considerable education and writing skills. Being the first great English poet of the medieval period, Chaucer paints a realistic image of women and men in late 14th century of England. Through the characters in *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer mirrored the religious life of the Middle Ages. Even, in the analysis of religious figures, it is revealed that Chaucer intended to change the Church by encouraging the use of English rather than Latin in Church

religious practices. So, churchmen were almost infected by a new materialism, as were the people. Except for Parson, every ecclesiastical figure is gross in all appetites.

Religious and Moral conventions are the central topic in the works that have been examined in Chapter 2. This chapter also discusses how Chaucer changed the tales, as well as how the ancient philosophical and religious writings influenced Chaucer. Furthermore, the values of religion or beliefs, specifically Christianity are strongly tied to the principles of honesty, chastity, purification of sins, sacrifice, mortality of body, immortality of the soul of human beings, virginity, and avoidance of secular things are also covered in these given tales. Chaucer does not criticize any Christian doctrine or belief, as a vigorous writer, but he cannot stand the love of wealth, the increasing corruption, and the lax discipline of the religious officials (Purwarno, Chairani, Suhendi, and Ekalestari, 2019, p. 570). But in the certain religious theme of *The Canterbury Tales*, Chaucer satirizes the immoral and sinful clergy of his time. He avoids becoming enraged or offended when he exposes the faults and silliness of his numerous characters in *The Prologue of The Canterbury Tales* by employing subtle and mild humor (Purwarno, Chairani, Suhendi, and Ekalestari, 2019, p. 570). On the other hand, in some of his tales, Chaucer admired the moral and religious qualities of the religious authorities, as well as their ability to present religion to people in an appropriate manner, which included “riche of hooly thought and werk, that Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche; His parissshens devoutly wolde he teche” (Chaucer, 1987, p. 13). In *The Parson's Tale*, Chaucer focuses on the attitudes of the Parson through the actions of the Parson who is the only good member of the clergy and represents the ideal parson among other religious official characters in *The Canterbury Tales*, and his goal is to teach Christian values in an effective manner. French states that the attributes that the Church in medieval times had to promote were acceptance of punishment, respect for discipline, and a spirit of commitment (Creighton, 1957, p. 4). However, there was a lot of theological turmoil in England during Geoffrey

Chaucer's era. Members of the clergy were chastised by people of all social classes. As the Church's moral doctrines were mocked, its authority waned. Many churchgoers saw that the Church was being destroyed by the wicked practices of some clergy. The whole of the image is as Chaucer saw it, as he presented it straightforwardly and in all its vivid actuality in some tales of *The Canterbury Tales* such as *The Summoner's Tale*, and *The Pardoner's Tale* (Creighton, 1957, p. 4). In *The Summoner's Tale*, the Friar teaches for greater things, but his own desire is for food and worldly stuff: "He beggeth mele and chese, / Of alle folk that yaf hym any good, / Ascaunces that he wolde for hem preye" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 1746-1749). He is outspoken about his desire for money "a Goddes halfpeny, or a masse penny," (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 1746-49). While he claims to be holy and pure, he is very fond of Thomas's wife, caressing and cuddling her: "And hire embraceth in his armes narwe, / And kiste hire sweete, and chirketh as a sparwe" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 1802-4). Briefly, he tries to seduce ladies as a debauch, and steals money from the Church. In *The Pardoner's Tale*, the Pardoner calls the virtuous folks forth to purchase his relics and be forgiven of their sins: "Goode men and wommen, o thyng warne I you:/That hath doon synne horrible, / Dar nat, for shame, of it yshryven be, / To offren to my relics" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 377-384). Yet, even though he is convicted of the very sins such as luxurious living, food, and money he preaches against, he can nonetheless convince the others to repent, which is depicted as follows:

Thus kan I preche agayn that same vice
Which that I use, and that is avarice
But though myself be gilty in that synne,
Yet kan I maken oother folk to twynne (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 427-430).

The incessant warfare with France caused a loosening of ties (1337-1453) between England and the Roman church. Because the papacy, under French domination, was captive at Avignon. The entire English nation lifted an outcry against an international church. As

previously stated, religious figures and the Church were powerful during the Middle Ages. After Pope John XXII thoroughly reformed the Church's finance system, the Popes who were at the top of the Catholic Church and the head of the feudal hierarchy were more interested in money. The Church became wealthier as a result, but it became morally deficient (Conerly, 1990, p. 3). It was not just the sum of money obtained that was under dispute, but also the numerous methods of collecting it. The Church's will-probation business grew to be quite profitable. It took gifts from people who were dying and then charged excessive fees to execute their wills. Pardons or punishment offerings sparked a lot of debate in the Church. To make easy money, popes and priests frequently sold them for a low price. Both ideas, which formed the groundwork for the Reformation, were scandalous to the people of the Middle Ages. Despite the changing environment, people continued to place a high value on the importance of Christianity. Chaucer demonstrates his regard for Christian beliefs, he places the emphasis on Church officials with *The Parson's Tale* in *The Canterbury Tales*. On the other hand, unlike *The Pardoner's Tale*, and his other tales, he does not directly criticize the parsons or present them in a conventional manner in this tale. First and foremost, he omits crucial aspects that indicate the corruption of the Catholic Church and expands on the religious issue. In *The Second Nun's Tale*, *The Physician's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale*, Chaucer makes some adjustments to elicit implied criticism on a variety of topics besides the theme of religion. Understanding the alteration of the literary text to its new context according to the writer's object requires the knowledge of historical facts as well as cultural and social characteristics of the period. The study of a literary text in a comparative manner is required by New Historicism, which encompasses both the historical background and framework of the text generated according to the social, cultural, and historical factors of the period the text was written. The citations in this study are supplied in medieval English because the writings are from the Middle Ages; however, current English translations have been included as well. The

way Chaucer reshapes traditional approaches to the women characters, as well as the depictions of the Seven Deadly Sins, both represent the period and reflect parts of philosophy and religion, is the theoretical and conceptual framework of this research. Chaucer is likely the most thoroughly involved with the strength of influence on both bodies and minds particularly in connection to female topics, of all medieval English writers. Even though women are typically seen to be more emotional and bodily, Chaucer highlights the interaction between feeling and thinking, which symbolizes the essence of being in the world, in all his writings and genders. Women occupy essential parts in Chaucer's writings as feeling and thinking characters and the intersection of body and soul connects with the issues of women's literary culture. While he represents the traditional approach in such depictions with the Seven Deadly Sins, he also helps the readers to understand the criticisms of the period's cultural and social framework. Women characters such as Cecilia, and Virginia in *The Second Nun's Tale* and *The Physician's Tale* force the reader to consider the man-woman interaction, and the comparison with medieval women exemplifies the adjustments he makes. As regards Leicester, Chaucer is conscious of both his culture and his own individuality, as well as the richness, and diversity of his own passions and views. Characters are recognized by their social status, and they mirror the cultural and social structure of the medieval period, therefore depictions of them in Chaucer's writings are vital. In this thesis, the Seven Deadly Sins motif is examined through the lens of New Historicism, which contains an examination of text-based research of history, as well as the social and cultural aspects of the time, and finally, the writer's multiple ways of expressing his indirect criticism. Depiction of the images of the women, which Chaucer employed emphasizes positivity with their position that satisfies humans spiritually.

The fourteenth century was a time of great social, religious, political, and intellectual development, but it also happened to be a time of great bodily distress owing to the Black

Death leading to restive times. The disease, which showed little regard for social status, or religious devoutness, developed a unique sense of collective physical vulnerability and concern about bodily survival. Preparing for dying and the hereafter became a top priority because of the Black Death in the middle of the fourteenth century, which appears to have boosted the popularity of the Seven Deadly Sins motif. It was considered that if one died before properly admitting their crimes, they would just go directly to hell. Due to the pandemic's extent and severity, this anxiety became a highly urgent problem. The constant danger of death and the consequent anxiety for one's soul became a common motif in art and literature in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Le Goff expresses that in the Middle Ages, The Church emphasized the path to heavenly purity was the persecution of the body and in this way, immoral impulses would emerge from it (Sabatel, 2020, p. 98). Reynolds suggests that the body in agony is the prominent religious symbol of late medieval England, particularly in the images of Christ's agony (2013, p. 9). This religious-spiritual manifestation of the body as an object was a method for people to understand and express their agony (Reynolds, 2013, p. 9). One recurring theme in the medieval is the female body. Women, who were creatures of embodiment, become the representative characters of being desired ones, yet despised bodies in medieval thought (Patton, 1995, p. 1). In medieval society, in a variety of ways, they have been denied the right to make their own choices about their bodies. This is particularly true when it comes to the roles of women in the medieval Church (Elizondo, 2021, p. 6). One of the key factors, women have been judged more than males is because of their bodies. In the Middle Ages, sin is associated with the body (particularly the female body), which is considered the devil's preferred location, given the moral vulnerability of Eve's children (Sabatel, 2020, p. 98). Women are frequently referred to as "daughters of immoral Eve", who embody the notion of immorality or sinfulness into them and deserve to be suffered for it (Elizondo, 2021, p. 6). So, women are treated as mediocre persons in

contrast to men. In the Bible, Eve is described as the mother of all living things, formed from Adam's ribs and the first woman on Earth, and her sinful, weak-willed, vulnerable to seduction, and seducing behaviours are interpreted as embodying essential and unfavourable beliefs about women in the West. Throughout the Middle Ages, St. Bernard of Clairvaux asserts in his sermons that Eve was "the initial source of all evil, whose dishonor has descended down to all of the other women." In his Pastoral Epistle to St. Timothy, St. Paul provides several reasons why women should not be permitted to educate or advise men: "Because I do not allow women to educate or have dominance over men; she must remain silent. Because Adam was created before Eve. And while Adam was tricked, the woman was misled" (1 Timothy 2:12-14). Women, according to Tertullian, inherit Eve's "shame of immorality and the baseness of being the source of the downfall of mankind:

Do you not consider yourself to be an Eve? Even while God's judgment on this sex of yours continues to exist in our day, it is vital that the shame continue to exist as well. You are the only one who let the Devil in, ate the forbidden fruit first, disobeyed the almighty commandment first; convinced the man whom Devil could not defeat. You ruined the image of God far more quickly. Even the Son of God had to die because of your desert, which is death. (Tertullian, p. 1)

Thus, women, as daughters of Eve, have been thought more worldly and thus eviller than men, who are associated with intellectuality instead of the body. Women have been deemed to be so far from paradise, the garden in which Adam and Eve initially dwelt, because of it, and hence they must strive considerably more to worship God (Elizondo, 2021, p. 6). As Saint Augustine perceives in Adam the spiritual, or divine aspect of human nature and in Eve the physical, or sensual aspect (Sabatell, 2020, p. 99). For him, those, who succeed in resisting the desires of the body are also praised. When Satan was able to hurt the spirit or soul by undermining it through the physical flesh, he was victorious. Mostly all Augustinian theology is characterized by the dualism of the body and soul. He suggests that the evil arises from the

body, and from the woman, who was regarded as a lower corporeal creature (Sabatel, 2021, p. 99). Celeste points out the early Church father's ideas about the moral status of the body and demonstrates the early Church fathers such as St. Jerome's views about the mentioned issue. As Celeste states, St. Jerome held a very different perspective on the human body, and he saw both fragile and wicked, as well as being associated with women. As cited in the Genesis account of Eve's seduction of Adam, as well as the connection to the passion and sexual relations that resulted in the fall from grace, can be credited in part for his viewpoint (Celeste 2). According to Genesis: "when Eve realized that the fruit of the tree was excellent for food and lovely to the sight, as well as a source for acquiring knowledge, she grabbed some and ate it. She also handed some to her partner, who consumed it" (3:6). Eve is tempted by the snake to eat from the tree of knowledge, which she exchanges with Adam, and they grow embarrassed of their nakedness. As a result, God exiles Adam and Eve from Paradise, forcing Adam to work to survive, and Eve to deliver a baby in agony. Eve relinquishes the Garden of Eden. The notion of original sin arose from the Christian doctrine of man's fall. St. Augustine said in his Epistle to the Romans, "death falls upon every man because of Adam, in whom all condemned" (5:12). According to him, Adam did sin in Genesis 3 when he defied God by eating the prohibited tree fruit, but the core of his sin is an interior corruption of the will that places itself above God (Cary, 2013, p. 23).

Throughout the Middle Ages, these official beliefs on women's roles in the domains of immorality, evil, sin, and sensuality shaped how they were perceived. For the medieval Christian world, which was influenced by the Catholic Church, women remained an evil devil's agent, whose sole mission is to remove a man from God by employing the worst attractions of the body (Sabatel, 2020, p. 98). As cited in Sabatel's article that Saint Bernard was concerned about the married man's immortal soul, and he states that "life with a woman without risk is much more challenging than trying to resurrect a dead body" (2020, p. 98). In

the thirteenth century, when philosophical and religious connections were reinforced, Saint Thomas Aquinas, who used the beliefs of Aristotele, explain women's weakness to men and their subjection to them (Sabatel, 2020, p. 99). "Perfect order would have been absent in humanity if some were not regulated by others than themselves," Thomas Aquinas argues. As a result of this submission, a woman is inherently subservient to a man, because a male's authority prevails (St1, q.92, a.1, obj.2). Sabatel emphasized that the combination of religion and philosophy's thought of women, as one might expect, would have a highly negative effect on the treatment and perception of women in all social aspects of life across the Medieval era (Sabatel, 2020, p. 100). However, the pure conception of the Virgin was supposed to replace Eve's position in the Fall and her presumption was thought to provide the human body with the opportunity to attain corporeal and heavenly purity in Paradise. The Virgin was revered for her spiritual grace and bodily purity, and she is frequently used as a model for poets' ideal women, as well as being shown as the desired object (Patton, 1995, p. 6). Evans mentions that the divine reward of virginity as it applies to women in the Bible is the "virgin-martyrs saints, which valued and worshipped in highly regarded (1994, p. 23). Because virginity is an act of obedience to God, the Bible highlights its importance. It is written in the Bible to avoid immoral behavior. As it says, "almost every vice a person commits occurs outside the body, but sexual immorality is a temple of the Holy Spirit in you, whom you have received from God. You are not your own because you were purchased. So, use your body to honor God" (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). As the nunneries and monasteries are the repositories of knowledge, they provide women with advice on virginity as well. Virginity is praised by St. Jerome, who derives the idea that Eve in Heaven was a virgin: "they were thrown down the valley of tears, and sewn together just to cover themselves wool, while nude and unencumbered, and as virgins unspotted, joined the fellowship of the Lord" (cited in Norris, 2001, p. 186). The marriage of Adam and Eve took place after the Fall, implying that it was not part of God's

initial plan: “and we must insist before the fall, Adam and Eve were virgins in Heaven; nevertheless, after they sinned and were sent out of Paradise, they married right away” (cited in Norris, 2001, p. 186). St. Jerome thought that all sexual urges, including inside marriage, were wicked, and that becoming a Christian required being a virgin. When the early medieval Church promoted virginity more vigorously, and even as monastery institutions became the primary focus of artistic development, Virgins increased the category of female saints (Winstead, 1997, p. 8). In the medieval community, a girl’s bodily purity prior to marriage was a source of concern because it confirmed her purified contribution to her husband’s family through delivery once she married (Philips, 2010, p. 4). The Church, on the other hand, had evolved a lavish view of virginity that extended much further than physical bounds. Virginity was viewed as a viable life option in which one may dedicate oneself to religion in a more comprehensive manner than marriage. Virginity has completely exceeded the typical marital condition: abstinence from sexual intercourse, a life of meditation, which is suitable for angels in the World, and the path to eternity. Physical purification of the women, virginity, on the other hand, was viewed as the ideal situation for women. Women were usually categorized into two groups by the Church: Virginity was at the top of the list, which leads to the highest spiritual reward; below that, in decreasing order of value were marriage and widowhood. The idea of virginity, which was linked with women in the Middle Ages, might indicate two reasons. One developed from the physiology of sexual contact; a recurrent aspect of Christian theology envisioned a woman’s initial unblemished body becoming tainted after being violated. The other reason was the idea that Mary, the mother of Jesus, a female role model, had been virgin despite having conceived, which had become a central component of Christian teaching (Philips, 2010, p. 4). According to Karras, virginity was an emotional as well as a bodily term in medieval thought such as a behavioral attitude and a goal to transcend bodily things (Philips, 2010, p. 4). Philips states that Virginia, a fourteen-year-old girl in *The*

Physician's Tale, embodies both aspects of virginity. She advocates of never committing sin with her body, and hence rejects social situations that encourage flirtation (4). Her disposition caused her to be as pure in spirit as in body, she flourished in virginity and reminds the reader of a more abstract sense of virginity (Philips, 2010, p. 4). By celebrating the virtues of Virginia, Chaucer spends a significant portion of the poem portraying not just her youth and beauty, but also her spiritual beauty: "And if that excellent was hire beautee, / A thousand foold moore vertuous was she. // In hire ne lakked no condicioun / That is to preye, as by discrecioun" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 39-44). In *The Clerk's Tale*, Griselda is also blessed with virginity which implies common medieval attributes of maidenliness such as repression of desire, loyalty to a father, and devotion (Philips, 2010, p. 4).

