

## Marxist Reading of Chaucer's Social Satire in the Canterbury Tales

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### Abstract

This research presents a critical perspective on a classic text that clarifies the relationship between literature, power, and economics. It highlights the role of satire in Chaucer's work, 'The Canterbury Tales', as an artistic tool that expresses symbols that are difficult to reveal directly. To achieve the research objectives, the study employs a descriptive-analytical method to examine social satire in 'The Canterbury Tales' by Geoffrey Chaucer, within the framework of applying Marxist theory to explain class relations and the representation of characters in the literary text. The analysis of society includes four social layers: the Aristocracy/ ruling class, the Clergy, the emerging middle class, and the working class (peasants). Each of these classes is referred to through representative characters within the literary text, reflecting the economic structure within the text. The research finds that Chaucer employed satire and social critique to illuminate class tensions and the interplay between structure and superstructure. Also it exposes the abuse of powers, corruption, falsity of claims, and hypocrisy, which align with the spirit of what Marxism criticized. The application of Marxist theory in the analysis of the literary text enables the reader to understand economic and social relations through their representation in the characters. Consequently, the literary text emerges not merely as an aesthetic text, but as a socio-cultural analytical tool reflecting class conflicts within societies.

**Keywords:** Chaucer, Social Satire, Corruption, Hypocrisy, Marxist theory

قراءة ماركسية للسخرية الاجتماعية لتشوسر في حكايات كانتربري

حيدر جابر حسين

### المخلص

تسعى هذا الدراسة لتقديم منظوراً نقدياً لنص كلاسيكي يبين العلاقة بين الأدب والسلطة والاقتصاد. ويُسلط الضوء على دور السخرية في عمل تشوسر، "حكايات كانتربري"، كأداة فنية تُعبّر عن ايماءات يصعب الكشف عنها بشكل مباشر. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث، تستخدم الدراسة منهجاً وصفيًا تحليليًا لدراسة السخرية الاجتماعية في "حكايات كانتربري" لجيفري تشوسر، ضمن إطار تطبيق النظرية الماركسية لشرح العلاقات الطبقيّة وتصوير الشخصيات في النص الأدبي. يشمل تحليل المجتمع أربع طبقات اجتماعية: الأرستقراطية/ الطبقة الحاكمة، ورجال الدين، والطبقة الوسطى الصاعدة، والطبقة العاملة (الفلاحون). ويُشار إلى كل طبقة من هذه الطبقات من خلال شخصيات ممثلة في النص الأدبي، مما يعكس البنية الاقتصادية فيه. ويخلص البحث إلى أن تشوسر وظّف السخرية والنقد الاجتماعي لتسليط الضوء على التوترات الطبقيّة والتفاعل بين البنية والبنية الفوقية. كما يكشف العمل عن إساءة استخدام السلطة، والفساد، وزيف الادعاءات، والنفاق، وهي أمور تتوافق



مع جوهر ما انتقدته الماركسية. إن تطبيق النظرية الماركسية في تحليل النص الأدبي يمكن القارئ من فهم العلاقات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية من خلال تجسيدها في الشخصيات. وبالتالي، لا يبرز النص الأدبي كنص جمالي فحسب، بل كأداة تحليلية اجتماعية ثقافية تعكس الصراعات الطبقيّة داخل المجتمعات .

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تشوسر، السخرية الاجتماعية، الفساد، النفاق، النظرية الماركسية

## 1. Introduction

*The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer is one of the most significant literary pieces that can reflect the medieval society. This epic poem shows the internal design of economic relations that were common in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Chaucer does not show the characters in the pilgrimage to Canterbury as casual walkers, but as social figures as such, representing the fact of classes and professional hierarchy in the various sections of the society, thereby bringing in a state of class disparity. Chaucer lets the reader see the inconsistencies of the social system and gives the undertones of various layers of the society in terms of money, power, work and religion (Carella, 2010; Amos, 2025).