Later medieval writers in the 13th and 14th centuries praised the achievements of a charismatic woman who resists the medieval community, whereas clerical medieval writers stressed just the virgin's devotion. The clerical medieval writers first portrayed the virgin was as a modest supplicant and a pious person, their aim to create or promote virgins as Brides of Christ, which is depicted in one of the clerical medieval poems called *Pearl*:

A blysfyl lyf thou says I lede;
Thou woldes know therof the stage.
Thow wost wel when thy perle con schede
I was ful yong and tender of age,
Bot my Lorde the Lombe, thurgh Hys Godhede
He toke myself to Hys maryage,
Corounde me quene in blysse to brede (Pearl, 2001, ll. 409-415).

It stresses the importance of the afterlife by symbolizing the immortal spirit of a virgin whose female body has been lifted from death to be revived as a celestial Bride of Christ. However, later medieval writers highlighted the distinctions between the ordinary people and the

heroine, portraying her as a strong mediator with God. Late medieval texts, like Jacobus De Voragine's widely publicized text *Legenda Aurea*, which provided a basis for many English writers, such as Geoffrey Chaucer, depict virgins as bold, frequently unruly women. In Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*, St. Juliana's Legend is chiefly related to her battle with the demon and her dealings with conflicting spiritual power. As her admirer reveals that he cannot convert to Christianity for fear of imperial vengeance, St. Juliana exclaims, "If you are so scared of a worldly emperor, how can you imagine me not to dread an everlasting one?" (Voragine, 1993, p. 160). In another legend of *Legenda Aurea*, St. Justina's Legend, Jacobus describes Cyprian's attempt to seduce Justina with the help of stronger demons, but they were unsuccessful. Cyprian argues: "What kind of strength have you got, that you can't overcome a plain girl?" (Voragine, 1993, p. 194). In the legend, women taking the veil, and men taking the cross are praised. Similarly, the narratives of some tales of Geoffrey Chaucer are broken from the conventional way that destabilized the authority of the Church and challenged other conventional relationships of domination and subordination, for example, the influence of husbands over women or of masters over servants. According to Winstead, the traditions of virgins recorded in late 13th and early 14th century England, which paradoxically exalt the virgins' unruliness, reflect both the fears and imaginations that pervaded a society experiencing dramatic and rapid social and economic change (1997, p. 65-66).

1.2 The Importance of the Thesis

The object of this study is to provide knowledge into the significance of Geoffrey Chaucer's writings as a representation of cultural and social values through the examination of untraditional components and innovations produced by him. The descriptions of a woman, as well as the depiction of the Seven Deadly Sins, offer not only historical events, but also allow for a study of the period's social norms. In Chaucer's literary works, the essential motif of the Seven Deadly Sins, which has been employed as an image for philosophical and

religious topics in medieval and prior works, becomes a resource for critical analysis. Geoffrey Chaucer presents a broader view of women, and religious issues, by changing the atmosphere of the medieval era. In a period and according to the standards of society, the Catholic Church's authority of power is indirectly criticized. In medieval literature, Chaucer depicted Parson as an idealized character with profound religious knowledge, Cecilia, and Virginia as medieval powerful virgins. The characterization of Parson and Cecilia is necessary because the characters are positioned in an unconventional work, in which most religious norms can be observed. *The Physician's Tale*, which is based on the story from Titus Livius' Histories, is considered an early work of Chaucer, written before almost all of *The Canterbury Tales* were started, was inspired from the Holy Bible "the story of Jephtha", who sacrificed his daughter to God. In *The Physician's Tale*, Virginia is deemed as a noble knight's sacrificed daughter and a plain object in pagan Rome, which is a common perspective in the medieval community. In *The Physician's Tale*, Virginia is given a voice like another character Cecilia in *The Second Nun's Tale*. Chaucer worked on these works, during the Middle Ages when religious, social, and cultural issues were tumultuous. In a changing environment, he used a variety of methods to criticize religious values. This thesis is crucial because it provides evidence for the alterations and innovations brought forward by the writer. Social, historical, religious, and philosophical research has been required to demonstrate Chaucer's distinctions. The role of the female characters, as well as the depiction of the ideal Parson and his moral teachings about the Seven Deadly Sins, reveal Chaucer's influence from biblical writings and his willingness to change the real atmosphere of the medieval environment. The historical, religious, and philosophical dimensions of the Seven Deadly Sins have been examined in this thesis. The research goal of this study was to figure out what Chaucer was critical of and what methods he used to express his criticism. This thesis integrates historical events about the period's cultural and social structural system, additional information about religious values,

factors that influence Chaucer, and the author himself, and interpretation of his considerations through the research of the characterization of women characters and changes in them. A study based on the principles of New Historicism, demands consideration of the period's historical, social, religious, and philosophical aspects. New Historicism, inspired by Michel Foucault's theories on History, asserts that history is defined by changes and transformations, that it is discontinuous, and a period cannot be defined by a single view, which is a commonly recognized vision of community. History and ideas, like mankind, develop over time. These preconceptions necessitate research into the existing and prior values and circumstances of the period. The main contribution of this research to the realm of medieval literature is a New Historicist analysis of Chaucer's literary works. Change, concerns about the role of women in the community, and the real value of life as necessary as the theme of religion and with the influence of biblical writings in *The Parson's Tale* and his teachings about the Seven Deadly Sins motif as a critical approach applied in Chaucer's works. Each of the Seven Deadly sins is portrayed as a branch of a tree in the Parson's sermon. The worst of the sins is pride, which is the root of all other sins:

Now been they cleped chieftayres, for as muche as they been
Chief and spryng of alle othere synnes. Of the roote of this severe synnes, is Pride the
General roote of alle harmes. For of this roote spryngen certein branches, as Ire,
Slewthe, Avarice, Glotonye and Lecherye (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 387-389)

CHAPTER I NEW HISTORICISM

Works of literature are regarded as historical texts by New Historicism. The concept of New Historicism puts forward a subjective attitude toward literary works that were mostly used in Renaissance Studies. A literary text reflects the cultural and social system of the era in which it was produced as suggested by New Historicism. History, society, culture, and other aspects that assist to establish the meaning or content of texts should be considered when reading them. Social and political structures, according to New Historicism, shape identity and literature is another type of social structure that is created by society and then plays a role in molding that society's culture (Doğan, 2005, p. 77). According to New Historicists, while interpreting a literary text, not only the text but also non-literary texts, as well as cultural and social aspects, the author's interests should be addressed to comprehend the message of the literary text. The writing that results from all these aspects may appear argumentative since it does not present a single point of view, yet a scientific study might better explain the author's objective (Nemutlu, 2013, p. 15).

The first book to outline the main tenets of the new historicist method was *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* written by Stephen Greenblatt in the early 1980s and was inspired by Michel Foucault's theories on history, providing literary critics with a different perspective to evaluate literary works. New Historicism is a literary practice rather than a literary ideology, according to Greenblatt, who admits that it is difficult to characterize the approach. He suggested referring to literary criticism as Cultural Poetics. New Historicism, though, flourished and eventually came to be accepted in the literary community. One may argue that New Historicism developed as a response to formalist critique, also known as Russian Formalism, and New Criticism, which emphasizes the structure of the literary text. Without considering the historical settings of their distribution,

New Critics evaluated literature in isolation. Texts were viewed from a new Criticist perspective as autonomous, self-contained things with their own form and meaning. New criticism ignored other texts, philosophy, history, or its audience in favor of analyzing the literary work in terms of its own structure. New Historicism expounds on the different types of circumstances in which a literary work is formed, in contrast to the formalist approach. It refuses to distinguish between a text that is literary and one that is not. A literary work is believed to exist independently of its time, culture, and author, according to New Criticism. In other words, it ignores and gives no weight to the reality that work was generated in a historical setting. Therefore, it may be claimed that New Criticism neglected literature's historical component (Bressler, 1994, p. 181). But according to Stephen Greenblatt, history is crucial in forming literary texts, thus its significance shouldn't be minimized or ignored. Michel Foucault, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Jacques Derrida were among the theorists who influenced the development of New Historicism. Harold Aram Veenser is a central figure in the New Historicism movement. Veenser argues in his book about *New Historicism* that it has enabled scholars to engage with fields including history, politics, economics, art, and anthropology (1989, p. ix). Additionally, New Historicism opened doors for humanists to study politics and power. It might be stated that New Historicism fully understands how any topic could affect people's life choices. Veenser asserts that New Historicism unites literature, art, history, and other disciplines by demonstrating the interconnectedness of all these multiple disciplines (cited in Kurt, 2019, p. x). Veenser compiles a list of the fundamental tenets of New Historicism that are used to categorize both followers and critics of the movement. The following list of these presumptions is given:

1. That every expressive act is embedded in a network of material practices;
2. That every act of unmasking, critique, and opposition uses the tools it condemns and risks falling prey to the practice it exposes;
3. That literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably;
4. That no discourse, imaginative or archival, gives access to unchanging truths nor expresses inalterable human nature;

5. That is a critical method and a language adequate to describe culture under capitalism participation in the economy they describe (Veeser, 1989, p. xi).

Regarding the first presumption, Veeser highlights the interconnectedness of literature, social norms, and financial practices and defines new historicism as "a fresh knowledge of how history and culture determine each other" (1989, p. xiii). The first premise is like Marxist thought in that literature is considered as a part of the material foundation rather than a transcendental, artistic superstructure. Closer to deconstructive theory is brought about by the second point. Attempts by historians or critics to view history or literature as fragmented and discontinuous serve as an illustration of this (Green, 1995, p. 116). A narrative whose content is wholly in conflict with its structure is created by expressing this discontinuity in a text that is coherent and combined. The third premise focuses on the connections between literary and non-literary works that can cross historical eras and the inevitable interactions between culture and power. The last point is that the historian or critic cannot avoid the factors that capitalism has played in shaping his or her own history (Green and LeBihan, 1995, p. 116).

New Historicism, underpinning Derridean's opinion that literary works contain all the thoughts, or everything is accessible to us in textual form, tries to break a systematic or hierarchical approach, that is, by looking at history as depicted and documented in literary texts. New Historicism seems to reinforce Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist thesis that "there is nothing outside the text" by incorporating deconstructionist and post-structuralist criticism. New Historicist critics argue that all historical information can only be received in a textualized manner. As a result, the text incorporates history, and new historicist researchers argue that history can never be restored and that historical events are replaced by texts. On the other hand, historicism takes a systematic approach by constructing a historical framework and assigning the literary text to it. In other words, whilst Historicism is focused on the environment of the past, New Historicism is engaged in how the past is depicted in the texts. Cox and Reynolds claim that new historicists view non-literary texts as well as literary texts

as occurrences and things in the world, as well as components of society, human life, and historical structures of authority and power (2013, p. 3). New Historicism differs from Old Historicism, according to Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, by its lack of trust in objectivity and continuity, as well as its emphasis on the processes whereby the history is made or invented, rather than the actual reproduction of the past (Doğan, 2005, p. 79). So, there is discontinuous history, the past is constantly narrated and represented. In *the Renaissance and Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Stephen Greenblatt outlines the shift toward conveyed values because of changing atmosphere. The terms discontinuity and change are all used in this analysis. New Historicism treats the minority in the same way as the majority and everything in a society acts as an agent. It focuses on minority groups, which have been neglected by traditional history such as women, the oppressed, the insane, and homosexuals. New Historicists strive to understand the period's social and cultural structure, as well as the power in terms of explaining the characters (Nemutlu, 2013, p. 16). According to New Historicism, power is pervasive, and it is possible to observe in all aspects of the community. Because religion and morality are the primary topics of the research, the objective of this study will be on the depictions of power in that society as well as the impact of power on gender relations. New Historicism demonstrates to be a method of critical analysis that has the possibility to be productive and effective not only in the interpretations of the historical, and literary texts but also in thinking out all the present through numerous historical explanations. In addition to the persistent relationship between a single text and other texts, New Historicist critics highlight the continuous touch between history and text. We may be able to expose not just the social environment of a literary text but also the current social atmosphere by adopting a new historicist method. Our relationship with any specific literature, like history itself, is a continuous, changing, and incomplete process. The value of Chaucer's works is investigated using keywords from New Historicism, such as discontinuity, power, culture,

context, and religious subject, as he reshaped the images of religious characters, such as the Parson in the *Parson's Tale*, and female bodies, such as Cecilia in the *Second Nun's Tale* to fulfill his requirements. The fundamental sources for body and soul images, religious figures' representations, literary, historical, and cultural texts, and papers used to offer clarity into the medieval epoch are all explored in a coherent argumentative style. The modifications and ideas supplied by Chaucer are investigated through literary analysis and discussion. Literary, historical, and philosophical writings are all examples of primary and secondary sources.

New Historicists disclose the discontinuity structure of history and the hardly fixed and unchanging human condition people, as well as the fact that no book may reach unchangeable realities, based on concepts derived from Foucault's views on history (Veesser, 1989, p. 17). Unlike the historicist approach, which focused solely on establishing how a book reflected its time, New Historicism considers how the text is affected by the time in which it was written. It also considers how the piece is shaped by the era in which it was created, the writer's socioeconomic background, psyche, and the literature that may have impacted him. New Historicism, which emerged in the 1980s in response to both formalist and old historicist theories, saw the literature as “a kind of discourse placed among a series of ideologies religious, political, and economic that both influenced and were molded by it” (Habib, 2008, p. 761). Their central focus is to see the past as defined by a singular system of interpretation and thought. With its aim of identifying a unified political vision, which is usually shared by the entire educated population or most citizens, old historicism is regarded to be monological. New Historicist critics, in contrast to Historicists, see history as “a very complex combination of opinions, ideas, and traditions, sometimes they are in confrontation and disagreement with one another” (Brannigan, 1998, p. 31). Culture, history, society, and several other aspects, are considered in New Historicism when determining the interpretation of a piece. Greenblatt avoids the old methods of commencing with such a consideration of the historical backdrop

and thereafter proceeding on to an analysis of the content which is disclosed by that backdrop, emphasizing the differences between New Historicism and Old Historicism. All theories of thinking, and all literary materials, according to historicists, “must be located together within historical context” (Habib, 2008, p. 760). Historicists believe that the content and structure of texts are defined only by the historical context in which they were written. Greenblatt, on the other hand, argues in *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance*:

The critical perspective presented in this collection calls into question the traditions that maintain a clear distinction between the 'literary foreground' and the 'political backdrop.' Such distinctions indeed exist, but they are created and repainted on a frequent basis by artists, audiences, and readers, rather than being fundamental in the texts. On the one hand, these concepts define the range of artistic alternatives available within a specific representative form, and on the other, they link that model to the complex web of organizations, rituals, and ideas that make up the culture as a whole.

(Greenblatt, 2005, p. 5-6).

New Historicism, in comparison to earlier historicists, rejects the metaphor of background and foreground by putting all social behavior, including literature and theater, on the same platform. The consequence of Geertz's thick description is that he gives equal weight to all kinds of texts and he rereads them to disclose nuances that handle the overall community (Brannigan, 1998, p. 34). According to Clifford Geertz, culture is the medium of semiosis, a system of rules that governs social life by controlling the creation of those collections of customs, practices, and artifacts to which the term “culture” is usually utilized, and a set of control methods, such as plans, recipes, rules, and instructions. Geertz views culture as an illustrative and essentially literary technique for recounting culture in motion and culture embodied in the actions and narratives of collective human beings. That is, Clifford Geertz's idea of culture holds that social acts are texts that may be read and analyzed by new historicists. He contends that since men are necessary for discussing culture, human nature cannot live apart from culture. In a similar manner, discussing man requires culture (Geertz, 1973, p. 49). By using thick descriptions, new historicist scholars aim to examine the cultural

and social mechanisms by which some sections of society are excluded and disregarded (Brannigan, 1998, p. 35). As Colebrook claims, “descriptions of texts would be thick if they related to the social and cultural contexts in which the text acted.” A thick description is a detailed contextual analysis that differs from formalism in that it does not place the meaning of the text in the text itself (1998, p. 75). Veesper contends that new historicists can read an event or anecdote differently by using thick descriptions to uncover the logic, behavioral rules, and driving forces that govern the entire community through the interpretation of the smallest detail (1989, p. 11). The thick description is of this form of linguistically self-conscious ethnographic activity. The thick description, which focuses on an occasion, performance, and other activities, is also known as interpretative narrating (cited in Lyu, 2021, p. 1076). New Historicists connect works of literature with many other cultural aspects of an era through a procedure of thick description. According to Geertz, there is no single feature or notion that can explain what constitutes human culture when it comes to assessing cultures. For New Historicists, Geertz is significant because he believes that a piece of writing as a representation of culture must be studied simultaneously, and that human behavior is tied to culture because human life is nothing without its manner of acting. The greatest way to understand history is as a study of entire cultural systems where institutions, social behaviors, and literary works are all interconnected. Because “a culture is already a form of a text,” it should not be considered the background of a text (Colebrook, 1998, p. 73). Texts are cultural manifestations that have been closely tied to a culture. According to Geertz, every member of a community should be viewed as a cultural artifact (1973, p. 51). Nevertheless, because the main consideration of New Historicism is literature writings, in literary studies, the critic begins by analyzing a specific event in history and then moves on to a deep examination of the literary piece, considering all other factors that contributed to the work's creation. When the social context of literature is considered, Stephen Greenblatt tries to demonstrate via

examples that “the border between literary text or other social activities is not a permanent one but one in a constant process of negotiation and reconstruction” (2005, p. 39). Focusing on the circularity of depictions in both literary and non-literary texts help New Historicist readers understand a text's meaning. Colebrook asserts that “there is no such thing as a cultural domain as such, formed by creative history; instead, the cultural domain is a space of controversy where multiple forces, such as political, historical, and economic forces, interact” (1998, p. 24). Culture is dynamic and survives through the exchange of symbols. A singular viewpoint cannot describe a community as stable or unify it. Geertz highlights the importance of culture in the formation of human beings by stating that “there is no such thing as a human nature free from culture” (1973, p. 3). He defines culture as “a number of control systems such as plans, recipes, rules, and instructions for the controlling of behaviors” (Geertz, 1973, p. 3). The insight that texts are also involved in the construction of ideologies and culture results from the shared belief of New Historicists and Cultural Materialists that all human behavior, practices, and knowledge are creations and construction. Texts must also be viewed as dynamic and not merely as phrases and examples. Since writings “function, operate and participate in a dynamic and changing environment; they are not just words or examples,” as per Colebrook (1998, p. 42). Since the New Historicists argued that literature could contribute to social construction instead of serving as a mirror of it, then Foucault's ideas on history were crucial to how they viewed the relationship between history and text. The text is viewed as textual and active in Foucault's discursive work. Because it is already an active participant in that history, Colebrook also says that “it does not need to be tied to some sense of its historical background” (1998, p. 40). She contends that as texts and discourses themselves constitute history; literature should not concentrate on a particular historical process. The historical, social, and political circumstances and effects of literary creation and reproduction are also of particular interest to New Historicist research. As a result of his belief that “the

possibilities and patterns for action are always socially and historically placed,” Montrose believes that work cannot be completely free from the social and historical environment in which it was generated (cited in Veenser, 1989, p. 21). As a result of the authoring, revising, and circulation of medieval manuscripts within these social networks, literary works are produced. “A text is considerably more than a written, linguistic phenomenon,” claims Veenstra (1995, p. 5). He continues, “A writing is profoundly influenced by the elements that form and shape our civilizations and histories as a human-made object” (Veenstra, 1995, p. 5). The New Historicist critique rebels against the notion that historians can give modern people a trustworthy and accurate picture of any civilization or era. The New Historicist theory holds that those who write about history do so while bearing in mind their prejudices. As a result, the New Historicist movement declares that history is merely one of many perspectives or discourses of seeing the world. Judith L. Newton touches on the new historicist speculation in her article by pointing out that people are susceptible to cultural codes, that truthfulness is impossible in our world, and that our historical position affects how we describe the world, how we understand language, and how we understand the past independently of the politics and value systems in our immediate environment (1989, p. 152).

New Historicists interpret histories against conventional histories, examining the methods by which texts disrupt themselves. Greenblatt utilizes words like shifting and jostling to depict an ongoing process rather than a notion of history as static. This is because “even as the universe depicted by new historicists is one where conflicting and colliding forces and ideas exist, so the interpreting of that world is itself a changing process” (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 7). New Historicist analyses are frequently comparative studies that involve the study of the literary piece as well as the historical, literary, and political context, as well as all types of production associated with the age in which the literary work was created. As a result, changeable interests or new circumstances of the periods form the context of a piece of

literature, rather than a fixed background or conditions that help define its interpretation. History, according to New Historicists, cannot be completely objective. Because it does not view history as an objective series of observations describing what happened in a specific time and place, the New Historicist approach to the recording of history is particularly intriguing. It is more of a subjective account that is shaped by the socio-cultural setting in which a historian with “power,” in Foucauldian terminology, creates knowledge rather than merely records it. As a result, knowledge is disseminated, and discourse is circulated.

The historian can never produce objective interpretations, despite his commitment to doing so, because he is unable to look beyond his own ideas, experiences, and background. The historian cannot avoid the perspectives offered by the ideologies and institutions of his own time because he is inexorably entangled in his own social and cultural circumstances. When a historian reads a “text,” they engage in interpretation, just like a literary analyst would, enhancing the subjectivity of any history report (cited in Garg, 2020, p. 56).

Because one's personal historical position, as well as the ideals and values that are embedded in it, influence one's understanding of the world. “Men create their personal history,” Greenblatt argues in *Renaissance Self Fashioning*, “but they do not construct it under situations selected by selves, however under conditions explicitly supplied and conveyed from of the past” (2005, p. 239). Just like Montrose rightly notes that everyone has their unique “viewpoints,” which are molded by instinct, history, and sociocultural environment (Veese, 1989, p. 23). As a result, the contexts of literary works may shift over time. New Historicism, according to Louis Montrose, makes no effort to discern between text and its context. That is the difference between literature and history. He also claims that New Historicism does not give special consideration to any work or author. He is outspoken in his opposition to the notion that history is less important than literary works (Montrose, 1989, p. 18). New Historicism, according to Louis Montrose, who is in *Professing the Renaissance: The Poetics and Politics of Culture*, is concerned with the “textuality of history and the

historicity of literary texts” (1989, p. 20). Montrose tries to highlight the correlation between text and history through his historicity and textuality theory in this way:

By text's historicity, I suggest the cultural distinctiveness, the social embedding, of all modes of writing—not just the texts that critics analyze, but also the texts that we analyze. By the textuality of history, I mean to imply, first, that we cannot have access to a complete and truthful past, a living resource presence, uninfluenced by the surviving text-based- based remnants of the community in a debate whose preservation we cannot presume to be simply reliant, but must rather assume to be at least partly the result of complicated and sub the social processes of survival and effacement; and, second, when viewed as the sources upon which historians root their own writings, called histories, those textual remains are themselves susceptible to later literary contemplations (1989, p. 20).

Whereas “historicity of texts” relates to the "based on culture specificity and social embedment of all styles of writing", “textuality of history” corresponds to the fictionality and constructedness of history, which Foucault explains in his archaeological approach to history as old file, making the argument that old historians completely remove and even out all discrepancies, inconsistencies, and discontinuities and create a consistent and clear historical narrative. According to Opperman, the text's meaning is ambiguous and open to additional interpretations due to the structure of the language. Texts may generate meanings based on the situations in which they were written, but those meanings may change over time as contexts and discourses do as well (Opperman, 1999, p. 4). Historical texts can be contextualized in various eras depending on the circumstances of the period, just like literary texts are in the process of change. This argument supports the textuality of history by arguing that, as the authors of any literary document, historians must choose which events to include and which to leave out when writing about the past. It is obvious that history cannot be written objectively. The subjectivity of writing history has to do with the way language is structured as well as the perspective from which the historian writes, which is colored by the time in which she or he lives. Additionally, according to Opperman, the relationship between historical texts and others must be considered, just as the relationship between a literary piece and other literary texts must be examined to determine its meaning.

Foucault describes archaeology as “systems that construct assertions as occurrences, with their own circumstances and realm of appearances, and as objects, with their own potential and fields of use” in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1970, p. 128). He differentiated his approach to analysis from structuralism and older historicism, which all stressed cohesion in the analysis of a text. “By considering contractions as objects to be defined, the archaeological research does not aim to locate a recurring factor in their place; it attempts to ascertain the length and form of the gap that separates them,” Foucault proposes (1970, p. 170). The goal of the archaeological analysis is to figure out what roles it performs, how it interacts with other contractions, and how it relates to the writing itself. Different discursive rules may function at the same historical time, and they can be compared to demonstrate their singularity, as well as what discontinuity entails. By concentrating on discontinuities, as opposed to the history of ideas, which is composed of similar happenings in a linear manner, archaeology attempts to investigate differences and “to create the structure of changes that comprise transformation” (Foucault, 1970, p. 192). That is traditional historians, regard history as information and background to the text. Foucault's archaeological theory of history as archive notifies yet another tendency of the New Historicists, in that they regard history as fictionalized. Contemporary historicists, according to Foucault, emphasize the discontinuities and contradictions of history rather than writing in a cohesive way:

The issue is no longer one of tradition or drawing a line; rather, it is one of drawing boundaries; it is no longer one of the enduring foundations, but rather one of the alterations that act as new foundations, or the reconstruction of foundations. The topic of how to define the various notions that allow us to conceptualize discontinuity is one that is emerging from a broad field of questions, some of which are already familiar, as this new kind of history attempts to build its own theory... (Foucault, 1970, p. 5).

Unlike traditional historians, he does not write history as a single, continuous narrative. History, according to Foucault, does not follow a linear path and does not have a set beginning and finish. In his opinion, history is made up of many interwoven narratives and different ways of thinking about the world, in addition to what people think and believe about

it. According to Booker, Foucault views society as the result of a sophisticated network of interconnected narratives, and he believes that historical events are influenced by interconnections that are too complicated to be articulated through simple cause and effect processes (1996, p. 137). When viewed from this perspective, history can be viewed as a display of power. History, according to Foucault, places itself in relation to the power that was dominant just at one period. Because “power is everywhere” and “comes from everywhere,” it is neither an agency nor a structure in this sense (Foucault, 1970, p. 63). Rather, it is a form of meta power or reality authority that permeates the community and is constantly in change and debate. The term 'power/knowledge' is used by Foucault to indicate that power is derived from established fields of knowledge, scientific knowledge, and reality. Power is associated with knowledge according to New Historicist theory, which views it as a social construct rather than a fact. It does not live in institutions or individuals, but rather operates on the tenet of circulation, whereby each person in the community contributes to the maintenance of the existing power structures. On the one hand, having knowledge implies that you can control others as well. On the other hand, if you are powerful, you can decide whether anything is appropriate or not. The truth, according to New Historicists, is a fabrication supported by authority. The truth of history cannot be more accurately captured in historical or literary literature. Texts influence or change the prevailing codes of culture while also representing the social behavior patterns of that civilization. Since reality is typically decided by the authorities, New Historicism prefers to use representations that are both reflecting and producing power. These representations bring into question the essence of reality. Due to the abundance of representations made by individuals from various eras and socioeconomic backgrounds, it is impossible for history to claim to have the whole truth. As different texts are reviewed, the degree of effect of relations of power on socially approved behaviors and cognition can be disclosed through conventional and dominant ideas and

viewpoints acknowledged in a culture at a given time. According to the new historicist viewpoint, dominant discourses create a society in such a way that any rebellion against well-established patterns is portrayed as abnormal. On this subject, Nietzsche's influence on New Historicism can be viewed. In *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche demonstrates that the universe of material beings is created by the combination of many forces into separate ideologies. Nietzsche developed a radical philosophy of truth based on perspectivism: "In my opinion, no facts are precisely what there aren't, only interpretations. We cannot create any fact within itself, and it may be foolish to try" (cited in Spinks, 2003, p. 140). Nietzsche opposed truthfulness, claiming that what is perceived to be the truth resembles what the authority in power has already identified as fact. Those in positions of authority tend to distort the facts to fulfill their needs. As a result, according to Nietzsche, the Will to Power manifests itself whenever an individual or institution misinterprets reality for their ideals and purposes. New Historicists believe that power is everywhere, as Foucault did, and that it is not a concentrated power incorporated in the state, but rather diffused across a society, embedded in all community relations, and represented in literary writings. Stephen Greenblatt writes that "the text is self-consciously rooted in communities, life circumstances, and power relationships" (1982, p. 7). New historicist analysts are inspired by Foucault's theories about power to examine history in search of mechanisms of oppression that force individuals of the community to keep in line with ideology, regardless of whether they support or oppose it. Power struggles can be evident in all types of discourses between humans, including men and women. Foucault states that "power, rather than being the effect of social and legal principles institutions, is a problem of the delicate and precise control of bodies" (Gutting, 1994, p. 20). Suppression and oppression are mirrored by both Marxists and New Historicists. According to Marxism "in any cultural system, economics is the key factor, and the prevailing method of creative production" (Brannigan, 1999, p. 24). Unlike Marxism, which concentrates on class

conflict, New Historicism, which will be researched as an interdisciplinary theory in this thesis, emphasizes power, which is manifested not just in class conflict but in every area of society. The representation of a fight for power between men and women in Chaucer's works, and how characters attempt to exhibit and exert influence on each other, will be one of the thesis's research problems.

According to Greenblatt, the power dynamics that exist in social discourse influence how people perceive their own selves. Even while people set out to shape themselves, societal institutions like the state, family, and religion do shape them. Although the term “fashioning” has been used for a long time to refer to the formulation or the producing process, it was first used specifically in the sixteenth century to refer to “the formation of the self” (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 1). He argues that despite appearing to be a development of self, identity development seemed to be a cultural artifact and a consequence of power relations in the culture in all the papers and texts he analyzed (2005, p. 256). He assumes that self-fashioning is no longer an act of autonomous self-realization but rather a process of shaping oneself to correspond to an existent authoritarian social force. According to New Historicism, the self is created in connection to the society of origin and is shaped by social norms and self-invention. The self is formed by political, ideological, social, and historical forces (Brannigan, 1999, p. 118). According to Greenblatt, society is where the human self is developed, and the culture of a society is influenced by its political and social power. Politics and social influence so have a role in shaping the self. Greenblatt claims that a self is first produced in subjection to an “absolute power” or authority and that a self is then developed in connection to the Other, the stranger, a category that the authority labels as subversive because it is the other that is not the authority: “Self-fashioning happens in response to something that is viewed as hostile, unusual, or foreign. To fight and destroy this dangerous Other a heretic, a savage, a witch, an adulteress, a traitor it must be uncovered” (Greenblatt, 2005, p. 9). As a result, the

stranger is either destroyed or trapped, stripped of his otherness. This entrapment involves a self-loss that makes it possible for a dialectical self-recovery. The process of self-fashioning involves two relationships: one with authority and the other with change. Variation between totalization and differentiation controls the self. According to Greenblatt, people identify who they are with respect to who they are not, thus who they are not must be dehumanized and branded as “other”. Peter Barry focuses on how New Historicism acknowledges and pays attention to a wide range of divergence and eccentricity. He claims that New Historicist critiques are always wholly in favor of liberal ideals of individual liberty since New Historicism is inherently anti-system (Barry, 1995, p. 175). To demonstrate that disadvantaged cultures also have a substantial impact and therefore are important to society, New Historicist researchers always pay particular attention to the groups that are not affiliated with the dominant parties and those who oppose the dominance of the dominant. Refusing to acknowledge the possibility of a singular, unifying message, New Historicism tries to look for formerly neglected or untouched resources, neglected social groups, and unusual resources. New Historicism places a high value on those who are seen as alien or bothersome in contrast to us. They do live, despite being ignored, marginalized, or suppressed. The repressed and the disenfranchised are of particular interest to New Historicists, as are stories concerning women, the insane, and colonized people. Therefore, according to New Historicist researchers, to comprehend the power structure itself, one must be conscious of others (Kurt, 2019, p. 13). Unlike Historicists, who have a singular perspective on history, New Historicists believe that every moment in history is marked by a conflict of voices that the historian needs to make all of them heard (cited in Pieters, 2000, p. 6). Historicists confined history to a monolithic singularity, leaving little room for the conflicting voices that the New Historicists want to simultaneously hear and make heard. The uniqueness of New Historicism rests at this point. New Historicists disagree with the Historicists' opinions and embrace the idea that

historical writings change throughout time because of ongoing discussions that need to be scrutinized and viewed from various angles. A New Historicist writer would give readers a chance to hear from the oppressed, the underprivileged, or the insane. By providing a voice to women, criminals, and the insane, for New Historicists, each element and each incident make for much more than themselves. As a result, “these new historians develop their own norms and omissions” (Thomas, 1991, p. 28). This is backed up in the introduction to *Practicing New Historicism* by Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, who states, “We New Historicists collect and store what is sometimes named counter histories that make the discrepancies, fractures, instabilities, and surprising absences in the monumental buildings” (Gallagher and Greenblatt, 2000, p. 17). According to Barry, the New Historicist critics go through the following stages:

They compare literary and non-literary texts side by side, interpreting the former in the context of the latter. 2. By distancing the canonical literary work from the weight of the body of prior literary studies, they attempt to “defamiliarize” it and perceive it as being novel. 3. They emphasize colonialism and its accompanying “outlook” in both text and co-text, as well as the issues of state authority and how it is upheld, patriarchal systems, and how they are sustained. 4. They achieve this by utilizing elements of the post-structuralist viewpoint, particularly Derrida's claim that all of reality is textualized and Foucault's thesis that social structures are governed by dominating “discursive practices” (1995, p. 179).