A prominent theory is Sociological Marxism that is applied in the study. Sociological Marxism is a conceptual paradigm that relies on classical Marxism to explicate how the reproduction and transformation of capitalist relations of classes take place. The theory emphasizes the perspective of class as exploitation because its core perception, which focuses on how the dynamic of classes create social institutions and possibilities of a more liberating change, are in place. It highlights the ideology, political and coordinated processes of maintaining the layer structures and finding the prospect of transformational change of a society. Sociological Marxism relates a conventional image of alternatives to critical capitalism, equitable social placement (Burawoy 18-35).

Social satire is one of the most recognizable techniques in the poetic writing of Chaucer, as the author used it to attain a critical vision (Özbeklik, 2021). The purpose of satire in the literary works of Chaucer was not a simple humorous element, but also an ideological purpose, which he intended to serve by attracting attention to the discrepancy between the moralizing of the upper classes and their behavior. Social satire dealt with clergymen who turned the religion into a commodity, merchants, pretending to be respectful and yet harboring greed, and rulers who tried to show the world their chivalry using flowery language. By doing this, Chaucer turned laughter into a satirical mechanism that evaluated the social order without having to challenge the authorities.

Middle Ages introduced feudal society, which offered the role of each class and it was impossible to exceed some of them. Nevertheless, the economic changes during the 14<sup>th</sup> century led to the development of new middle classes with a subsequent growth in the status of money. This resulted to a social system that is full



of tensions. Chaucer effectively brought out these tensions and conflicts in his literary text and the characters who were competing to have power and status (Taylor, 2007). He stressed the importance of their language and their behaviors and exposed the struggle between classes that were disguised under the seemingly unified order.

This theory has given a comprehensive and critical analysis of the interpretation of the text although, *The Canterbury Tales* was written many years before Marxism theory. The Marxist ideas and aspects of hegemony, ideology, relations of production and class have helped to interpret how Chaucer inferred the society structure and how religious and moral institutions were employed in the generation of the class domination. Consequently, this study intends to use the Marxist approach as a means of interpreting the literary work to identify the economic, political, and moral aspects that relate to the social satire. The study is initiated on the assumption that Chaucer relied on satire to provide a critical and elucidatory social comment on the stratification system and ideological dominion in the middle Ages, and made an effort to expose its inconsistencies. The given study will examine the criticism of Chaucer by breaking down the characters in *The Canterbury Tales* into four major layers and discussing the way in which these layers are presented and contributed to the feudal hierarchy. In this respect, this study is a critical account of a classical text that explains the connection between literature, power and economics and the way in which irony is used by Chaucer as an artistic device which conveys a symbol which is not easily expressed directly.

### 1.1 Research problem

Most previous studies, which analyzed '*The Canterbury Tales*', have focused on investigating the narrative style, morality, or ironic techniques employed as critical methods, but without delving into the class structure that reflects the true framework of art criticism (Crosson, 2015; Hanna, 2016; Manjunatha, 2017; Werner, 2020). Furthermore, most previous analyses of Chaucer's characters have critiqued them as individual human archetypes, but have not focused on the socio-economic representations that express class distribution within the social system.

A clear, systematic reading linking social irony as a critical method of the economic and ideological structure of medieval society to an interpretation of class structure based on class struggle and the equitable distribution of relations between classes has been lacking (Hanna, 2016). Chaucer's irony specifically reveals a flaw in the structure of the social system, where moral and religious concepts are used to conceal manifestations of power, domination, and exploitation between classes (Manjunatha, 2017).



Moreover, previous studies have shown a lack of engagement with Marxist theory as an interpretive tool for Chaucer's literary texts, even though this theory represents an important tool for revealing the relationship between power, money, and language within the sphere of work. Therefore, the problem of the current research is to employ irony to reveal the contradictions of the social system and to clarify the mechanisms of control used by the upper classes to control the lower classes through ideological discourses, based on Marxist theory.

## 1.2 Research importance

The significance of the research is based on the fact that it provides a critical interpretation of one of the most significant texts in English literature, *The Canterbury Tales*, in such a manner that it avoids the readings of the text that focused on the stylistic or moral issues in a narrative view of the text. This study offers a critically analytical methodology that puts into light the social and economic aspect of *The Canterbury Tales* explaining that social satire is a critical instrument that can bring into clear the framework of the class society and domination of the Middle Ages.