In Greenblatt's book *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, literature is seen as a crucial component in the “cultural formation of identity,” and the self-fashioning of the sixteenth century appeared to be “a manipulatable, creative process” (2005, p. 2). The author views a certain period's art as the key factor influencing how men and women behave in a particular culture. According to this perspective, art can be used to control one's own, another people's, or a group of people's identities or as a tool for self-expression. According to Greenblatt, literature should be described in three different ways because it is a “culture artifact” and an embodiment of the process of self-fashioning “as a reflection of the author's behavior; as a statement of the codes that control behavior, and, as a critique of those codes” (2005, p. 4).

According to Greenblatt, each of these three tasks should make use of the analytical process. Therefore, Greenblatt seeks a deeper cultural and sociological critique of these three functions. Affected by the time in which he lived and the customs, Geoffrey Chaucer introduces innovations by using character images in different positions that will be analyzed in this thesis.



CHAPTER 2

A NEW HISTORICIST READING OF *THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE*

One of Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, "The Physician's Tale," is said to have been composed either when Chaucer initially started writing *The Canterbury Tales* or when he was composing *The Legend of Good Women*, a piece that contains countless instances of pious and suffering women. Because it is absent from the prologue to *The Legend of Good Women*, which includes a collection of Chaucer's previous works, many academics believe it to have been created no earlier than 1386. Furthermore, it certainly appears that Chaucer's version was composed earlier than this time because his text demonstrates little acquaintance with Gower's version of the story, which was released in 1390. Based largely on a tale from the *Histories of Titus Livius*, which Chaucer got inspiration from, and the biblical account of Jephthah, it is a "domestic tragedy" (such as the sacrifice of a daughter by her father) about the interaction between a daughter and her father. The sacrifice of the daughter scene by her unscrupulous father seems to appear in the Bible, which served as Chaucer's inspiration in the relationship between Virginia and Virginius in the tale. In the *Book of Judges*, Jephthah is described as a judge who ruled over Israel for six years and commanded Israelites in a war against Ammon. In return for helping Israel beat the Ammonites, Jephthah promised to slaughter whatever would pass his door first. He quickly lamented the promise he had made, which required him to sacrifice his daughter to God, when his daughter emerged from the house for the first time: "Jephthah's vow had been: "If thou shalt without fail to deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering" (Judges, p. 30-1). The story reflects the social history from the point of view of New Historicism.

The Physician's Tale along with *The Parson's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale*, this tale is regarded as one of moral story. The genre of *The Physician's Tale* is a combination of moral exemplum and historical narrative. The story invites literary and social criticism due to its thematic issues and creative expression, and it can be better understood by examining the literary and social contexts in which it was created. To better appreciate the story in light of the New Historicist concept, it will be useful to look at it in relation to its literary and historical context. The interaction and influence of many texts and works on one another is a topic that New Historicism is interested in. *The Physician's Tale* opens with an immediate reference to the story's inspiration: Livy's enormous compilation *The History of Rome*. The story's fragment, which is supposed to be floating, also looks weirdly disconnected from its teller and the rest of the story. The third book of Livy's Roman history contains the legendary Virginia incident that Chaucer will revisit, and which has already served as inspiration for medieval writers like Gower and Jean de Meun. According to Sheila Delany, Chaucer introduces political concepts in *The Physician's Tale*, and yet he is incapable to address them as the tale progresses. While Angus Fletcher agrees that the story shifts away from the subject of overt political power, he argues that it raises issues of authorial and historical authority. According to Linda Lomperis, the power in dispute is the power over bodies, and she interprets the story as dividing between the physical body and spiritual issues like virginity and death. Focusing on the genre, Derek Pearsall, Jill Mann, and Lee Patterson interpret the story as a saint's life that has been placed into a political narrative. According to Anne Middleton, the story serves as an example of the exemplum's failure to convey the moral lesson of the story. That is, virtue is also punished in this tale. Virginia perishes due to her goodness and beauty, just as Apius dies due to his sins, which is highlighted at the end of the tale: sin always reaps what it sows. For these, and other reasons, some academics (Brewer, Muscatine, and Donaldson) have claimed that the tale is quite badly constructed, in terms of

both narration and character motivation (quoted in Farber, 2004, p. 151-152). From various viewpoints, it is noticed that the story lacks some cohesion, as indicated by the prolonged praise of Virginia's purity, the lengthy discussion of parents and governesses, the abrupt moment whenever Virginius slaughters his daughter, Claudius's uninspired support, and the hurried conclusion. Fichte notes that Chaucer presented the actual incident in *The Physician's Tale* in a unique and more emphatic way (1983, p. 189). Chaucer tries to manipulate acquired sources for his own objectives by reproducing the plot and structure of a significant literary sample. According to New Historicism, the author, social conditions, and literary work all assist us in comprehending the wider context, as Doğan argues (2005, p. 83). This chapter will study Chaucer's *The Physician's Tale* while keeping in mind the author's goals, relevant social and cultural context, and the text's original meaning and any supplemental material. New Historicism stresses the discontinuous aspect of history and the changeable, variable nature of people, both of which are influenced by Foucault's theories on history. Unlike traditional historians, who see history as knowledge and context for the text. The New Historicists have another tendency, which is to view history as fictionalized, as revealed by Foucault's archaeological idea of history. According to Foucault, modern historicists focus on the gaps and inconsistencies in history rather than writing coherently:

The issue is no longer one of tradition or drawing a line; rather, it is one of drawing boundaries; it is no longer one of the enduring foundations, but rather one of the alterations that act as new foundations, or the reconstruction of foundations. The topic of how to define the various notions that allow us to conceptualize discontinuity is one that is emerging from a broad field of questions, some of which are already familiar, as this new kind of history attempts to build its own theory... (Foucault, 1970, p. 5).

Chaucer modifies his source by adding some modifications and, albeit not entirely, enhancing the entire narrative with moral and theological thoughts. Readers are required to read the story according to the new way of thinking they have been exposed to. The period when *The Physician's Tale* was produced is crucial for understanding the background of New Historicism, a literary discipline that considers literary text in connection to the past,

community, government, and civilization. According to Biscoglio, "A particular author in any time era, whether medieval or contemporary, necessarily displays the ideals and interests of his civilization" (1993, p. 135). *The Physician's Tale* was created during a period of unrest, the end of feudalism, the rise of the working class, the deterioration of morals, and the development of corruption within nuns and priests (despite taking vows of chastity). In the patriarchal society of medieval England, ideas about gender and power played a significant role in the lives of women. Given the New Historicist assumption that the social and historical context of the text's time should be considered when interpreting its meaning, Chaucer's critical approach can be examined. In addition, the social background of the author, his tastes in literature, and the books that affected him all have a significant role in interpreting a text, according to New Historicism. Race, class, gender relations, cultural traditions, institutions, and physical and economic surroundings are all crucial to understanding the text's meaning. Livy appeals to knaves, scullery boys/girls, and the high classes and lauds moderation and the plebian virtues. According to Farber, Chaucer's revisions, and modifications to his original text, which give the story its discord and imbalance, are coherent. He contends that the story should shift away from the topic of justice and focus on how a person is formed, how they come to comprehend and experience the world, and how they come to decide to commit suicide (Farber, 2004, p. 152). The fundamental purpose of the tale as well as Chaucer's additions and modifications to the acquired material, which resulted in the author's different presentation of Virginia's tale, has been examined. The historical evolution of the produced text analysis will be studied in order to achieve this particular goal. The prerequisites for both the examination of the entire collection and the management of the genre's capacity to alter in relation to the forms of a single piece will therefore be provided. The author's goal must also be considered in addition to this. Therefore, the numerous ways that the Virginia tale has been treated by Chaucer and Titus Livius will also be investigated. It is uncertain whether the

occurrence on which Virginia's tale is based was a historical fact. The Virginius narrative is placed by Titus Livius in the middle of the fifth century B.C., at a time of bitter strife between the plebeians and the patricians. The Romans started formalizing the pre-existing legal system in the middle of the fifth century B.C. The decemvirs, an elected body of aristocrats with specific privileges, were supposed to carry out this responsibility. These guys were ultimately removed from office, most likely because they mishandled the authority granted to them. An account was created to explain this political occurrence in later Roman history. Titus Livius's history demonstrates the tyranny and oppression of the patrician aristocracy. It also serves to defend the Third Roman Empire of 449 B.C., which brought significant advances to the people. Among the 10 lawgivers, the aristocratic and decemvir judge Appius Clodius perverts the course of justice for desire and fell in love with a girl of noble birth whom he attempted to lure using money. The virgin held firm, so he dispatched accusations to have her falsely cleared of being a slave girl. Despite her father's loud protests, the decemvir declared himself the court's judge after this was completed and gave the girl to the accusers. To stop his own daughter from falling victim to the decemvir, the child's anguished father grabs a knife from the butcher shop and murders the girl as she is about to be brought away. After that, he flees from the town and heads to the Roman soldiers who are fighting to expose the injustice. The decemvirs are then dealt with and punished because of an unplanned insurrection that takes place after that. The history of Rome included this incident. It now belongs to the *res gestae* as they had been collected originally in the records of the magistrate and recorded later in the annals. And as *res gestae*, the story is passed on from generation to generation to be modified and interpreted by historians to fit their personal views of history. In the tale, Appius Claudius is a member of the aristocratic oligarchy, while Icilius, Virginius, and his daughter are plebeians. The account is dominated by the idea of the conflict of classes or gender inequalities, and the ineffable delight of religion suffusing the soul in an austere style. Entire

administrative power is controlled by a relatively very small elite class, personified by Appius Claudius, who mistreats most of the citizens. The oppressed lower-class revolts against the dictatorial ruling class because of Appius Claudius' maltreatment and severe legal violations. The writer of the Virginia story claimed he had uncovered in it the struggle of the opposition groups influencing the course of his own period, which is why it was interpreted in such a way (Fichte, 1983, p. 191-192). Livy's interpretation of the incident, in which the essential details are left unchanged. According to Livy, the decemvirs' overall moral degradation is compromising the city's foreign and internal stability. He uses examples to demonstrate the decline of the town, the decemvir commanders' murder of Siccius, and the Virginia incident that occurred within the city limits. To place the amazing happenings within the broader perspective of Roman history, Livy also connects this tale with Lucretia's tragedy. Like the Lucretia tale, it holds a unique place in Roman history. A transformation in the structure of governance is brought about by both instances. Both Tarquinius' vileness and Appius Claudius' moral failing led to the dismissal of the decemvirs. Tarquinius' lechery and Appius Claudius' moral failure resulted in the demise of the Roman kingdom. Icilius, Virginia's husband, admires and loves her for being a perfect example of virginity. As a result, when Icilius addresses the public during the initial court scene, he does so purely in the capacity of a proponent of morals. By reprimanding Appius, he appeals to both god's and humans' faith. Livy concerns about the reliability of his sources, and therefore the second court scenario is no longer recorded in its full. In this instance, too, Virginia is given to the applicant, who is about to lead the girl away once Virginius hurries from the battleground and endangers Appius. His sense of ethics drives Virginius to perform the desperate act that comes next; he does not wish for his daughter to be Appius' mistress. And after Virginius has finally returned to his troop, he warns his companions in weapons to guard their wives and daughters against Appius' unrestrained lechery instead of uniting his soldiers to a class revolution or

calling on the oppressed common folk to fight against the governing oppressors. This lengthy discourse focuses solely on the moral standards that the decemvirs are currently violating. In this way, the uprising is transformed into a form of self-defence, a means of defending the moral principles of the Roman family against the obscenity of the tyrants and safeguarding the moral basis of the Roman government. In his story of Virginia, which is found in his History of Rome book, Titus Livius extensively highlighted the political aspects of Rome by focusing on the immorality of decemvirs like Appius and their downfall. However, in The Physician's Tale, the political downfall of decemvirs is overshadowed and Chaucer put Virginia forward to the centre of the tale. As Fichte claims, the setting of each example of the Virginia narrative determines its meaning. The story has lost its previous relevance when removed from its original historical setting (1983, p. 197-198). He remarks that there is an inner and an outer subset within which the narrative circumstances of *The Physician's Tale* are situated. *The Canterbury Tales* make up the outside frame, and by influencing the audience, *The Physician's Tale* rises to the level of all the other tales in this collection. The pilgrims, particularly Harry Baily, the host, the physician, and other participants in the pilgrimage, as well as the inner frame, which is untouched by the notions governing the receipt of the outer frame, form the inner frame (Fichte, 1983, p. 199). The Physician, whose personality isn't fully developed in *The General Prologue*, serves as the inner frame's narrator. He excels in his field and has extensive scientific understanding. In addition, the omniscient first-person narrator who provided the profiles in *The General Prologue* informs us that this pragmatic man does not read the Bible frequently. The Physician is a member of the sturdy middle class of pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*, whose missionaries share morally inspiring stories. The Physician introduces his story by citing Titus Livius as its author. The Physician breaks himself to say, "This is no fable, / But knowen for historial thyng notable," emphasizing the importance of this approach towards Livy. This is the only instance in *The*

Canterbury Tales where a specific historian is specifically named as the origin of a story (Chaucer, p. 155-56). Instead of starting with Livy, Chaucer introduces Virginius by calling him a knight, establishing his place within society. Chaucer then demonstrates that Virginius possesses all the virtues required of a secular knight, including “fulfilld of honor,” a prudence that is both individual and community at large, and “and of worthynesse” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 3) dignity that is also employed for the knight in *The General Prologue*. In the High Middle Ages, becoming a knight was seen as a lower order of aristocracy. By the Late Middle Ages, the position had come to relate to chivalric ideals, a set of rules for the ideal Christian courtier. But then comes a ninety-nine-line diversion that makes up almost a third of the whole story and has no connection with Livy. The moral of the story is conveyed to the audience in a ten-line moralisatio at the conclusion of the story. In the next link, Harry Baily evaluates *The Physician's Tale* and then switches to *The Pardoner's Tale* because he wants to hear “som myrthe or japes” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 319).

The reader is confused by a lengthy diversion that follows the doctor's claim that Virginia had been exceptionally well-endowed by nature at the beginning of the story, where Chaucer first began to make revisions. She is the epitome of what a wonderful person should be. Virginia, the embodiment of human perfection, is a subject of masculine lechery. Virginia is a model of female femininity in both intellect and body, having been created by the Almighty. As is well known, everyone is formed in part by nature. The narrator's goal in telling the story is to demonstrate that nature could not have helped Virginia any more than she did. It is informed five times in eleven lines that nature molds, and paints; nature molds all species and chooses “the colour that they han or what figures” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 28); that is, nature did her greatest with Virginia. Virginia had already received every attribute of beauty and virtue that could be bestowed upon a being. Virginia would disapprove of voluptuous garments, and she would not deride women's coiffures and cosmetics, she would

attack unjust nobles and landlords and would follow moderation. A generalized overview of the significance of governesses is given throughout the story when the narrative shifts. The phrase has been interpreted as a critique of Chaucer's sister-in-law Katherine Swynford, who served as one of John of Gaunt's daughters' governesses before becoming his mistress and then his wife. By relating directly to the governesses, Chaucer displayed a woman's effectiveness as a governess, who held virtue and has a superior understanding of how to prevent falls in others. (Farber, 2004, p. 155). By cautioning parents against correcting their children, the author compared them to innocent shepherds whose carelessness could cause the sheep to perish. To underline those parents, who should be protecting their children, are ultimately responsible for any harm that may befall them, the analogy quickly switches from the political to the pastoral. Many people have pointed out the lines' apparent incoherence. Although he refers to the lines as a diversion, Brian Lee counters criticism of this inconsistency by stating that because the story's focus is on the supervision of a young child, being lengthy is not unsuitable (cited in Farber, 2004, p. 157). According to Farber, the story's lengthy prologue presents potential explanations for what motivates moral behavior: it might be a product of his own free will, the governess' guidance, or parental guidance and upbringing. Virginia is positioned very explicitly within this conceptual framework because she has no governess and because nature has done everything in its power to "forme and peynten" her well (Chaucer, 1987, p. 21) (cited in Farber, 2004, p. 157). Conventional rebukes of earthly joys and exaltations of heavenly bliss cannot be seen here. The character does not want to be obliterated and suffer a pang of conscience. There should not be an adamant lifestyle at all.

The Physician's Tale has a lot of relevance to *The Franklin's Tale* about Dorigen and Arveragus, which typically comes before it, even though the order of the stories in the various manuscripts changes significantly, and it is not entirely clear where it belongs in the order.

The Franklin's Tale also has a woman who must decide between honour and disgrace, just like *The Physician's Tale*. The tale's tone is less urgent than that of Virginius and his daughter since Dorigen makes the squire Aurelius a light-hearted offer to give her love if he can eliminate the rocks from the sea off the coast of Brittany. After he succeeds in doing so, she considers suicide but decides against it. Virginius hurries home to kill his daughter as once as he learns the wicked judge's decision, in contrast to Dorigen and her husband, who act and respond with restraint and faith in God's great mercy. Only five lines later, a multitude of 1,000 people rushes to Virginius' rescue, saying that if only her father had been as tolerant and eager to put his faith in the Divine as Dorigen and her husband Arveragus. *The Physician's Tale* takes place during pagan Rome, although the opening verses make various allusions to a Christian setting for example in the narrative portion of the story, Virginia's grace and morality are praised and Virginia says, "Blissed be God that I shall dye a mayde!" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 248) (I pray to God that I will pass away virginal!). Thus, it seems logical to conclude that Christian morals ought to be followed. For God has dispatched the Bible, and people have to account for their every vice, though they may plea, people may be bound by bad deeds. It is still feasible to interpret the connection between *The Franklin's Tale* and *The Physician's Tale* in a different way, even within a Christian context. For example, *The Franklin's Tale* is a self-admitted romance on top of being rather innocently idealistic, while *The Physician's Tale* is presented as history, a chronicle of things that occurred. Maybe *The Physician's Tale* by Chaucer was merely meant to be a realistic depiction of how human nature might react, at this time in history, to situations where a woman's dignity was endangered by sexual contamination. Dorigen and Virginia, like many of Chaucer's female characters, live in a world where gendered violence is routinely practiced. For both characters, dying is the only option to escape the embarrassment of having sex outside of marriage. Violence committed by the men in these women's life is unavoidable. The conflict between

Dorigen and Virginia mirrors the cultural environment of medieval England, where the physical abuse of a woman may be used as a tool to uphold masculine dominance. Chastity and virginity are especially defined in the context of a sacrificial system for the Middle Ages society. Therefore, sacrifice acts as a form of community healing. However, it's interesting to note that the very model of an unrighteous woman as being useless, which causes this need for sacrifice, also gives the chance for both Dorigen and Virginia to leave that model and express themselves with their objections. Both pagan Rome and the civilization of medieval England, which was regarded as a patriarchal society, had strict roles, and regarded women as second-class beings who were entirely sexual, naïve, or incompetent. Males made decisions for them, and their lives were governed by the men who dominated society. As a result, women were generally excluded from positions of authority or prevented from standing up for themselves. The submissive position of women in fourteenth-century culture was the same irrespective of social class, according to Judith Bennett's latest book, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside* (cited in Laskaya, 1995, p. 38). Women experienced violence in both public and domestic spheres. The ladies in his feudal domain were frequently viewed as fair game by upperclassmen in the Medieval Era, such as judge Appius in *The Physician's Tale*. The lower the women's class was more prone to physical abuse, beatings, rape, and even murder (Laskaya, 1995, p. 39). In Chaucer's story, Virginia, who was physically violated by Appius, belonged to the lowest class of the upper class. Women's dependence and self-denial were governed not just by a code of traditionally feminine submission but also by a code that urged them to maintain stillness. This also comes from the Bible: "Let your women be silent in the churches, for it is not permitted for them to talk" (1 Corinthians 14:34) The church's misogyny was a powerful regulating force throughout Chaucer's day. Women were commonly depicted as being on the verge of monsterhood; they were stereotyped as being

priggish, lascivious, and sexually voracious, and the religious authorities patronized them. In no manner were women allowed to take part in church dogma.

The long discourse by and about Nature on the creation of Virginia's stunning quality and morality, the conceptual discourse of the obligation governesses and parents endure for the children in their care, and the event in which, after hearing Appius's decision, Virginius returns home to tell Virginia what happened, and Virginia consented to her own death are all changes made by Chaucer in *The Physician's Tale*. In contrast to other adaptations of Virginia's stories, Chaucer gives Virginia a voice by transferring the action from the open court inside Virginius's home, in which he makes Virginius not only carry out the execution but also converse it with Virginia. According to Jean de Meun's account of the events, Virginius executed Virginia without explaining his decision or seeking her or anyone else's opinion after realizing that he had no alternative except to surrender to Apius. But in Chaucer's tale, Virginius makes it obvious that his daughter must choose between disgrace or death. The girl is portrayed as a helpless victim and has no speaking role in the other version. But in *The Physician's Tale*, she engages her father in a conversation about her future. She tries to talk to him out of going down such a rigid path, refusing to acknowledge the parental choice as unquestionable. She doesn't accept her situation until after her conversation with her father has proven to be fruitless. Virginia requests her father Virginius to kill her in a memorable scene from *The Physician's Tale*, saying, "Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 249). Neither Chaucer's claimed source, Livy's history, nor his unspoken source, Jean de Meun's *Roman de la Rose*, contain this or any other instances in which Virginia speaks. This specific change results from Virginius's reaction to the bad judge Apius's request that Virginia be turned over him. When Virginius realizes the circumstances, he must decide between killing his daughter and giving her to Apius "in lecherie to liven" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 206) in order to prevent Apius from obtaining her virginity. Not so much

that Virginius determines it is preferable for his daughter to be killed than disrespected, but rather that Virginia herself complies with this choice, which is notable in this passage in *The Physician's Tale*. Virginia's body is abused and exploited as a means of contacting the divine, serving as a bridge for connection. Virginia's metaphorical duties in *The Physician's Tale* serve to reveal the divine through the human body. To make Apius and Virginius's tale work, Chaucer modifies it to reflect the potential impacts on Virginia's decision-making process and character development. In addition to morality and good conduct, which Virginia acquires, there is nature, which can "forme and peynte" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 21) but not instruct. There is also the potential influence of a governess, which does not influence her. Finally, there are parents, who must set a positive example for their children and discipline them when necessary (Farber, 2004, p. 159). In the last "additions," Virginia employs language all her own that is unique to Chaucer's telling of the story. She challenges her father's claims, criticizes his behavior, and rejects a sacrificing interpretation. To give her father options to think about her destiny, Virginia wonders if there is no "grace" (a religious response) nor "remedye" to her tragic condition (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 236). She refers to her statement twice as a complaint "My deeth for to compleyne a litel space;" or a protest personal tragedy with a long literary history (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 239). She explicitly states that her father is carrying out his wishes "in Goddess name" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 250). She compares him to the biblical "Jepte", "For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace \ For to compleyne, er he hir slow, allas!" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 240-241), who according to medieval interpretation mistakenly slaughtered his innocent daughter to uphold a sad, rash, and impious commitment to God. Although she is unable to physically protect herself from her father's rigid, uncompromising determination to preserve his own honor (by killing her), she fights against him as forcefully as she can using her body and voice. Chaucer dealt with the issues of power in the male-female relationship by giving women a position in the work against the medieval time and

underlined the value of virginity in the medieval era through Virginia's wish to preserve her virginity by refraining from contaminating her body. New Historicism and Cultural Materialism, which are both affected by Marxism, concentrate on power dynamics in the community and attempt to explain how power functions in literary works. They are additionally “linked by their compulsion to connect literature to history to see writings as inseparable from contexts,” according to Ryan (1989, p. xi). In contrast to Marxism, which focuses primarily on class conflict and strife, Cultural Materialism and New Historicism regard power as existing in all areas of society. However, New Historicism especially emphasizes the historical backgrounds of cultures as compared to beliefs and calls attention to the ways in which social and cultural writings function as a source of power. The interaction between a man and a woman in *The Physician's Tale* is one of Chaucer's core thematic themes, and he is particularly interested in issues of power in such relationships. The portrayal of women in Chaucer's works contradicts both the medieval view of women and his society. However, “Chaucer's attitude toward women was far more complicated than what can be inferred from his fictitious reinforcement of a favorite literary topos”, according to Biscoglio (1993, p. 136). Understanding the medieval world and its attitude toward women will enable better appreciate the text through Chaucer's cultural setting. The story's addition by Chaucer, which will be examined in depth, and the modifications he made can be related to the shifting conditions of the medieval eras. During this time, women were supposed to be chaste and obedient to their husbands. Chaucer created a chaste, virtuous woman character such as Virginia but powerful as opposed to the medieval era. He does not dwell on outward signs of religious frenzy but is scornful of clergymen. As Biscoglio relates, despite the difficulties and complexity of his own vision, Chaucer demonstrates a remarkably new form of admiration of women whereas at the same time writing within the context of his own society by altering the understanding of the function of women (1993, p. 148). The misery of the innocent in a moral

world is a theme that appears often in numerous stories from the Canterbury tales, and *The Physician's Tale* also connects to this theme. In both *The Prioress' Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale*, Christian martyrdom is presented as a rationale and reward for that pain.

2.1 Virginia as a Virgin Martyr

Eternal virginity was highly regarded in Chaucer's era; some saints were venerated because they would have chosen death over losing their virginity, while others through such heroic efforts to keep their virginity that were regarded as martyrs and were subsequently glorified. Pious women are frequently tormented by men's sexual desire and annoyance, which causes them to go through hardships, according to virgin martyr legends. Yet, their persecutors discover that their virginity is impenetrable. According to Karen Winstead, the virgin martyr mythology contains contradicting issues regarding bodily anguish: "She will stay pure in God's eyes, regardless of what happens to her body, yet she is never raped" (1997, p. 13). Virginia represents the traditional medieval characteristics of a virgin martyr. In the legends, the highly moral protagonist and the evil antagonist are put side by side. The contrasting character is required to highlight the metaphorical nature of the legend. As a result, the saint is romanticized as the pinnacle of beauty and goodness, in contrast to her enemy, who is utterly evil and lacks redemptive traits, like Virginia and her antagonist Appius. It appears that Chaucer included elements of saints' legend customs in *The Physicians Tale*. The saint is challenged, possibly by adversity, or illness, but frequently by oppressive pagan or satanic forces. The saint's legend is a common medieval genre. The saint in the "Virgin Martyr legends" is typically a woman, and her testing generally includes bodily-focused torments. But despite not being entirely religious, *The Physician's Tale* focuses mostly on moral guidance. However, Virginia's life represents the pursuit of truth in addition to goodness, exactly like the lives of the saints in the legends, and Virginia falls back aghast at the wrongdoings, and enjoys having an altruistic lifestyle. She preserves the virtues

and fulfils the allotted tasks with consecration. Pagan Virginia is a perfect illustration of the typical characteristics of the virgin martyrs as they are represented in *The Golden Legend*. Virginia is portrayed by Chaucer as possessing virtues of virginity, modesty, and tolerance that are strikingly like those that are frequently associated with Christian virgin martyrs. Virginia is humble in her behavior and appearance, wise yet reserved in her speech, and “evere in “bisynesse/ To dryve hire out of ydel slogardye,” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 56-57) Virginia chooses to lead a moral life; she refrains from drinking alcohol and stays away from social gatherings where flirting can occur. Virginia is the epitome of the attributes and these personal qualities exhibited by the saints. A comparison between Christian virtue and vice is formed inside the context of a mythic tale, preparing the audience for their confrontation with Appius, the embodiment of evil. To highlight the typological significance of the protagonist's deeds, Chaucer uses the saints' legend convention of the juxtaposition of both good and evil (Ponder, 1977, p. 29). As the guardian of honesty and purity, Virginius is forced to kill his own daughter in order to uphold this concept. In contrast to Appius, Virginia acts completely out of innate goodness. To place the abstract ideal of virtue over his own sentiments, contending Virginius sentences Virginia to death “for love and nat for hate, thou most be deed. My pitous hand moot smyten of thyn heedo” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 225-26). In this conflict, Virginia's piety is put to the test, and she is forced to make a moral decision. Virginia cries out for forgiveness before asking for a “litel space” to “compleyne” her doom. For, pardee, Jepte yaf his doghter grace for to compleyne, er he hir slow, alias! (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 240-41). The biblical analogy implies a similarity between Virginia's situation and that of Christian martyrs and legendary heroes. Virginia makes the final decision to commit herself instead of losing her virginity, reflecting the typical cycle of conflict-passion-victory in the saints' narratives. “Blissed be God, that I shal dye a mayde. Yif me my deeth, er that I have a shame; Dooth with youre child youre wyl, a Goddes name” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 248-

250). Virginia's final words are expressed as a prayer, which is a common technique in the saint's legends to highlight the contemplative elements of the story and to provide the emotional context in which to present the moral of the story. The epilogue, which is well situated at the conclusion, provides the moral lesson and a brief description of Virginia's antagonists' destiny. The claim that Chaucer followed the norms of the saints' legends is not meant to imply that he never broke the rules of the genre, but rather to highlight how Chaucer utilized those conventions when they would have improved his tale. *The Physician's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale* best demonstrate Chaucer's skill at using the characteristics of the saints' legend genre to enhance the impact and creativity of his tales and to portray the values of the saints' lives tradition with honesty, elegance, and simplicity (Ponder, 1977, p. 32). To throw additional light on Virginia's assent to death, Chaucer uses the moral complexity of virgin martyrs. She realizes that there is no legal way to stop the corrupted judge from acting in this way, so she decides to uphold her honor and moral integrity even at the cost of suffering bodily harm and relinquishing her life (Lee, 2017, p. 19).

CHAPTER 3

A NEW HISTORICAL READING OF *THE SECOND NUN'S TALE*

Geoffrey Chaucer is the main narrator of *The Canterbury Tales* and gives vivid descriptions of a wide range of individuals. He creates a detailed picture of each pilgrim in *The General Prologue* and the tales that each pilgrim tells in *The Canterbury Tales*. Except for the highest socioeconomic classes, who would never travel in such a group, the pilgrims disclose a significant portion of late-medieval England's social system. The variety of characters also reveals one of Chaucer's objectives, which was to paint a picture of a well-rounded community, and they impinge on the readers. In Chaucer's depiction of community, there is space for both corrupted and deviant individuals as well as for those who adhere to the Christian ethical code of conduct. But perhaps most importantly, Chaucer gives three female characters the Wife of Bath, the Prioress, and the Second Nun the opportunity to participate in the storytelling contest among the majority of male pilgrims (Chao, 2007, p. 76).

The Canterbury Tales by Geoffrey Chaucer includes *The Second Nun's Tale*, which was composed in late Middle English. *The Second Nun's Tale* appears to be no more than a retelling of a previous religious parable with a clear and straightforward spiritual message, in contrast to some of the other tales, which are fables with numerous meanings. According to Joseph Grossi, Chaucer's intention might even be to create a serious work of "religious vision" that highlights the "absurdity of paganism" (2002, p. 302-3). Grossi makes a convincing case that Chaucer's intended goal for the Life of Saint Cecilia was to write a book that upheld Christian beliefs while disparaging pagan values as being connected to the tyranny that frequently characterized medieval power structures. Christian doctrine One of the most well-liked medieval literary genres, the "saint's life," is told in *The Second Nun's Tale*. Since this saint's life included martyrdom, one may have anticipated Chaucer to accentuate the sad elements of the story, with Cecilia serving as yet another illustration of gently suffering

womanhood. Apart from the allegorical Prudence in the Melibee, Cecilia is a strong and active heroine who acts to control and mold not only her own life but the lives of others around her in the Tale. She is a good woman character. The life of the saint usually describes the hero or heroine's life, miracles, and martyrdom. It is a hagiography of Saint Cecilia's life, told by an unidentified nun. The narratives of Christian saints who acted as role models for Christians on Earth are chronicled in hagiography or the stories of saints' lives in the Middle Ages. Most of the medieval religious literature fell into this category. The legends of female saints, which are told by males, are characterized by an obsession with virginity, as the ladies frequently affirm their chastity. Some academics have hypothesized that the story is just the second narrative of the solitary nun or of the prioress because the second nun's portrait description in *The General Prologue of The Canterbury Tales* is missing, but this notion is not widely accepted. The Nun speaks up towards the end of the pilgrimage after *The General Prologue* which does not contain a portrait of her; her speech is audible without being distorted by the visual representation of her as a pilgrim. As she demonstrates her own busy control over words in The Prologue and Tale, she is accorded subjectivity rather than objectification (Arthur, 1998, p. 218). To underline that her appearance and manners have no bearing on how valuable she is as a person and a character, Chaucer simply gave her somewhat less weight than he did on other characters. With her pious, morally upright actions, the Second Nun is the ideal woman in a religious order. She warns against laziness at the outset of her prologue since sloth is one of the Seven Deadly Sins. She also claims that being lazy results in getting captured by Satan, thus in order to prevent that, she will share her story. Like the Prioress, the Second Nun uses a praising invocation to devote a portion of her prologue to the Virgin Mary. Her story, which is a recounting of the martyred Christian saint St. Cecilia's narrative, is appropriate for a nun because it upholds Christianity and Christian principles, particularly faith. *The Legenda Aurea the Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine,