The relevance of this study can also be seen in the fact that it operates using the Marxist theory, which suggests an interpretive context of the literary piece. This opens new boundaries in the studies of medieval literature since it links and examines it in the context of the new social theories. The methodology brings depth to the aspects of the connection between literature and power, and the way in which the literary text would have the capacity to generate the ideological hierarchy of the society. Hence, the study helps to address the existing gap that is direly needed in the context of the Marxist theory application and criticism of the literary works by Chaucer.

At an academic level, this study adds to the expansion of the perspectives of interdisciplinary research that unites literature and social theories, and considers literature as a document that can unveil the social relations that existed in earlier times. Moreover, this work contributes to the Chaucerian studies through the systematic critical reading of the inconsistency of the feudal system, and the comprehension of economic and social changes that existed before the origin and evolution of the modern societies.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

Geoffrey Chaucer (1342-1400) was an English poet, philosopher, satirist and a writer. He was referred to as the father of literature or the father of poetry. The trilingualism of Chaucer provided him with the possibility of making a transition



between languages. His works clearly evolved the English poetry and the English literature which can be as eloquent and rich as French and Latin.

The Canterbury Tales is a work of Geoffrey Chaucer that has received a great deal of critical interest in the literary field, and past approaches have taken numerous different approaches, such as linguistic, narrative, and ethical approaches (Crosson, 2015). In this work, Chaucer had chosen his pilgrims with care and professionalism to encompass all the English samples of people in the Middle Ages based on the terms of personality, origins and interests. Social satire is a way of writing that relies on the mood of the writer or the teller not on being a non-flexible one, which is associated with culture, human behavior and institutions. There is no definite and precise definition of the social satire, though it is founded on the mood of critique and the imprisonment of the text.

Chaucer stands out as an author of literary ability in the development of characters and satire as a technique of criticizing. Nevertheless, this has been the case in most literary interpretations of satire as an artistic tool meant to entertain or criticize morally, overlooking the economic, class, and social aspects of the tool (Manjunatha, 2017).

Critical studies emerged more in the 2nd half of the 20th century, and the works of Chaucer started to gain a critical approach to social and class relationships of medieval England. His book, Jill Mann Chaucer and Medieval Estates Satire was one of the earliest literary works that made an attempt to establish a critical structure that would have connected the characters in The Canterbury Tales with the social classes of the society (Hanna, 2016). As shown in this book, Chaucer aimed at exposing the internal contradictions of classes in societies using satirical form of estates satire. In turn, the analysis of social representations over moral archetypes turned out to be a new frontier of studying the characters in the Canterbury Tales because the former dealt with the social representations of characters and the latter did not.

The literary works that Chaucer created enabled him to stress that texts cannot be removed out of their historical context as well as economic context. This is typified in *The Canterbury tales* which holds that there had to be social tensions in classes that were the logical culmination of the economic transformations and changes that the society experienced during the fourteenth century. Such changes took the form of the weakening of the old feudal order and the emergence of the middle class (Strohm, 1989). As observed by Aers (1988) Chaucer used satire and humor to evaluate ideologies that dominated in the society. According to Patterson (1991), the literary text of the work The Canterbury Tales provided historical literary reading that elucidated the forms of conflict between the powers with the other classes in the medieval society.



These social criticisms of *The Canterbury Tales* were too blind to utilize the Marxist theory in their analysis and did not establish the linkage between social irony and the economic framework of the literary work. Literary criticism based on Marxist interpretation of literature was also applied to modern literature and did not address and apply it to the literary texts of the Middle Ages that were well endowed with ideological implications reflecting the correlation of domination, production, and exploitation (Eagleton, 2011; Dinshaw, 2012; Williams, 2015; Jameson, 2016; Varty, 2018).

According to the Marxist theory of society structure, it is founded on the relations of classes, which cannot but follow the ideas of control and domination (Varty, 2018). Such class relations also bring about class wars, which are the main source of energy and motivation to change and transform in the society (Eagleton, 2011). Thus one cannot comprehend literary text without connecting it with the socio-economic environment under which it was created. The literature mirrors and criticizes the domination relations in society, relying on the ensuing social change.