one of the most extensively read works among both religious and laity in the later Middle Ages, served as the inspiration for Chaucer's life of St. Cecilia. *The Golden Legend* was closest only to the Bible as a source of religious motivation during the Middle Ages, therefore it appears highly likely that Chaucer was acquainted with the lives of the saints as told in it (Ponder, 1977, p. 7). Dominican Jacobus de Voragine composed *The Legenda Aurea* in Latin between 1250 and 1280 for spiritual education. In medieval religious teachings, the heroic examples of the Christian martyrs were utilized as both a lesson and an encouragement. William Caxton translated and adapted *The Golden Legend* from the Latin accounts of the saints' lives following Chaucer's time in 1483, and it was extensively reproduced and spread. As a result, the Middle Ages' social, political, and theological framework was interwoven with the legends. Whatever its true worth, it was for a very long time one of the most important literary genres (Ponder, 1977, p. 8). As previously stated, a three-part prologue a discourse on laziness (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 1-28), an evocation of Mary (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 29-84), and the explanation of the name Cecilia introduces Chaucer's Life of Saint Cecilia (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 85-119). These three ideas intrinsically are blended into a heavenly plan, which firmly situates the story in the convent's universe. When translating the Latin text of the "mayde and martyr, Seint Cecile," Chaucer starts *The Second Nun's Prologue* by narrating the second nun's sermon against the dangers of sloth and by providing the second nun's tips on how to avoid ydelnesse. A prayer to the Virgin Mary and an explanation of Cecilia's name comes before *The Second Nun's Tale* (Ponder, 1977, p. 20). Even the meaning of Cecilia's name, "lily," is not confused with the courtly custom of flower symbolism. Like other young Chaucer heroines, Cecilia is beautiful, bright, clear, and white, but the Second Nun carefully describes these attributes as representations of her intelligence, purity, and other qualities, according to Wetherbee. They never make the sexual appeal a priority (cited in Vaneckova, 2008, p. 23). Cecilia's character strengths are evident. Her virginity aids

in her victory against the realm of authorities. After converting her husband and his brother to Christianity, Cecilia, a young woman in the story, dedicated her life to the spread of the Christian faith. She never stopped in prayer, fasting every two to three days and abstaining from all the delights of the flesh. At the start of the story, she is getting married, but she asks God to keep her from any pollution throughout the ceremony. Rather than going to bed when night falls, she informs her husband that she must stay virginal and that her guardian angel will have to murder him if he believes the contrary. Her husband Valerian also converts to Christianity, as does his brother. But because this was irreverent against Jupiter, the Romans' god, Almachius, the governor, was furious. All those who converted to Christianity were killed as a result, such as Cecilia, who mysteriously lived for three days. She continued to "and nevere cessed hem the feith to teche / That she hadde fostered; hem she gan to preche," despite the agony she was experiencing (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 538-539). In addition, she asked that her home be turned into a place of worship after which she passed away and was declared a saint. Her story is notable in terms of how men and women interact with one another since it shows a woman who defies several norms of the medieval canon of propriety for women. By sharing her beliefs publicly, Cecilia not only crosses into the public sphere, which is often dominated by men, but she also adopts a man's function because women were not permitted to preach, breaking down barriers. It is stated that Cecilia's dominance over the males in the story is a result of her devotion to God. Cecilia's spiritual strength, which allows her to rule the males in the story, is described by Priscilla Martin as follows: "Obviously, Cecilia's purity is one of her strongest points". She benefits from it in both political and spiritual ways. She appears to be more formidable than most of the males in the story, in addition to being equal to all of them (cited in Vaneckova, 2008, p. 25). To fully understand a literary text's message, New Historicists contend that not only the text itself, but also non-literary texts, cultural and social contexts, and the author's objectives should all be taken into consideration. However,

Stephen Greenblatt contends that because history shapes literary texts so significantly, its importance shouldn't be underestimated or neglected. This theory examines culture and society, emphasizing marginalized people that traditional history frequently ignores, including women, the oppressed, the mad, and homosexuals. To define its theme and uncover its dynamic and strong heroine Cecilia, *The Second Nun's Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer will be explored in this chapter using the New Historical approach. Issues of power and authority will be developed along with links to religious faith. According to New Historicism, power permeates every part of a community and may be seen there. The study's focus will be on how power is represented in that society and how it affects gender relations because religion and morality are its main research areas. Stephen Greenblatt writes that "the text is self-consciously rooted in communities, life circumstances, and power relationships" (1982, p. 7). New historicist analysts are inspired by Foucault's theories about power to examine history in search of mechanisms of oppression that force individuals of the community to keep in line with ideology, regardless of whether they support or oppose it. Power struggles can be evident in all types of discourses between humans, including men and women. Foucault states that "power, rather than being the effect of social and legal principles institutions, is a problem of the delicate and precise control of bodies" (Gutting, 1994, p. 20). Suppression and oppression are mirrored by both Marxists and New Historicists.

With the elevation of Cecilia's body (unlike in the Middle Ages), the author seeks to illustrate the social conditions of the Middle Ages that placed value on virginity in Christian medieval England. In Chaucer's retelling of the Cecilia legend, the protagonist's straightforward defiance of patriarchal power is emphasized. By examining how history is portrayed and recorded in literary texts, New Historicism seeks to undermine Derridean claims that all ideas are included in literary works or that everything is available to us in textual form. Deconstructionist and post-structuralist criticisms are both incorporated into

New Historicism, which appears to support Jacques Derrida's deconstructionist claim that there is nothing outside the text. Critics of the New Historicist movement contend that only textualized forms of historical knowledge can be understood. As a result, history is incorporated into the text, and new historicist academics contend that texts take the place of historical events, and that history can never be restored. According to Jeffrey N. Cox and Larry J. Reynolds, New Historicism varies from Old Historicism by placing more emphasis on the methods used to create or fabricate history than on the actual replication of the past and by placing less faith in objectivity and continuity (Doğan, 2005, p. 79). As a result, history is fragmented and continually retold and represented. Stephen Greenblatt discusses the shift towards values that are imparted because of the environment changing in *The Renaissance* and *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*. In this examination, the words discontinuity and change are all employed. According to New Historicism, everything in a society function as an agent, and the minority is treated in the same manner as the majority, and the society impinges on the culture. It focuses on underrepresented populations like women, the repressed, the crazy, and homosexuals who have been left out of traditional histories. The goal of new historicists is to comprehend the social and cultural structure of the time as well as its significance for character explanation (Nemutlu, 2013, p. 16).

Many Church members started to view desire and sex as sins brought about by the Fall during the Middle Ages. This made them think that women, who were Eve's offspring and the reason for the Fall, were frail and susceptible to sexual vice. So, to escape both their own sin and the guilt of males, the Church urged women to stay virginal and submissive. By presenting them as fragile temptresses who are more prone to sin rather than just promoting courage and chaste behavior, the Church undermined the status and authority of women in medieval Europe. How the virgin protects her feminine virginity by exemplifying her goodness and confidence in God creates the story's main conflict. Geoffrey Chaucer closely

follows the traditional version of the busy Cecilia story, but he also inserts his own prominence: Cecilia's meeting with Almachius comes across as a conflict between her straightforward faith and the finally stupid learning of a man who calls himself a philosopher but idolizes a stone. Chaucer also draws attention to the disparities between Cecilia's power to convert her husband and his brother "al in another kynde" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 250) and Almachius' failure, despite the bath of flambes, to even change Cecilia from life to death. There are two views on women that have emerged in medieval England. Christianity is the primary influence behind these two viewpoints. The two key role models for women in Christianity, Eve, and the Virgin Mary have influenced how women see themselves and are perceived in relation to these two women. A woman is a deceiver, untrustworthy, feeble-minded, and dishonest, according to Eve's model. The Original Sin is the source of it. Adam's body was used to construct a woman, which gave rise to the notion that God made Adam in his image. As a result of her perceived inferiority to men, women were destined to be subordinate to men. She was unable of avoiding the temptation since she was feeble and sinful because of the devil's trickery. Because of her immorality, Adam ate the forbidden fruit with her, committing the Original Sin, which led to the expulsion of humans from Paradise. She had to surrender to a man who is more logical, tougher, and powerful since she was weak and lacking in rationality. He had to dominate her. All women are seen as Eve's daughters, and as such, they ought to be corrected and repented of. The Virgin Mary model, however, is different. Her most prized traits are loyalty and meditation. Both religious symbols are essential for defining and describing the female role in both society and literature. the Virgin Mary serves as an example of how a woman should be. Consequently, in the Middle Ages, women were expected to be virginal and chaste. *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Writings' Virginites* by Ruth Evans explores the spiritual significance and reward of virginity which applies to women. The biblical virgin martyred saints were popular and diverse cultural

icons that medieval women used and worshipped in deeply intimate ways (Evans, 1994, p. 23). Saints like Cecilia of *The Second Nun's Tale* by Geoffrey Chaucer represented a moral example for medieval women who read their lives literally, it confirmed that keeping their bodies unharmed and virtuous as God's will is, for even though it may charge their corporeal lives at the hands of desirous men, they would be awarded heavenly reward and be even more adored by the Lord for devoting their lives to him. "Virginité symbolizes the best equivalent to utopian purity on earth, and intentional virginité participates in a fight with the body that is subdued by virtue" for virginité is a white robe, and any spot on it is easily seen (Evans, 1994, p. 23-25). *The Second Nun's Tale* character Cecilia, who resembles the martyred Saint Cecilia, recognizes the seduction of the flesh and perceives the hope of eternal salvation in maintaining her celibacy. Jo Ann McNamara concluded that "women were responsible for the establishment of a cult virginité and a disciplined solitary way of life" in her research of the earliest Christian women and their concern for the benefits of chastity (cited in Arthur, 1998, p. 218). Cecilia's virginité grants her freedom from both her father and her husband, according to Priscilla, who also notes that a nun in 14th-century England would have acquired comparable control over her own body and destiny (cited in Arthur, 1998, p. 218). St. Cecilia maintains her virginité through her own will and asks God to keep her virginité even at her wedding: "O Lord, my soule and eek my body gye / Unwemmed, lest that I be confused" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 136-137). Cecilia, the story's virgin heroine, uses both her religion and her virginité to persuade her intended to accept a non-sexual marriage. She demonstrates her compelling ability to effectively discuss religious issues (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 319). To successfully convert her husband and her brother-in-law and ultimately maintain her chastity, she turns to the power of language and miracles rather than bowing to patriarchal authority and accepting her fate in silence like Custance and Emylie. Additionally, unlike the submissive and passive female characters, St. Cecilia takes a stand, and more significantly,

her words influence how the situation turns out. Cecilia delivers a classic sermon against idols that are nothing more than objects when she encounters Almachius, who commands her to prostrate herself before idols. She informs him that his authority could hardly be regarded as the control of life and death because he is only a torturer with the ability to take life. Her confidence comes off as hostile and haughty from the perspective of a pagan Roman authority whom she opposes. Despite being modest in character, Cecilia's virginity appears bold. According to Helen Philips in *Chaucer and Religion*, Chaucer only makes a significant literary effort to portray combative Christian virginity in *The Second Nun's Tale*. She notes that despite this, his poetry generally respects the Christian view of virginity, with the controversial exception of *The Wife of Bath's Prologue* (2010, p. 5). He is especially receptive to the topic of dangers against female virginity (Philips, 2010, p. 5). The Second Nun is more interested in St. Cecilia's words than her deed. Many men are led to Christianity by St. Cecilia through her speech. Due to the power of her voice, she makes an articulate defense of herself when she is presented before Almachius:

 Youre myght, quod she, ful litel is to dreede,
 For every mortal mannes power nys
 But lyk a bladdre ful of wynd , ywys.
 For with a nedles poynt, whan it is blowe,
 May al the boost of it be leyd ful lowe (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 437-441).

She openly defies Almachius, who becomes enraged and charges her of being “whennes comth thyn answeyng so rude” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 432). Almachius views St. Cecilia as inappropriate and disgusting since her behavior deviates from the ideal of submissive and appeasing speech favored by medieval ladies. In addition to calling St. Cecilia strong and courageous, Almachius also employs additional phrases that draw attention to her unique disobedience. St. Cecilia's most atrocious offense, according to Almachius, who is the representative of the male-dominated community, is that she stubbornly refuses to submit, which endangers the preexisting social order.

The image of a woman who was so strong, and outspoken contrasts with the notion of the ideal lady in the Middle Ages. In contrast to how men typically view women, St. Cecilia believes that her life should be guided by her religious convictions rather than her gender. St. Cecilia exhibits rigid resistance to the worldly authorities but complete submission to the celestial authorities. She challenges civil authorities, reshapes her marriage, and challenges patriarchal authority. She is a fearless rebel against the stereotype that women are feeble, inferior, and submissive to their husbands. She decides to put her strong mind into deciding to become a nun. So, she stands for a religious commitment that is strikingly different from the false duty of Prioress and the “cautiously influential figure of Prudence” (Laskaya, 1995, p. 171). St. Cecilia defies and surpasses a lot of the normative social standards that society has for women. She portrays “nearly a Golden Age myth of female resistance of tyranny, feminine efficiency and intellectual power, and harmony between the sexes,” as Knapp notes in his analysis of her story (cited in Chao, 2007, p. 84). The Wife of Bath is also outspoken and stubborn. She represents most of the flaws that the medieval patriarchal community criticized in women. Women throughout the Middle Ages were thought to be more emotional, earthly, and materialistic than males and to be less intellectual. The Wife of Bath describes herself as an earthly woman in her prologue, motivated by a mix of vanity, ego, desire, and animal instinct. She is frank about the misdirections of marriage and love. She's been married five times, which her image in *The General Prologue* demonstrates. She is sensuous and morally inferior by medieval standards if she has been married five times and is yearning for her sixth marriage. The coverture is obvious for marrying a lot is disreputable and appalling. There is no restraint on women to marry five times (Ms. Courtauld Institute, sermons, 1381). She asserts, however, that because she was born under the sign of Venus and is destined to be fleshly, she quite freely acknowledges her sexuality. She epitomizes all the flaws men have associated with women, including the tendency to be bold, the tendency to

dispute, and the need for autonomy and independence. She is outgoing in habits and powerful in discourse. As she claims:

For certes, I am al Venerian
In feelynge, and myn herte is Marcien.
Venus me yaf my lust, my likerousnesse,
And Mars yaf me my sturdy hardynesse; (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 609-612).

The Wife of Bath has unusual intelligence and courage, comparable to Cecilia, which again challenges the medieval expectation that women should be illiterate and quiet. Chaucer's women characters such as Cecilia and Alisoun provide medieval women a platform to demand power and speak out for equality. Chaucer uses characterization and description to give readers a glimpse into a medieval society where women are beginning to show their aspirations for power and authority.

3.1 Cecilia's Body

The female body became the object of masculine conflict in the lives of saints during the Middle Ages; the tensions that resulted in the torment eventually makes the woman the target of their conflict, as indicated by efforts to exert control over her body. Despite the fact that women's physical bodies were often mistreated, their souls were declared chaste and valued highly. The saints' souls were declared pure in comparison to their physical bodies via behavior rather than through physical evidence. Recurrent actions and statements that revealed spiritual chastity served to reinforce their identities. *The Second Nun's Tale*, as mentioned above, is a poetic translation of Jacobus De Voragine's *The Golden Legend's* account of Saint Cecilia's martyrdom. *In Search of Sacred Time: Jacobus De Voragine and the Golden Legend* by Jacques Le Goff examines *The Golden Legend* in order to examine the life and works of Jacobus De Voragine. Le Goff adds, "When it comes to the virgins, it is worth emphasizing that the important element in female holiness remained to be the feminine

body” in reference to the female virgins found in Voragine's collection. However, Voragine looks beyond the physical to identify factors that back up the belief that women are dominant in a secular community (LeGoff, 1990, p. 28-29). This claim leads to the conclusion that Chaucer is also emphasizing an emphasis on the presentation of spiritual virginity. Saint Cecilia serves as a model of virginity throughout the entire story. Cecilia prayed to God every day to preserve her virginity. Then she threatens Valerian, warning him that if he were to “touche, or love in vileynye, / He right anon wol sle yow with the dede, / And in youre yowthe thus ye shullen dye; (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 156-158). He is aware of this and regards her preferences. Almachius commands that she be burned after discovering that she follows Christianity and is outspoken. She was surrounded by fire, but she was unaffected by any of them as she remained there. She did not even shiver as she remained there. He utilized his evil imagination to plan her beheading after realizing his incompetence. So she was given three blows to the neck, but the prosecutor was unable to strike her again because her head remained attached. A stunning atmosphere for a martyr's death is created by Cecilia's three strokes and the three days she spends teaching and lecturing after being executed. The bloody scene of Cecilia's martyrdom, with its symbolism of the three injuries, provided the tale's concluding image in *The Second Nun's Tale*, as it does in many saints' stories. Despite this incident, Saint Cecilia continues to preach the gospel to anybody who will listen. Cecilia's body is subjected to physical torment by being beaten, burned, and having her throat slashed, but she manages to stay alive for three days and use her sermons to convert a large number of unbelievers. Once she requires her body most, it encourages her and does not let her down. Cecilia's body is a representation of her undying commitment and faith. Cecilia's body does not submit her to the suffering that Almachius, her persecutor, inflict upon her, just as Cecilia does not submit to his psychological abuse. *In Fleshly Things and Spiritual Matters*, Nicole Nyffenegger and Katrin Rupp state that “severed talking heads and sliced tongues are nearly

daily issues” (2011, p. 95). The essential virginity of the saint's body is attained by the physical examination of the body's integrity. In *The Second Nun's Tale*, Cecilia was compelled to wed Valerian and endured punishment from Almachius for being virginal all the way up until her death. The female body was viewed in the Middle Ages as one of the primary places where evil originated. Susan Morgan writes in “Body Symbolism in the Book of Margery Kempe” that medieval preachers and hagiographers understood voracious female guilt as essentially bodily and sexual, originating from inside (1995, p. 5). Cecilia was able to sustain her dedication and become a saint because her body was able to avoid this sin by maintaining her virginity. Osmond claims that while the body may engage in sinful behavior, the soul is ultimately responsible for the guilt (1974, p. 6). Cecilia was able to manipulate her body by using her soul. She refused to let the practices of the world destroy her soul, so her body was unaffected. So, the soul was made good and pure. Although the world and satan had an effect on the body, the soul might take full control and compel the body not to sin. Saint Cecilia works in this way through her devotion. Because her soul and belief are so powerful, her body must and will follow her voluntarily, as a body without a soul can do nothing. Cecilia's desire to fast can be used to explain how she is able to keep control over her body. For the love of the Lord, Cecilia fasted every second or third day and prayed to God to preserve her virginity. Many people believed that fasting was a method to keep control of their bodies. According to Susan Morgan, the connections between eating and sexual dominance have a long history in the Christian tradition, and when women fasted, they were disciplining and correcting their bodies in service of the higher aim of chastity. Cecilia's choice to fast also enabled her to maintain her chastity and purity by controlling her body. The practice of “food asceticism,” according to Morgan, aids in “journeying into the body, combining the humanity of Christ” (1995, p. 5). Cecilia was able to maintain control over her body while fasting, and it also made her feel more connected to God and his strength. Women

might feel more powerful by maintaining their modesty and exercising control over their bodies, and this is the idiosyncrasies for women. According to Cathy Hampton, “all virtuous women must immediately submit to the chastity, a necessity that puts them on an equal ground instead of in a hierarchy.” (2007, p. 9) Regarding Cecilia, her choice to maintain her virginity through her life might have also given her a sense of empowerment and made her recognize that she had the autonomy to manage her life, enabling her to resist Almachius's persecution.