Moreover, the base and superstructure are the two principles of the Marxist theory (Varty, 2018). Base is the source of production that forms economic relations whereas superstructure is the various social and cultural institutions in society that form the economic structure of society. According to Williams (2015), ideological institutions bring the legitimacy of the structure of the classes, though the legitimacy is usually unjust and exploitative. Moreover, it is the concept of ideological hegemony that helps the ruling classes attribute to themselves the required value, which they strive to deliver to other classes as natural so that to be accepted by lower classes, yet these values overlook and exploit the latter classes to benefit themselves (Hall, 1990; Eagleton, 2011). The phenomenon of ideological hegemony is inextricably connected with the so-called false consciousness, and it presupposes the inculcation of the perceptions of people, which serve the interests of the ruling strata, which obscures the actual fight between classes of various social groups.

### 3. Research methodology

To achieve the research objectives, the research will rely on the descriptive analytical method to study social satire in '*The Canterbury Tales*' by Geoffrey Chaucer, and within the framework of employing Sociological Marxist theory to explain class relations and the representation of characters within the literary text. The research will also determine how class satire is used to explain social and economic practices within the middle society in England, and how these practices can illustrate tensions between different classes, in addition to clarifying the role of ideology in changing society and challenging authority.



The researcher will rely on reading the original literary text and analyzing the characters in it, dividing them according to the four social classes, while clarifying the rhetorical methods that reflected power relations. Marxist theory will also be used to study each of the characters, identifying areas of class conflict, false consciousness, and ideological hegemony, and their impact on the characters' behavior in society.

#### 4. Research analysis and findings

The study of Geoffrey Chaucer's *'The Canterbury Tales'* reflects the image of a class society in medieval England, which emphasizes social class diversity. This diversity of social classes indicates unequal relations that represent an important arena for criticizing and revealing the nature of the relations between these classes, and the forms of domination that govern them. Chaucer depicts society using the style of social satire and reveals the deep debates between classes through the differences between the declared values and actual and realistic practices within each class.

The analysis of society includes four basic classes: The aristocracy/ruling class, the clergy, the emerging middle class, and the working class (peasants). Each of these classes is referred to through representative characters within the literary text, reflecting the economic structure within the text. Relying on Marxist theory, the framework within which literary narratives operate and influence the production of class domination will be clarified. The class conflict and false consciousness among the representative characters will also be clarified. Below is the class analysis of the characters in *'The Canterbury Tales'*.

##### 1. The aristocracy/ruling class

This class, which refers to economic and social power in Middle England, is the class that owns land and controls the sources of production. 'Knight' and 'Squire' in *'The Canterbury Tales'* represent the nobility. 'Knight' carries a noble personality that possesses the qualities of chivalry, and at the same time reflects class dominance in society. His social status reinforces and justifies the class system and class dominance. In *'The Canterbury Tales'*, 'Knight' is described thus:

*"To ride out, he loved chivalry,*

*Fidelity and good reputation, generosity and courtesy.*

*He was very worthy in his lord's war,*

*And for that he had ridden, no man farther,"* (General Prologue, lines 45–48).



Knights should follow distinctive behavior full of chirality and generosity. But this character has some distractions that make him look less than he should bear this title in terms of nobility, gallantry, and chivalry, because he contradicts what he claims.

*"As well in Christendom as in heathen lands,*

*And (was) ever honored for his worthiness;*

*He was at Alexandria when it was won.*

*He had sat very many times in the place of honor"* (General Prologue, lines 49–52)

Despite the continuous praise that Chaucer bestows upon the Knight, he sometimes uses social satire to divulge a truth. The Knight fought bravely and valiantly in the Middle East or in the North of Africa, not for the sake of the principles of patriotism that people believe in, but in fact, he achieved it to maintain his continued authority and emerged as a social acceptance among his community.

*"His horses were good, but he was not gaily dressed.*

*He wore a tunic of coarse cloth*

*All stained (with rust) by his coat of mail,*

*For he was recently come (back) from his expedition,*

*And went to do his pilgrimage."* (General Prologue, lines 74-78)

The Knight was humble when he returned from a bloody battle, and he was still wearing a spotted and half-torn coat as a hint of humility. But because of its exaggeration, it refers to a tendency to romanticize harshness as virtue, as a tired and stained warrior who finally returns home, as any other worker has succeeded. Chaucer tries to convince us that the Knight is like other selfish merchants or the advisor who has unclear agendas.

Relying on Marxist theory, Knight's character embodies the ruling class, which the rest of the classes believe is right, historic, and ancient, but in fact, he shows the systematic hypocrisy that most people will believe because of his dominating position.

As for 'Squire', he is a noble, outgoing young man, bound by the duties of his father's class. Comparing with Marxist theory, Squire reflects the concept of false consciousness, which takes the values of the dominant class as a class, even if it imposes many social restrictions on it. It is stated in 'The Canterbury Tales' that:

*"He loved so passionately that at nighttime, He slept no more than does a nightingale"* (Chaucer, General Prologue, lines 97–98)

These lines refer to the Squire's interest in love and appearances, without awareness of his family's economic and social status, and which stagnates on the false awareness of the dominance of the noble class, which contradicts the principles



of chivalry and true leadership of the masses, where one must first sacrifice for the people.

Likewise, the Squire character seeks to evade responsibility and indulges in the pleasures of life, forgetting his moral obligations to people.

*"He was embroidered, as if it were a mead, all full of fresh flowers, white and red"* (Chaucer, General Prologue, lines 89-90)

When the authorities avoid their duties and embrace extravagance and excessive luxury at the expense of the people, then deception will be in all its forms, as Sociological Marxism refers to.

Referring to 'Knight' and 'Squire' characters, the idea of base & superstructure is reinforced. The ruling class is in control of the sources of production, and the cultural superiority associated with the chivalry of the nobility enhances their legitimacy and existence.

## 2.The clergy Class

This class refers to the authority of the church and religious ideology, and shows the contradiction between declared moral practices and personal actions. The 'Prioress' and 'Friar' are the most prominent characters who refer to the clergy. 'Prioress' is a character who represents the official moral orientations of the church, but in some situations, she shows more interest in social appearances than in her level of spiritual commitment. According to the Marxist perspective, this character reflects the cultural supremacy that supports the upper classes, which adds religion as a tool of legitimacy to their social class. As for the character of 'Friar', he is a character who exposes corruption in the church, as he exploits his religious position in order to obtain personal interests, which generates a conflict between religious values and class interest. This indicates false consciousness and class struggle, where the clergy uses moral and religious values to maintain their own self-interest, deceiving the lower class. The following text appears in *'The Canterbury Tales'* that confirms this:

*"He was a noble pillar to his order, and an easy man to give penance, for a gift"* (Chaucer, General Prologue, lines 225–227)

The quote refers to the exploitation of religion and the conflict between moral values and personal interests.

Normally, a person used to hear that the Friars and clergy men live a life of chastity, poverty, and peace, but in fact in the tale of the Friar's life is full of manipulation, corruption, exploitation, and greed. The Friar is another controversial and ridiculous character. Özbeklik's *Condemnation of Corruption in the Canterbury*



*Tales* declares that the Friar never follows the way of other Friars in wearing or living style, but he wears expensive clothing just like a pope or other rich man. This appearance exploits his religious and social status. (150). Chaucer, in his General Prologue, describes him in these lines:

*"It is not respectable; it can not be profitable,  
To deal with any such poor people,  
But all with rich people and sellers of victuals"*. (Chaucer, General Prologue, lines 246–248)

Obviously, Chaucer ridicules the Friar who scorns the poor people because of their poor health or financial condition, instead of helping them with mercy and generosity. In addition to his avariciousness, Chaucer also describes him with some immoral traits that do not match his status and religious position. The Friar is described as a good companion for the rich and the powerful and the high-ranking to achieve material aims once and satisfy sexual desire another time. With this behavior, the Friar seeks to corrupt society, which considers him a role model, but in reality, he is far less than anyone else.