CHAPTER 4

THE PARSON'S TALE

The Parson's Prologue suggests that Geoffrey Chaucer meant it to be the last story in his poetic collection in *The Canterbury Tales*. The narrative, which is the longest of Chaucer's pilgrims' telling is a lengthy prose on penance rather than a story or poetry. In the tale, the Seven Deadly Sins, sometimes known as the cardinal sins, “pride (Superbia), greed (Avaritia), lust (Luxuria), wrath (Ira), gluttony (Gula), envy (Invidia) and sloth (Acedia)” were a part of Christian theology by the Medieval Era. The idea of the Seven Deadly Sins was the most often used religious subject among men in the Medieval Era. Evagrius Ponticus, who was a Christian monk, recorded the eight wicked concepts, which include gluttony, lust, greed, rage, sloth, melancholy, egoism, and pride. The list served as a guide for overcoming the vices. Pope Gregory the Great was the first person to categorize the Seven Deadly Sins according to this classification around 590 and was also recognized by all Catholic theologians in the 13th century. Pride is considered the worst sin since the soul fell victim to it. Since they result in the soul's destruction, they are referred to as mortal or deadly. The soul will perish if one of these deadly sins is committed without repentance or confession. Ultimately, either the person or their soul will spend all of eternity in hell. A man had turned to the Seven Deadly Sins and his state grew worse every year. God would want the reckoning of all men lest mankind should become more brutish than the beasts.

It has been said that *The Parson's Tale* is a moral treatise created in accordance with the opinions of the day. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that it is completely consistent with Chaucer's own ideas and the philosophy of life that is implied in his Retraction. The Seven Deadly Sins are condemned in the Parson's sermon, and they have functional significance since they act as a central factor in *The Canterbury Tales*. Sin is either explicitly or implicitly depicted in *The Canterbury Tales*, for example, greed in *The Pardoner's Tale* and vengeance

in the Friar-Summoner group. *The Wife of Bath*, *The Physician's Tale*, and *The Second Nun's Tale* are just some of those Tales that implicitly depict sin.

Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Parson's Tale*, a medieval text that depicts the Seven Deadly Sins, as in the Bible, will be the subject of this section of the thesis. This is related to Greenblatt's work which points out that history is crucial in forming literary texts, and the Biblical verdicts are important here. As Vesser says, there is the interconnectedness of another discipline. Though Derrida says, there is nothing outside the text by incorporating deconstructionist and post-structuralist criticism. Power is pervasive. The many stories are related by pilgrims who are making their way to Canterbury Cathedral, where Saint Thomas Becket is venerated. *The Parson's Tale* is the most fascinating literary work that addresses the theme of sins. *The Parson's Tale's* theme of repentance is covered under the three primary headings of contrition, confession, and satisfaction (Cooper, 1989, p. 402). The Sacrament of Contrition is compared to a tree, with penance as its root, confession as its leaves and branches, and satisfaction as its fruit. These Seven Sins, according to the Parson, are the root of all other misdeeds since they are the "main and spryng of alle othere synnes" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 386). The first section discusses the justification for repentance: God wants "that no man wole perisse, but wole that we comen all to the knoweleche of Hym, and to the blissful lyf that is perdurable," (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 1). The Seven Deadly Sins pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony, and lechery are likened to a tree. Pride is the universal cause of all harm, "Of the roote of this sevene synnes," according to these seven sins (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 388). "For of this roote spryngen certain braunches, as Ire, Envye, Accidie or Slewthe, Avice or Coveitise, Gloytonye, and Lecherye" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 388-389). The second section of the speech addresses the confession of sins and the factors that make sin worse. This section is completed with a list of the qualities of a good confession, each of which must be made voluntarily and in good conscience. A good confession needs to be made as quickly

as possible and must contain “serweful bitterness of herte, humylitee in confession” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 91-98). In the third and last section of the sermon, the parson discusses the satisfaction that a sinful must provide for both God “moost generally in sinesse and in corporeal peyne” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 1030). The benefits of fasting and prayer are also endorsed as satisfying practices. If one intends to reparation for his crimes appropriately, fear, shame, and despair must be prevented. Man will obtain the endeless blisse of heaven via suffering and repentance, and he will be a man free from disease, infirmity, and famine, sharing the glorious campaignye. Penance and “This delightful regne may men purchase by deeth and mortification of synne” are the sources of this joyful everlasting (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 111). It makes sense to concentrate on these Seven Deadly Sins when researching the topic of sin. The two sins of the body, lust and gluttony, that are regarded as the sins of the body will be examined in this thesis. The New Testament, which Geoffrey Chaucer employed as a source, will be juxtaposed with the sins of the body to assist the reader in comprehending their viewpoint. Various perspectives on sin will be examined to start the study of it. The Parson describes gluttony as having an “uncontrollable appetite to ete or to drynke” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 817). Due to the widespread understanding that gluttony involves excessive eating, this picture hasn't changed all that much recently. The Parson refers to the five categories of gluttony listed by Saint Gregor: Initially, consume before meals. Second, stress when consuming food and beverages. Third, eating too much. Fourth, indulge in exquisite cuisine. Fifth, overeat (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 828-830). One thing unites them all: a total breakdown of harmony and proportionality (Holloway, 1986, p. 35). “Food will not bring us close to God (1 Corinthians 8: V8). So, culture is dynamic and survives through the exchange of symbols. It imbibes the connotations and the figurative language. Abstinence, according to the Parson, is the cure for gluttony (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 830). The Parson does not specify how to prevent such sin, though. Chaucer infers it in *The Second Nun's Tale* by having Cecilia fast to cleanse

her body: “Every seconde and thridde day she faste, \ Ay biddyng in hire orisons ful faste” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 139-140). A final intriguing revelation from *The Parson's Tale* is that he claims that gluttony is the sin that has destroyed this world (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 818) and those gluttons are “the enemys of the croys of Christ; of whiche the ende is deeth, and of whiche hire wombe is hire god, and hire glorie in confusioun of hem” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 76). This claim was asserted earlier in The New Testament's Epistle to the Philippians, which is the book's eleventh chapter. In the church of Philippi, St. Paul notes: “For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; their end is destruction; their god is their belly, and their glory is in their disgrace” (Philippians 3:18). This passage was very certainly borrowed by Chaucer. Thus, gluttony is defined as the excessive consumption of food and beverages. It is a complete lack of harmony and balance. “After Glotonye thane comth Lecherie, for these two synnes been so cosyns that ofte tyme they wol nat departe” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 835). Along with the Parson, there is an author who has this view regarding the tight link between two sins. “Lust and gluttony have many features,” claims Holloway (1986, p. 35). Because of this, lust will be the second sin examined in this thesis. One needs to understand what lust is in order to start looking at this sin. One typically associates sex as the first thing. The Parson refers to lust as “filthe” indispensably (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 881) and uses the synonym “bitwixe” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 864) to express how it taints God's intention for marriage. Several religious traditions view sexual activity between unmarried spouses as always being wicked. The Parson asserts, though, that even married couples run the risk of engaging in the sin of luxuria. Being wicked as they “putten Crist out of hire herte and yeven himself to all ordure” (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 905). Adultery, immorality, and the commission of homosexual activities, in Dunnam Reisman's view, are the three most prevalent manifestations of lust (1997, p. 152). When he says that a woman ought to be “attemree of hire array,” the Parson just briefly mentions the issue of immorality (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 931). The Parson does not address homosexuality.

However, the Bible asserts that homosexuality is characterized by all manner of immorality, depravity, and wickedness. Full of murder, deceit, and evil, they are God-haters, heartless and ruthless (Romans 1:29-31). Adultery is lust's final expression. The next example will show how *The Parson's Tale's* text that addresses this element of lust is replete with both direct and indirect allusions to the Bible. The Parson begins by quoting "Do no lecherie" from verse 836. The Bible also supports it: "You have heard me say, you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you, everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28). Thirdly, the Parson lists various consequences for adultery, including that the woman "sholde be slayn with stones" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 837), which is found in the Bible:

The scribes and Pharisees presented a woman who had been found in an adulterous relationship, and putting her in the middle of the group, they addressed him: "Teacher, this lady has been found in an adulterous relationship. Now, Moses commanded us to stone such in the law. What do you think about her? With his finger on the ground, Jesus wrote while stooping. He then rose up and told them, "Let anyone who is without guilt among you be the first to throw a stone at her," while they kept asking him questions. He knelt down once more and scrawled with his finger. However, as they heard it, they fled one by one, starting with the oldest, leaving only Jesus and the woman who was in front of him. Jesus asked her, "Woman, where are they?" as he turned to face her. No one has condemned you. Lord, no one, she prayed. "Neither do I condemn you; go, and do not sin again, Jesus said. (John 8:3-11)

The Parson refers to this incident as well (cf. V888) and emphasizes God's benevolence. The punishment after death is subsequently described, again with direct biblical allusion: Adulterers shall burn in hell in sulphur and fire, just as Saint John declares (cf. V 840). Overall, this section of *The Parson's Tale* is not Chaucer's original work but rather another mixture and reproduction of various biblical passages. Like how he did with gluttony (and the other five evils), the Parson closes the chapter on passion by mentioning the cure. The sole cure for lust is "chastitee and continence" (Chaucer, 2023, ll. 914), which applies to widowhood as well as marriage (cf. V916; 943). So, the study of literary historical facts as well as cultural and social traits of the period can be seen in New Historicism. This is in

juxtaposition with Foucault's theories about power to examine history in search of the mechanism of pressure that forces individuals in the community to keep in line with ideology. People desire authority and power through coping with the Seven Deadly Sins.

This part of the thesis has provided a summary of how the Middle Ages saw the reception of fleshly sins. Additionally, it has been noted that Chaucer makes frequent references, both explicit and indirect, to the Bible. Overall, it may be said that though many centuries lie between us, Parson's perspective on sin is not really that different from ours nowadays. Vice is still a part of human existence, both now and in Chaucer's era, and probably still will be.



CONCLUSION

The research aims to investigate how Chaucer rewrote *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale* in a different context. According to the tenets of New Historicism, the research requires a comparative analysis because Chaucer's tales pertained to some texts. To understand the portrayal of female characters and the use of the seven deadly sins, it is necessary to examine the literary characteristics of the medieval ages that represented the influences of earlier and medieval eras. In *The Physician's Tale*, Geoffrey Chaucer added unusual elements that he had taken from Titus Livius, and he also made some changes in *The Second Nun's Tale*. The modifications were added to emphasize the classic tale in a new setting. Old tales were written in medieval literature, and reverence was displayed by referring to the forefathers as authorities. The additional depth Chaucer gives his works when he adapts classic stories is important to remark. In an unconscious manner, Chaucer conveys his admiration for traditional aspects as well as his critical stance. The greatness of *The Canterbury Tales* is related to the author's acute observation of the people he chose to represent the broad vision of medieval culture. As a result, his writings are significant both as literary works that elevated the status of the English language in the Middle Ages and as a source that captures the social and cultural trends of the time. In this research, women are investigated as saints or virgins to reveal Chaucer's approach toward them. Additionally, because *The Parson's Tale* is a religious treatise, the Seven Deadly Sins are also examined. It has been determined that Chaucer composed these stories to illustrate the inadequacies of moral or religious traditions and views toward women in medieval times. He used a variety of techniques that have been investigated in the context of New Historicism to advance criticism. Change is the dominant topic of both works, including *The Physician's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale*. It is evident that a community ruled by patriarchal social

standards and the connection between men and women is mirrored in these literary works, much as Chaucer transforms an old story into a new one with more significance. Changes may also be made to *The Physician's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale*. This study will explore how Geoffrey Chaucer subverts the gender politics of his day by giving female characters a voice against the Middle Ages and highlighting the value of virginity through their pure bodily imagery, as well as the modifications and novelties he introduces in his works. Knowledge of historical events as well as the cultural and social norms of the times is necessary to comprehend how the literary text is changed to fit into its new context in accordance with the writer's purpose. To examine *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale*, it is necessary to study literary texts in a comparative manner in accordance with New Historicism, which considers both the historical context and structure of the text as well as its time of formation considering the social, cultural, and historical factors. The conceptual and theoretical basis of this study is how Chaucer reinterprets conventional views of women characters and how his portrayals of the Seven Deadly Sins both reflect the time period and elements of philosophy and religion. Chaucer is perhaps the one who is most deeply concerned with feminine subjects. Chaucer emphasizes the relationship between feeling and thinking, which is fundamental to being in the world, in all his writings and genders, despite the fact that women are often perceived as being more emotionally and physically expressive. The junction of body and soul ties with the themes of women's literary culture, and women play important roles in Chaucer's writings as feeling and thinking characters, and they are not erratic at all, and not very malleable as well. They reverberate the verisimilitude. The juxtaposition with medieval women serves as an example of the changes he makes. Women characters like Cecilia and Virginia in *The Second Nun's Tale* and *The Physician's Tale* urge the reader to think about the man-woman relationship. Chaucer is aware of his heritage, his uniqueness, the depth and breadth of his personal interests, and his own

worldview. Characterizations of them in Chaucer's writings are crucial because characters are identified by their social rank, and they reflect the cultural and social framework of the medieval era. Chaucer's use of women's representations highlights their positive roles as sources of spiritual fulfillment for people. Due to the idea that Eve, the first woman, was immoral, the medieval community did not highlight this positive view of women. As a result, they are sometimes referred to as "daughters of immoral Eve," and it is thought that the devil prefers to reside in their bodies. These official viewpoints on women's roles in immorality, evil, sin, and sensuality affected how women were viewed throughout the Middle Ages. However, the virgin's virgin conception was supposed to take the place of Eve in the Fall, and her conception was supposed to give the human body the chance to achieve corporeal and heavenly purity in Paradise. The somatic desire of Eve pointed out through fulfilling the forbidden. The Virgin is commonly utilized as a role model for poets' ideal women and is also depicted as the desired object since she was venerated for her spiritual grace and physical purity. The mood of the medieval era is altered by Geoffrey Chaucer's presentation of a more comprehensive and exhaustive understanding of women and religious matters. *The Physician's Tale* emphasizes the non-political features of Rome and places Virginia at its center. It is based on a story from the Histories of Titus Livius and the biblical account of Jephthah, both of which Chaucer drew inspiration from. In the story, there is a lengthy discussion by and about nature regarding the morality and stunning quality of Virginia's creation, as well as a conceptual discussion of the responsibility parents and governesses bear for the care of their dependent children. This young lady was so self-aware that she didn't require a governess. Chaucer adjusted the story after hearing Appius' decision, including the fact that Virginius went home to tell Virginia what had transpired, and that Virginia had agreed to her own death. Geoffrey Chaucer, in contrast to other translations, gives Virginia a voice by moving the action from the open court into Virginius's house, where he has Virginius