### 3.The emerging middle class

This class expresses the economic forces that emerged and challenged the traditional feudal forces, as the character of the Merchant, Guildsmen, and Wife of Bath express this. The character of the merchant reflects the economic and social ambition of the middle class, which seeks to consolidate its economic position through commercial gain. It was stated in *'The Canterbury Tales'*:

*"A Merchant was there with a forked beard, in motley dress, high on his horse he sat"* (Chaucer, General Prologue, lines 305–307).

This quote suggests that while Merchant appears as an economic authority, he also conceals the social constraints imposed by the base and superstructure.

As for 'Guildsmen', they are representatives of artisans and merchants, who seek to develop a collective consciousness linked to their economic interests. However, at the same time, they are still within traditional social dominance, as they are restricted by the laws and cultural values prevailing in society. Although the middle class reflects the rise of economic powers, it is still within the scope of hegemony and governed by prevailing class values.

Another significant character among the group of pilgrims is The Wife of Bath, who portrays a good sample of social satire. In this tale, we see a new page of



challenge that stands against the authority of the church and the man's dominance in the society of the medieval age. Women have raised a slogan of challenge against the controlling view of women.

*"For trust well, it is an impossibility that any clerk will speak well of women"* (Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue, lines 688-689).

The religious male authority, which has always ruled the society in the language of masculinity, understands nothing about marriage and judges it rudely. During the Middle Ages, people gave a vivid significance to the authority of the church, male scholars and clergy men, especially the written authority, which always aimed to control women and dominate them. Chaucer comes to satirize that belief by introducing a simple woman who challenges ancient holy beliefs and religious thoughts in a simple, convincing, and inexpensive way.

While Tinkle's *The Wife of Bath's Marginal Authority* states that the authority of the woman is created from the woman's marginalized status in the medieval age. The Wife of Bath is not a priest or scholar, but is a woman without specialized or professional knowledge in a specific subject, yet she exposes this institution in a striking way. (p-68)

*"To read in this book of wicked wives.*

*He knew more legends and lives*

*Than are of good women in the Bible"*. (Chaucer, The Wife of Bath's Prologue, lines 685-687).

Chaucer here increasingly states that the wife distorted some religious dogmas that the real believers at that time never accepted any kind of destabilizations in the atmosphere of the faith, just to defend her multiple marriages. In this way, she sent a message to expose how the men of the church (unreal believers) could interpret the religious texts for their own benefit. A big contradiction of interpretations can be felt and seen because of the manipulations in the holy texts by the authoritarians. This motivation pushes Chaucer to use the Wife of Bath's social satire to expose this system.

The pilgrim Wife of Bath deeply expresses the spirit of the Marxist theory in the field of religious corruption that covers the religious system in the Middle Ages.

## **5. The working class (peasants)**

This is considered the most vulnerable and exploited class in Middle English society, and the characters of 'Plowman' and 'Miller' represent this. The character of 'Plowman' shows an honest farmer who works hard, but is also subject to



economic exploitation. According to the Marxist perspective, Plowman reflects a limited class consciousness, as he is satisfied with hard work in exchange for small rewards that enable him to live. Turn in ‘*The Canterbury Tales*’:

“*He was an honest worker, good and true, living in peace and perfect charity*” (Chaucer, General Prologue, lines 496–498).

These lines show the lower class's limited awareness and economic exploitation, representing a daily struggle between the ruling class and the lower working class.

As for Miller's character, he is a character who reflects the humor of the lower class and tries to use his physical strength and intelligence to achieve economic gain at the expense of others. In Miller's Tale, Chaucer legendizes and spoofs the romance conventionalism of medieval knightly as well as courtly love traditions through his satirical depiction. The Miller's Tale deeply represents social satire, class conflict, inverted ideals, and hypocrisy. For instance, a thematic survey of Chaucer's Canterbury Tales focuses on how the story of the Miller as a lower-class figure and a rude satirist of the elegant romantic perfection of the Knight's tale. The Miller still continues to tell his story to others exaggeratedly:

“*In spite of all his guarding and his jealousy,  
And Absolon has kissed her lower eye,*” (Chaucer, The Miller's Prologue and Tale, lines 3851-3852)

The Miller's Alison and Absolon story is one of the most satirical and funniest stories in Chaucer's tales. When social standards stand in the way of personal freedom and rights, literature steps forward to expose the untruthfulness of social traditions and their abhorrent states. In the above two lines, Chaucer depicts two satirical pictures that show how some families accept marrying their daughters to old men suitors, and why should those people who are lusty and undisciplined be clerks in Churches? In this tale, the Miller has mocked John, Alison's husband, because he was an old carpenter, jealous, and foolish. He is not suitable for Alison because he cannot sexually satisfy her. This refers to class struggle, the false consciousness that leads peasants into accepting their positions within the class system. It is stated in ‘*The Canterbury Tales*’:

“*He was very strong of muscle, and also of bones.*” (Chaucer, General Prologue, line 546).

Therefore, satire here expressed class, economic, and social disparities, and used literature to expose the exploitation of power.



## 5. Discussion of the results

An analysis of the characters in *The Canterbury Tales* reveals that Chaucer employed literary language interwoven with social satire to depict class inequalities in society and their impact on social relations. This aligns with Strohm's (1989) observation that literature is capable of reflecting the social tensions prevalent in medieval English society. Moreover, the ruling and clergy utilize religious and moral values to reinforce their authority and status. This is precisely what Williams (1977) pointed out through Marxist theory, demonstrating that the aristocratic behaviors exhibited by the ruling and clergy serve to solidify their dominant legitimacy.

Furthermore, the struggle and exploitation of the emerging middle class are evident, as seen in the characters of the 'Merchants' and 'Guildsmen'. Despite facing numerous economic challenges, they remain constrained by the old values. As for the peasants, as exemplified by 'Plowman' and 'Miller', they showed their exploitation by the dominant upper class, where 'Friar' represented a prime example of his exploitation of religion for personal gain. This precisely reflects what Eagleton (2011) and Jameson (2016) discussed within the Marxist framework, which emphasizes the economic and social class struggle for gain and maintaining a privileged position within class society.

Furthermore, Chaucer employs irony to illustrate that even the lower classes, such as the peasants, adopt the values of the upper classes, thus highlighting the concept of false consciousness according to Marxist theory.

## 6. Research Conclusion

The *Canterbury Tales* is not merely a collection of humorous stories, it is a multi-dimensional masterpiece, which reflects the intricacies, fears, and the shifting social order of England during the fourteenth century. Chaucer creates an everlasting image of what the human soul is by captivating characters, searing sarcasm, and different viewpoints, which makes us wish to take a similar carefree attitude and view the world around us with a critical eye. The timeless relevance of this work is in the fact that it entertains and informs the readers of different generations and establishes itself as the staple of English literature. The central motifs of the *Canterbury Tales* are not individual strings but intermingled fibers adding strength



to the piece. Knowing these themes, we get deeper into the genius of Chaucer, in all his satirical critic, his philosophical inquiries and his insight into man.

In conclusion, The Canterbury Tales provides a classic discussion of our world that makes us laugh, think, and doubt as we rejoice in the hale of storytelling. The long-term social importance of it is its critical representations of many social classes, its interaction with current anxiety, and its eternal investigation of human relations and social orders. Through the way he provides a reflection of the lived-in medieval England, the work by Chaucer gives us an opportunity to converse about the eternal questions of morality, power, and the meaning of life.

The satire and social criticism were used by Chaucer to enlighten the class conflicts and the interactions between the superstructure and structure. The use of Marxism theory in analyzing the literary text helped the researcher to interpret the economic and social relations in the form of the characters. Therefore, the literary work was not only a resultant text of aesthetics, but the text of socio-cultural analysis of the conflict of classes in societies. Using the Marxism on the social satire found in this piece of Chaucer, the extent of deceit, voice suppression, corruption, lies, and the denial of societal rights as suggested by the Marxist theory is exposed.

## 6.1 Research recommendation

Based on its findings, the research recommends the following:

1. Employing theories of hegemony and false consciousness in the analysis of ancient and modern literary texts.
2. Utilizing interdisciplinary critical approaches to bridge the gap between social science literature and modern cultural literature.
3. Further research is suggested to compare Chaucer's satire with literary outcomes in other societies, specifically focusing on socio-economic conflict.



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