not only carry out the execution but also debate about it with Virginia. Virginius makes it clear that his daughter must choose between death or humiliation in Chaucer's story. Female characters in Chaucer's works, like Dorigen, Virginia, and Cecilia, frequently engage in gendered violence. The fight between these women, Cecilia, Virginia, and Dorigen, reflects the social climate in medieval England, when a woman's physical assault may be employed as a means of maintaining male control. In the Middle Ages society, chastity, and virginity, in particular, are defined in the framework of a sacrificial system. Consequently, sacrifice aids in the rehabilitation of society. It's fascinating to see that the very idea of an immoral woman as worthless, which creates the necessity for sacrifice, also provides Dorigen and Virginia the ability to reject that idea and show their differences. Virginia speaks in a style that is distinctive to Chaucer's recounting of the tale. She disputes her father's assertions, condemns his actions, and rejects a self-sacrificed viewpoint. Virginia ponders whether there is no "grace" or "remedy" for her unfortunate situation in order to give her father some alternatives to think about regarding her fate. She struggles against her father as strongly as she can with her body and voice, despite the fact that she is powerless to defend herself physically from his inflexible, unyielding intention to protect his own dignity (by killing her). By giving women a role in the work against medieval times, Chaucer addressed issues of authority in the male-female interaction. He also highlighted the importance of virginity in the medieval era through Virginia's desire to keep her virginity by not corrupting her body. In contrast to medieval times, Chaucer constructed a strong, chaste woman who embodied virtue. Like this, Cecilia's tale in *The Second Nun's Tale* is noteworthy in terms of how men and women interact with one another since it depicts a woman who disobeys a number of rules set forth by the medieval code of etiquette for women. By publicly expressing her opinions, Cecilia not only enters the public arena, which is frequently dominated by men but also takes on a man's role because women were not allowed to preach, removing barriers. By elevating Cecilia's

body (unlike in the Middle Ages), the author aims to highlight how virginity was prized in Christian medieval England's social context during that time. Chaucer emphasizes the protagonist's unambiguous resistance to patriarchal authority in his rendition of the Cecilia legend. Instead of surrendering to patriarchal authority and embracing her fate in silence like Custance and Emylie, she uses the power of language and miracles to successfully convert her husband and her brother-in-law and ultimately keep her chastity. Furthermore, St. Cecilia takes a stand in contrast to the docile and submissive female characters, and more importantly, her comments have an impact on how the event plays out. Cecilia sees Almachius, who orders her to bow down before idols, and she preaches a traditional sermon against gods that are nothing more than objects. Cecilia is humble in temperament, although her virginity seems daring. The concept of the ideal lady in the Middle Ages is in stark contrast to the image of a woman who was so powerful and vocal now. St. Cecilia feels that her life should be governed by her religious principles rather than her gender, in contrast to how men traditionally regard women. St. Cecilia displays adamant opposition to earthly powers while submitting fully to divine ones. She alters her marriage, defies patriarchal authority, and challenges civil authorities. She bravely challenges the idea that women are weak, incompetent, and subservient to their husbands. So, there is the deification of women that is redeemed. Chaucer's female characters give medieval women a voice to seek power and advocate for justice, such as Cecilia and Alisoun. As the virginity values of women characters like Cecilia and Virginia are assessed, particularly Cecilia's bravery is also assessed. Chaucer provides readers with a glance into a medieval society where women are starting to express their desire for authority and power through characterization and description. To understand the significance of Chaucer's modifications, it is necessary to examine all the other components of *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale*. According to the New Historicist tenets, changes in characterization are

investigated for this purpose. Since it pays particular attention to various types of literary and historical analysis in addition to dealing with problems in the literary and non-literary texts, New Historicism appears to build on the topics disregarded and forgotten by the already existing modes of literary criticism. It may be said that current historicist researchers are trying to analyze the marginalized, the oppressed, and the topics that the older critics have never addressed. Literary and non-literary texts are given equal weight in New Historicism, and they are used in criticism not only to support one another but to challenge it as well. New Historicists assert that literary texts are not necessarily superior to non-literary texts. The opposite is true; they view literary texts as just one of the many sources that can be employed in literary criticism. A literary work is not independent and should be positioned in the social and political context of its production, according to the New Historicist theory, so that it can make sense when it is read alongside a non-literary text. Any attempt by a scholar to accurately reproduce reality in history is likely to be incorrect, according to the New Historicist theory, which holds that the absolute reality of history is inaccessible. The examination of a text as a synthesis of all the aspects that contribute to determining the meaning of the text is what New Historicism includes, as compared to Historicism or other formalistic methods. In New Historicist research, historical, social, and cultural facts are examined alongside the context to comprehend the writer's social and literary objectives. Additionally, according to New Historicists, transformation into a new era is considered as the unavoidable outcome of history's discontinuous nature. Such alterations find a place in literature to describe the contrasting aspects of a literary text and are presented as shifts and contrast in the terminology of New Historicism. Given that a writer is influenced by the changes in his own times, certain alterations reflect those changes in his writing. In addition, certain modifications and alterations result from the writer's approach toward the subject. Another way that New Historicism differs from other literary approaches is by emphasizing

the undermining of a monolithic viewpoint, which clarifies certain seemingly incongruous ideas that can be expressed in a work of literature. Instead of putting the meaning of the texts into one interpretation, which is the majority view, New Historicists frequently read the texts with an emphasis on the contradictory structure of things. Such emphasis necessitates a critical analysis of all the pertinent textual components. A writer might criticize the very strategies he uses in his text by using obsolete but commonly used conventions. In addition to adhering to traditions, the writer is free to take a critical stance. In addition, New Historicism contends that a writer's viewpoints can be inferred from the new writings they produce by looking at the texts they have read. Because of the writer's past, which influences his opinions, and the juxtaposition of the old and new concepts in the current setting, readers deduce conclusions on their own.

Because New Historicism is an interdisciplinary theory, it allows for the analysis of power issues that profoundly impact people's lives on all scales. Because they observe power struggles everywhere and in all literary works. Utilization of power within the same class becomes problematic even if the text is not about economic issues, class conflicts, or gender difficulties. Gender inequality is reinforced by class, and the interaction between men and women has always been a subject for discussion. Studying the culture that generated the work is crucial to comprehend the function of power. According to New Historicists, literature and culture are mutually supportive of one another. Each has an impact on the other's development. Cultural ideals influence how individuals behave, and people also influence culture. As a result, everything in the community turns out to be a crucial sign of the people who live there and their culture. In addition to any cultural norms, one must consider a person's physical surroundings when attempting to understand them. New Historicism has been investigated in Chapter I as that of the study's theoretical basis. There has been an explanation of its history, proponents, and presumptions.

Chaucer had a great mastery of classical literature and could read and interpret works from Italian sources because of his education and thorough understanding of the Bible. Religion and morality are the central themes of all three of his stories *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale*. Chaucer's critical strategy is very subtly carried out in the stories. He accomplishes this in *The Physician's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale* mostly through intricate characterization with a religious undertone. Chaucer brings the reader's attention to the character's psyche as well as the truth of the situations they were in. The feelings of a medieval woman are revealed to the readers, who also understand how and why she takes decisions. Whether in *The Physician's Tale* or in *The Second Nun's Tale*, the woman image is compared with the woman image in the medieval period and the ancient pagan Rome period with the new historicist method, and the medieval woman image characterized in the tales by Chaucer differently, that is, how she should be.

This thesis examines the motif of the Seven Deadly Sins through the lens of New Historicism, which includes an analysis of text-based historical research, as well as the social and cultural characteristics of the era, and finally, the writer's various indirect criticisms. With the Seven Deadly Sins, Chaucer symbolizes the conventional approach in such representations, but he also enables readers to comprehend the critiques of the cultural and social milieu of the time. *The Parson's Tale* is about repentance. The three components of penitence according to the Parson are satisfaction, confession of the mouth, and contrition of the heart. By mentioning the Seven Deadly Sins and providing solutions for them, the second section concerning confession is demonstrated. *The Parson's Tale*, the final tale in Chaucer's lyrical collections in *The Canterbury Tales* and a theological model for the Middle Ages, incorporates additional biblical verses into its portrayal of the Seven Deadly Sins. The Seven Deadly Sins include arrogance, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, anger, and sloth. These sins create the conditions for additional vices and deeper immorality. The Seven Deadly Sins were

viewed in the Middle Ages as tendencies to sin and alienation from God. The New Testament, which Geoffrey Chaucer used as a source, is compared with the physical sins of gluttony and lust. In the story, the Parson defines gluttony as having an insatiable appetite. In The New Testament's Epistle to the Philippians, it is described that many people live as enemies of the cross of Christ and their god is their belly. Chaucer rewrote this passage in *The Parson's Tale* to serve as a warning to avoid gluttony. Similarly, Chaucer draws his inspiration for lust from the gospel of Matthew to avoid adultery in the Bible. The speech of the Parson, who says that the lady should be stoned to death, is found in the Bible in the part of John. Chaucer uses this speech to describe several penalties for adultery. Geoffrey Chaucer dealt with the sins in the tale that were initially mentioned in The New Testament in the first century AD. Geoffrey Chaucer reinterprets The Seven Deadly Sins, one of the religious topics covered in the Bible in the first century AD, with a new historicist perspective, and he offers his tale to his readers of the medieval era as a Christian stimulant model. All these results are based on a comparative analysis that also examined the writer's and the period's social and cultural background. Chaucer's aptitude for fusing the ancient with the modern and for skillfully addressing the fundamental issues of society is what makes his works so successful.

ÖZET

Bu tez çalışmasında Ortaçağ yazarı Geoffrey Chaucer'ın dini eserleri *The Canterbury Tales* adlı hikayelerinde yer alan *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale* ve *The Parson's Tale* adlı hikayeleri Yeni Tarihselci yöntemle incelenmiştir. Bu edebi eserler farklı teorik açılardan incelenmiş, ve İngiliz edebiyatı için ne kadar önem arz ettiği kabul edilmiştir. Geoffrey Chaucer hem *The Physician's Tale* adlı hikayesinde hem de *The Second Nun's Tale*'de değişiklik yapmış ve eski Roma tarihçisi olan Titus Liviusdan esinlediği *The Physician's Tale* adlı hikayeye kendine özgü yönler eklemiştir. Chaucer *The Physician's Tale* ve *The Second Nun's Tale* adlı hikayelerinde kadın karakterlere rol vererek Ortaçağın toplumsal cinsiyet politikasını alt üst etmiş ve Ortaçağ döneminde olan bekaretin ne kadar önem taşıdığını ifşa ederek betimlemiştir. Ortaçağ döneminde ahlaki ve dini uygulamalarda olduğu kadar kadınlara yönelik tutumlarda da eksiklikler vardır. Ataerkil sosyal normlarla yönetilen bir toplumun ve kadın-erkek ilişkisinin bu edebi eserlere nasıl yansıdığı açıktır ve Chaucer bu hikayeleri kendine özgü yani, yeni ve daha anlamlı şekilde anlatmıştır.

Bu tez de Chaucer'ın bir diğer hikayesi yani *The Parson's Tale* araştırılmış ve bu hikaye Chaucer tarafından Ortaçağ dönemi için bir teolojik model olarak kullanılarak yedi ölümcül günahı tasvir etmek için Hristiyanlığın kutsal kitabı olan İncilden kaynak alınmıştır. Dönemin ahlaksızlığı nedeniyle Chaucer, *The Parson's Tale* adlı hikayesinde okuyucuları yozlaşmanın tehlikeleri hakkında bilgilendirmek için Yedi Ölümcül Günahın betimlenmesinde kaynak olarak kutsal kitabı İncili kullanmıştır. Yeni Tarihselci kuramına göre bir edebi metni doğru anlayabilmek için, içinde bulunan dönemin sosyal ve kültürel bağlamı ile metnin oluşumunda etkili olabilecek diğer tüm unsurların irdelenmesi gerekir. Yeni bir metnin yaratılmasında, eski metinlerin ve dönemin önemli bir etkisi olduğundan, Yeni Tarihselcilik bu tezi yazmak için çok yararlı bir teorik çerçeve işlevi görmüştür. Yeni Tarihselciliğe göre, Geoffrey Chaucer'ın edebiyattaki önemini ve dönemin sosyal ve kültürel

tarihini ne kadar iyi yansıttığını göstermek için, Ortaçağ'da yazılan *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale* ve *The Parson's Tale* adlı hikayelerin incelenmesi önem taşır. Chaucer'in esinlediği eserler ve dönem karşılaştırılarak, yazarın eserlerde yaptığı değişiklikleri açıklamak için Yeni Tarihselciliğe ait fikirler ve terminoloji uygulanmıştır. Chaucer *The Physician's Tale* ve *The Second Nun's Tale*'de geleneksel unsurların yanı sıra eleştirel bakış açısını ortaya koyar. Bu yaklaşımda, Chaucer bu eserlerinde yeni bir ortamda ortaçağ ilkelerine meydan okur. Ancak bunu tekil, öznel bir bakış açısıyla sunmamıştır. Okuyuculara, bu eserlerle hem dönemin ahlaki veya dini değerleri ve Ortaçağ kadının yaşamı hakkında Chaucer'in bilgisi, hem de eski yazıların ve Ortaçağ döneminin Chaucer'ı ne kadar etkilediği sunulmuştur. Sonuç olarak, *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale* ve *The Parson's Tale*, dönemin sosyal yapısını, dini değerlerini ve diğer faktörleri temsil eden Ortaçağ ingilizcesinde yazılmış Ortaçağ hikayeleridir. Bu tez çalışması, karşılaştırılmalı bir yöntem izleyerek Geoffrey Chaucer'in adı geçen değerleri yeni bağlamda ele alışını incelemektedir. Chaucer'ın eserlerde yaptığı değişikliklerin amacını açıklayabilmek için değişim, farklılık, güç gibi kavramlar ön plana çıkarılarak ve her türlü yapıtı göz önünde bulunduran Yeni Tarihselcilik yöntemi kuramsal çerçeveyi oluşturmuştur. Yeni Tarihselcilik yöntemi sayesinde hem Ortaçağ döneminin sosyal ve kültürel yapısı, hem de Chaucer'ın eleştirel tutumu açık hale gelmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Chaucer, dini eserler, vücut-ruh, Yeni Tarihselcilik, cinsiyet politikası

ABSTRACT

In this study, three religious works by Geoffrey Chaucer entitled *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale* are examined using the New Historicist method. The writings had been examined from various theoretical perspectives, and it was acknowledged how important they were to literature. Chaucer altered both *The Second Nun's Tale* and *The Physician's Tale*, and he added peculiar aspects to *The Physician's Tale* that he had borrowed from Titus Livius. The fact that Chaucer subverts the gender politics of his day by giving female characters a voice against the Middle Ages and exposing the Medieval view of the significance of virginity is portrayed in both texts. There were deficiencies in the moral or religious practices as well as attitudes towards women during the Middle Ages. It is clear that a society governed by patriarchal social norms and the relationship between men and women is reflected in these literary works, and Chaucer recounted these tales in new, more meaningful ways. Chaucer used extra-biblical scriptures to depict the Seven Deadly Sins as a theological model for the Middle Ages in *The Parson's Tale*. Due to the corruption in this era, Chaucer used the Bible as a source and the Seven Deadly Sins in *The Parson's Tale* to inform readers of the dangers of the vices. The social and cultural context of the time as well as all other elements that may have had an impact on the creation of the text must be examined in order to properly understand a literary text according to New Historicism. Since older texts and the time had a significant impact on the creation of a new text, New Historicism served as a very helpful theoretical framework for writing this dissertation. According to New Historicism, it is crucial to examine *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale*, which were written during the medieval era, to demonstrate the significance of Chaucer in literature as well as how well they reflect the social and cultural structure of the time. By comparing the old writings and Geoffrey Chaucer's inspired works, the ideas and terminology of New Historicism have been applied to explain the alterations Chaucer made.

Chaucer takes a critical perspective on these works in *The Physician's Tale* and *The Second Nun's Tale* in addition to using traditional components. In this approach, Chaucer challenges the viability of medieval principles in a modern setting. However, he doesn't accomplish this by offering a singular, subjective viewpoint, though. Readers are informed about the moral or religious values of the era and the life of medieval women. These ideals can be found among the old writings and historical circumstances that impacted Chaucer. In conclusion, *The Physician's Tale*, *The Second Nun's Tale*, and *The Parson's Tale* are three examples of medieval tales written in medieval English that represent the social structure of the time, the values of religion, and other factors. This thesis examines Geoffrey Chaucer's treatment of these concerns in new contexts, which is crucial to understanding the effectiveness of these works.

Keywords: Chaucer, religious works, body-soul, New Historicism, gender politics

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